



**University of Brighton**

# **What's wrong with teacher mentoring and coaching?**

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# Outline

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- i. Overview
  - 1. Context
  - 2. What is mentoring?
  - 3. The research informing the paper
  - 4. Potential benefits of mentoring
  - 5. Conditions for effective mentoring
  - 6. *What's wrong with teacher mentoring?*
  - 7. Discussion

# i. Overview

- ❑ Broad review of research evidence on institution-based teacher mentoring (IBM) across primary, secondary and FE sectors in England
- ❑ Overall picture is that IBM has:
  - ❑ had a significant impact on professional development of teachers
  - ❑ failed to achieve its potential
- ❑ This paper explores the reasons for this and what might be done to remedy the situation

# 1. Context

# The rise of IBM

- ❑ Formal school-based mentoring emerged in some initial teacher preparation programmes in 1980s
- ❑ Introduced more widely as part of policy-driven shift to ‘school-based’ teacher preparation in early 1990s...
- ❑ ...and to school-based newly qualified teacher (NQT) Induction in late 1990s
- ❑ In FE sector, widespread emergence of mentoring in early years of 21<sup>st</sup> C. following LSC guidance (2001), government reforms and regulations (2001, 2004) and Ofsted directives (2004)
- ❑ Sporadic deployment in/for teachers’ EPD and CPD

# Rationale for the rise of IBM?

- ❑ Unclear
- ❑ Likely to vary both between and within particular contexts
- ❑ *Partly informed* by one or more perspectives on professional knowledge and its acquisition – e.g.:
  - reflective practice (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983; Zeichner, 1994);
  - cognitive psychology of skill (Anderson, 2006; Leinhardt et al 1995);
  - situated cognition (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996)
  - socio-cultural perspectives (Edwards & Collison, 1996; Rogoff, 1995; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wertsch, 1991)

# Rationale for the rise of IBM? {cont.}

□ *Partly informed* by more managerial and political imperatives

- alleviate 'reality shock' (Gaede, 1978; Veenman, 1984)
- encourage teacher retention (Feiman Nemser, 1990)
- decrease power of universities, de-intellectualise teacher preparation, deprofessionalise teaching (Wilkin, 1999)?
- more recent (mis-)appropriation as part of accountability and performativity agenda

## **2. What is mentoring?**



# What is mentoring in teacher education?

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- ❑ Lack of general agreement over:
  - meaning of term mentoring
  - its relationship to ‘coaching’
  - what mentoring should seek to achieve
  
- ❑ Like teaching, mentoring can:
  - have a variety of specific purposes or goals;
  - involve a variety of practices and strategies to achieve its purposes and goals

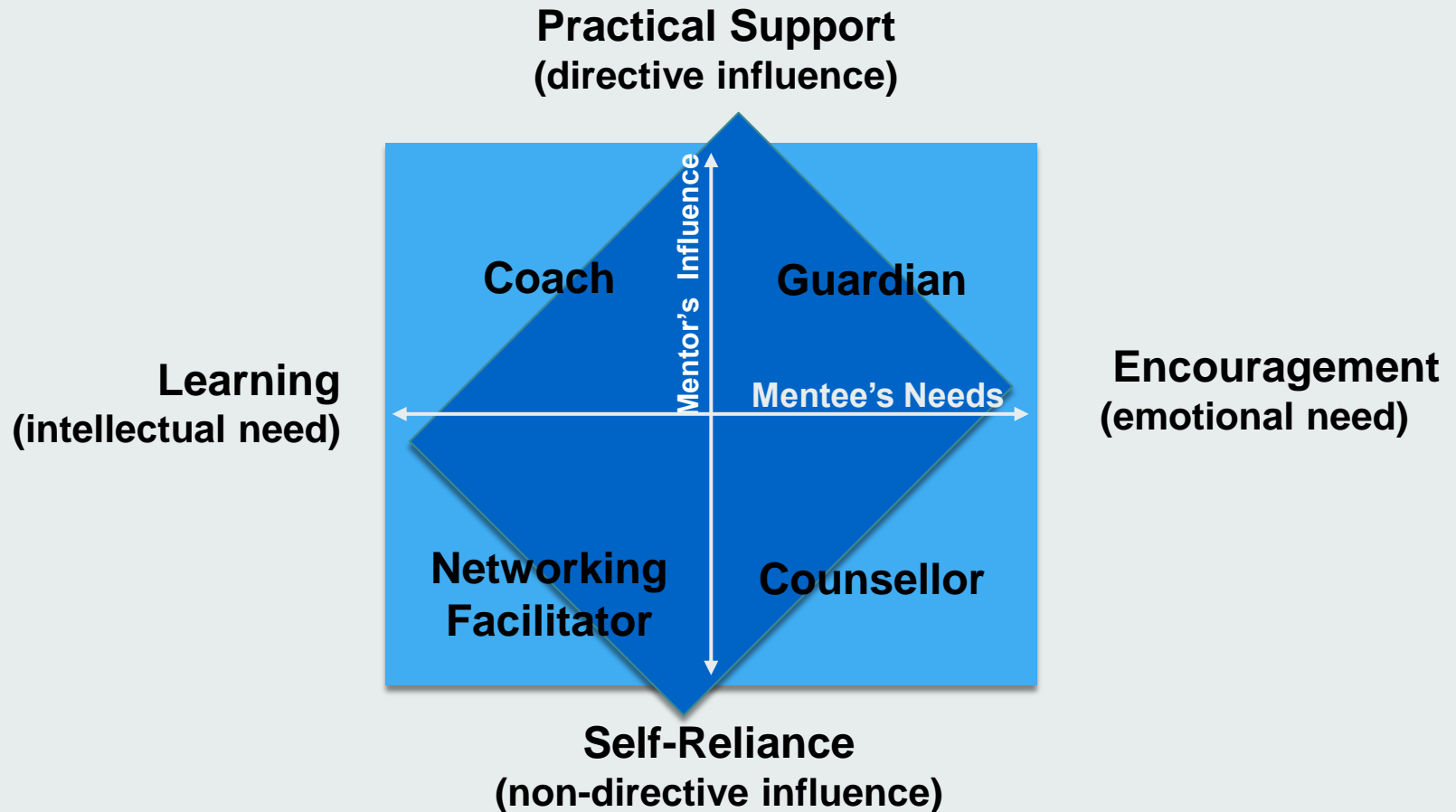
# What is *mentoring* in teacher education?

We define mentoring in teacher education as:

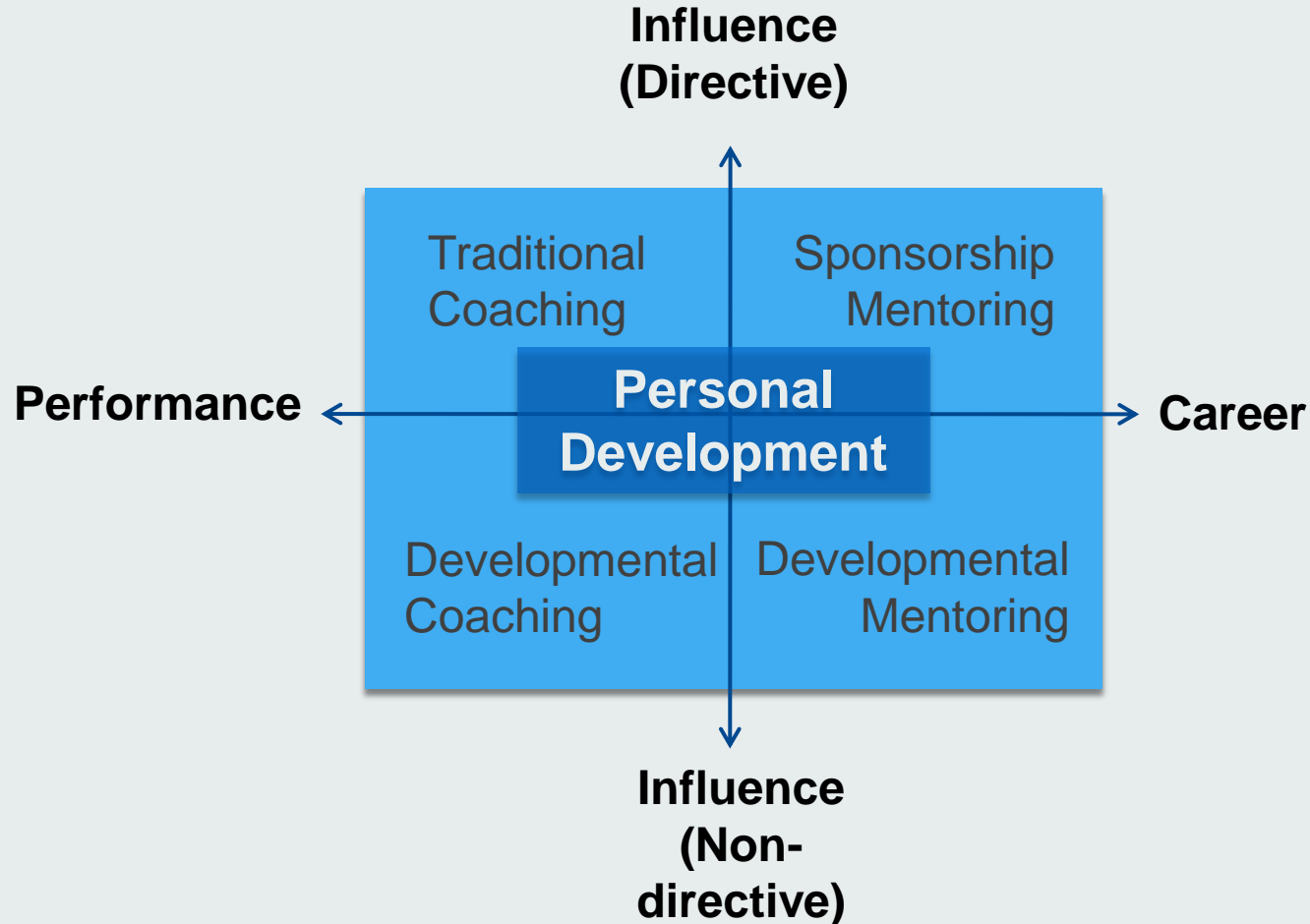
“a one to one relationship between a relatively inexperienced teacher (the mentee) and a relatively experienced teacher (the mentor), which aims to support the mentee's: (a) learning and development as a teacher; (b) wellbeing; and (c) integration into and acceptance by the cultures of both the organisation in which they are employed and the wider profession.”

(Hobson *et al.*, 2015/ forthcoming)

# Dimensions of Mentoring I (Clutterbuck, 2013)



# Dimensions of Mentoring II (Clutterbuck, 2013)



# What is *mentoring* in teacher education?

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Mentoring is – or should be – fundamentally a:

*“developmental activity, with the emphasis on empowering and enabling [mentees] to do things for themselves”*

(Clutterbuck, 2004, p.11).

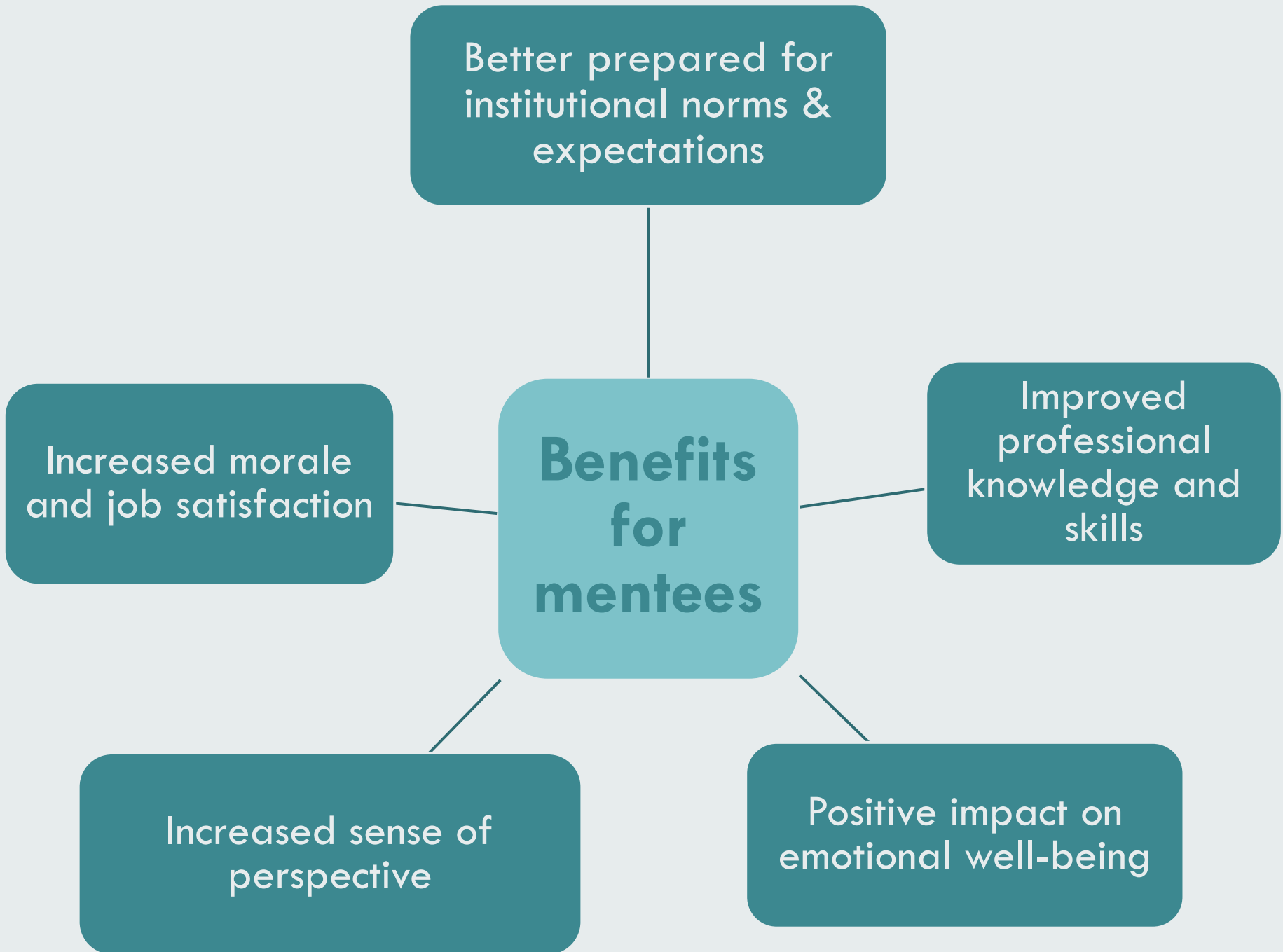
### **3. The research informing the paper**

# Paper draws on

- ❑ Review of international literature on mentoring and teacher development (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009; Tomlinson, Hobson & Malderez, 2010)
- ❑ The '*Becoming a Teacher*' research (Hobson, Malderez, Tracey, Homer, Ashby, McIntyre, Cooper, Roper, Chambers & Tomlinson, 2009)
- ❑ The '*Modes of Mentoring & Coaching*' research (Hobson, McIntyre, Ashby, Hayward, Stevens & Malderez, 2012)
- ❑ *Mentoring and coaching for teachers of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and other subjects in the Further Education and Skills sector in England.* (Hobson, Maxwell, Stevens, Doyle, & Malderez, 2015/in press)

## **4. Potential benefits of mentoring**





New  
ideas/strategies

Reduced  
isolation

Improved  
self-reflection

**Benefits for  
mentors**

Consolidation of  
teacher identity  
and  
professional  
status

Improved  
communication  
skills

Increased  
commitment/enthusiasm for  
teaching

Assisting career  
planning/progression

Positive impact on  
teacher retention  
(mentors)

**Benefits for  
schools/colleges/  
educational  
system**

Enhanced  
student  
learning

Positive  
impact on  
teacher  
retention  
(mentees)

## **5. Conditions for effective mentoring**

# 1. Mentor selection and pairing

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- Being an effective teacher is a necessary but not sufficient condition for being an effective mentor...
- Mentor selection should take account of research findings about characteristics of effective mentors
- Informed pairings
- Opportunities to alter pairings

## 2. Mentor preparation and support

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Mentoring tends to be more effective where mentors:

- are appropriately trained for the role
- have networking opportunities

### 3. Contextual support for mentoring



Mentoring more likely to be effective where (e.g.):

- mentors are provided with (additional) release or non-contact time
- Mentors are given time to meet with mentees during school/college day
- Where the role is achievable and doesn't include potentially conflicting requirements

## ***6. What's wrong with teacher mentoring?***

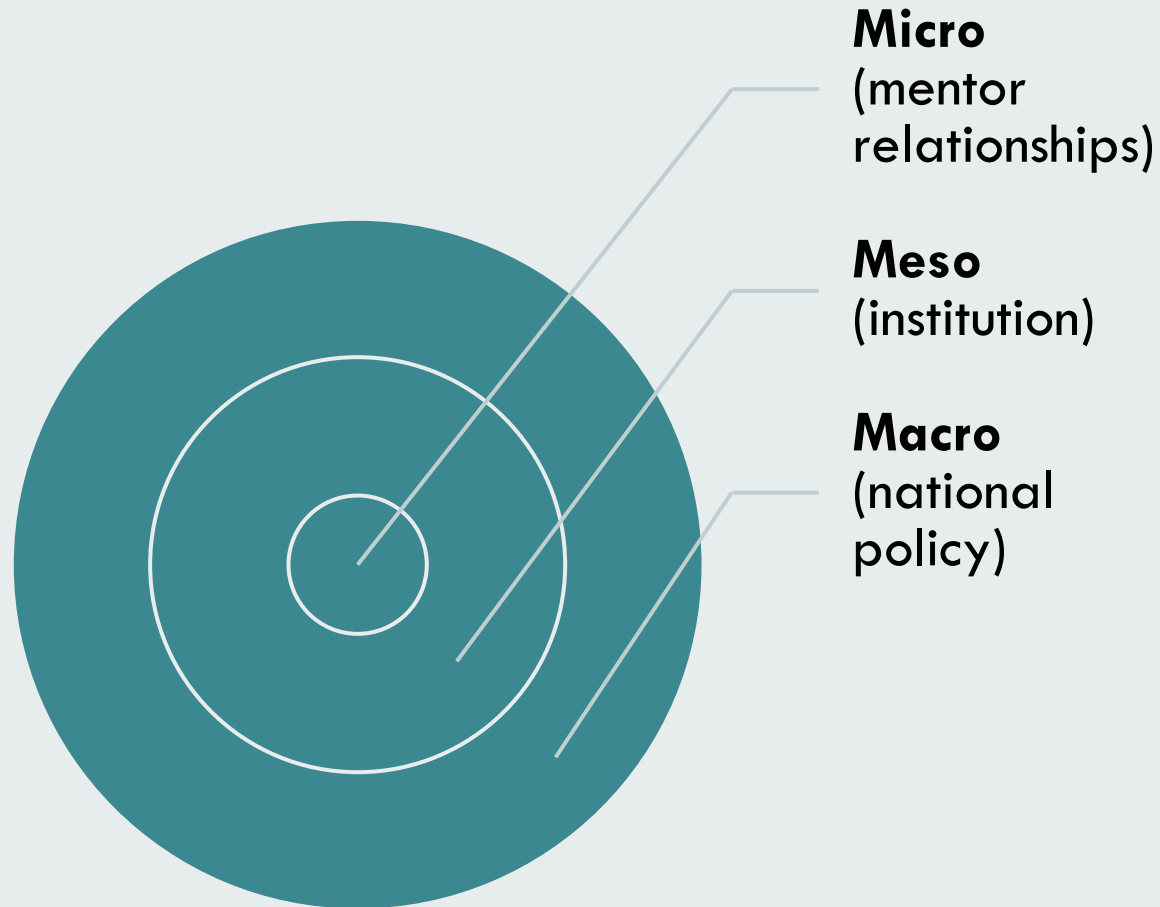


## *What's wrong with teacher mentoring?*

### i) Inconsistency in quality of mentoring support:

*My mentor has probably been the most influential person [in my training]. Some of the other students I have talked to, they have not got on with their mentors at all, they have had really bad experiences... I think it is really dependent on how your course goes, who you have got as a mentor.*

# *Micro, meso and macro levels of analysis ('failings')*



## **Micro (mentoring relationship) level issues**

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### 1) “[A]ttitudes of the beginning teacher mentee”

(Roehrig et al. 2008, p.684; see also, e.g., Bubb & Earley 2006; Schmidt 2008; Valencic Zuljan & Vogrinc 2007)

## Micro (mentoring relationship) level issues {cont.}

E.g. One mentor described a mentee who:

*'has taught lessons and thought they were very, very good... [and] doesn't really want to hear that ... in actual fact they are not, and their learning outcomes are not very good'.*

One mentee spoke for many in stating that they:

*"wouldn't be speaking to my [school-based] mentor about flaws that I have."*

## *Micro (mentoring relationship) level issues {cont.}*

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2) Some mentors are not able to create safe and trusting relationships:

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

## Micro (mentoring relationship) level issues {cont.}

3) Practise of *evaluative mentoring* – takes a number of forms:

- being unduly critical of mentees' work / teaching:

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

## Micro (mentoring relationship) level issues {cont.}

### 3) Practise of evaluative mentoring {cont.}

- Belief of some mentors that theirs is *the right* approach; apparent wish to produce clones:

[M]y mentor in my second year [of ITP]... whenever I said 'this is the way we have to do things' she said quite a lot about my lectures and my special subject, 'oh you shouldn't be doing that and you shouldn't be doing that...you should be doing this'. And ... I kind of felt 'all that work and it is worthless because I have got to do it your way', you know, that is wrong.

## Micro (mentoring relationship) level issues {cont.}

### 3) Practise of evaluative mentoring {cont.}

- Over-use of restrictive mentor-led 'feedback' model in post-lesson discussions
- In general, '*mentors reveal own judgements on mentees' planning or teaching too readily or too often*' ('*judgementoring*' – Hobson & Malderez 2013)



## Micro (mentoring relationship) level issues {cont.}

### 4+) Some mentors:

- don't have clear idea of what mentoring is or should seek to bring about
- support apprenticeship model of teacher preparation
- are mainly concerned to '*jump through hoops*'
- having insufficient time for mentees
- are not sufficiently committed to the role
- lack requisite knowledge or expertise
- grant insufficient responsibility or autonomy to mentees

## Meso (institution) level issues

- 1) Relatively few schools or colleges employ rigorous methods of mentor selection

In some cases, mentoring roles were automatically attached to other (normally middle leadership) roles within the institution:

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

## Meso (institution) level issues {cont.}


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2) Where there are no same-subject specialists within the institution, some institutions fail to make alternative provision

## Meso (institution) level issues {cont.}

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



Sometimes it's not easy for people to share concerns with you because they feel 'that's going to be a black mark'. (Mentor)

## Meso (institution) level issues {cont.}

### 3b) (Mis)Appropriation of mentoring for performativity agenda

*[Coaching is] focused on people who were getting [Ofsted] Grade 4s or Grade 3s in lesson observations and about getting them up from a three...*

*Anybody that is observed by their line manager on a teaching observation or within what we call an IQR, an internal quality review... if they get a Grade 3 then they go on what's called a 'Stepping-Up' programme and they would be assigned to the mentor for a given number of weeks and then they would be re-observed until they get their Grade 2*

## Meso (institution) level issues {cont.}

### 3b) (Mis)Appropriation of mentoring for performativity agenda

[The mentor's role is] *first of all to identify weaknesses of the... teacher, and then develop a plan of action addressing the weak points and this may come either from their own observations or more likely from the department's observation or Ofsted observation. {emphasis added}*

## Meso (institution) level issues {cont.}

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- 4) Failure to ensure that mentors are appropriately trained for the role
- Most ITP mentors and NTI mentors have the opportunity to undertake some form of mentor training
  - Not all mentors (are able to) take advantage of this
  - Some feel that any training would have limited value...

## Meso (institution) level issues {cont.}

[Y]ou could say for all the years I've been [a mentor], I've been making it up as I'm going along... No one has ever said 'Hang on, has anyone ever put you on a programme to train you in how to do this?' ... [Y]ou find out what works well, how to look after someone, how to push somebody else... when to say 'yes you can do something' and when to say 'no'. That, I suppose, experience is the best training. But if somebody said 'Hang on, there is a course on this' I don't think anyone can give you the course on that.

(Mentor)



## Meso (institution) level issues {cont.}

5) Many (most?) schools / colleges provide mentors with insufficient time to carry out the role effectively, especially given associated administrative requirements

Problem exacerbated where institutions do not timetable mentor and mentee to be 'free' at the same time:

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

## Meso (institution) level issues {cont.}

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6) Lack of effective partnership working between some HEIs and 'partner' schools / colleges:

[S]ometimes the students feel things are repetitive and that's because, although I know the title of the university's lecture, I don't know the content. (Mentor)

## Meso (institution) level issues {cont.}

7) In general, may be argued that many schools/colleges fail to take teacher mentoring sufficiently seriously

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

# Macro (national policy) level issues

- 1) Failure to accord greater / sufficient status to the mentoring role through, e.g.:
  - (lack of) recognition in career progression frameworks and salary structures.
- 2) Failure to recognise or impress upon schools and colleges the importance of:
  - rigorous and appropriate forms of mentor selection and mentor training
  - ensuring that student and newly qualified teachers have access to subject specialist support

## Macro (national policy) level issues {cont.}

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- 3) Failure to provide sufficient funding to schools and colleges that is earmarked for mentoring and PLD
- 4) Failure to effectively promote a common understanding of (*or to understand*) what mentoring is or ought to entail, or what mentors should be seeking to achieve
- 5) Associating monitoring and assessment of student and newly qualified teachers with mentoring role - illustrated, in relation to NQTs, in the Department for Education's (2012) 'Statutory guidance' to schools...

## Macro (national policy) level issues {cont.}

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

## Macro (national policy) level issues {cont.}

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6) Creation of accountability culture characterised by 'surveillance overkill' (Mahony *et al.*, 2004, p. 440)

- Provokes insecurity, anxiety and mistrust amongst employees (Jeffrey, 2002; Ball, 2003; Lumby, 2009)
- Also responsible for amount of time mentors must spend completing relevant 'paperwork'...

## Macro (national policy) level issues {cont.}

[T]he forms that I have fill out, they are horrendous ... I don't think they serve any purpose, I think they're a paper filling exercise. We go through the motions of completing the form ... I can see that if somebody is not coming up to standard it might be useful but I actually don't think it helps particularly in the NQTs' development...

(Mentor)



## Macro (national policy) level issues {cont.}

### 7) Failure to learn from experience of mentoring in other contexts

- mentoring is more effective as an 'off-line' activity (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995; Clutterbuck, 2004)

*I mean in theory people are supposed to be designated a mentor when they come here and very often that mentor is their line manager and ... you've got line management confused with mentoring. You've got the power dynamic there.*

## What's wrong with teacher mentoring? Some consequences: Costs for mentees, mentors and institutions / education systems

Mentees	Mentors	Institutions
Negatively impact mentees' wellbeing	Create unmanageable workloads	Result in promotion and reproduction of conventional norms and practices
Stunt mentees' professional learning and development or 'learnacy' (Claxton 2004)	Sense of insecurity or threat at prospect of being observed or challenged by mentees	Contribute to teacher <i>attrition</i> (Chambers <i>et al.</i> 2010; Hobson <i>et al.</i> 2009)
Create 'learned helplessness' (Maier & Seligman 1976)	Feelings of isolation in role	

# *What's wrong with teacher mentoring? Some consequences:*

## **Costs for mentees**

- Negative impact on mentees' wellbeing – one NQT described the impact of evaluative mentoring thus:

You get told all the time what you are doing wrong, not what you are doing right... That really pulled me down and I thought 'what's the point?'

# Teacher professional development position statement

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- Professional learning and development will be more likely to come about where teachers are able both to *recognize* and ***acknowledge their perceived limitations or development needs to one or more significant others who may be able to help them to address these,*** or else to facilitate access to someone who (or something that) can.

# *What's wrong with teacher mentoring? Some consequences:*

## **Costs for mentees**

- 'Fabrication as strategic silence'  
(Hobson & McIntyre, 2013)

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

# *What's wrong with teacher mentoring? Some consequences:*

## **Costs for mentees**

- 'Fabrication as strategic avoidance'  
(Hobson & McIntyre, 2013)

*'putting subject  
knowledge to the  
back'*

*the kids will ask you a  
question, something  
about physics and  
you're hoping no one  
will ask you...*

# 7. Discussion

# Discussion

- What can be done – at micro, meso- and macro-levels – to improve institution-based mentoring?
  - ▣ In simple terms, seek to achieve the conditions for effective mentoring relating to:
    - Mentor selection and pairing
    - Mentor training
    - Contextual support for mentoring
  - ▣ In practice, how difficult might this be?
  - ▣ Is a significant cultural shift required?
- In absence of such a shift should we invest in external mentors?



## Further information

Chambers, G.N., Hobson, A.J. & Tracey, L. (2010) "Teaching could be a fantastic job *but...*" Three stories of student teacher withdrawal from initial teacher preparation programmes in England. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 16(1), 111-129.

Clutterbuck, D. (2013) *Making Developmental Mentoring Work*. Keynote presentation given at Sussex Police Mentoring CPD Day, Slaugham, West Sussex, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014.

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Hobson, A.J., Maxwell, B., Stevens, A., Doyle, K. & Malderez, A. (2015/in press) *Mentoring and coaching for teachers in the Further Education and Skills sector in England*. London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

# Further information

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# Contact and Potential Impact

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If this research impacts on your work in any way, please tell us about it 😊