Conditions for effective mentoring

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Outline

• Needs in general (Hobson et al. 2009)
• Conditions at different levels of context – the case in England (Hobson & Malderez 2013)
• Potential benefits
Needs

• Appropriate Initial Mentor preparation and development opportunities
• Formal recognition for qualified mentors
• A ‘pro-mentoring’ environment (e.g. absence of others acting as Stressor, Restrictor, Alienator, Dis-empowerer, Controller. Elmajdob, 2004)
• Time
• ‘Accessible’ mentors
Conditions – The Case of England

Context

- Formal school-based mentoring emerged in some initial teacher preparation programmes in 1980s

- Introduced more widely as part of policy-driven shift to ‘school-based’ teacher preparation in early 1990s...

- ...and to school-based newly qualified teacher (NQT) Induction in late 1990s
Rationale for the rise of SBM

- Unclear – probably varies
- Probably partly informed by one or more of a number of perspectives on professional development/teacher learning, e.g.
  - reflective practice (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983; Zeichner, 1994);
  - cognitive psychology of skill (Anderson, 2006; Leinhardt et al. 1995);
  - situated cognition (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996)
  - socio-cultural perspectives (Edwards & Collison, 1996; Rogoff, 1995; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wertsch, 1991)
Rationale for the rise of SBM

- *Partly informed* by more managerial imperatives, for example:
  - alleviate ‘reality shock’ (Gaede, 1978; Veenman, 1984)
  - encourage teacher retention (Feiman Nemser, 1990)
  - decrease power of universities, de-intellectualise teacher preparation, deprofessionalise teaching (Wilkin, 1999)?
Two main research studies

- *Becoming a Teacher* project (2003-2009)
  - University of Nottingham, University of Leeds, Ipsos MORI
  - Sponsored by DCSF, GTCE, TDA

- *Modes of Mentoring & Coaching* project (2010-13)
  - Sheffield Hallam University, University of Nottingham, NFER
  - Sponsored by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation
Overview of becoming a Teacher (BaT) research

- Project aim: investigation of teachers’ experiences of initial teacher preparation, induction and early professional development

- Longitudinal mixed methods study
  - National surveys, interviews, ejournals
BaT data informing this study

- Interviews with 79 student teachers at the end of their ITP (primary and secondary phase; variety of routes)
- ... and 73 of these at the end of their first year of teaching
- ‘Ejournals’ with 46 NQTs – ‘hot data’
- Interviews with 46 ITP programme personnel, including 15 school-based mentors
- Interviews with 27 induction tutors
Modes of mentoring and Coaching (MoMaC) research

- Sequential mixed method design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998)
  - Scoping, ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ phases
- Project aim: to investigate nature, impact and potentially broader applicability of ‘external mentoring’ support for science teachers in England associated with:
  - Pilot Physics Enhancement Programme (PEP)
  - Pilot Science Additional Specialism Programme (SASP)
  - Stimulating Physics Network (SPN)
MoMaC data informing the study

- *Mainly* analysis of data generated from part-structured interviews with:
  - 20 PEP and SPN ‘mentees’ (11 PEP, 9 SPN)
  - 10 external mentors (5 PEP mentors, 5 SPN TLCs)

(Also, Qs in national teacher survey, achieved sample, 1558 – 21% response rate)
Findings 1: The good news

• Support for earlier findings that mentoring one of most effective means of supporting professional learning and development of beginning teachers (Franke and Dahlgren, 1996; Hobson, 2002; Marable and Raimondi, 2007; Su, 1992).
Findings 1: The good news (cont.)

- Support for a number of the previously reported benefits of SBM for beginner teachers.

1. Supporting mentees’ socialisation and acculturation into local (school) and broader educational contexts (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Edwards, 1998; Feiman Nemser and Parker, 1992)
When I first saw the QTS list [the national Standards for Qualified Teacher Status when I started this course it blew my mind and I thought ‘I am never going to do all of that’ ... It was all gobbledygook to me; I came from a military background we had our own kind of military jargon... And so to work with the mentor I can understand how they relate to what I am doing in the classroom. ...working with the mentors and having [the Standards] explained, seeing how they relate to the observed lessons it all became very clear...
• I think I have realised more and more how important it is to check that [the pupils] are [learning] because sometimes we’ve checked and they haven’t, you know they haven’t understood something so we’ve got to go back so I think that sort of thing I have learnt to be more thorough.

• {Interviewer: Okay so where does that increased questioning come from?}

• I think again from the feedback from the teachers and my mentor who have watched me teach really saying to me ‘did you feel that you’d achieved the objectives?’ and you know ‘are you sure that task worked?’ … so I think I have learnt to not take [pupils’] nods and smiles as actually being ‘yes I understand this’.
More good news

• 3. Positive impact on mentees’ emotional wellbeing (e.g. Bullough 2004; Marable & Raimondi 2007).

• I guess the most useful person during that early time was my mentor because that was the person who I ... always knew was there in school. If I did have a problem or something went wrong ... I could have gone to my mentor... You know, he’d given me his home phone number, I had ways of contacting him and he’d said to me, you know ‘whenever you need to ring me, ring me’, so I felt like I could, he made me feel comfortable with that.
2. Improved professional knowledge and skill base (e.g. McIntyre & Hagger 1996; Lindgren 2005), including:

• subject and curriculum knowledge
• ability to manage time and workload
• classroom management
• informed reflection and ‘noticing’
I’d spent one session and it was almost like I was shouting, my voice just rose and rose and at the end of it I was really hot and flustered and my teacher who’d been watching me, she fed back to me afterwards and she gave me some strategies to use and I used them next time and they worked.
More good news

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... but not all good news

Wide variation in the perceived quality of mentoring support:

*My mentor has probably been the most influential person [in my training]. Some of the other students I have talked to, they have not got on with their mentors at all, they have had really bad experiences. I can’t say that at all, mine’s been really good and I think it is really dependent on how your course goes, who you have got as a mentor*
Findings 2: The bad news
Micro level (mentor relationship) failings
1. Some evidence in BaT and MoMaC studies that perceived ‘attitudes and approaches’ of some mentees provide a challenge for mentors....

E.g. One mentor described a mentee who:

- ‘has taught lessons and thought they were very, very good... [and] doesn’t really want to hear that... in actual fact they are not, and their learning outcomes are not very good’.
Micro-level failings (cont)

2) Mentors failing to create safe and trusting relationships:

[D]uring the PGCE whatever you ask your mentor they would judge you on and [think] ‘why doesn’t she know that?’

One mentee spoke for many in stating that they:

“wouldn’t be speaking to my [school based] mentor about flaws that I have”
Micro level failings (cont.)

3) Practise of *judgemental mentoring*, or ‘judgementoring’

“... a one to one relationship between a relatively inexperienced teacher (the mentee) and a relatively experienced one (the mentor) in which the latter, in revealing *too readily and/or too often* her/his own judgements on or evaluations of the mentee’s planning and teaching (e.g. through “comments”, “feedback”, advice, praise, or criticism), compromises the mentoring relationship and its potential benefits” (Hobson & Malderez 2013, p.90)
Micro-level failings (cont.)

Judgementoring takes a number of forms:

a) being unduly critical of mentees’ work as (beginning) teachers (only negative judgements):

[I]t was a really oppressive atmosphere in the school. [From] my actual mentor... I got nothing but criticism and pressure from her from Day One. She was criticising everything I did... I mean we had been doing a lot on the course on the power of positive feedback... and I got none whatsoever.
Micro-level failings (cont.)

b) Belief of some mentors that there is one ‘right way’ to teach, and theirs is *the right* way to teach; apparent wish to produce clones:

- [M]y mentor in my second year [of ITP] ... whenever I said ‘this is the way we have to do things’ she said quite a lot about my lectures and my special subject, ‘oh you shouldn’t be doing that and you shouldn’t be doing that, you are not prepared, you should be doing this’. And ... I kind of felt ‘all that work and it is worthless because I have got to do it your way’, you know, that is wrong.
3. c) Use of restrictive mentor-led ‘feedback’ model in post-lesson discussions

4) Some mentors don’t have clear idea of what mentoring is or should seek to bring about
Micro-level failings (cont.)

5) Evidence of mentor beliefs in ‘proceduralist-apprenticeship’ rather than ‘understanding-oriented’ approach to professional learning and development (Hobson 2003).

E.g. One mentee seeking support to analyse the root cause of a problem was frustrated by his mentor’s approach:

- ‘I am actually asking you for help and you are telling me what worked for you!’
Other micro-level failings

6+) Other failings:

• Mentors having insufficient time for mentees
• Mentors not sufficiently committed to the role
• Mentors lacking requisite knowledge or expertise
• Mentors ‘jumping through hoops’
• Mentees granted insufficient responsibility or autonomy
• Fragmentation
Some consequences of micro-level failings

- Stunts mentees’ professional learning and development – including of learnacy (Claxton 2004)

- Negative impact on mentees’ wellbeing – one NQT described the impact of judgementoring:

>You get told all the time what you are doing wrong, not what you are doing right ... That really pulled me down and I thought ‘what’s the point?’...
Some consequences of micro-level failings (cont.)

- Negative experience of mentoring contributed to decisions of some to leave profession (Hobson et al. 2009; Chambers et al. 2010).

One mentee who dropped out said of her mentors and other teachers in her placement schools:

*I thought they were amazingly unsupportive if I’m absolutely truthful. I think they were truly horrible ... You just got the feeling you weren’t allowed to say anything... I wanted to engage in it and talk about it and of course, a lot of teachers just want you to shut up. (Mentee, withdrew after two thirds of ITP)*
Meso-level failings

1) Relatively few schools employ rigorous methods of mentor selection

[I am] *coordinator of the year group*. So, in that role, it was therefore decided that I would be *mentor for those coming into my year group*...

(Mentor)

2) Where there were no same-subject specialists within the school, most schools failed to make alternative provision
Meso-level failings

3) Providing mentors with conflicting roles – those of both assessing beginner teachers and supporting their professional learning.

[You never want to mention any potential failings that you might have to your [school-based] mentor ... because you don’t know what’s going to go down in writing...

Sometimes it’s not easy for people to share concerns with you because they feel ‘that’s going to be a black mark’. (Mentor)
More meso-level failings

4) Failure to ensure that mentors are appropriately prepared for the role

All ITP mentors and most NTI mentors had the opportunity to undertake some form of ‘mentor training’ or initial mentor preparation.

Not all mentors took advantage of this

Some felt that any training would have limited value...
[Y]ou could say for all the years I’ve been [a mentor], I’ve been making it up as I’m going along... No one has ever said ‘Hang on, has anyone ever put you on a programme to train you in how to do this?’ No one has ever done it... [Y]ou find out what works well, how to look after someone, how to push somebody else... when to say ‘yes you can do something’ and when to say ‘no’. That, I suppose, experience is the best training. But if somebody said ‘Hang on, there is a course on this’ I don’t think anyone can give you the course on that. (Mentor)
More meso-level failings

• 5) Many schools appear to fail to provide mentors with sufficient time to carry out the role effectively, (especially given the associated administrative requirements in England)

Problem exacerbated where schools do not timetable mentor and mentee to be ‘free’ at the same time:

*Time is the killer. If you are allocated time during the school day to do the mentoring you get a much more high quality amount of work done, whereas if you’re doing it after school, you feel rushed, the student feels rushed, they don’t want to take up your time, and there are other things to do.* (Mentor)
More meso-level failings

6) Lack of effective partnership working between some HEIs and their ‘partner’ schools.

7) In general, many schools fail to take the mentoring of student and newly qualified teachers sufficiently seriously.

My teacher was off on sick leave because she hurt her back and then she was off for most of my placement so that was a very bad placement because I didn’t get any support. Nobody in the school went out of their way to support me.
Macro-level failings

1) Failure to accord greater / sufficient status to the mentoring role e.g.:
   • lack of recognition in career progression frameworks and salary structures.

2) Failure to recognise or impress upon schools the importance of:
   • rigorous and appropriate forms of mentor selection and mentor training
   • ensuring that student and newly qualified teachers have access to subject specialist support
Macro-level failings (cont.)

3) Failure to promote effectively a common understanding of what mentoring means, ought to entail and/or what mentors should be seeking to achieve

4) Associating monitoring and assessment of student and newly qualified teachers with mentoring role - illustrated, in relation to NQTs, in the Department for Education’s (2012) ‘Statutory guidance’ to schools
Macro-level failings (cont.)

• “The head teacher/principal must identify a person to act as the NQT’s induction tutor, to provide day to day monitoring and support, and co-ordination of assessment. The induction tutor ... should be able to provide effective coaching and mentoring... The induction tutor should review the NQT’s progress at frequent intervals throughout the induction period... NQTs should have formal assessments carried out by either the head teacher/principal or the induction tutor.” (Department for Education, 2012, p.14).
More macro-level failures

5) Creation (in the education system and the public sector and society more broadly) of accountability culture characterised by ‘surveillance overkill’ (Mahony et al., 2004, p. 440)

• Provokes insecurity, anxiety and mistrust amongst employees (Jeffrey, 2002; Ball, 2003; Lumby, 2009)

• Also responsible for amount of time mentors must spending completing relevant ‘paperwork’...
• The forms that I have fill out, they are horrendous ... I don’t think they serve any purpose, I think they’re a paper filling exercise. We go through the motions of completing the form ... I can see that if somebody is not coming up to standard it might be useful but I actually don’t think it helps particularly in the NQTs’ development... (Mentor)
... and more

• 6) Failure to provide sufficient funding to schools that is earmarked for school-based mentoring (Bubb & Earley, 2006).
Summary

Despite inevitable limitations of the research...

- Evidence of variation in quality of mentoring
- Failure of national policy makers and schools to support conditions for effective mentoring
- Resulted in judgement mentoring and many other failings
- Massive culture shift required if SBM is to achieve its potential
Given appropriate conditions at all levels of context, mentoring can ... 

• Support transformative learning and enable the initial development of informed skilful and creative teachers with learnacy  
• Support the transition from Initial Teacher Preparation to induction and early career development  
• Support teachers (and those who support them) in:  
  • Continuing development and remaining in the profession  
  • Making the changes required of them by policy changes in contextually appropriate ways
References


