The emerging dilemmas and challenges for mentors and mentees in the new context for training in-service teachers for the learning and skills sector

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DRAFT: NOT TO BE QUOTED WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE AUTHORS

Introduction

Until 2007-8 when the revised standards for the Learning & Skills (L&S) Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses were introduced (LLUK 2007), mentors on in-service programmes had a non-judgemental role (unlike mentors on pre-service programmes) essentially providing subject-specific pedagogical support, advice, informal mutual observations and support to the trainee on their Individual Learning Plans and professional development (DfES 2004: 8). The new requirements for ITE mean that mentors now have a more significant and onerous role which involves the observation and assessment of their mentees, writing formative and summative reports and closely liaising with the university tutor (OfSTED 2004: 7) to reach agreement on the final assessment of practical teaching.

This research is significant because it emerges from a plethora of policy and consultation on ITE for the L&S sector since the late 1990s. The documents “Equipping Our Teachers for the Future” (DfES 2004) and “A Framework for the Inspection of Initial Training for Further Education Teachers” (OfSTED 2004) embedded much of the emergent ideas into official policy, which awarding HE institutions and colleges are currently implementing. In 2006 OfSTED published findings from their 2004/5 inspection of teacher training courses for the L&S sector. They identified continuing weaknesses in systematic mentoring and subject-specific support of inexperienced and trainee teachers in the workplace particularly for those on in-service courses (OfSTED 2006 p.2).

Since then there have been several other reports summarising findings from ITT inspections in the sector which, although they identify improvements, continue to highlight significant shortcomings in mentoring provision, such as a lack of clarity in defining the mentor role, too little contact between mentors and teacher trainers and limited mentor training (OfSTED 2007:10). By 2008 the OfSTED reports were more positive overall, referring to improvements in many colleges but noting the difficulties in securing appropriate mentors for trainees working outside the further education college setting. Interestingly, in the most recent report there is specific criticism of the variability in mentors’ skills in making “accurate judgements about teaching and learning” (OfSTED 2008:5), a point to which we will return later.

Teacher training for the Learning & Skills sector has become more regulated, controlled and managed since the introduction of standards intended to inform the design of accredited teacher training qualifications (FENTO 1999) despite criticisms of this approach (Lucas 2004). The standards have been revised (LLUK 2007) and come under an external quality assurance system (SVUK). Like all institutions which offer these qualifications for teachers both new to the profession and for old-timers without full certification at the appropriate level, we have radically re-
designed our courses to encompass the new standards and SVUK units. We have made the whole process of mentoring more structured with new documentation and forms, increased requirements for specific activities, and a new Mentor Handbook. Mentor training has been made a requirement for all mentors and this, coupled with many other duties expected of the mentor, including meetings with University Tutor and regular “tutorials” and assessed observations, has added significantly to the workload of the mentor.

This research emerged from a recognition that, compared with the mentors for students completing the final year of the old “legacy” PG /Cert Ed (FE) in-service course which was winding up in 2007-8, the mentors for the first cohort of students on the new course in 2007-8 had a much more onerous job. We wanted to look at the ways in which this new type of relationship was working, and to see if some of our concerns about what we were having to ask mentors to do was translated into reality in the workplace. It is against this background of a perceived shift in emphasis for teacher educators and more particularly for mentors that we have conducted this research.

**Theoretical framework**

Before looking at official reports and other research on mentoring in the sector we want to examine a model of mentoring in order to place subsequent discussions within a conceptual framework. Our starting point is the model developed by Clutterbuck (2001) which has been elaborated by Klasen & Clutterbuck (2002) and brought into circulation within the Learning & Skills teacher training sector by Wallace and Gravells (2005).

The model derives from two key questions: who is in charge of the process and whose needs are being met.

If the mentor takes primary responsibility for managing the relationship then the relationship is characterised as directive; if the mentee takes primary responsibility then the relationship is characterised as non-directive. According to this model, the relationship covers: content, timing, direction and agenda. In a directive relationship the mentor directs the mentee towards specific goals and gives strong advice and suggestions, in a non-directive relationship the mentor encourages the mentee to come to his or her own conclusions and stimulates self-reliance (Clutterbuck 2001: 15).

If the focus is on learning then the relationship is characterised as challenging and stretching. At this end of the spectrum the emphasis is on task orientation. If the focus is non-task related then the relationship is characterised as supporting and nurturing. At this end of the spectrum the emphasis is on consideration and social support (Clutterbuck 2001: 16). The model combining these two dimensions results in four categories: coaching, guiding, counselling and networking as set out in Figure 1 below.
The model has been further developed into a more complex form which identifies some of the behaviours associated with the different quadrants of the model (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2002: 17) as set out in Figure 2. There are two types of issues which confront mentors in this model: **boundaries** with roles outside the diamond and **tensions** between roles within the diamond. On one interpretation of this model these approaches and behaviours can be combined in an integrated approach which selects the approach or behaviour which meets the mentee’s needs at the time (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2002: 16). The revised model also begins to identify those behaviours which fall within and without the role of mentor (the diamond in Figure 2).

**Example of mentoring model: Four basic styles of helping**
Adapted from Klasen and Clutterbuck 2002 in Wallace and Gravells 2005 p.14

The authors talk of the ways in which the model can be distorted if one aspect is emphasised over the others such that mentor behaviour steps over the boundary.
of the ‘diamond’. For example the North American view “tends to be aimed mainly at sponsoring and assisting mentees with their career moves” (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2002: 17). The problem that this causes for mentoring is that career progression is traded for loyalty and respect such that the mentor actively moulds the mentee’s career. We recognise that at times mentoring in-service ITT students may mean stepping outside the “diamond” of the diagram above, but problems arise if the boundaries are consistently and continually over-stepped. We do discuss this in our mentor training.

We have extended this insight and applied it to the other three quadrants:

- if the coaching aspect is overemphasised then the approach becomes judgemental
- if the counselling aspect is overemphasised then approach becomes friendship
- if the networking aspect is overemphasised then the approach becomes constraining

### Boundary Issues in mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECTIVE</th>
<th></th>
<th>NON-DIRECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judgemental</td>
<td>Sponsoring</td>
<td>SUPPORTING / NURTURING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraint</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3**

Tensions between the roles within the diamond are characterised by matters of emphasis as set out in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Between</th>
<th>and</th>
<th>Potential tension issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>critical friend</td>
<td>role model</td>
<td>Tension between demonstration of good practice and constructive criticism/stretching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical friend</td>
<td>catalyst</td>
<td>How much to challenge mentee’s assumptions and how much to make things happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical friend</td>
<td>listener</td>
<td>Finding a balance between stretching and challenging and listening to mentee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>role model</td>
<td>listener</td>
<td>How much direction/advice mentor to give mentee in interactions with them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>role model</td>
<td>catalyst</td>
<td>Tension between demonstrating good practice and making things happen for mentee</td>
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**Table 1**
We have used these boundary issues and tensions to explore our data and further develop the model. However before we proceed to the data we want to examine some policy texts on mentoring for ITT in the sector.

Where has mentoring been mentioned in the policy documents?
We aim to identify what style of mentoring is articulated in the policy documents which have been instrumental in providing a framework for the mentoring model we and other ITT providers have adopted in our new courses. It is clearly important to be able to locate our model of good mentoring within the emergent OfSTED framework provided by the series of reports over the past few years, and the seminal DfES document “Equipping our Teachers for the Future” (DfES 2004).

The emphasis for mentoring when the new framework for ITT in the sector was first set out was on support for subject specific teaching skills:

to help teachers develop teaching skills in their own specialist or subject area (DfES 2004: 4)

Systematic procedures were envisaged to ensure that this took place:

... well-documented principles and procedures for ensuring that trainees receive appropriate experience and support from subject mentors, which are applied systematically” (OfSTED 2004: 14)

We would locate these statements within the directive + stretching quadrant which seems mainly developmental but also shades into coaching.

The rationale for this clearly but tacitly acknowledges the concept of “communities of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991:97) and the way in which new teachers learn on the job through a gradual process of “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave and Wenger 1991:29):

The vast majority of teachers in the learning and skills sector are trained in-service and model their future practice by observing colleagues and mentors who teach the same subject or vocational area. Without good role models of teaching and comprehensive support, their development is severely inhibited. (DfES 2004:11)

We would locate these statements within the directive + nurturing quadrant which seems mainly developmental but also shades into guiding.

So far, so developmental. However in 2004 a more judgemental role for the mentor was foreshadowed:

an essential element of teacher training is the observation of the trainee’s teaching and constructive feedback... Some must be conducted by mentors or managers in the teacher's workplace, and others by those delivering the taught elements of the course. (DfES 2004: 8)

OfSTED further promoted this requirement of mentors:

Tutors and mentors give trainees frequent, constructive feedback and clear guidance on their performance. (OfSTED 2004: 10)

By 2006 however, the tenor of OfSTED’s commentary had shifted slightly, and a stronger line was clearly being taken on the role of the mentor:
Feedback from mentors is of more variable quality, and sometimes lacks sharpness or fails to set clear targets. The effectiveness of feedback on teaching is often undermined by an over-reliance on a tick-list approach with little use of more detailed professional comment. (OfSTED 2006: 11)

The following year a clearer picture was emerging from OfSTED, an apparent precursor to the current demands for ITT providers to grade their trainees:

The quality of assessment during teaching practice was better where trainees were observed by more than one tutor and an experienced, subject specialist practitioner was involved. However, the use of specialists in the assessment of teaching was not well established and there was often confusion about the assessment role of mentors. Communication between mentors and teacher trainers, about trainee progress, was inadequate. Teacher trainers rarely define the pass or fail boundaries on practical teaching so that all those involved, and especially trainees, understand what is expected of them and how to improve. In most cases, where it is in place, moderation of the assessment of practical teaching is not well developed.” (OfSTED 2007: 12)

The most recent OfSTED summary report (OfSTED 2008) firms up this expectation of both tutors and mentors to set targets and make judgements

Mentors’ skills in making accurate judgements about teaching and learning varied, in particular about the boundaries between pass and fail grades. (OfSTED 2008: 5)

Feedback on lesson observation outcomes, in particular feedback provided by mentors, was not focused sufficiently on the impact of teaching on learning, or on subject-specialist issues. Where paired observations were taking place to monitor the quality of mentor feedback, this was beginning to have a positive effect on trainee progress. (OfSTED 2008: 15)

Insufficient specific and tracked action planning at an early stage of the training with tutors and mentor, however, inhibited the trainee’s development. (OfSTED 2008: 9)

These latter set of quotes contrast in tone and emphasis with OfSTED’s 2004 document, which suggested that university tutors should:

liaise with college mentors to ensure that opportunities are provided for trainees to enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching their specialist area. (OfSTED 2004: 7)

As new principles become established, requirements are being tightened and expectations of tutors and mentors firmed up. The language of “judgements” and “targets” is becoming entrenched in policy related to mentoring in-service trainees in the sector. Evidently there has been a shift of emphasis from 2004-2008 towards a more judgemental model of mentoring.

**Other Literature**

Other work takes a more organisational perspective and explores the structural requirements and imperatives for supporting and encouraging mentoring (Cunningham 2007a and 2007b). Handbooks for mentors (Cunningham 2005; Wallace and Gravells 2005) also provide a framework within which to analyse this data but the pace of change is fast in this area and there is the need to examine its implications for the main protagonists. More recent empirical research on
models of mentoring which have been adopted across the full range of providers of ITT within one region will also provide some useful insights and background on which to analyse further our data (Ashby et al 2007).

Data collection
Data has been collected since 2006 when mentoring was made a requirement of recruitment to the in-service course at the university for the first time, through the rolling programme of mentor training and support sessions, which has developed and evolved to adapt to the new requirements of the course and the increasing role of mentors. We made notes of the dilemmas and issues which arose during these sessions which included open discussions with mentors. A questionnaire based survey of both mentors and mentees was carried out during this period.

In 2007 we gathered data through focus groups, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Five focus groups were held at five separate FE colleges with a total of 59 mentors. The same set of mentors completed a questionnaire and subsequently later in the year interviews were held with 16 mentors and 14 mentees, 10 of whom were paired. They came from four of the FE colleges with one pair from a private training provider.

There are several comments to be made about the nature of this data collection. For the interviews we contacted mentors and mentees via email to ask for volunteers; the sample was therefore a self selected sample. We have some sense that in the main those mentors and mentees who were happy with their roles contacted us. One of the interviewers was well known to the mentors and mentees and from our data it appears that those for whom the relationship was not working so well were prepared to contact this interviewer.

In those cases where the relationship was working well we pushed for respondents to identify dilemmas. This did make us feel sometimes like tabloid journalists digging for dirt. However it did result in some interesting responses in which respondents identified the key aspects of why they thought their relationship was working well which may not be present in other mentoring relationships they knew of. We used this data to identify dilemmas which would arise if these aspects were absent.

Both of us have been working in FE teacher education for some years, so from this experience we have formed our own views of the kinds of dilemmas mentors and mentees face. In one or two cases we found ourselves prompting respondents to think about particular aspects of their role which they had not mentioned, e.g. the tension between their responsibility to the college, their mentee and the university. Viewed from the perspective of an interview as pure data collection this could be interpreted negatively as influencing the data collection, from the perspective of an interview as an interactive conversation it can be interpreted positively as raising challenges to respondents to think differently about their roles.

In analysing the dilemmas and issues we are aware that we have not identified how intensely the issues were experienced either in quantitative terms (how many mentors/mentees felt x) nor in qualitative terms (how strongly did mentors/mentees feel x).

Data Analysis
We asked both mentors and mentees about any problems or dilemmas they have had or could anticipate in their experience. We have tried to analyse them in terms of the potential boundary issues and tensions in the model outlined earlier in this paper. Our initial impressions were that almost all the dilemmas were located in
the top “Active” and “Directive” half of the model. These were firstly, boundary issues involving an “overstepping” or “slipping” from the fundamental role of the mentor as shown on the diagram by the diamond shaped area and secondly, tensions within the mentor role between critical friend and role model. The modified model is set out in Figure 4 below.

**Tensions & boundaries in mentoring**

![Diagram of Tensions & Boundaries in Mentoring](image)

**Boundary issues:**

1. **Critical friend / coach**

Several mentors raised their anxieties about the need to be critical of their colleague, even though most made it clear that they understood the concept of constructive criticism. One mentor said:

   "I have some anxiety and guilt about having to say things which are critical and trying to put them into appropriate language... being able to write comprehensively and accurately. I need time to write the feedback as it happens – I can’t do this – I need to write notes and then transcribe."

Another mentor found it difficult when her mentee had more teaching experience than she did:

   "It can be uncomfortable to critique lessons. It’s an awkward situation."

Relationships in the staffroom can get in the way of mentoring when the coaching side of the role is to the fore. Mentors were more comfortable with the role of critical friend, giving constructive and developmental feedback, but when asked to commit this to paper on an official feedback form which they knew would become part of their colleague’s portfolio and would count in the final qualification, they were much less easy. One mentor who works closely with his mentee as a colleague put it like this:
Having to write things down is a problem – especially giving a pass or fail. What do you do if there are problems? Pass them because this person is a colleague and friend, or fail them because you know they’re not ready?

Mentors sometimes found the grading criteria and language confusing. Some had been trained in OfSTED grading as internal peer assessors but were aware that the developmental feedback required for the purposes of mentoring was different from this. The general view was that mentors did not want to use OfSTED grading but one or two thought it could be useful to use the OfSTED language even if they were not using their grades.

As the time taken and level of formality of meetings and observations is increased with this more onerous mentor role, so the anxieties of some mentees are raised. One more capable trainee, anxious to improve her practice, worried that her mentor “doesn’t want to be critical” and others that they were “taking up her valuable time – she’s always willing but it’s difficult to diary”

One of the important aspects of this boundary issue is that some mentors over-stress the coaching part of their role and are too directive about pedagogical issues: “you should teach like I do”. For example one trainee felt she had to ask her colleague to be her mentor as he was the only person who also taught her group of learners with behavioural difficulties. She quickly realised that he had issues with the group and she felt compromised and caught between them. Her mentor was over-directive and she felt that he wanted:

\[\text{to see me teaching the same way as he does – he criticises me for this but I know that his approach doesn’t work with these students.}\]

2. Role model / guardian

Many mentees talked about the value of having a good role model in their mentor but for some this was proving uncomfortable as the mentor had crossed the boundary of role model and had taken on the more active job of “grooming” their mentee for the requirements of the job as they saw it. This happened particularly where the mentor was a more senior colleague.

The question of who leads the process of mentorship in the workplace was raised by several interviewees. One pair found this difficult to resolve as the mentee was less well organised in terms of the paperwork and processes than the mentor, who felt she needed to press her mentee to get forms completed and observations arranged. This resulted in some awkward situations, described here by the mentor:

\[\text{I have tried to press her to do it but she’s got stroppy with me. Someone else might not cope with this but we’re friends from before – probably this is why I end up doing it for her.}\]

3. Catalyst / Network Contact

This boundary issue arose where the duties of the mentor in this respect extended beyond the role of catalyst, conceived here as someone who makes things happen, in this case mainly to do with the nature of teaching within the subject. In tightly-knit staff rooms where relatively small teams of staff work closely with one another, we found that mentors and mentees sometimes felt constrained by a fear of “rocking the boat”. This resulted in mentors feeling unwilling to give criticism or even make constructive suggestions. One mentee said:

\[\text{it might have been useful to have had someone external to the organisation [as mentor] because of the problem of closeness and the lack of opportunity to}\]
be completely honest without the fear of consequences. The problem is that no-one else has the level of subject expertise that is required.

Of course this has other potentially problematic consequences too. A mentor wrote of his concerns in this respect:

The number and ability of applicants into FE work is declining. Therefore the mentor is aware that they may be working with the person they are potentially criticising for a long time.

He went on to write:

Having a lecturer commenting on another and potentially having a say in the completion of the Cert Ed is uncomfortable for most institutions. If someone does not complete the Cert Ed (i.e. is then likely to lose their job) they may not like the role the mentor had in this.

4. Listener / Counsellor
The boundary issues here are concerned with privacy and friendship. Mentors need to be clear about setting boundaries for this aspect of their role in order to ensure that they remain within their area of expertise. This is analogous to the teaching role in some respects, where the college counselling system might deal with the difficult issues which students bring to college. However the difference is that the protagonists here are colleagues, and the counselling role may be extended into further development of friendships which may (or may not) already have existed. We heard frequently of mentors who made themselves available for their mentee. One said “You just do it like if a student asked for help”, and a mentee talked of his mentor as “always there for me”.

While the friendship aspect of mentoring a colleague is clearly one which is highly valued by many, and indeed it could be argued that the best mentor/mentee relationships have friendship at their heart, there are attendant potential problems which have been discussed above in 1.

Tensions
Here we look at two of the most significant tensions from those identified in Table 1 above. It is important to note that our data show that as the boundaries of mentoring are broken so the intensity of the tensions between roles increases.

1. Between critical friend and role model
Tensions arise particularly where the role of critical friend (information provider, pedagogical supporter, subject specific adviser, facilitator) conflict with that of role model (friendship, emotional support, personal development). Apart from the obvious challenges of making pass/fail judgements about a friend and colleague as described above, there are other tensions which emerged from the interviews.

There are ethical issues for the mentor on the sharing of knowledge about the mentee. One mentor talked about the problems associated with being both her mentee’s line manager and her mentor. She had deliberately moved her mentee to a different site to avoid this situation:

there are things you need to say to people that you couldn’t if you were their line manager. There is a need for a hierarchy, for example if discipline is needed. We are very open with each other but it would be very difficult if I needed to give her an appraisal.
This of course raises the question of who should be a mentor. Our guidance clearly states that the line manager is not the most appropriate choice, but sometimes we have to accept that this situation is unavoidable. The choices available for a mentor with appropriate qualifications and subject-specific teaching skills are often limited.

Ethical issues arise also from the new and enhanced status of mentors’ judgements of their mentees’ performance. Previous mentoring models stressed developmental and formative feedback as the main means of supporting the development of mentees’ teaching skills. In this new model, summative judgements are required, which has shifted the goalposts and created a different and potentially ethically problematic scenario for the mentor. Knight and Trowler refer to “low-stakes and high-stakes assessment” conflicts (Knight and Trowler 1999:28). The decisions which the new-style mentor must make are certainly moving towards the higher-stakes end of this spectrum.

**Between critical friend and listener**

Another significant and obvious tension exists where mentors need to offer critical judgements when acting as critical friend to their mentee (a role much more significant now as we have argued earlier). This conflicts with the opposing role of listener/counsellor/friend as shown in the model.

Many mentors spoke of their worries about how their friendship with their mentee might be affected by, and might affect their ability to be a “good mentor”. One mentee saw this as a serious issue in that her friendship with her mentee-colleague was being affected. She felt she did not need the subject-specific critical friend/coach so much as someone with extensive teaching experience and wisdom (such as her university tutor who is also a colleague). This reflects a frequent characteristic of this type of mentoring of in-service trainees: that mentees often have a great deal of teaching experience in their subject area already. Many have been employed as teachers for several years and some also have extensive vocational experience.

It seems that the overriding issue in all these dilemmas for both mentors and mentees emanates from the fact that, of necessity, the people involved are colleagues. They may also be friends and may have had a long history of working closely together, often as equals. As one mentor put it:

> It’s not just about teaching methods and content, it’s also about different experiences in the classroom, personal relationships, human interactions.

The alteration in their relationship brought about by their new roles as mentor and mentee can have significant impacts upon their interactions with one another and sometimes with their employers. In the latter case, one interesting comment written by a mentor illustrates another dilemma for mentors:

> Most institutions cannot resist asking the mentor how the mentee is progressing and if things are not going well will ask for detailed notes to support their case. Of course, this is outside the mentor’s agreed role, but refusing a line manager’s request is not a good move.

This brings us to the heart of the tensions within the mentor role: who are they accountable to in this role; are they accountable to the college where they work or to the awarding institution where the qualification is located. Ideally there should not be any tensions between these accountabilities but the reality of the different purposes of these institutions means that there are tensions. This situation is further complicated by the way the mentor role is resourced: the college does not
normally receive any payment from the awarding institution as it would were this a pre-service course. But it is increasingly the case that colleges give some remission for this role, which increases the case that mentors are accountable to their colleges. Some colleges have used the central government workforce reform money to support mentoring but we are sure that not all colleges have used it in this way.

Other types of mentoring problems
The tensions and boundary issues shown in the model and discussed here represent what we consider to be the central issues and dilemmas in mentoring of this type. However the questionnaires, focus groups and interviews raised a number of others which are listed here and which will be familiar to anyone involved in mentoring in such settings. These issues are of a different type from those discussed in this paper, but it is important that we acknowledge them here as they are often the most pressing and immediate issues for mentors and mentees. They are fundamental, often practical or logistical problems, often related to the “architecture of mentoring” (Cunningham 2007a) which are slowly being recognised and addressed as the place of mentoring in the sector becomes established:

Practical issues
- Time to carry out the role
- Timetable clashes with mentee
- Paperwork
- Information/communication problems
- Finding suitable place to meet, privacy
- Insufficient support and recognition from college management

Suitability & Choice of mentor
- Suitability – background, training, approach
- Mentee more experienced teacher
- Former role of mentee
- “It’s hard to say no to being a mentor”
- Even more difficult to withdraw from role?
- No alternative mentor available

Conclusions
In the process of exploring the emerging dilemmas and challenges for mentors we feel we have exposed a tension at the heart of the intended partnership between colleges and higher education institutions: who are mentors accountable to. While this tension may continue for some time, it is likely that this tension will reduce as teacher education courses are required to use a grading system for practical teaching similar to that used in OfSTED inspections. However as this tension reduces we feel that other tensions, such as that between ‘critical friend’ and ‘role model’, are likely to increase.

Underpinning these tensions are two different versions of mentoring. One is to do with information giving and pedagogical advice and is the rationalist, cognitivist version of mentoring. It has more in common with a model of coaching than one of mentoring in its fundamental sense, and is essentially judgemental in its approach. This is the version fostered by the guidelines from government organisations such as OfSTED. The other is more to do with personal relationships and is the humanist, interactionist version (which makes it high risk) and is essentially developmental in its approach. This is the version usually preferred by providers of ITT for this sector (and by most mentors and mentees in our view) and which is being challenged and distorted by the government imperatives of target setting, action planning, grading and summative judgements. This tension is evident in
such issues as whether the focus is (or should be) on personal development or subject pedagogy. This may be affected by differences in culture between FE and HE in the sense that HE tends to have a theory based learning culture whereas FE and WBL has more of a practice based learning culture.

The specific tensions and boundary issues identified in this small scale research on mentoring in-service trainees produce a wide range of particular dilemmas and challenges which we have attempted to differentiate and analyse here. The reality, of course, is that in many cases there is a blurring of the boundaries and an overlapping between the different tensions and boundary issues, but some clear patterns and trends have emerged.

Clearly wider improvements in the “architecture for mentoring” (Cunningham 2005, 2007a) are required over the next phase of teacher training for the sector. On a more local scale, teacher training providers, including our own institution, are enhancing and developing their mentor training, liaising more closely with mentors, carrying out co-observations and moderation exercises and encouraging colleges to provide adequate time and resources for good mentoring to take place. These improvements and systems will take some time to become established and in some places there may be a lag between new requirements and effective mentorship practice.

Further research will be needed to monitor these changes and developments. We have mainly referred to the mentor processes in further education colleges here. The dilemmas and issues in mentoring which are specific to other types of settings, such as work-based training or the charity sector, have not been addressed in this paper. As teacher training for the Learning and Skills sector broadens its range and deepens its roots, so mentoring will become even more significant. It will be important to monitor developments in the role of the mentor and to recognise the challenges which will accompany them in order to design ITT programmes which hold mentoring securely at their heart.

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