



The Research & Development Bulletin

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Edited by Dr Angus I. Carpenter



Special Edition



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Developing and enhancing the practice and management of scholarly activity and research within further education colleges



The Higher Education Academy will be holding two events to support practitioners to engage with scholarly activity/research and to allow managers to receive information in regard to successfully managing it within their institutions. These events will address key issues for both practitioners and managers within FECs involved with research/scholarly activity, such as:

- i. the meaning of scholarly activity/research and how to build a research ethos;
- ii. the key research processes, including research design/dissemination;
- iii. making funding applications;
- iv. key resources to support their engagement with scholarly activity;
- v. considerations for and management of scholarly activity/research within an FEC;
- vi. institutional impacts from scholarly activity/research.

The workshops will take place on:

- 25 March 2010 at Engineering CETL, Loughborough University;
- 11 June 2010 at City of Bristol College, Ashley Down Centre.

For further details and booking form, visit www.heacademy.ac.uk/heinfo, or contact Sara Bath at sara.bath@heacademy.ac.uk.

www.heacademy.ac.uk/heinfo

Can research lead to real improvements in the learning and skills sector?

research conference

Friday 26 February 2010
Park Plaza Riverbank Hotel, London



In partnership with



Notes:

Editor's comments

Dr Angus I. Carpenter, Research Centre manager, The Research Centre, City College Norwich

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the latest issue of the *Research and Development Bulletin*; volume 7, number 2. This is a special edition, sponsored by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), the Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region (ACER) and the East of England Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (EECETT). I very much thank these organisations for their willingness to collaborate on this special edition issue, and I hope it proves to be an interesting and informative read for you. The articles presented in this issue were all included in a suite of action research projects, funded by LSIS and managed by ACER, conducted by Further Education Colleges within the East of England. All the projects presented here investigated aspects of enabling mentoring. The many varied methodologies and experiences presented, provide a wealth of information and advice to any would be mentor or college seeking to establish a strategic mentoring programme. At least that was the intention of the editor!

The FE sector still remains in a period of economic stress, and future predictions suggest that this will only be further compounded by funding restrictions across post compulsory education sectors. Forecasters in the HE sector have already predicted meltdown post the comprehensive spending review (CSR), and the FE sector will most likely witness a significant funding reduction too. Therefore, FECs will seek novel approaches and greater efforts to secure external funding from future grant / funding sources, which will also increase competition.

In regard to information and planning for the future, there are many conferences taking place shortly. LSIS has announced it will host a conference in London in February, while the QAA / HEA are also holding a conference in January – both are themed on future planning. Also it is worth knowing that the

HEA annual conference this year will be at the University of Hertfordshire and is well worth attending. There will be a vast array of subject matters covered and it is a great opportunity to build relations with the HEA subject centres.

ACER has reinstated its commitment to research engagement and management with the launch of its new research and HE engaged and management group. The launch of this group will be on the 2nd February at ACER's offices in St Ives, with a second meeting planned for the 30th April, at a host FEC that is yet to be announced, and a conference to be held on the 8th June. Speakers at the first two meetings are already booked. At the first meeting Dr Becky Turner, from the HELP CETL, University of Plymouth, will be talking on how the HEI and FEC partnerships work there and, specifically, how the HEI supports FEC practitioners in their research, etc. The second speaker will be Sheila Kearney, research manager for LSIS, who will discuss how LSIS will be further planning to support the sector and practitioners in it. Those interested in attending should contact ACER directly.

Also in regard to supporting the engagement and management of research by practitioners in the FE sector, you will see a flyer in this special issue of the *Research and Development Bulletin* giving information on two further Higher Education Academy (HEA) research skills workshops for the FE sector. Previous workshops have been a huge success, with participants having gained much information, skills and ideas for taking a more pro-active research stance in their institutions. Each workshop is limited in the number of attendees that will be accepted. They will operate a first come first booked policy with the ceiling at 40 individuals. So be quick in booking to ensure you are not disappointed!

The Research Centre is currently involved,

one way or another with all of the above events and activities. It is the lead in the HEA workshops, responsible for the development and organisation of each session at each workshop. However, City College Norwich is utilising the skills located within the Research Centre to conduct inward looking surveys and draft reports on areas that management have identified for improvement.

The Research Centre

Within the Research Centre here at City College Norwich, we are ever increasing the support offered to the college management team by investigating internal areas and topics of interest on behalf of the college. This should be the essential role for research conducted within FECs, in the majority of situations, which clearly separates it from the 'blue sky' research of HEIs.

The Research Centre is working with HEA on both its 'Research skills workshops' and by testing and populating their EvidenceNET website with useful resources from the FE sector.

The Research Centre has also been working on World Class Skills projects funded by LSIS. These small scale projects offer a good opportunity for staff to engage with research in relevant areas and offer good levels of support to the researchers.

The Research Centre continues to operate as an independent evaluation specialist for the University of East Anglia's BEACON project. This project seeks to explore and promote university engagement with the public. The work we have conducted for UEA has been formerly recognised by the Research Councils UK (RCUK). It has highlighted how

educational institutions across the FE and HE sectors can work together in highly productive relationships.

Another project The Research Centre manages is The SOUL Record, which is growing in reputation as the best practice tool for measuring soft outcomes and reporting these against Every Child Matters (ECM). See the project's webpages for more information:

<http://www.theresearchcentre.co.uk/>

As always, the Research and Development Bulletin welcomes the submission of papers from practitioners in the sector wishing to disseminate their projects' findings. If you are interested in submitting to the journal then please either contact me direct (contact details below) or go the Research Centre's webpages where instructions are provided on what and how to go about submitting an article.

If you have any queries or wish to gain any further information on either The Research Centre or the R&D Bulletin, please do not hesitate to contact me:

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Action research projects: Enabling access to effective mentor support

Markos Tiris, Programme Director Teaching and Learning, Skills for Life Strategic Reform and Development, Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)

1. Introduction

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) was a relatively new organisation that came into operation on 1 October 2008 from the combination of two previous sector bodies – the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA). The focus of LSIS was on developing excellent and sustainable further education and skills provision across the sector, and leadership development underpins the organisation's strategic role in the sector.

LSIS was established after consultations with sector leaders identified a strong desire for an organisation that would be sector led. As a sector owned public body, LSIS aimed to be owned, directed and governed by FE and skills colleges and providers, and dedicated to supporting excellence, leadership development and self regulation in the FE sector

Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training
Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs) have been operating since April 2007 and were introduced by the then Department for Education and Skills, following an Ofsted report that identified systemic weaknesses in the national system of teacher education in the sector. The introduction of Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs) was a critical component of the package of reforms to teacher training in the learning and skills sector and represented a £10M investment over three years from the then Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).

The initiative was rooted in the idea of building future Initial Teacher Training (ITT) systems around networks of providers that provide trainees with good experience of teaching and professional development across further education, adult and

community education and work-based learning, but with a clear remit to achieve this through the provision of a mentoring support.

Review of projects nationally

The main activities of the CETTs were to focus on the development, support for and provision of ITT and CPD. The activities were understandably diverse and, to some extent overlapped, but there were also different emphases within each CETT. All CETTs were involved in mentoring, but some with different aspects such as research, training or support. Other activities included action research, communities of practice (whether face to face or virtual), ILP development, networks (new, existing or specialised), task groups VLEs / websites, working with employers and work placement. The target groups also overlapped and included AVC / community groups, adult and community learning (ACL), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Offender Learning, students with learning difficulties or disability, vocational and work-based learning staff. The communication tools also varied and included conferences, academic journals (paper and electronic) newsletters, seminars, workshops, teacher education forums, summer schools, and graduation events.

Issues and barriers to effective mentoring

A focus on mentoring support, through providing examples of effective practice in the processes of mentoring and providing training for mentors, has been at the heart of CETT activities. In addition there has been research, development on teacher observation and work experience and placements. However, in many contexts there were still major issues in providing this vital mentor role to the wide range of trainee teachers and other trained professionals who practice in post-compulsory education.

A common theme emerging from many of the 80 plus case studies undertaken by the CETTs, under the heading 'Professionalising the Workforce', were the many concerns raised relating to the delivery of effective mentoring across the sector and great diversity in practice. This was evidenced in funding and the development and quality assurance of mentors.

Experience from fieldwork by the CETTS revealed the contexts in which the needs for supporting mentoring were most evident, these being work-based learning (WBL), offender learning (OL), adult and community learning (ACL), the voluntary sector and in some colleges (unpub. data).

The perceived issues and barriers to mentoring support varied but included funding, distance, age, gender, race, time, disability and the lack of basic skills. In the projects outlined below, it was anticipated that the focus would be on providing time for mentoring support and funding to develop systems and processes to support and develop mentors.

A specific benefit resulting from the CETTs initiative, and the now large partnerships reaching out to work within wider sectors, has been the development of capacity for and expertise in finding ways to overcome these issues and make things happen through action-research based projects.

Action research projects fund

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) made funding available to each CETT for action research projects (ranging from £2000 to £20,000 going directly to the sector) with a focus on removing the barriers to access effective mentoring as part of teacher education in the specific contexts mentioned above. In this context, action research projects were short-term pieces of development work designed to contribute to part of an organisation or the organisation as a whole, and there was scope for larger collaborative projects. Dissemination and sharing was critical to knowledge transfer, and there was a requirement for reports and products to be disseminated via a number of

routes including a series of regional CETT conferences.

The focus was primarily on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) but projects could also cover continuing professional development (CPD)

Action research project themes and methodology

Within the overall theme of mentoring there was a focus on the following:

- information advice and guidance
- progression
- building capacity for teachers and / or teacher educators in specific contexts
- the core curriculum and developing trainee teachers' own skills

Some or all of these elements were cited in the projects' proposals. However, the focus of these action research projects was very firmly on removing potential barriers to mentoring and, thus, making mentoring happen. Applicants were asked to actively promote, initiate, develop and / or strengthen mentoring practices or processes within the organisation as a result of the funding. They were also required to trial strategies for support that could be taken forward in future years in a sustainable manner.

Timescales

The timing for project turnaround was quite tight, with the application stage in November 2008 and projects and their reporting completed by the end of July 2009.

Selection criteria

The commissioning process required bidding organisations to meet six criteria, one of which was to improve the support for trainees in the workplace so that they were better able to develop skills related to teaching their specialist subject / occupational area. Others focussed on the need to bring together providers and trainees from different contexts or to increase the breadth and depth of experience by providing opportunities for observing and teaching or assessing different types of learners on different qualifications in more than one initial teacher training provider.

The proposals were selected on the basis of the extent to which they:

- were planned with clear objectives, milestones and success criteria
- explained how practice developed on the project would be spread within the organisation or, if relevant, between organisations
- have built in reflection time and lead to the production of a brief case study, which would be of use to other learning providers
- build on or add to processes, initiatives or resources developed by the CETTs
- have the support of a senior manager
- demonstrate how they would directly benefit learners / trainees

Action research projects can form a helpful part of the participating organisations' continuing professional development (CPD) plans, as the Institute for Learning (IfL) suggested in its 'Guidelines for your continuing professional development' (IfL, 2007).

Major learning points

A key factor in deciding whether a project had been successful must lie in determining whether or not there would be any long term benefits for the wider sector, and not just for the individual organisations involved. This meant that effective dissemination methods

were crucial, and methods that allowed others to directly benefit from what had been learned by others during the projects.

In practice, it can be difficult to ensure that this happens and particularly within a timescale that will have visible results to policy makers and practitioners alike. However, there was more than anecdotal evidence from both of these camps that this was the case, as well as from the independent evaluation that has been undertaken that was already showing evidence of impact.

Action based research was proving a powerful tool for stimulating change, and one that allowed LSIS to work with the sector to support change. They were also an effective technique for directing additional resources to difficult areas, while simultaneously building up the knowledge base and expertise in that area

References

IfL. (2007). *Guidelines for your continuing professional development*. Institute for Learning

Further Information on the Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs) can be found at the following web address:

- <http://cett.excellencegateway.org.uk/>

Notes:

Using The SOUL Record™ to enable access to effective mentoring

Angus I. Carpenter, The Research Centre, City College Norwich

1. Introduction

By its very nature, the FE sector engages with a wide spectrum of learner, ranging from individuals not in employment, education or training (NEET) through to HE level students. In order to improve the student experience and their development, mentoring has often been cited as a means to re-engage student (Allies, 2009; Anderson, 2009) and help address these perceptions, whilst also providing a more holistic supporting role from the institution to improve the personal development and achievement of an individual student.

The challenge for FECs, regarding increasing efforts to improve mentoring within institutions, remains over how to maximise the benefits from their resources, specifically decreasing funding and staffing. These resources also have increasing demands and competition over them, whilst institutions try to ensure the learner receives the best experience.

Competing with multiple factors, such as restricted funding and high staff turnover, means it has been difficult for FECs to invest in costly mentor training for their staff. However, in order to provide a greater student experience and development, FEC staff require 'up-skilling' and greater professionalism in regard to mentoring skills and practice. Similar conditions had been observed within the voluntary and community sector, but which has also witnessed the development and expanding use of The SOUL Record™ (Marsden *et al.*, 2006; Allies, 2009), which perfectly answered their needs. Created to measure soft outcomes and report progression in relation to Every Child Matters (ECM) and RARPA, it operated as an easy to use support vehicle for mentoring across a range of scenarios (Fitzhugh, 2007; Allies, 2009; Anderson 2008, 2009;).

Therefore, the aim of this project was to investigate whether The SOUL Record™, a product developed within the voluntary and community sector and which had had minimal experience within the FE sector, was able to transfer sectors and provide the Further Education sector with a suitable tool for their needs; being a quick to train in, easy to use mentor support toolkit, which also reported soft-outcome progression against ECM and placed the learner central to the process. Several objectives were established to ensure the progression of the project and aid its evaluation. These objectives included the following:

1. train FE staff in the use of The SOUL Record™ for mentoring and soft outcome measurements against ECM
2. mentor staff in regard to their mentoring skills and use of The SOUL Record™ to provide constructive support and feedback
3. establish a robust, clearly structured, systematic and operational mentoring process within participating FECs
4. identify best practice and radiate throughout and across institutions
5. collect feedback to consider appropriate modifications to The SOUL Record™ to ensure the tool was 'best fit' for purpose within the FE sector

2. Methodology

Three Further Education Colleges (FECs) were approached and asked, in principle, if they would be willing to be involved in this project. Eleven staff were recruited, which included staff managing HE provision, course leaders for teacher training programmes, lecturing staff on Level 1, 2 and 3 programmes across subject disciplines, HE and FE additional learning support (ALS) officers, course leader for a NEET

programme and independent trainers. The SOUL Record™ ‘user training’ sessions were held on the 29/01/09 and 17/02/09 for the eleven individuals recruited from across the three FECs.

Post the user training and on return to their work place the staff members implemented The SOUL Record™. After each use of The SOUL Record™ each staff member was contacted, either in person or via the telephone, to discuss their experiences, problems, queries and anything else around the subject area of mentoring per se and / or The SOUL Record™ implementation and / or use. The eleven project participants were scheduled to mentor five students on three occasions during this trial project, using The SOUL Record™ for this. Each member of staff received mentoring after each, staff:student, mentoring session in this three tier, cascaded model system (Fig. 1).

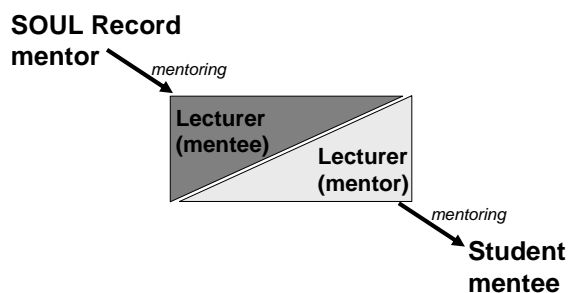


Figure 1. The three tier, cascaded methodology used during this project to support and develop FE staff with their mentoring skills.

Qualitative data were collected from feedback made during the supporting process and on completion of the three mentoring events each member of staff had conducted with five students. On completion of the staff:student mentoring period, each active, staff participant was interviewed, either individually or in groups, to collect data on their experiences, thoughts and opinions in regard to having used The SOUL Record™ as a mentoring support toolkit. These interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed, with the main statements of interest, either positive or negative, extracted for analysis

and discussion. These data have been presented here anonymously.

3. Results

A total of eleven individuals were recruited as staff participants to the project. These individuals were recruited through three Further Education Colleges (FECs) but represented five organisations. Three were on the 2nd year of a Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS), while the remaining eight had previously qualified in teaching and some had been through Subject Learning Coach (SLC) training. Of the eleven recruited, three (two HE lecturing staff and one independent trainer) did not complete any part of the project's tasks and provided no feedback to the project.

Each member of staff was to mentor four to five student mentees three times during the project. The student mentees were enrolled on a range of courses, from a 10 week long programme specifically designed for engaging NEET individuals through typical Level 1 to 3 FE provision up to students on HE and teacher training programmes.

Data has been presented in terms of case studies. These case studies present the main themes discussed during the interviews with the onus given to the interviewees' opinions, thoughts and experiences in regard to The SOUL Record™, supported by their statements.

3.1 Interview A

Interview A represented the experiences and opinions / thoughts from one institution by staff using The SOUL Record™. Those interviewed were lecturer/s from the Care, Education and Public Services sector programmes, with direct responsibility for Level 3 students, mostly aged 17-18, and, predominantly, mature teaching assistants, whilst also acting as a personal tutor offering pastoral care to students aged 16 to 19.

Five students were mentored at this institution by the member of staff using The

SOUL Record™. Four were aged 16-17 and on the first year of their two year programme while the fifth mentee was a second year student; all students were female.

In regard to the user training day, it was stated to have been a good and "...adequate..." event. However, it was felt that a greater amount of role play would have been beneficial. The main benefits from having attended the user training event were cited as good materials to come away with, meeting up with people from other institutions, the role play scenarios and making that personal contact from which to build working relationships.

The SOUL Record™ had a vast array of materials for use during mentoring across a range of scenarios. However, the materials used by staff at this institution included questionnaires and worksheets, such as 'Being healthy', 'Enjoying and achieving', 'School and community', and 'Making a positive contribution at home'. The worksheets chosen were those most relevant to the student based upon their responses to a previous questionnaire (the 'Getting to know you' questionnaire). The mentoring support programme was stated to have been very useful, though a follow up session focused on the statistical results package (SRP) was suggested for future training events in The SOUL Record™.

Initially, when implementing The SOUL Record™ within the institution, the 'Getting to know you' questionnaire was used in a 'broad-net' approach with the whole cohort asked to complete the questionnaire independently (care was taken to remove any peer pressures). From analysis of the questionnaire responses, relevant students were identified – those that had scored low which raised areas or issues of concern. These issues were then followed up with 1:1 (staff:student) mentoring sessions using other tools within The SOUL Record™ toolkit. The exact tool used was dependent upon the area of concern raised by the student. For example, the 'Healthy person' sector appeared to be a category that was utilised

often in response to these students' concerns.

The mentoring was found to be highly impacting, with the mentor stating that The SOUL Record™ was "...very powerful, I was absolutely flabbergasted at what's come out." This was despite having 20 minute, 1:1 tutorial sessions scheduled with these students every six weeks prior to having used The SOUL Record™ in this project setting. However, the more holistic approach of The SOUL Record™ was obviously refreshing for the students as "First of all I was amazed at how much they wanted the time with me ... they loved the attention. ... the tool certainly facilitated that... [and] ...they loved it and they really wanted to come back for more so that was quite surprising". The depth and breadth of the issues being presented by students was also staggering. For example, one of the students discussed issues surrounding an eating disorder and emotional difficulties they were having. In this situation the lecturer felt she had a responsibility to the student but also that she "... felt out of my depth", highlighting how mentoring may raise issues for which lecturing staff were not qualified to offer expert help but were able to signpost students to appropriately qualified staff. Thus, The SOUL Record™, as a toolkit, provided a much greater insight into students and the issues affecting them. It was also felt that The SOUL Record™ would be a major factor in student retention, as it "... show[ed] that you're taking an interest in them [the students] and listening to them... [which means]... they feel better about themselves, they feel that they are being valued ... and treated as adults as well and that all helps". Certainly, it was indicated that the "...structured attention..." involved in this mentoring system was beneficial, with the students monitored as part of this project reported by staff to be increasing in confidence and self-esteem, as well as making sustained academic progress.

In terms of using The SOUL Record™ as a facilitative mentoring tool, staff reported that there was "... definitely the potential ...[though it apparently needed]... to be adapted and tuned to be more fit for

purpose...". In terms of the materials within The SOUL Record™, it had been thought, prior to use, that the students would find the 'smilie faces' a bit "...patronising...", but, in fact, it was reported that the student's appeared to like them. However, this was qualified by the student group used at this college studying Childcare, and that if they had been A level or engineering students it may not have been accepted. Producing charts and graphs was well liked by the staff too, and the opportunity to do things electronically. The only negative issue highlighted was that of time. It was not thought to be possible to expand this to a whole class scenario in the college's present systems, and there would need to be a managed, institutional level approach to be able to implement such a system in to the college. Also, during this pilot project there had been an emphasis on the 'healthy person' section, following the students' feedback. However, a staff preference was reported that they would "...much prefer there to be a big block on study skills, time management and organisational skills, particularly with this age, ... that's where it could be really powerful". The fact that The SOUL Record™ measured against the Every Child Matters (ECM) was also stated to be a highly desirable and important benefit. The target setting and scoring system were found to be a most powerful aspect of using The SOUL Record™. In terms of the main benefits, it was stated that "...it has the potential to provide a structure for supporting students to develop holistically, when their all round development is supported their achievement and attendance definitely increases".

In terms of continuing with this mentor training, staff suggested that cascading the training through the college might be more useful, specifically for the way in which their particular college was structured. Thus, perhaps training in The SOUL Record™ would be needed for one or two more staff, which was then followed by in-house cascading. It was also suggested that a quite prescriptive framework of worksheets with specific statements and detail would be useful from which those most applicable

could be chosen that would be a "...hugely powerful resource..." and "...The SOUL Record™ helped give that structure". It was also stated that The SOUL Record™ fitted in with Ofsted's emphasis on following the 'student experience', and as such "...having something like this [The SOUL Record™] would help colleges show that they are taking students seriously". Finally, certainly from this college's experience, The SOUL Record™ would be recommended to other colleagues and other colleges.

3.2 Interview B

This was a multiple attended interview group with staff who attempted to use a wide range of The SOUL Record by selecting a variety of student groups and subject areas. For example, these ranged from the 14 to 16 age group to adults and across courses in Animal studies, Construction, and Teacher training plus individuals from a 'Step-up' programme. Staff recruited to this project also included those that had received training in coaching, often being subject coaches, while others had received none.

Some of the students did already receive mentoring and this included the teacher training and Foundation degree (Fd) students. However, it was noted that the current mentoring was subject specific whilst The SOUL Record™ was educational "...in the wider sense...". The Fd students were reported to have enjoyed the meetings and one student in particular found it very useful, which was reported as "...she could see the value, quantifying it gave her a sense of control of things that are qualitative things kind of personal skills that you think are in a particular way, but when you look at them and then you tot up the score she began to see how she perceived it was different from the way it was and for her that was a very good moment".

In terms of the experience of having used The SOUL Record™, it was agreed by all staff that it provided a good opportunity to enter into the mentoring process with students, providing a good way to get to know them and their issues / concerns. The college had approximately 300 school

students on site and one staff member undertook mentoring with 4 individuals from this age group. In this case, their mentor was not their tutor and it allowed the mentor to get to know the students "...better than their tutors know them and they really opened up to us". Similarly, another mentor on the project stated that they knew "...more in half an hour about one of the students than the tutor who had had them since September...". This highlighted a point of misinterpretation by their lecturer who believed that the "...student was not interested ...[when actually the]... student was very interested and they [the tutor] weren't aware ... they hadn't got to know that student well enough. It was the ability to get to know the student and know their aspirations and their strengths and weaknesses" with The SOUL Record™ that had changed this perception. It was acknowledged that "It's that value of the one to one time that often a tutor could do with having but often doesn't have that opportunity". It was cited that the first contact questionnaire ('Getting to know you') was possibly too wide and it could perhaps be adapted to be more focused. However, it was also agreed that, conversely, it was very useful, at this stage, to be wide as this provided a good way of starting the mentoring process by building conversation with students. It was also suggested by the non-teaching participants, that perhaps the students had opened up more to them because they were not the day to day teachers. Discussions were had about testing this theory, that students' mentors should not be their teachers, if The SOUL Record™ was taken forward.

An interviewee from the college highlighted that what they had found useful was the point of time in the academic year that The SOUL Record™ had been used. The teacher training students had already completed a lot of work and The SOUL Record™ enabled them to reflect on their progression, which gave a boost to the students by "...talking about their achievements so far". It was agreed that The SOUL Record™ was easy to use, but also pointed out that, in this case, being the students' lecturer and knowing they had other mentors and tutors, it was

"...strange..." to go from lecturer to mentor, although it was useful. The teacher training students were reported to score highly and it was suggested that this would be the same for HE students. Therefore, in these situations it would perhaps be useful to have greater reflection and go deeper to allow the mentee to move forward. In using The SOUL Record™ with younger aged individuals it was found that students were unsure about some of the questions, so these had to be explained with examples. For example, it was highlighted that different answers could be given by the 14–16 age range depending on whether a school or college reference was to be given. Hence, these questions would need adaptation to allow for each setting.

Asked if training and using The SOUL Record™ had increased / improved their own training, development and 'up-skilling', it was agreed, unanimously, that it had. For some this was despite having completed subject coach training previously. It was further suggested that the training that comes with The SOUL Record™ would be very useful for those with no previous training. The difference between subject mentoring and using The SOUL Record™ was also highlighted:

"...it's a very different technique. I think the subject learning coaching is very objective and you ask key questions but they are very open and getting the other person to do a lot of talking, where as these, I think, are personal I think...". (college staff member).

Differences in use of The SOUL Record™ between the voluntary and educational sectors were mentioned. The educational setting experiencing both subject and study mentoring with some concerns raised over knowing where to 'signpost' students who had issues outside the mentors' knowledge.

The SOUL Record™ was used with students from a ten week, 'Step Up' programme, which encouraged participation in FE by NEET students. It was reported that including both the lecturer and a mentor was entirely

appropriate for this group. In this situation, The SOUL Record™ was viewed as integral to the programme and required the lecturer to participate. It was reported that The SOUL Record™ was liked by this student group and appeared to be particularly useful for use with these NEET students because “Where it [The SOUL Record™] is so powerful, it’s looking at things that are barriers to learning”, which then gives the opportunity to remove these perceived barriers.

In regard to the impact of re-engaging students with college, it was stated that certainly some of the students felt more valued post their mentoring experience. There was also agreement, to varying degrees, that The SOUL Record™ could be a, potentially, useful tool in improving student retention:

“...students who possibly have an unfair negative perception of themselves and what they’re achieving or what they’re doing, it [The SOUL Record] can turn that in to a positive...” (college lecturer).

It was summed up that “...that’s its strength. It opens up conversation that lets them [the students] feel valued”, and students welcome this attention.

It was stated that The SOUL Record™ needed to be used as a mentoring tool with the appropriate time afforded to it by suitably trained staff. For example, trying to use it ‘quickly’ could, potentially, have negative impacts:

“The one to one value of it is very powerful, but it’s a question of time” (college lecturer).

Alternatively, potential problems raised by these users included the commitment of teachers who may try to ‘cut corners’ by simply giving sheets out to the students or if it was viewed as a tick box exercise by staff and not as a mentoring tool.

There was general agreement on the perception that much was gained from staff having follow up mentor sessions with The

SOUL Record™ co-ordinator acting as mentor to the college staff. This allowed discussion on progress, issues and concerns and may not have taken place if these ‘formal’ follow up sessions had not been planned in advance. It was also cited that having support from someone ‘outside’ of the college was also extremely useful.

In terms of the initial The SOUL Record™ training, the activity to choose worksheets for three different people was helpful, however, it was suggested that rather than work through filling in the questionnaire with colleagues a ‘staged’ video example would be better. Also a role play was suggested for the activities rather than being oneself. In terms of adaptation, one interviewee felt it was important for students to help choose the worksheets to be used. Alternatively, one interviewee had been unsure if their choice of questionnaire / worksheets for the mentoring session had been correct, but the external coordinator reassured and supported their choice in this case. It was also reported that most individuals were encouraged and more confident after having completed their first mentoring session with the coordinator. The group thought it would be possible to keep to one, central questionnaire, but adapt the language and terminology to suit different students.

In regard to taking The SOUL Record™ forward post this project, this college had planned to strategically introduce it, the overall impact recorded had been so great. There was also much interest and excitement from those participating, in regard to the data produced being able to evidence support, against ECM criteria, for students during an Ofsted inspection. Another, longer term introduction was a 20 credit module that had been written for delivery on the Fd for teaching support. The key benefits of The SOUL Record™ were getting to know the students much better; getting the PGCE students to recognise how well they had progressed so far; teaching on the Fd helped staff get to know and understand their students’ background; and for students themselves they can identify, ‘own’ and set their own targets / goals.

3.3 Interview C

This interview was with a staff member from the Hair and Beauty sector, who was responsible for both pre-16 and post-16 students and delivering a full time, Level 2 programme.

The mentoring training was cited to be helpful and, although this lecturer already carried out personal tutorials with students, this was the first training they had had the opportunity to take. The training and follow-up, support sessions provided confidence to this lecturer to conduct mentoring sessions with students. Another benefit of the training was cited as being able to meet staff from other colleges and organisations and get an insight into how they were hoping to use The SOUL Record™ mentoring system. It was also commented upon that it would have been helpful to have a later follow up session with the same participants, even if not a full day, so project participants could have learnt from each other about their outcomes of having used The SOUL Record™.

The 'Getting to know you' questionnaire was used with a Level 1 group, as it was perceived that these individuals often have more personal difficulties or learning needs and, thus, it was considered that using this group in this pilot project would be more beneficial to all. Following the initial questionnaire, five students were identified for the mentoring process but this was subsequently reduced (due to time constraints) to three students, whom it was considered were unlikely to progress on to Level 2. The main worksheet used with these students was the 'Raising aspirations' as lack of confidence and self-esteem was identified as an issue. Mentoring sessions were organised once a fortnight and lasted approximately 15–20 minutes. This was 'blended' in to 'normal' tutorials so the students were not particularly 'aware' of having specific sessions.

There was agreement that having used The SOUL Record™ had allowed this staff member to get to know the students' personal circumstances more fully, and how these

might affect their study at the college. Therefore, it allowed a much greater understanding of the students and their situations, which made it much easier to relate to them from this point onwards. A major benefit of The SOUL Record™ mentoring was the opportunity that it provided to re-engage students with learning and / or regarding progression on to other courses, even if this was not within hairdressing. It allowed the lecturer to identify and highlight key transferable skills exhibited by individuals that could be taken forward in to other subject areas. For example, one or two students appeared to be 'struggling' with the practical hairdressing skills, but it was possible to identify other skills they possessed, such as working with people, which could be more positively used in other career areas. An example was cited of one student, where using The SOUL Record™ had identified that she would demand a lot of support before being able to progress on to a Level 2 programme. For this student there was a need for them to take greater 'ownership' of their actions. It was also better to have established this at this stage rather than continuing to struggle on the current course.

At this college it was stated that there was no need to adapt The SOUL Record™ materials for the Level 1 students, who often came with more "...baggage and issues..." that affected their learning. However, it was suggested that it may need small amounts of adaptation for Level 2 students who, generally, had fewer issues and came with better GCSE grades, etc. This lecturer did not identify any barriers to using The SOUL Record™ and pointed out that the students were already familiar with personal tutorials and completing ILPs, where target setting and using The SOUL Record™ was not too dissimilar.

It was confirmed that at this college, they would be using The SOUL Record™ again in the future, and could see clear benefits in using it with diploma students, particularly the 14–16 age group. However, it was also highlighted that this student group could be taught both in school, college or an academy and, therefore, it could be easy to lose track of their progress both academically and

otherwise between institutions. However, to the knowledge of staff, there were, currently, no planned tutorials for the 14–16 age groups. Thus, classroom times followed by individual tutorials were envisaged as being useful for both staff and students. In terms of the Level 1 students, it was felt that The SOUL Record™ could continue to be used without adaptation although it was pointed out that one student with severe learning difficulties had found it difficult. The SOUL Record™ had particularly helped with following up on issues of confidence with the students and had assisted in identifying and helping students with personal issues. Finally, the lecturer stated that they would recommend The SOUL Record™ to others, though perhaps not for Level 3 students or mature students, but certainly for Level 1 and diploma students.

4. Discussion

Whilst the numbers of college staff participating in this pilot project were small, there have, nevertheless, been clear and highly important benefits reported here against the project's objectives.

Firstly, in regard to whether The SOUL Record™ could be transferred to the FE sector, from the voluntary and community sector, and whether it would be suitable / appropriate or even useable. The experiences reported from the three colleges, presented here, were all clearly in agreement that The SOUL Record™ was wholly applicable to and suitable for use within the FE sector. While there were a couple of queries about a couple of specific statements, in general, the majority of participants were satisfied with the materials as supplied. Overall, satisfaction had been supported by the fact that college staff were still using The SOUL Record™ post cessation of this pilot project with two FECs having undertaken a strategic roll-out.

When college staff reported on their The SOUL Record™ training day, they all reported that this had been a good day with

materials and instructions delivered clearly. There was one suggestion that greater amounts of role play could have been used, while one other member of college staff suggested the use of video rather than role play in the training day. On the whole though, the training was successful, relatively cheap, quick to set up and complete, and easy to deliver, which was unlike most mentor training.

In regard to their experiences and the effectiveness of the follow-up, mentoring sessions (the cascaded approach) they received, they were, again, all in agreement that this was an incredibly important aspect to the successful use and implementation of The SOUL Record™. Individuals used these mentoring sessions to improve their understanding of The SOUL Record™, its use and application, but also, importantly, to be reassured about what they were doing and increase their confidence in using The SOUL Record™ as a mentor support toolkit.

In regard to the application and suitability of use, there was total agreement that this was where The SOUL Record was most powerful. It provided a toolkit that could be used directly after the one day's training, was quick to use / complete with a clear process that easy to follow for both mentor and mentee. This is of application was a major highlight for this project. The toolkit highlighted areas of concern for individual students at all three colleges, which staff then attempted to resolve or signpost students to the appropriate person / place. This was in both situations where students were already on a course but possibly under achieving or potentially dropping out, and in a Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) scenario, when better instruction as to best course options were given to the students.

The fact that The SOUL Record™ reported student progression against Every Child Matters (ECM) was also held up as a major benefit of using the system. This meant that the colleges and staff were able to report on individual student cases against the five criteria of ECM. Ofsted inspectors have a dedicated chapter in their inspection manuals

on how to inspect for measurement of soft outcomes. This tool clearly presents data for individuals against the ECM criteria and thus can be inspected by the Ofsted inspectors.

There was an intention to expand this pilot project to a wider selection of FECs and Independent Training Providers (ITPs) and increase the 'n' value of the participants trained and using The SOUL Record™. This would increase the robustness of any findings being reported. Also, there was a need to investigate further whether the need to adapt any of the statements used in The SOUL Record™ was genuine, and, if so, to undertake these adaptations and re-test them. Finally, two of the FECs in this project were in the process of strategically rolling out The SOUL Record™ across their institutions over the summer to enable full use at the start of the next academic year. There was a

need to support these institutions and monitor their experiences to enable best practice to be identified and disseminated to other FECs for future use.

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Notes:

Delivery of effective mentoring through the investigation of the coordination and quality assurance of mentor support for ITE trainees

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1. Introduction

National changes to Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements, introduced in September 2007 (Success for All, 2002), meant that all trainee teachers working in Further Education needed a mentor (DfES, 2004:8).

Although there has been an increase in the literature on mentoring (and coaching) in health care and school-based education over the past 30 years, with the introduction of mentoring as a mandatory element in ITT programmes, there was still a need for the expansion of this to include work of direct relevance to the FE sector (Cunningham, 2005; Wallace and Gravells, 2007).

Despite the lack of an agreed definition for mentoring in many settings, there were clear expectations around what a mentor should do. As with all other aspects of mentoring, there was no definitive list, though Smith *et al* (2005:39) had identified a "...paucity of empirically derived mentor traits and functions" within the literature. The role of mentor may be challenging for mentors in FE, especially if the role required them to make judgements on peers and to give negative feedback. Hankey (2004:392) stated that the mentoring model in use in the FE sector was based on "...reflective dialogue, rather than on assessment of practice using performance-based criteria".

Even though there was considerable literature available about mentoring, and a large chunk of this related to education and training, the literature associated with the specific nature of FE was only just beginning to appear. This meant that theorists, managers and practitioners were using data and ideas from other settings to compensate

for the lack of sector-specific literature. Therefore, as mentoring was a relatively new idea within FE, it was not surprising that there was little mention of it in the literature. Cunningham (2005) attempted to re-address this, partly by referring to Wallace (2001), who made mention of mentors in the FENTO-approved book on teaching for the sector, and Huddleston and Unwin (2002), who provide a good practical text on college teaching that has a few sentences on mentoring, but these were just passing comments. Since Cunningham (2005) there has been just one further publication specifically focussed on the sector, Wallace and Gravells (2007) publication. However, the FE-specific literature was still short on empirical data and reliant on discourse used in other settings.

The existing literature which most closely linked to FE related to mentoring programmes within schools. Therefore, it was important to highlight key differences and not to assume that models and ideas were readily transferable. For instance, Cunningham (2005:11) reported that "...very few teachers in [schools] will be undergoing their training in-service, whereas this is the training mode which accounts for, by far, the greatest proportion of our [sic] own trainees". Clearly this would affect the choice of model, the mentoring tools used and the resources available to allocate to mentoring systems. The disparity in terms and conditions of employment was also a factor. For example, Cunningham (2005:12) noted that school-based mentors currently had more incentive to undertake and carry out this role as they received financial rewards as well as potential career advancement.

Over recent years there have been many changes in the FE sector particularly in the professionalization of the sector, such as for

teachers to be qualified, introduction of Diplomas, 14-19 agenda, etc., which may also have had an influence on the experience of mentoring and being mentored. As Cunningham (2005:18) stated, FE has "...suffered disproportionately from poor morale, a perception by long-serving staff that the pressures of teaching have been greatly increased..." by an audit culture and "...innovation fatigue". If this was the case, it may have a detrimental effect on how mentoring was perceived and carried out, as well as the information and support offered by mentors. Cunningham (2005) also considered that without some kudos or financial reward, it was unlikely that teachers in FE would volunteer to become mentors. Such an outcome would make it difficult for some organisations to manage mentoring provision effectively.

Criticisms of mentoring

From the literature, both FE-specific and wider, mentoring was viewed, predominantly, as a positive part of teacher training. A few authors had, however, raised concerns. For example, Rogers (2007), in a text on coaching, examined some of the problems resulting from ineffective mentoring relationships. They had identified the following key points:

- chronic misunderstanding on both sides about obligations and expectations
- the relationship was not a priority for either side
- mentee and mentor don't like or respect each other
- the mentee was doing it because it seemed like an obligation, not out of any wish to learn or change
- the mentor was inadequately trained or had little natural aptitude for the role
- mentors saw their role as being to pass on the fruits of their experience

These points highlighted the potential problems with mentoring and the importance of monitoring mentors and mentoring systems.

Kullman (1998:474), discussed mentoring within schools, identifying concerns that "...it is assumed that as long as mentors create the appropriate conditions, student teachers will be ready and willing to participate in a voyage of exploration". Clearly, this may not be the situation for everyone, particularly for trainees who have had no experience of mentoring or whose performance was being monitored by a mentor. As Kullman (1998) reported, there was "...an inherent contradiction..." in mentoring relationships where the mentor has "...both a development and judgemental role".

A fundamental concern about the nature of mentoring was raised by Clutterbuck (2003), who was unhappy about the evidence offered to support mentoring as a positive experience. Discussing research by Kram (1985), on which much subsequent research has been based, Clutterbuck (2003) reported that the study's sample size was just 28 pairs. While Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995) reviewed formality and informality in mentoring and reached almost totally divergent conclusions between the academic papers and actual experience in the field. They concluded that this was, at least in part, due to the result of failings in the structure and definition of much of the research. Although this appeared to point to serious flaws in much of the empirical evidence, there has been little evidence that has pursued this argument. Clutterbuck (2003) went on to state that meta-studies and literature reviews may just compound the problem as their starting points were based on a false assumption that everyone was measuring the same thing. Without clarity in terms of definition and positioning within the wider literature, it was not possible to have a shared understanding of what was being researched or how to interpret the findings.

One of the most frequently cited problems with mentoring was time, yet it was also frequently dismissed (Matthews, 2003:331; Hankey, 2004:396). Without acknowledgement of and compensation for the time that staff needed to invest to make it successful, it was unlikely that mentoring would work. Linked to this was the effect of

reallocating the time of the mentor, such as Allen and Eby (2003) called for more research into the impact on mentors' performance and careers. Although mentoring systems may describe line management procedures and the roles and responsibilities of mentors, few offer professional quality mechanisms to evaluate the impact or to support mentors.

A previous, small scale study (pers. obs., unpublished data) showed that there were similarities between expectations of the mentor as to their role and that of the trainee teacher. The only thing that stood out as being different was the mentors' involvement in assessment, which the mentors did not see as part of their role whereas the trainees did. The development of the role of mentor tutor had seen a significant increase in the number of mentors engaging more directly with the ITT provider, which was commented on favourably by Ofsted inspectors during an inspection of the teacher training provision at the institution (pers. obs., unpublished data). In this case, the suggestion was that both partner providers for the University would benefit from a more consistent approach to the mentoring process.

The main focus of the project reported here, was to develop consistency across the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) provision for two partner Further Education (FE) colleges. Alongside this was the development of 'consistency of practice', while the project also attempted to ascertain the level of impact from mentoring on trainee teachers. As a consequence, it was hoped that more effective support for mentors could be developed. The planned outcomes for the project were to:

- establishment consistent practice across the teacher training provision
- hold regular focus group meetings of mentors, trainers and trainees
- ensure a suitable mentor training and support programme was in place

2. Methodology

The project involved two, large, Further Education Colleges (FECs) situated in South East England. They provide Initial Teacher Training (ITT) that was validated by a partner University for nearly 200 trainees yearly. Each partner college delivered ITT programmes that were part time, in-service and one provided a full time, pre-service route. Both institutions provided a variety of other relevant programmes, including Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS), Certificate in Education (Cert Ed) and Professional Certificate in Education (PGCE).

The recent national changes in the requirements for the providers of ITT mean that each trainee must have a mentor. This led one institution (College A) to instigate a Mentor Tutor, a role consisting of the coordination of support and training for the mentors. Hence, the research was conducted by the Mentor Tutor from College A with support from the Curriculum Leader from College B. The Mentor Tutor role at College A was also seen as a strength, allowing for the coordination of mentors in a more rigorous fashion.

The first aim of the project was to increase opportunities to work with key partners and establish consistent and supportive mentoring systems across the two colleges. This could in turn enhance quality assurance in the ITT provision across the two partner colleges. The second aim was to explore the impact of the mentoring provision upon trainee teachers' practice

The first step reviewed existing, strengths (good practices) and weaknesses (areas for development) of current systems. A Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Strengths (TOWS) analysis, conducted by questionnaires to both mentors and trainees, that identified a number of areas of good practice and areas for development (Fig. 1).

<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources (time, computers, people, financial, remission, qualifications, etc) • Monitoring mentor activity and observations • Logging details to ensure identify gaps • Strategies for plugging gaps • Monitoring development across observations • Spiky profiles 	<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor database • Logging mentor activity • GROW model for tutors and mentor training • Development of questioning techniques • E-portfolio • Development from past observations to be tracked • Trainees' needs analysis (self-assessment, specialist subject, processes, strategies etc.) • Joint offer of training programme
<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent collection of mentor activity (obs, meetings, etc) ➢ Variety of course tutor observers (College B) ➢ Designated Tutor observer role (College A) • Differentiation (in-service trainees who have been teaching for a number of years versus new pre-service and in-service trainees and the mentoring role) • Recognition of trainees existing skills 	<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor Tutor role (College A) • Mentor handbook • Proformas for recording meetings, observations, action planning • Case study (College B) ➢ Variety of course tutor observers (College B) ➢ Designated Tutor observer role (College A)

Figure 1. The review of existing practices to identifying Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Strengths.

Second, it was planned to survey mentors and trainees to ascertain their perceptions of the impact from mentoring upon teaching practice. The decision was made that the focus of the investigation would be on College B. Questionnaires from a previous study were adapted to provide data from both trainees and mentors about their perceptions of the impact of mentoring support upon trainee teachers' practice. Zoomerang was used for the distribution of and collation of the data from the questionnaires. Mentor and trainee email addresses were collected from College B and 150 questionnaires were distributed. A number of emails (n=13) were undelivered.

The third element planned was to conduct a focus group of mentors from College B in order to discuss any themes or patterns emerging from the research. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to conduct the focus group meetings due to logistical problems within the timescale of the project. A decision was taken to use the qualitative data generated from the questionnaires to investigate any patterns and themes that emerged concerning perceptions of impacts from the mentoring process, and the support and training needs with a view to developing this work further in

the future.

A number of difficulties were encountered in regard to the development of the focus group aspect of the project, which included staff shortages, illness and the timing of the investigation. Also, the project was late starting, due to participation problems, which shortened the time frame of the study. Unfortunately, the travelling distance between the two colleges also had negative impacts on the project, as it made availability of access to the mentors and trainees complicated for the researcher. This was a problem that was further compounded by the proximity to the end of the semester and the consequent increase in workload with regard to assessment.

3. Results

Key weaknesses were seen, firstly, as an inconsistent approach to the collection of evidence regarding mentor activity, such as, records of mentor / trainee meetings, observation reports and support where there may have been areas of concern for either mentor or trainee. A further area for development was to ensure some differentiation between mentees who may have been teaching for some years and those who were new to the role. In addition, it was noted that little was done to ascertain the trainees existing skills concerning their previous experience of teaching, either with regard to their length of service or range of institutions worked in.

From the TOWS analysis it was possible to identify a number of opportunities that would enable improvement of practice at both colleges. College B intended to develop its database in line with that of College A. College B was also going to put forward a proposal for the development of a Mentor Tutor role. Both colleges were going to develop systems for logging mentor activity in a rigorous and systematic manner. There would also be a trainee needs analysis developed, a trainee self assessment on areas to include information regarding their

specialist subject knowledge and experience, knowledge of national and local policies and processes, teaching strategies, assessment and so on. This was to allow the development of a support programme more specifically tailored to the individual needs of the participants.

A total of 53 mentors were involved, of which 40 were first year mentors and 13 were second year. Similarly, trainees totalled 93, of which 47 were first year trainees and 50 second year trainees.

The total number of respondents from these two populations was 9 (16%) mentors and 27 (18%) trainees. Of the 27 trainees, 14 (52%) were from a PGCE programme and 13 (48%) from a Certificate in Education with a similar distribution between years 1 (n=14, 52%) and 2 (n=13, 48%).

Trainees were asked to indicate their length of time in teaching with respondents categorised in to two groups; 1/ those with less than five years experience (n=19, 70%), and 2/ those in excess of ten years (n=8, 30%). They were also asked on the questionnaire, 'how effectively trainees felt they were supported by their mentor?' Responses ranged from 41% stating 'extremely', 30% 'very' and 30% stating 'somewhat'. No trainees stated they were 'not at all' supported effectively. In response to the question 'how useful do you find the mentor / trainee meetings', the 27 trainee responses ranged across all four categories: 'extremely' (26%), 'very' (44%), 'somewhat' (22%) and 'not at all' (7%). Similarly, regarding the trainees question on 'how trainees would describe the impact the mentor has on their practice', trainees perceptions of impact ranged from 33% stating a 'significant impact', 48% stating 'some impact' and 19% stating 'little impact'.

Nine mentors responded to the mentor survey, which aimed to focus on impact of mentoring, mentor training and support needs. Of these 9 mentors, 33% responded as 'extremely' to the question 'how useful they found the trainee / mentor meetings', while 56% responded with 'very' and 11%

somewhat. In response to the question, 'how mentors would describe the impact of the mentoring experience on their trainee', not surprisingly, 56% stated 'extremely' and 44% 'very'. In responses to the question of 'whether mentors felt they received the support / training necessary to fulfil their role as a mentor', 56% stated 'yes' while 11% stated 'no' and 33% appeared unsure or undecided.

Comments from the questionnaire recorded similar themes to those recorded in a previous study that potentially hinder practice; such as time, mentors being busy people, expectations of the role and need for support and guidance for observations.

Differences were recorded between mentors and trainees, such as the frequency and length of meetings. For example, 2 mentors stated that meetings were held weekly while only 3 trainees concurred with this. Conversely, 8 trainees stated meetings were termly whereas no mentors reported this. Four mentors and 11 trainees did agree that meetings lasted approximately 30 minutes, while 2 mentors and 3 trainees did report meetings lasting up to an hour. Alternatively, 2 mentors reported meetings lasting less than 15 minutes, however, 9 trainees reported this as their experience.

Unfortunately, the mentor focus group did not take place. However, the questionnaire did collect some qualitative data. In response to requesting comments on how mentors would describe the impact of the mentoring experience on their trainees, mentors stated that the benefits covered 'pointing [the trainee] in the right direction', 'improves reflection' and 'focuses on the specific rather than the general'. Whilst the mentors' questionnaire included this open-ended question the trainee questionnaire did not. It would have been interesting to have seen the trainees' views on this matter.

Statements made in response to the mentors own training needs elicited a variety of responses. They indicated the value of 'meeting with other mentors', 'induction for new mentors' and the need for the

development of an intensive training programme on the 'role of the mentor' and 'conducting observations and giving feedback'. Again, this concurred closely with the previous research conducted (pers. obs., unpublished data). In addition, one mentor suggested the 'use of role play with feedback from more experienced mentors'. The use of role play in this way had not been considered previously and was something that could be introduced into the training and support programme in the future. This also supported the notion of needing to develop a more differentiated approach.

Trainees were asked to describe the most useful aspects of the mentoring experience for them. Four (14%) of the 27 trainees that responded, indicated how it had 'increased confidence', 10 (37%) cited the benefits of having 'someone to talk to', while others mentioned support, guidance and having someone who was 'non-judgemental'. Conversely, trainees were also asked to indicate what they felt were the least useful aspects of this mentoring experience. Nine (33%) indicated that there were no 'least useful aspects', while five (18%) indicated that 'time to meet and busyness of the mentor' and three (11%) stated that they did not receive the support they felt they needed. One trainee stated that their mentor was not a 'teacher' and another that their mentor had little knowledge of the requirements of the 'academic work' for the course.

Interestingly in the previous research a question asking about the expectations of the mentor role 59% of trainees indicated that they felt that academic assessment was part of the role whereas only 18% of mentors considered this part of their role. This is an area that could be explored in a mentor focus group. There were issues regarding including mentors in the 'academic and assessment' aspects of the course that might impact on their 'non-judgemental' stance, which appeared to be valued by the trainees. However, it may be that information regarding course requirements should be made available to mentors in order to enable them to support trainees in preparing their assignments, etc.

It also resonated with our own thoughts regarding the different experience and practice that trainees bring to the programme and how this might impact on the type and amount of mentoring they may require and therefore the need for differentiation within the ITT programmes. Begging the question of how much mentoring a 'trainee' teacher on ITT programmes with experience of teaching in excess of ten years would need? The study also raised other themes that could be used for further development, such as how we might measure impact and the nature of the training and support that mentors might need.

4. Discussion

Clearly further investigation is needed in order to ascertain why there might be differences in responses. Of course, only a small number of mentors (9) participated in the survey and they may well have been those most committed, experienced and / or successful as mentors. A survey linking the mentors and trainees questionnaires whilst still maintaining anonymity would throw light on whether the mentors and trainees perception of the meeting frequency and length were actually different.

Although the project did not meet all its objectives it was interesting to observe the similarities with previous research conducted at College A and how this also matched other published research (Cunningham, 2005; Wallace and Gravells, 2007; Clutterbuck, 2003).

The research project has opened up a dialogue between the two colleges and the validating university. This has been beneficial to the teacher training staff of both institutions and it was hoped that this would be developed further in the future with more regular meetings. Although meetings were held they had been focused on standardisation and curriculum issues. It should now be possible to include mentoring as part of these meetings.

There were interesting themes raised by the divergence between the trainees and the mentors' responses that should be explored in focus groups. For example, it would be useful for the two colleges to explore methods of measuring 'impact' of mentoring on the trainees' progress and practice.

The recent changes to the national requirements for ITT providers have transformed the previous rather ad hoc informal feature of mentoring into an essential aspect of teacher training programmes. The effectiveness of the mentor relationship was consequently of increasing importance. Along with the fairly consistent complaint from both mentors and trainees regarding the constraints of time available for conducting mentoring activities, one of the trainees noted that the least useful aspect of the mentoring process was "...telling me all the things I am doing wrong". This may be a useful starting point for mentor training around, for example, giving feedback, constructive criticism and the importance of making time available for trainees despite workload. Mentors were not employed directly by ITT providers and were often volunteers having been identified by self, a trainee or a line manager and had little recompense for taking on this role. Therefore, it was extremely difficult to deselect an ineffective mentor. This may indicate that ITT providers need to establish closer links with employers and ensure that they were fully conversant with the roles and responsibilities of mentors.

Another development was the introduction of a self evaluation needs analyses for trainees to complete during induction in order to support the assessment and meeting of their specific needs more individually with regard to amount of mentoring required. This will enable providers to monitor how many years of teaching experience the trainee and / or mentor may have had and in which type of institutions, and so offer more meaningful support by differentiating between new and more experienced trainees. This would be a joint development between the two colleges and will also need to be shared with the mentors. This idea could be developed as

part of the collection of information regarding the mentors so that their training programme could be targeted at individuals, for example, observation feedback. It may be possible for the two colleges to develop a joint approach to support and training for mentors and to introduce an appropriate qualification linked to their Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

The TOWS analysis pointed out the need for both colleges to develop their monitoring of the mentor processes in a more formal and systematic way. Communication was essential for ensuring that the processes were conducted consistently across the partnership colleges. The development of the database would help to ensure that mentors had access to relevant information. Meetings with employers to ensure they understand the requirements of the role. College A had introduced a 'meet and greet' meeting at the beginning of each academic year for mentors, trainees and course tutors. This proved to be very successful such that even people working in the same organisation did not realise that another colleague was acting as a mentor. This might lead to the development of 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 2000) for mentors who will then be able to support each other. This was something which could be taken up by College B. Both colleges were going to request that mentors send in copies of their observation reports so that these could be tracked and added to the profile of the trainee.

The role of Mentor Tutor was one way in which these developments could be introduced in College B and the liaison of these tutors would thereby enhance the consistency of practice across the provision.

During a recent meeting with the validating university and the two partner colleges, the issue regarding the effectiveness of the mentor tutor role was raised and it was put forward that the university might be able to add weight to support College B in the development of such a role. This role has been considered favourably by Ofsted and SVUK and this should also be able to bring

support for this proposal at College B.

One of the main issues raised was the identification of the need to improve communication methods between the partner college and with mentors in order to develop a more consistent approach. There was also a need to develop processes for supporting trainees where mentoring was not being as effective as it could be.

Both colleges have benefited from the TOWS analysis. The mentor tutor and curriculum leader feeling that the TOWS analysis was a good starting point for development and would utilise those items seen as 'opportunities' for development to support the introduction of areas considered good practice, such as updating of the mentor handbook, introduction of the self evaluation needs analysis, development of a database, differentiation of training and support and tracking of evidence of mentor activities would, in turn, enhance the experience of participation in teacher training programmes for both mentor and trainee. The aspect of 'differentiation' has been a recurrent theme and needs further investigation to discover how this might be utilised most effectively. It may be that mentors were overvaluing the support they provide to trainees despite the indication that much of what was provided was seen as valuable to trainees. For example, 'someone to bounce ideas off', provide guidance, answer questions, support, 'putting new found knowledge into practice' and build confidence.

Conducting practitioner research in a time constrained environment will pose logistical difficulties, which reduce the value of the findings and this investigation has been no exception. As has been already mentioned, there was a shortened time scale for the completion of the project. It would have been beneficial if in addition to the initial meeting with the Curriculum Leader at College B the researcher had introduced the investigation by organising a meeting with the mentors and trainees. This might have resulted in a greater response rate especially from the mentors. If this had been earlier in the academic year then there would have been

greater opportunities to instigate a closer relationship with the participants in College B and, therefore, the mentor focus group would have been more likely to have taken place. The triangulation of methods was essential for meaningful research and the difficulties regarding the arrangements around the mentor focus group leaves a significant gap in the findings of the project, and emphasised the difficulties of conducting research in an institution where the researcher was not a member of staff and at a distance. Questionnaires were limited in their ability to capture the more qualitative aspects of the investigation, which could really have taken the project a step further. Nevertheless, the project has had a number of benefits as have been stated. For example, College B was going to introduce a database similar to the one developed by College A in order to be able to more easily communicate and monitor communication with mentors. Both colleges were to introduce the self evaluation needs analysis to support differentiation for trainees and mentors. The training programme developed by College A would be shared with College B and would be developed further in the future with perhaps some cross college collaboration utilising the strengths of those participating in the teacher training provision. Both colleges were to investigate the development of systems for closer collaboration with employers and the tracking of evidence of mentor activity. Another outcome was to ensure the implementation of the role of Mentor tutor for College B, successfully supported by the university. There was also the intention of developing a follow up investigation to link the questionnaire so that while anonymity was maintained it would be possible to match the mentor and trainee to see if their perceptions of mentor's impact were similar or whether one partner considered the relationship as completely effective while the other may well not. Thus, providing some insight in to the question of whether mentors may be overvaluing their support for trainees. To continue the enhancement of the relationship between the two colleges with their joint projects and the introduction of Mentoring as a standing item on the agenda for meetings to augment consistency of practice.

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Developing and enhancing the practice and management of scholarly activity and research within further education colleges



The Higher Education Academy will be holding two events to support practitioners to engage with scholarly activity/research and to allow managers to receive information in regard to successfully managing it within their institutions. These events will address key issues for both practitioners and managers within FECs involved with research/scholarly activity, such as:

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Enabling access to effective mentoring support for trainee teachers of numeracy

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1. Introduction

Since 2001, specialist teachers of numeracy have been required to hold a qualification in teaching numeracy either as an additional diploma, if they already have a generic teaching qualification, or as part of their generic teaching qualification. Generally, across the UK there were fewer providers offering programmes, fewer trainees becoming qualified and there was a shortage of numeracy teacher educators and mentors. Government targets in Skills for Life (SfL) were focused on numeracy and providers' targets, in terms of numeracy, would have doubled, at least, in the past 12 months.

In the light of these concerns, both Essex PDC and ACER considered it important to revisit research conducted in 2004 on mentoring within SfL teacher education programmes (Horrocks, 2008). However, this time, the focus would be on numeracy in teacher education. At that time mentoring within SfL teacher education programmes was patchy. This study sought to investigate whether mentoring had become an intrinsic part of programmes since then and whether there were models of good practice that could be further developed as part of this action research?

The research was commissioned by the Essex Professional Development Centre (PDC) and the Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region (ACER) to complement and add to work in increasing the number of qualified numeracy teachers and build capacity in numeracy teacher education in the eastern region. It followed an earlier feasibility study (Horrocks, 2008) into numeracy teacher education in the eastern region. In the report, a number of suggestions were made for change, one of which was to challenge traditional models of offering

teaching qualifications and make them more accessible to a wider range of potential trainees.

In a previous research study (ACER, 2004) it had identified a number of key mentoring behaviours that contributed to a good mentoring experience for both mentors and mentees and, crucially, to developing effective practice in the classroom. These mentoring behaviours, it was felt, should be included, where possible, within any model outcome developed from this study.

The overall aim of the research was to examine the key features of mentoring support within numeracy teacher education through interviews with mentors, mentees and teacher educators. The purpose of the interviews was to identify both strengths and weaknesses within current practice. These findings would in turn stimulate the development of a model that could be trialled within this action research. It was hoped that the model developed would overcome some of the difficulties encountered in providing effective mentoring for numeracy trainee teachers.

2. Methodology

ACER was formed in 1993 by the Further Education Colleges (FECs) in the eastern region. Embracing the six counties in the eastern region it provided a central source of support, development and representation to member colleges. One aspect of this support included bidding for national and regional project funding. This research links with ACER's current European Social Fund (ESF) projects that aim to support providers across the region in the professional development of Skills for Life (SfL) teachers. Essex PDC, based at Anglia Ruskin University, responded

to the needs and interests of all the constituencies involved in the wider Skills for Life (SfL) sector in Essex by raising the awareness, skills and knowledge of those involved in teaching, embedding and supporting Skills for Life.

The project used both action research and survey as its main strategic approaches:

1. a survey to establish current practice and to develop understanding of the issues facing mentoring provision. The project team conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups, involving mentees, mentors and teacher educators
2. action research to pilot the model
3. a literature and document search on mentoring theory and existing models of effective practice.

Survey

In the survey phase the researchers worked with five providers across the eastern region. Three of these were FECs and one a private training provider all offering an additional diploma in numeracy. The fifth provider was an HEI offering both the additional diploma in numeracy and the DTLLS in numeracy. All the courses were offered part-time. The researchers worked with 19 trainee teachers (mentees); 8 mentors and 7 teacher educators. Surveys were conducted via face-to-face focus groups wherever possible. This approach was successful with groups of mentees and teacher educators. However, where mentors existed they tended to be scattered and most interviews were conducted individually and via telephone. Often, course time was used for interviewing mentees because of difficulties in bringing them together. Questions were semi-structured; this was useful in that it allowed the interviewer some flexibility in interviews. On occasions it was difficult to use even this format when it became obvious that no mentoring was taking place. Sometimes, whole sections of questions had to be abandoned (Fig. 1). Each interview / focus group was recorded to enable the interviewer to gather detailed data for writing up and for

comparing between providers, mentors and mentees.

<p>The Structure and Organisation of Mentoring Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where does the scheme fit into the organisation's approach to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supporting trainees through their Numeracy teacher education programme; - continuing professional development (CPD); - quality assurance systems? • Who manages the programme? • Who liaises with mentors? • Who monitors the mentoring programme?
<p>Documentation and records used in the Mentoring System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What forms of documentation are there? • What is it used for? • Who does it belong to? • Who has access to the documentation? • Is it useful?
<p>The Process of the Mentoring Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of the mentor? • Does the role of mentor include a focus on the teaching and learning of Numeracy? • What actually happens? • Are there different ways of working? • What are the typical behaviours and activities of a mentor? • What is the relationship between mentor and mentee? • What is the relationship between the Numeracy teacher educators, the Numeracy trainees/mentees and the mentors? • When does the mentoring programme start and finish?
<p>Selection of Mentors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the mentors? • How are they chosen and are there any barriers to choice? • Are mentors Numeracy specialists? • Is there any reward for mentoring? • Who makes the selection? • What say do the teacher trainers have in the selection of mentors?
<p>The Training of Mentors and Mentees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What training is available?

Figure 1. The framework of semi-structured questions used in surveys with participants in this study.

The project consisted of two phases. The purpose of the first phase was to revisit research into mentoring within SfL teacher education, conducted in 2004, and to examine what affect the new teacher education strategy had on the development of mentoring practices. The objectives in this first phase of the research were to report on the following:

- how does mentoring within the numeracy teacher education programmes work
- do mentoring systems and practices triangulate to include: teacher educators / elements from the numeracy additional diploma programme, mentors and mentees
- what works well
- what does not work so well

- what were the factors that helped or hinder effective mentoring of trainees on numeracy teacher education programmes
- what did mentees and mentors discuss and explore
- what did trainees / mentees on numeracy teacher education programmes gain from the mentoring process

The aims for the second phase of the study were to trial a model that sought to overcome some of the difficulties around the shortage of mentors. In essence, it aimed to:

- set up a mentoring system using one mentor for a whole cohort of numeracy trainees
- use distance mentoring as a feature of that mentoring system and to offer mentees a blend of individual and group mentoring sessions
- pilot the use of technology to facilitate group mentoring and individual mentoring
- identify the strengths and weaknesses of the various features of the pilot mentoring scheme
- the objectives for this phase were to include some of the key components of good mentoring practice namely
- to use mentoring to bridge the gap between theory and practice and, therefore, focus on aspects of teaching and learning
- to promote peer-mentoring through the use of group mentoring
- to use elements from the numeracy additional diploma programme (i.e. reflective journals, observation feedback) to provide the focus for the mentoring

3. Results

In the run up to the introduction of the new teaching qualifications in 2004 much had been made of the importance of mentoring for teachers in training and there was the promise of money for mentoring provision.

The researchers were, therefore, surprised and not a little disappointed that there was so little evidence of mentoring having taken place, even though there was an awareness that little of the money allocated had actually reached SfL teacher education. A major contributory factor to the dearth of mentoring in SfL teacher education was, the researchers felt, that it was not mandatory for SfL teachers (it was in generic teaching diplomas).

Literature review

A literature review conducted in a previous study (ACER, 2004a) informed both the action research model and the handbook (ACER 2004b). The researchers looked to the literature again to support this piece of research. However, there was little in the literature on mentoring for numeracy teaching. What was found related to school teaching rather than post-compulsory teaching. However, this did support the principle of the importance of subject-related mentoring, such as the identification of "...pedagogical knowledge..." (Hudson, 2007) as one of five essential attributes of a successful mentor. Using this knowledge, a mentor could "...guid(e) the mentee with planning, timetabling, preparation, implementation, classroom management strategies, teaching strategies, content knowledge, questioning skills, problem solving strategies, and assessment techniques" (Hudson, 2007). A good mentor would also "...model effective teaching with well-designed, hands-on lessons that display classroom management strategies and exemplify a rapport with students" (Hudson, 2007:210). Hudson (2007) looked specifically at maths and science teachers, arguing that it was the pedagogical knowledge that was specific to the subject that was important for mentees. They needed to develop the practices and processes related to their subject area in order to develop as an expert practitioner (Hudson, 2007).

Edwards and Protheroe (2003), though not writing specifically about subject specialist mentoring, were concerned about ways in which "...student teachers learn about learning" (Protheroe and Edwards, 2003:230)

and how mentors could support that process. Citing other studies, Protheroe and Edwards (2003:229) argued that teacher mentors, as did most expert practitioners, found it difficult to talk about the knowledge that underpinned their practices in abstract terms and that mentoring, therefore, needed to be a participatory activity. Teaching practices and processes were heavily situated in the subject area, the classroom and knowledge of the sector (Protheroe and Edwards, 2003:229). Mentoring, as experienced by many new teachers today, was limited to observations and what they describe "...as something that can be called up and applied" (Protheroe and Edwards, 2003:228) rather than, for example, team teaching in which the mentor's role was to guide student teachers participation in the practices of teaching and in increasingly knowledgeable interpretations of and flexible pedagogic responses to local classroom events (Protheroe and Edwards, 2003:338).

Time constraints limited the amount of time that could be afforded to the literature review. However, what was found did appear to lend support to the importance of a subject specific mentor. However, what was also recognised from the literature search was that the model for the action research would be limited to what Protheroe and Edwards (2003) described as something "...that can be called up and applied".

Action research

Data from the first phase of the research suggested that there was little mentoring taking place and one of the reasons for this was a shortage of specialist numeracy mentors. Where mentoring was taking place there was little evidence that its main focus was on teaching and learning.

The focus of the action research was influenced by the findings, namely:

- the desire on the part of mentees for a subject specialist mentor
- a shortage of specialist mentors
- a perception that the enthusiasm of the teacher educator for mentoring

was crucial to the success of mentoring

- limited knowledge on the part of mentors and mentees on what mentoring can offer
- most trainees currently were in fact experienced teachers
- the lack of time for mentoring on the part of mentors and mentees
- constraints on both timeframe and resources of the research project itself

Given these findings a model was developed in which one experienced subject specialist mentor worked with a cohort of numeracy trainees. Mentees were offered a blend of individual and group mentoring 'sessions' using virtual learning environment (VLE), email and telephone.

The pilot centred on a numeracy additional diploma group of 7 trainees at an FE college. The mentor was asked to organise two group mentoring sessions and two individual mentoring sessions for each mentee.

A site was set up on the college intranet. Access to the site was limited to mentees and their mentor. Due to the way the site had to be set up, the course tutor was a named member but did not access the site during the lifetime of the pilot. The site included a chat board and it was this facility that was used for the group mentoring sessions. These group mentoring sessions had allocated times, although members were able to use the chat board outside these times if they wanted to.

Individual mentoring sessions were conducted by either telephone or email. This was decided by the mentor and mentee together, depending on need and other practical considerations.

At the end of the pilot everyone involved was interviewed using the same framework of semi-structured questions used in the survey (Fig. 1). The mentees were interviewed as a group, the teacher educator face-to-face and mentor (by telephone) separately. All interviews were recorded.

The model for the action research was not developed until after the completion of the survey phase. The concept of e-mentoring or distance mentoring was not explored in the literature because this was not part of the original plan. In retrospect, this should have been done to support the action research as this might have informed the way the pilot was then conducted.

In constructing the model for e-mentoring the researchers were aware that it went against many of the fundamental principles of effective mentoring. For example, observing mentees, engaging in peer mentoring and working alongside the mentor. However, in focusing the mentoring on a professional dialogue between mentor and mentee(s), at least one fundamental principle of effective mentoring remained intact.

4. Summary

The pilot was successful in many ways, possibly more successful than the researchers thought it might be. What was learned will be useful in determining future mentoring projects.

The mentor found it difficult to establish contact with the mentees. This was possibly because the pilot started very late into the diploma course and trainee teachers were focusing on assignments as well as their own teaching. Another factor was that most of the mentees were not new teachers. They all had a range of teaching experience and many felt that mentoring for them was unnecessary. The mentor was also trying to establish a relationship at a distance with people they had never met; one of their comments was that they would not do that again! Instead, they would want to meet the mentees, at least once. There was reluctance on the part of mentees to respond to an initial email seeking to 'make a date' for an online group session, and in the end the mentor did ask the teacher educator to help them by prompting the mentees to respond. Even then, it was difficult to find a mutually convenient time to 'meet online' and not

everyone could. Generally, the mentor was the initiator in making contact. Though this sounds negative, it did provide valuable data on the importance of finding ways to establish a relationship and to ensure that there was enough time for the relationship(s) to develop. Some of the difficulties occurred simply because the technology was not right. For example, the 'chatroom' system for responding was slow and cumbersome, making dialogue difficult. Both the mentor and mentees suggested that in future this could be asynchronous (you could logon at anytime and add a comment) rather than synchronous (when you all have to be there at the same time). However, there were synchronous systems that did work (e.g. Google chat, MSM), thus, there was value in pursuing these options too.

The individual sessions via the telephone were valuable. This was where the relationship could develop and where most mentoring occurred. Mentor and mentee did discuss things that were relevant and important to the mentee. For example, resources and the mentor's advice was sought on progression routes from the diploma and on an upcoming Ofsted visit. The teacher educator noticed that the mentees did start to use their reflective journals more effectively when the mentoring was happening. The mentor felt that it was the mentees who were external to the FE provider, running the course that seemed to need more support or wanted more support. Mentees appreciated the wide experience that the mentor had of the sector as well as their subject knowledge. The mentor felt that whilst e-mentoring might make it feel less personal, one advantage was that it did concentrate the mind so that it did not become the chat over coffee rather than a meaningful dialogue.

Despite the limitations of the research, it was possible to see the potential of group and e-mentoring. Both mentor and mentees began to see what they could get from a mentoring relationship. The researcher believed that an effective model of mentoring for numeracy teachers could be developed, possibly using a blended model of face-to-face and distance

contact. To be truly effective, the model would need to include opportunities for trainee teachers to work alongside more experienced colleagues to really make use of the "...extensive practical knowledge of teachers" (Protheroe and Edwards, 2003:229). Finally the researcher believed that the mentors of tomorrow were the trainees of today, and only a good experience of mentoring would help them to see the value of mentoring.

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Evaluating e-mentoring for initial teacher trainees

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1. Introduction

Between February and June 2009, the colleges of West Suffolk, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth collaborated in undertaking an action research project designed to evaluate the contribution of on-line mentoring towards the professional development of trainees on the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) programmes delivered within these colleges. This was undertaken as part of a set of action research projects on enabling access to effective mentor support, funded by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and managed through the East of England Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (EECETT) based at the Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region (ACER).

The objectives for this project were:

- develop a model of practice for Cert Ed / PGCE trainees to engage in e-mentoring alongside their face to face mentoring
- identify the strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats of e-mentoring
- evaluate the potential of e-mentoring as a stand alone method and its potential as a professional development tool
- refine the model of practice for engaging in e-mentoring
- evaluate the current associate on line experience and its value to the trainees subject specific knowledge and skills

In order for this project to be action research, it was decided that the 'researchers' would be

the students participating on the ITT programs. A project management team, comprising of members from each of the colleges (and a project leader), was established to manage and steer the project.

2. Methodology

The project was designed and delivered using an action research methodology.

"Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out." (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:162).

So that the ITT students participating in this project had an understanding of action research, a series of action research seminars were delivered at each of the three colleges partaking in the project. This also served to support one of the ITT modules and to build capacity for future research. These seminars introduced the foundation theories of Kurt Leewin (Smith, 2001).

The project management team decided to meet prior to each stage of the action research cycle to develop ideas, feedback on progress and plan the next stage. In all, six meetings took place.

The first meeting established an approach to undertaking this project and the roles of the management team. It was agreed that as far

as possible, students undertaking ITT should not be burdened with further work due to this project. To this end, the management team agreed to write the action research activities in to the ITT curriculum. This was possible, to a large extent, as tasks set within the ITT programme were sufficiently broad, and the action research tasks could be crafted to fit within these. This involved drafting out tasks that could be included into the programme at year 1 and year 2 of the Cert. Ed. / PGCE (QTLS). This programme was validated through University Campus Suffolk (UCS).

All of the partners in this project were involved in the running of this ITT programme. All participating students had been (or were in the process of being) registered with 'ASSOCIate Online', an on-line mentoring system developed by the Huddersfield Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (HUDCETT). Associate on-line was described in the following way;

"ASSOCIate Online provides, maintains and develops subject specialist online communities (SSOCs) for teachers and trainee teachers in the Lifelong Learning Sector. SSOCs consist of sets of facilities and resources that support trainees in developing pedagogies appropriate to their specialist knowledge. These SSOCs can be made available quite readily to trainees at any ITT provider..." (HUDCETT, 2009).

It was agreed that the research would look at how students were working with 'Associate Online' as an e-mentoring platform.

3. Results

3.1 Planning

It was decided that the cycle of Action Research would be as follows:

Stage 1: Take first action step

The ITT student groups which would be included in this project were selected. The process for engagement with 'ASSOCIate

Online' was agreed. All ITT students were to be given an on-line account. An initial engagement task was developed. Members of this project team, who were responsible for delivering ITT programmes within their respective colleges, would gain consent from their ITT students and then set the first task.

Stage 2: Evaluate

The project team discussed the outcome of the first task and set a further task, which was a SWOT analysis.

A SWOT analysis employs a strategic planning method to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a project. The exact origin of the SWOT has been disputed, however, there has been a referenced discussion around this (Freisner, 2009).

This exercise was designed to evaluate engagement with 'ASSOCIate OnLine' using SWOT as a common framework. Members of the project team responsible for delivering ITT programmes within their respective colleges conducted this exercise with their ITT students.

Stage 3: Amend plan

The project team reviewed the outcome of the SWOT analysis exercise. A further task was developed. Each student was asked to develop an Action Plan using the outcomes of the SWOT analysis to address issues around engagement with 'ASSOCIate OnLine'. Members of the project team responsible for delivering ITT programmes within their respective colleges set this task with their ITT students.

Stage 4: Take second action step

The outcome of the SWOT analysis was discussed. Originally, the team thought that a 'model of engagement' could be developed indicating how each of the ITT students engaged and gained the greatest value from on line mentoring. However, this was modified to account for what was learned in the process. Instead, the task that was set was to gain feedback from ITT students regarding their experiences with internet forums in general.

“Definition of: forum - A discussion group on the Web about a particular topic. It is similar to a Usenet discussion (see newsgroup), but uses the Web browser for access. Before the Web, text-only forums were common on bulletin boards and proprietary online services (see BBS). Web-based forums can include all the extras people expect from Web pages, including images, videos and downloads.” (PC Magazine encyclopaedia, 2009).

3.2 Take first action step

The reason for the change in direction was due to the following project discussion. ITT students were given the following initial engagement tasks:

1. complete your profile on ASSOCIate OnLine
2. find a buddy, a twin and an e-mentor
3. compare your results from the above with a peer in a different subject specialist area
4. write a piece for ReFlect on this comparison
5. share a resource, and obtain a resource
6. on the Welcome page, under News and Announcements, go to Table of Contents for our Community. Scroll down to ‘Participate’ and select Community Forum: Ideas and Issues. What is there? How could you participate?
7. provide evidence of contacting your e-mentor, such as copies of email correspondence

Some difficulties were identified in the process of the research group undertaking these tasks. These included:

- problems with email addresses (for example, institutional email addresses were required and some of the group worked outside of the institutions)
- some of the research group found difficulty locating a mentor
- some ITT students lacked computer skills

- problems with the University Campus Suffolk IT system

3.3 Evaluate

The research group were asked to develop a SWOT analysis to evaluate their initial engagement with ‘ASSOCIate OnLine’. The SWOT analysis approach provided the three college ITT student cohorts with a common framework. This task was delivered using the following guidance:

- review your notes from the earlier tasks and complete a SWOT analysis using the model provide below. (Aim to include 3-5 points in each square)
- using this SWOT analysis, consider how you may use ASSOCIate OnLine to address any (or any combination) of the points you have included in the grid
- write a piece for Reflect on the ideas you now have about using ASSOCIate OnLine
- start a log of your ASSOCIate OnLine activity

All of the students in each of the colleges undertook a group SWOT analysis. A consolidation of the SWOT Analysis from all 3 partner colleges has been presented in Figure 1.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Gives ideas and can help clarify areas. Helps to keep you informed of current developments in specialist area Provides contact point and access to resources Could be a good resource if enough people participate Opens the possibility of other professionals to you other than your own working environment I have found a buddy, and it is very useful to have someone to share ideas and resources with, provided I can find a mentor or twin Some of the random e-mails I receive are actually quite helpful. Particular ones discuss relevant ideas and some have helped to inform my own practice I have found a mentor. It gives you the ability to share information and views with other teachers in your specialism. To find a new direction in your teaching. Easy to follow attractive format May appeal to younger or more ICT happy teacher trainers Forum particularly useful Access even after the course is completed Cost Effective Broadens your geographic lens Making new contacts Quicker and more focused than face-to-face mentor meeting Allows tutors to contact other tutors specialising in other areas of interest e.g e-learning</p>	<p>Ease of navigation - not clear, time consuming with minimal benefits, overloaded with e-mails many not relevant Hard to locate suitable mentor. Navigation of site difficult, easily lost. I prefer face to face contact because I want to be shown how my mentor does worksheets and descriptions of assessments, experiences Navigating difficult Only as good as the Associates on Line members Limited contacts, I prefer being shown how to apply teaching techniques Not enough responses or existing participants, have been bombarded with e-mails Too many e-mails, each e-mail doubles and triples by amount over a space of time My buddy does not teach the same subject as me, so I have not found it very useful. Speaking to peers is much more productive. I don't have the time to go on Associate on Line I haven't found a mentor yet. Limited reply to e-mail, possibly due to the fact that I never find anyone with over 50% match. Website could be more simple to use - sometimes there is too much information I prefer face to face contact. The information may not be up to date. Your mentor or teacher may not get back to you Only two mentors available - I was not lucky enough to get one. Difficult website to navigate around. Found a twin but have not yet gained any feedback Sharing resources limited (not enough memory to share some types of resources - eg music mixes) Everyone seems to be from Huddersfield Having to log on every time you use it. Relies on e-mentor checking their emails Can't really develop a relationship with mentor Difficulties in getting on-line Not face-to-face Assumes participants are happy with medium i.e. communicating personal information on-line Site not user friendly - menus difficult to follow Difficult to build relationship of trust with someone you don't get to meet. The site does lack from personal interaction, maybe a web cam or web conference facility may help.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Potentially a good idea especially if you can find a good mentor Expand knowledge and gain views from further afield Make contacts and find new information on courses and colleges Job and courses Could be effective way to share ideas and resources with other tutors/teachers within specialist areas Opens a wide use to access resources and materials if need be It has given me the opportunity to communicate with others in the same role as me, however as I don't have a mentor or twin communicating with other tutors is not particularly helpful at the moment I may be able to stay in touch with my mentor/teacher. I may be able to find job opportunities. I may be able to visit different colleges Forum site will be useful and needs to be regularly visited for specific subjects, twin will be useful if he replies As more colleagues use it - there should be an increase of resources Another way of keeping up with trends in my subject area Community forum could be really good way of sharing good practice. Share resources and experiences Broadens your geographic lens Perhaps better vetting of potential mentors knowledge and experience Could provide evidence of CPD for Reflect Provides great opportunities for professional forums Opportunities to bridge north/south divide Share good practice with other tutors in subject specialisms or specific age groups Develop knowledge in other teaching establishments approach to eLearning, VLE's and e-portfolio</p>	<p>If new to topic or teaching you have no guarantee you are getting good information Given wrong information or advice by mentors through lack of time Sharing work practices, authenticity of information. Only one mentor for whole of construction and they are unable to help Time and quality of information, is it current and accurate Spam e-mails Open to problems caused by inappropriate comments or content that may cause offence to others. Needs policing/monitoring My mentor may not have time to deal with my questions. My mentor may not answer my question Can look at site usage by individual users. Too many other alternatives already available and being continually developed. Only ever as good as the people who use it Distracting - spent too much time on it. Open toe personal exposure. Threat to face to face mentoring The availability of a mentor Confidentiality of what is being shared If people don't engage with it, it's purpose is being negated People who are identified as potential buddies, mentors etc may not respond in timely fashion Ownership of resources maybe a problem and college ownership may also be a problem.</p>

Figure 1. The resultant Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats identified from the SOWT analysis conducted as part of this project.

The SWOT analysis and ITT student discussion from this exercise was discussed at the following research meeting. From this meeting it was identified that:

- there was a time lag between ITT student contact with ASSOCIate OnLine and a response from them
- there was a feeling that this form of on-line interaction was in the nature of a 'chat room' and students talked of a 'dating agency' type of approach
- students reported that they had been told that they couldn't have a mentor as they already had one (meaning unclear). These students, from a construction department, subsequently made their own contacts
- there was concern about too many e mails and students being bombarded
- some students still lacked the skills and training to use the internet
- ITT program teachers needed to also be literate in using the system and this was not always the case
- the ASSOCIate OnLine training packs were considered to be too wordy
- ITT students stated a preference for face to face mentoring
- some ITT students were able to establish a satisfactory e-mentor relationship, however, these were in the minority
- students explored the potential of using the internet more widely than with ASSOCIate OnLine and found that the internet forum was more suitable for this form of interaction as these were more global, more spontaneous and more subject specific

As an outcome of this discussion a new research question emerged: How could participating in an internet 'Forum' enhance the induction of people into FE teaching?'

At this stage in the project, the research question had naturally evolved through reading the SWOT, other feedback and through project team discussion. It was

decided that the focus would be taken away from e-mentoring and moved on to the participation of ITT students in internet forums as a tool for professional development. This had the effect of adding a further objective to this project;

- develop a model of practice for Cert. Ed. / PGCE trainees to engage in on-line forums

It was generally agreed to widen the research to provide the ITT participants with greater opportunities to engage in internet forums and, therefore, the ITT students would be asked to reflect on any forum they discovered and found useful. This may include discussion forms conducted on ASSOCIate OnLine, but not necessarily so.

In the true spirit of action research, the direction of this research had changed. Therefore, an adjustment of the time frame was necessary. ITT students were given until the end of May 2008 to locate a discussion forum and report back on it.

3.3 Amend plan

The original plan asked for each student to develop an action plan using the outcomes of the SWOT analysis to address issues around engagement with ASSOCIate OnLine. However, the amended plan now asked the ITT students to locate a discussion forum and reflect on it.

The outcome of this exercise was the generation of a number of relevant sites (Fig. 2), which reported the internet forums that ITT students had located and found to be of value. Some of these engagements included a combination of on-line (exchanges included both web based systems and email) and face to face (f2f) exchanges. Others were either only on-line or only face to face engagements. These too have been indicated.

Specialism	Source	On-line	f2f
Accountancy	regional Association of Accountancy Technicians http://www.aat.org.uk/	•	•
Building and Construction	Home Builders Federation http://www.hbf.co.uk/	•	
	Associate On-line http://associate.hud.ac.uk/	•	
	Construction Awards Alliance http://www.caaalliance.co.uk/	•	
	Miller Welding http://www.millerwelding.com/	•	
Business	MENTA http://www.menta.org.uk/	•	•
Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL	Skills Workshop http://www.skillsworkshop.org/	•	
	Literacy ClusterACER (Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region) http://www.acer.ac.uk/index.php	•	•
	Maths Cluster, ACER (Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region) http://www.acer.ac.uk/index.php	•	•
Hairdressing	HABIA http://www.habia.org/	•	
	Hairdressers Journal Interactive http://www.hji.co.uk/	•	
	Hair and Beauty Jobs http://www.hairandbeautyjobs.com/	•	
Health	NUCO Plus http://www.nucoplus.com/	•	
Horticulture	Royal Horticultural Society http://www.rhs.org.uk/	•	•
Languages	CILT – National Centre for Languages http://www.cilt.org.uk/commlangs/forum.htm	•	•
Mechanical Engineering	Institute of Motoring Industry http://www.motor.org.uk/	•	•
Music	Sibelius Forum http://www.sibeliusforum.com/forums/		•
Special Education Needs	Foundation Stage Forum http://www.foundation-stage.info/forums/index.php?showforum=15	•	
	TES Connect http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6010675	•	
Skills for Life	Education Forum http://www.educationforum.co.uk/	•	
	Open University Open Learning http://www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/home.php	•	
Sport	FACA (Football Academy Coaching Association) http://thefa.com/	•	•
Teaching	External Examiner & Mentor, Derby College http://www.derby-college.ac.uk/	•	•
	Excellence Gateway (LSIS) http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/	•	
	Staff Forum http://wolsey.ucs.ac.uk/webapps/login/	•	
	Leonardo Project http://www.nettjetti.fi/jobline/	•	
	NLP http://www.new-oceans.co.uk/new/nlpindex.htm	•	

Figure 2. The list represents the sources that ITT students found most helpful by subject area.

3.4 Take second action step

The original plan asked that a ‘model of engagement’ be developed, indicating how each of the ITT students engaged and gained the greatest value from on line mentoring (with a view to making use of this data). The amended plan asked the ITT students to provide an account of their experiences with on-line discussion forums.

An analysis of these accounts provided the following themed groupings:

- it has been helpful to access subject specific contacts, information and resources
- many resources were freely available
- there was the potential to broaden your geographical horizons and communicate with people from other countries both professionally and in a similar situation

- access was variable, however, many examples were provided of easy to use sites and resources
- some sites will notify you of discussions within your interest area
- topics discussed include the latest developments within the specialist area

4. Discussion

The outcomes of this project were originally anticipated to be a set of 'Models of Engagement', developed by approximately 80 ITT students. As this course of action was changed during this project, what did emerge instead was a list of sites that contain forums and resources that ITT students would recommend to other ITT students.

The outcomes and findings of this project in terms of meeting the project objectives can be described as follows:

Objective: Develop a model of practice for Cert. Ed. / PGCE trainees to engage in e-mentoring alongside their face to face mentoring.

This project found that e-mentoring had limited application potential, suiting those who were in isolated specialisations, those who worked in remote settings (i.e. working within the prison system) or those who were comfortable with the technology and on-line interaction.

Objective: Identify the strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats to e-mentoring.
A SWOT analysis had been constructed and was included in this report.

Objective: Evaluate the potential of e-mentoring as a stand alone method and its potential as a professional development tool
The majority of ITT students included in this project did not show a preference for e-mentoring. The majority, however, preferred face to face contact with a mentor. This was not a criticism of any particular on-line site or community, but more generally regarding the

concept of engaging with an on-line mentor. There were a range of reasons given for this, including lack of response, lack of specific subject and / or institutional understandings, time delays, the structure of a written conversation, comfort issues and, more generally, a preference for face to face mentoring.

Objective: Refine the model of practice for engaging in e mentoring

Despite the preference for face to face mentoring it was found that a combination of on-line and face to face mentioning has worked well for some students. The underpinning principals of a successful model of practice included:

- an approach that relies on a single model of engagement through a single provider was unlikely to provide a suitable solution
- commitment to face to face mentoring should be sustained regardless of additional mentoring resources
- ensure that there was an appropriate level of technical training and technical support for on-line mentees

Objective: Evaluate the current ASSOCiate OnLine experience and its value to the trainees subject specific knowledge and skills
ASSOCiate OnLine was not evaluated as this project changed direction upon the finding of technical and student oriented issues.

Objective: Develop a model of practice for Cert. Ed. / PGCE trainees to engage in on-line forums

The outcome of this objective was the on line forums and sites that ITT students would recommend to others (Fig. 2).

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Notes:

Assessing mentoring

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1 Introduction

This project was possible due to a small, additional, funding grant that was made available at the end of February 2009. This grant was an extension to another funded action research project on enabling access to effective mentor support (East of England Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training – EECETT) entitled 'Evaluating e-mentoring for initial teacher trainees' (Garside *et al.*, 2009). This additional project was set up to undertake an evaluation of face to face mentoring at West Suffolk College.

The objectives for this project were:

1. develop an approach to evaluating mentoring
2. employ the approach to evaluate mentoring
3. identify approaches to sustain mentoring
4. identify the subject specific nature of mentoring relationships

This project commenced with the establishment of a team of potential researchers from the second year, ITT mentor cohort at West Suffolk College (WSC).

2 Methodology

While within the broad scope of action research, this project was hampered by a short time frame that would not allow for a complete cycle of events to be undertaken. However, as the project evolved, an action research approach was taken that allowed for

the project to be extended beyond the time frame and reporting period (pending further funding). Therefore, this project commenced employing a grounded theory approach

Grounded theory is a systematic, qualitative research methodology used in the social sciences emphasizing generation of theory from data in the process of conducting research. It was developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967).

The project started without a specified set of methods. It was, therefore, the task of the research group to develop these. Through discussion it was agreed that an evaluation should not only collect information, but it should also allow for reflection. Therefore, it was agreed that focus groups of ITT students would be conducted (using the nominal group technique). These focus groups would be videoed. The video and the analysis of the outcome of the focus group exercise would be distributed to the rest of the group, who would in turn make their individual reflections. Therefore, the initial steps were as follows;

- Step 1: Conduct focus groups with ITT students
- Step 2: Collect reflections on the focus group outcomes
- Step 3: Meet to determine the next stage.

3. Results

Step 1: Conduct focus groups with ITT students

The nominal group technique was used to collect feedback about mentoring from ITT

students. This technique was new to the team member who conducted it, however, they managed to use the technique to great effect by following a set of provided notes (Fig. 1). The method was used on two occasions with two focus groups and videoed on both occasions.

Focus Group – Nominal Group Technique

Instructions

Steps - In groups you are asked to.

1. Read through this exercise (steps 1-10)
2. Write down your individual response to the question in 2 minutes on individual post it notes.
3. Prioritise your answers to these questions by alphabetising (A, B,C etc) in with A being your first choice, B your next and so on. – 2 minutes.
4. Take a large sheet of 'Flip Chart' paper - Go around each of the group participants in turn and ask them to read out their letter 'A' response. Do not discuss these responses at this stage. Place the post it note onto the flip chart. Once all of the letter 'A' responses are listed, go around each of the participants again and collect their letter 'B' responses. All responses should be included unless they are exactly the same wording as another response. Repeat this process until all responses are collected. If a group member runs out of responses, they are to pass on their turn.
5. A group discussion should now take place - only to clarify the meaning of each response. No other questions should be asked at this stage.
6. The next stage requires that each of the recorded responses be Scored. To do this, in turn each member of the group is asked to write a number 5 beside the answer on the flip chart that they believe to be the most important, a number 4 beside the next, then 3, 2 and 1 beside the next three in descending priority order.
7. Next, add up the scores for each Answer on the sheet. Select the top scoring responses as the group answer to this question.
8. Session closes.

The outcome of this meeting will be a set of prioritised responses to the key stimulus questions.

Figure 1. The set of instructions provided to the researcher for conducting focus groups.

The outcome of this exercise were two sets of priority responses to the following stimulus questions:

1. What do you value most about the mentoring relationship
2. What do you value least about the mentoring relationship

The responses from each group, as prioritised through this technique, are presented in Figure 2 (a and b).

Assessing Mentoring Research Project Focus Group 1 (AM) Nominal Group Technique Results	
Q.1: What do you value most about the mentoring relationship?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support 2. Expertise 3. Opportunity to seek advice and opinion on different teaching issues 4. Sharing experiences 5. Sharing resources 	
Q.2: What do you value least about the mentoring relationship?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mentoring paperwork unhelpful 2. Logistical difficulties – mentor not always available to meet. 3. Having a mentor who has same specialist subject. 4. Whole mentoring process 5. Linking LLUK units from observations 	

Figure 2a. Focus group 'A' responses to the two questions set.

Assessing Mentoring Research Project Focus Group 2 (PM) Nominal Group Technique Results	
Q.1: What do you value most about the mentoring relationship?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Honesty – my mentor wants to support me and will give me constructive criticism/advice. 2. Support 3. Genuine 4. Time to offload to someone who knows what you are talking about. 5. Confidential Confidence in the person as a mentor Approachable 	
(NB 3 x statements got the same score for 5 th place)	
Q.2: What do you value least about the mentoring relationship?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The paperwork – not very well thought out in terms of what is productive and what's been discussed – pdr – tutorial sheets. 2. Availability – time to meet up 3. Having to meet to suit course requirements (rather than needs of student) 4. Mentor may not have exact experience of teaching your students 5. Non genuine reasons for wanting to be a mentor. 	

Figure 2b. Focus group 'B' responses to the two questions set.

The video footage that was taken of each of these events was then edited down. The video footage demonstrated both the method and the focus group outcomes and included some of the discussion that was generated through these exercises.

Step 2: Collect reflections on the focus group outcomes

Each member of the project team were provided a copy of the video and of the focus group results and asked to give their reflections on the method used (the nominal group technique). They were also asked to give their views on the results of these exercises.

Five responses were received. An analysis of these responses revealed the following themes for question 1: 'What is your response to the process?'

1. the nominal group technique was an effective and useful method
2. a broader, 'reflective', discussion would have been helpful, providing specific examples and a more qualitative approach may have enhanced the outcomes
3. the technique enabled participants to be more objective and allowed all participants to have a say
4. the technique may not result in an accurate account
5. an individual may not have agreed with the group response
6. results were not subject specific
7. video was an effective tool and did not impact on the outcomes and discussions
8. video may not have been necessary (there were issues over the use of video)

An analysis of these responses revealed the following themes for question 2: 'What is your response to the outcome?'

1. pleased with support for mentors and mentoring as a process
2. outcome was expected / could have been predicted / unsurprising
3. would have liked more thought provoking feedback
4. the technique did provoke further questions
5. groups were different but the findings were similar
6. mentors were appreciative of the positive feedback
7. some of the negative feedback raised ideas about the mentoring relationship
8. group were pleased that paperwork, administrative and time constraints were highlighted as major issues

Step 3: Meet to determine the next stage in the action research cycle

A further meeting was held to discuss the reflections and generate any further ideas that came out of this process. At this meeting the problem of the paperwork associated with mentoring was discussed at length. The evaluation process had clearly highlighted this to be problematic and the mentors

reflected on this in some of their feedback.

The suggestion was made that an extension to the project be made to address this issue. The group were asked to respond to this suggestion. At the time of writing, 5 of the group members had responded agreeing with this suggestion.

4. Discussion

The outcomes and findings of this project, in terms of meeting the project objectives, could be described as follows:

Objective: Develop an approach to evaluating mentoring

The findings from the group were that they wanted a non intrusive dialogue around the issues of effectiveness in mentoring. This involved the development of 'remote' methods that provided a template for reflection upon the mentoring experiences of mentees and allowed for a mentors response. The methods developed for this were reported above.

Objective: Employ the approach to evaluate mentoring

The findings from the group were that the approach reported here appeared to have been an effective approach. However, some modifications had been suggested that may include more discussion and qualitative outcomes, should the process be repeated.

By way of outcomes for this objective, two artefacts had been produced. One was a video recording of two nominal focus group exercises. The other was the results of these exercises in the form of a rated set of responses to the stimulus questions.

Objective: Identify approaches to sustain mentoring

While some specific ideas had been revealed through by the project, the group had also been able to indicate the aspects of mentoring that were working well. There was a strong argument for nurturing and supporting mentoring at West Suffolk College

for ITT students. One issue that was clearly indicated in the feedback was the use of paperwork.

Objective: Identify the subject specific nature of mentoring relationships

While this objective was the subject of debate at the first project meeting, the group were unable to clearly establish subject specific elements of the mentoring relationship. This may also suggest a further question to investigate the subject specific nature of mentoring.

This project demonstrated that aspects of mentoring at West Suffolk College were working well. What would be advantageous, in the future, would be a review of the paperwork requirements that support mentoring. A full investigation of the current paperwork used, the purpose of this

paperwork and the internal and external requirements for paperwork would be useful.

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