

MENTORING AND COACHING

Abstract

Pt1: A critical analysis into current thinking and issues appertaining to coaching and mentoring.

Pt2: Focusing on mentoring and its historical, social, cultural, organizational and economic context within post compulsory education and training

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Contents

Introduction.....	2
Current Thinking.....	2
What is Mentoring?	2
Blurred Lines	4
Cross Gender Roles.	4
Professional Development.	5
Mentoring.....	6
Relationships.....	6
A Cognitive Approach	7
Collaborative Teaching.....	8
Welsh Government Report.	9
Conclusion.....	9
References	10

Introduction

The following serves to analyze current thinking as regards to mentoring and coaching in an organizational environment with particular reference to training issues and professional development.

Further to the above an analysis of the position of mentoring within post compulsory education and training. This analysis is written in regard to cultural social and historical contexts.

Current Thinking.

What is Mentoring?

Firstly. What is mentoring and coaching, and do they offer specific advantages at opposing ends of the spectrum or are they to some extent interchangeable?

The answer is.....its complicated.

Traditional mentoring gives an individual the opportunity to have a close relationship with somebody older and wiser. This bond develops and in time the mentor supports the mentee and passes on experience and knowledge, facilitating the success of the mentee in their chosen field or indeed their life.

Mentoring; *"help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking"* (D Clutterbuck & D Megginson, 1999).

Traditional coaching relies upon the coach to have the ability to impart knowledge and training to the individual or team in order to fulfill their specific goal. There is no necessity for the coach to have the specific experience or the skill, only the ability to convey and implement techniques to further progress.

Coaching; *"a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve. To be a successful a Coach requires a knowledge and understanding of process as well as the variety of styles, skills and techniques that are appropriate to the context in which the coaching takes place"* (Parsloe, 1999).

Modern coaching and mentoring practice share aspects of both disciplines in that they both offer a conduit for reflective analysis and knowledge, enabling the coached or mentee to travel a path to success.

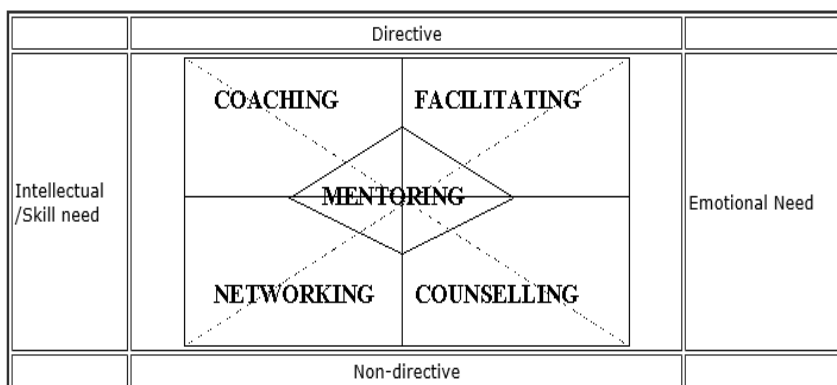
This modern approach stems from the realization that training or the imparting of knowledge, is far more productive using coaching and mentoring techniques than traditional training course methods.

Parsloe (Parsloe, 1999) writes;

- Firstly, organisations have to find new ways of getting results and can no longer rely upon traditional structures, with coaching and mentoring providing a practical alternative.
- Secondly, coaching and mentoring individuals within the workspace is far more cost effective and provides the support to make learning very effective.
- Thirdly, the practical help and support from the organisation enables the learner to take responsibility for their own development.

Coaching is easier to outline and define in that the primary role of the contracted coach is to focus on performance and task toward a specific goal. The coach does not necessarily have the experience of the goal, only the knowledge of the task and the ability to impart this knowledge. This role tends to be short term or until the goal is achieved. If after completion the goal is reset, then a new contract can be instigated. This is not to say that there is no crossover into aspects of mentoring. As well as a trainer or teacher the coach has to facilitate, support, observe, create techniques, encourage, evaluate, develop and manage the relationship. All aspects of mentoring.

Modern mentoring is very much more difficult to define in that the relationship between mentor and mentee is on many levels (including 'coaching').



(Clutterbuck.D Sweeney.J, 1997)

The above illustrates the range of responsibilities entrusted to a mentor, from intellectual to emotional and direct to indirect. The mentor has to manage these ever-developing roles over a longer time period than coaching. With four distinct phases, each of which is given a flexible time period agreed between both parties, these being, (Mentorloop, 2019);

1. Foundation. (~1-2mths) Being the period of establishing the relationship.
2. Progress. (~2-5mths) Where most benefit is gained by the mentee.
3. Analysis. (~2-5mths) The mentee is given more autonomy, becoming independent.
4. Redefinition. (indefinite) The mentee is independent and on a path of equality to the mentor.

The time periods above are subjective to the needs of the mentee and are very flexible, dependent upon subject, progress and how often meetings take place. This is in direct opposition to coaching which is task and goal led, although goals can of course be reset.

Blurred Lines

The very fact that there is, to some extent, the blurring of lines between coach and mentor can lead to a relationship which veers away from the primary goal of the process. This can lead to a breakdown in relationship and failure of achievement. The longer the relationship and higher the investment in time, work and emotion can lead to longer term issues, particularly with bonding with subsequent coaches or mentors. Dennen (Dennen., 2004) writes that; the generally used descriptors to identify a coach or mentor are used regardless of whether they satisfy the coach or mentor definition and goals, as laid out in purely pedagogical terms.

This is where a contract between both parties must be implemented in order to define the role of the coach/mentor in their relationship with the coachee/mentee.

“Contracting is essential to an effective coaching or mentoring relationship. It is the working agreement between the two parties, setting out goals, boundaries, expectations and working procedures between both parties. Though it is tempting to jump in and get on with coaching or mentoring, coaches and mentors need to invest time at the beginning to agree a comprehensive contract with their coachee/mentee. It lays the foundation for effective working, and helps the two avoid assumptions, misunderstanding and confusion” (Croner-i, 2020).

This contracting of the relationship serves as a focal point throughout the time period specified. It gives both parties the ability to track and check that the contract is adhered to. Documenting the progress throughout the contracted period is also essential as a means to track progress.

Cross Gender Roles.

Natural mentoring and coaching have taken place for millennia. They are present in the form of close relationships within a family or tribal setting. Parents essentially coach and mentor their children during their formative years, some parents will say that this never ends. Tribal societies use coaching and mentoring in the same way. Due to the family environment the gender of coach or mentor becomes irrelevant with mothers and fathers sharing the roles to varying extents.

The issue primarily arises when mentoring and coaching relationship involves different genders, particularly male to female roles. There is a disproportionate number of men in positions of power the only option is a cross gender relationship with a male mentor or coach.

“because the numbers of women in leadership roles is so low. In many cases, the only mentorship available to junior women is from men” (J.Becket, 2019).

Intimacy, attraction (not necessarily by both parties), gossip and how the relationship is judged by peers will have an impact upon the achievable goals of the process.

Coaching is of lesser risk of the above due to the elements of specific practical aims and goals. This focuses the relationship on the task although there is the risk of crossing boundaries if contracted ground rules are not implemented.

Mentoring is of greater risk of failure due to the nature of mentoring in that there is a close bond built at an emotional level often over a longer time frame than coaching.

“For many years, men have been helped to advance in their careers by the interest and personal guidance of a mentor. Now, when women merit this special professional attention, problems can arise-include sexual attraction, marital disruption, and damaging gossip” (James G. Clawson, 2004).

In either case when the relationship becomes intimate on a physical and emotional level it effects both parties on a personal and professional level. The aims and goals are unlikely to be achieved particularly when questions of fidelity arise on all levels. Ineffectiveness of the relationship occurs if the parties become closer or feel that more distance should be implemented.

In recent times men are shying away from mentoring and coaching roles with women as protégé due to the perceived implications of cross gender relationships at work. With the backlash towards men from campaigns such as the #MeToo (#MeToo, 2020) movement, men are becoming cautious about entering into these roles.

“There appears to be an emerging concern that cross-gender mentoring should be approached with caution.....some men feel their everyday interactions with women are at risk of accusations of harassment—so their solution is to avoid women altogether” (J.Becket, 2019).

This will only act in a detrimental way to women striving to be successful in their goals. Ironically women’s empowerment could lead to a negative outcome for the very women struggling to achieve with predominantly men in power.

Professional Development.

In reality, and providing that professional development is carried out in the form of seminars, conferences and learning opportunities, successful coach/coachee and mentor/mentee relationships can be possible and successful. Combined with contracts and the will to respect boundaries, these relationships would be void of harassment issues. Education is the key.

Mentoring

Relationships

Mentor/mentee relationships have been with us since life appeared on earth. Natural mentoring in the form of senior family members mentoring younger members is a natural occurrence in the wider animal kingdom and of course humans. This provides knowledge and insight into the path from infant to adolescence and into adulthood. The adult becomes mentor and so forth. This is without planning or following mentoring model rules, but as a way for the survival of the immediate and wider family unit whether animal or human.

Humanity recognizes mentoring interaction; mentor/ mentee relationship has been documented for millennia. The term mentor itself refers to the guardianship of Telemachus, Odysseus son in Homers 'The Odyssey', by Odysseus's friend Mentor.

"Odysseus placed Telemachus under the care of a guardian called Mentor, whose job it was to protect and guide him" (Panagiotakopoulos, 2019).

Panagiotakopoulos (Panagiotakopoulos, 2019) also writes, ironically Mentor failed in his mentoring of Telemachus, leaving him unconfident and insecure. It took the intervention of the goddess of wisdom Athena to successfully mentor Telemachus (by imitating Mentor) into becoming successful.

Mentoring outside of the family environment has become more contrived, organisations such as education, require differing mentor/mentee individuals to form a relationship for specific and diverse requirements.

In modern times mentoring is regarded to be a primary tool in education in order to impart the wisdom and knowledge required for, primarily, the mentee to succeed. Just as important for an educational establishment is to future proof itself, in a way as to prepare trainee teachers for future senior roles.

Dependent upon the requirements of the setting, a mentoring model will define the form that the process takes. Models include (USDA, 2019);

- One-to-one mentoring;
- Group mentoring.
- Peer mentoring.
- Flash mentoring.
- Situational mentoring.
- Reverse mentoring.
- Virtual mentoring/ E-mentoring.
- Cross- group mentoring.
- Cross -agency mentoring.
- Blended mentoring.
- Internship-embedded mentoring.
- No "M-word" included.
- Professional networking.
- Authentic/natural mentoring.

The most recognized form of this relationship is a one to one or peer mentoring, in which a senior lecturer or tutor is matched with a learning teacher in order to provide guidance, support, and encouragement. This is regarded as essential to the ongoing education and development of the learner teacher in Higher Education (HE). This is incorporated into its ongoing strategy to further professional development for both student teacher and for the senior tutor.

“mentoring is a highly effective method for supporting and facilitating student teachers in their professional development” (Tomlinson, 2009).

Tomlinson (Tomlinson, 2009) also writes that the learners requirements and approach to learning are responded to positively. In this way the effectiveness of the relationship is enhanced.

HE establishments have a duty of care to identify suitable mentors and assess the effectiveness of the mentor/mentee relationship. Only in this way can a mentoring program be successful. Without this monitoring. Issues can arise within the relationship or indeed fail as a process. Take the example of Mentor himself (P5), he failed as a mentor and it took the intervention of Athena in order to fulfil the goals of Telemachus.

It is of vital importance that both parties commit wholly to the process and connect on a psychological and emotional level. The mentor must have the skill and experience in order to fill the role, whilst the mentee must trust that this is true.

“In fact, it is strongly suggested that the quality of the mentee and mentor relationship is of paramount importance for the success of the model” (Bolam, R. McMahon, A., 1995).

A Cognitive Approach

Mentoring has to be approached from a holistic point of view. New learner teachers may have the necessary knowledge of a particular subject but not the skill to impart the knowledge to their students. Mentoring facilitates this by entering the learner teacher into a form of cognitive apprenticeship framework.

“Increasingly though, the study of mentoring within an apprenticeship framework includes more than the development of physical skills; it has expanded to include the development of mentee cognitive skills (Collins, A. Brown, JS. Newman, SE., 1989)”

Traditionally apprenticeships were developed to teach practical skills for a future workforce whereas cognitive apprenticeships model skills and behavioral methods to cope with real world issues within the classroom. A cognitive apprenticeship framework follows similar time frames to traditional mentoring time periods (p3). Anderson (Anderson, 2000) writes that there are three distinct stages of knowledge gain;

- The cognitive stage. Establishing of the understanding of skill and behavioral methods.
- The associative stage. Learning from mistakes and linking crucial aspects to reinforce development.
- The autonomous stage. Skills become polished and mentee becomes independent.

In essence a cognitive approach delivers on a thinking as well as skills level. There are many issues which can and will occur during a teaching career, from for example behavioral, skills level and disabilities. A cognitive approach caters for these probabilities as well as preparation for teaching practice in a multicultural world.

HE establishments by their very nature are multicultural in that the students enroll from all corners of the world. Tutors need to be aware and conscious of cultural difference which will occur during their careers. These differences can include race, language, religion, class and gender.

“Both mentor and mentee bring to the relationship values and assumptions that are culturally based. By understanding the influence of culture on attitudes, expectations, and behaviors, leaders may increase their cultural awareness and improve intercultural mentoring practices” (Osula,B Irvin,SM, 2009).

A rounded multicultural cognitive mentorship program would prepare new trainee teachers for this role.

Collaborative Teaching.

In an era of HE establishments being run as businesses, with national audits of performance, league tables and results performance criteria, there is a need for a better way to educate teachers in order to build a sustainable future. Student teachers are as individual as anybody else, with unique needs and methods of learning, hence they will have many different ways to disseminate knowledge to students.

The use of collaborative teaching within a mentor relationship can develop methods tailored to the individual, ultimately proving successful in educating students. Co-teaching in the form of observation and teaching by mentor and mentee helps develop techniques and understanding of behavior.

“Mentoring and collaborative teaching are vital to the success of learners in educational settings where differences necessarily exist in educators’ expertise, knowledge, experience, and cultural resources and adaptability. Faculties that work to cultivate a collaborative spirit and to mentor each other are more likely to be successful in promoting student learning” (Cob,M. et al, 2006)

Teaching duties can be one sided or shared, with either party observing and analyzing the others technique and performance. Gains in insight are made into dealing with issues within the classroom appertaining to groups or individuals. The process evolves, with the trainee teacher developing strategies, skills and behavioral knowledge on the path to becoming an independent successful teacher.

“Co-teaching in a teacher education academy provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate how collaborative teaching strategies can be utilised for teacher candidates and practising teachers alike that may have opportunities to adopt these practices when they commence teaching” (Doheny,C. Sachs, GT., 2007).

Welsh Government Report.

There is growing recognition of the importance of mentoring in teacher training. In October 2018 the Welsh government released a report (Estyn, 2018) under the Inspectorate of Education in Wales, Estyn. The report outlined 80 findings regarding the use of mentoring within Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Some aspects of the report were positive and showed an increasing regard for mentoring within ITE such as,

“19: Effective mentoring most consistently occurs in schools where mentors and senior mentors are chosen strategically” (Estyn, 2018).

There are underlying issues with documentation and conformation with a narrow understanding of mentoring. It shows a need to report back to a system of Education whereby league tables, quantifiable results and funding takes precedence.

“3: The mentor training currently provided by the centres of ITE places too much emphasis on completion of documentation rather than developing the skills, knowledge and understanding required to mentor successfully. In addition, ITE quality assurance procedures focus too heavily on consistency and conformance at the expense of ensuring quality” (Estyn, 2018).

Ironically this finding of ITE practice is in direct contradiction to the mentoring they are attempting to promote. This is evidence of a deeper misunderstanding of the purpose of mentoring in teacher training. This is proved by another finding within the report.

“60: Currently, the mentor training and development provided by the centres of ITE does not address specifically the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to mentor successfully. There is no shared definition of mentoring within ITE providers and across Wales, and this means that practice and understanding of the mentoring process varies too much” (Estyn, 2018).

Conclusion.

There seems to be the need for some clarification of the mentoring process along with insight from the ITE establishments into what mentoring practices involve.

Mentoring has always been a successful tool in the education system, but as with the importance of understanding between mentor and mentee, the understanding by the teaching establishment of what mentoring is and how it can be implemented is equally as important.

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