MENTORING AND COACHING FOR TEACHERS IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS SECTOR IN ENGLAND

FULL REPORT

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DISCLAIMER

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Since the 1980s, work-based mentoring and coaching have enjoyed a meteoric rise in the UK and many other parts of the world (Wang and Odell, 2002; Tomlinson *et al.,* 2010). Evidence suggests that mentoring and coaching are amongst the most effective means of supporting the professional development of teachers, though in practice the quality of mentoring and coaching is extremely variable (Hobson *et al.*, 2009a). Whilst much research has been carried out on school-based mentoring, a relatively small amount of research exists on institution-based mentoring in the Further Education and Skills (FE) sector, though again this suggests that mentoring – and other opportunities intending to support the professional learning and development (PLD) of teachers/lecturers – are of variable quality (Oti, 2012; Swain and Conlan, 2012; Maxwell, 2014). There may thus be a case for strengthening institution-based mentoring for FE teachers and/or for seeking to compensate for some of its limitations, especially in those areas – such as the STEM subjects – where there are concerns about the shortage of skilled teachers.

Recent research from the compulsory schooling sector in England suggests that *external* mentors – i.e. experienced subject specialist teachers who are not based in the same institutions as the teachers they are supporting[1] – can provide effective support for teachers' PLD and can help compensate for some of the limitations of institution-based mentoring (Hobson *et al.*, 2012; Hobson and McIntyre, 2013). However, *very few* studies have been carried out on teacher mentoring provided by external mentors and, to the best of our knowledge, *no* studies have explored external mentor support – or the potential of such support – for FE teachers. Indeed there is little evidence of formal programmes of external mentor support for teachers in the FE sector.

In this research, we have thus sought to provide a more comprehensive account of existing, institution-based mentoring for FE teachers, while also exploring the potential for introducing an external mentor support programme for such teachers, with particular emphasis on teachers of STEM subjects.

Within FE, as in education more widely, there is a 'lack of clarity' over what mentoring is or ought to involve (Tedder and Lawy, 2009) and varying understandings and enactments of mentoring are evident (Maxwell, 2014). In addition, some activity that is labelled 'coaching' within FE has significant overlaps with mentoring in terms of aims and processes (Hardman *et al.*, 2008). Adapting slightly Hobson and Malderez's (2013) definition, we conceptualise mentoring – whether it is undertaken by someone in the teacher's institution or by an 'external mentor' – 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.*

We conceptualise mentoring as a developmental activity in which mentors may adopt a range of supportive roles to empower mentees and support their PLD and wellbeing (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). One such mentor role is *coaching*, which relates to attempts to support an individual's development of one or more job-specific skills or capabilities (Malderez and Bodoczky, 1999; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). We thus see mentoring as a broader concept and PLD activity than coaching, and so when we refer to 'mentoring' this encompasses coaching.

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[1] The interaction between external mentors and their mentees may take place within and/or outside of mentees' institutions, and may be face-to-face and/or remote.

1.2 RESEARCH AIMS

Through the research we sought to:

1. learn more about the reach, strengths and limitations of institution-based teacher mentoring in FE and of other forms of support for FE teachers' PLD, with a particular but not exclusive focus on teachers of STEM subjects;
2. explore the potential need for and appropriateness of a programme of external mentor support for FE teachers in general and STEM teachers in particular;
3. identify factors which may encourage or discourage FE teachers of STEM and other subjects from accessing and taking full advantage of external and/or institution-based mentoring, and identify other barriers to effective mentoring and potential means of overcoming these;
4. make recommendations with respect to strengthening institution-based mentoring and/or introducing a programme of external mentor support for FE teachers.

The overriding aim of the proposed study is to inform the design and implementation of a programme for enhancing institution-based mentoring and/or providing external mentor support, which would add value to existing mechanisms for initial teacher preparation and PLD, and thus enhance teachers' subject knowledge, subject pedagogy, and effectiveness, wellbeing and retention.

1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research comprised three main elements:

• an initial review of literature; which informed:

• semi-structured interviews with teachers, mentors and a range of other stakeholders associated with the teaching of STEM and other subjects in the Further Education and Skills sector; and

• an online survey of teachers of all subjects/vocational areas within the FE sector.

1) Review of literature

First, we undertook a review of existing research on mentoring and other support for the professional learning and development (PLD) of teachers in the FE sector in England (but drawing on international literature where appropriate), with particular emphasis on teaching and mentoring in relation to STEM subjects.

The overall aims of the review of literature were to inform:

a) data generation and analysis for the empirical phase of the study; and
b) the production and possible implementation of any recommendations arising from our empirical research findings.

The review of literature thus part-shaped the data generation and analysis undertaken in the subsequent stages of the research, and the account of the literature review provided in Chapter 2 provides a valuable context for the empirical findings of our research which are reported in Chapters 3-5. Further details about the methodology of the review are provided in Chapter 2.

2) Interviews with FE teachers and other stakeholders

Secondly, we undertook part-structured interviews with colleagues from a range of institutions – including FE colleges, Sixth-Form Colleges, adult and community learning providers, employment and learning providers, and universities – in order to find out more about institution-based mentoring and coaching in FE, and about the potential for a programme of external mentor support. Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique initiated via existing contacts of colleagues at the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, Myscience, the University of Brighton and Sheffield Hallam University.

In total, 40 participants drawn from 19 different institutions across England were involved in this strand of the research:

- where possible, and in 25 cases, participants were interviewed on an individual and face-to-face basis
- in two cases, teachers participated in face-to-face group interviews (with three and two participants, respectively)
- in six cases, individual participants were interviewed by telephone
- in four cases, participants responded to the interview questions via email.

The 40 participants comprised:

- 8 mentors or coaches of beginning and/or more experienced STEM teachers;
- 8 beginning teachers of STEM subjects (unqualified trainee, newly qualified or second year teachers) who had current or recent experience of being mentored;
- 4 other experienced STEM teachers who had previously been mentored and might be potential beneficiaries of external mentoring;
- 5 heads or assistant heads of department or faculty (STEM subjects);
- 4 FE-based teacher educators, including heads of teacher education and/or CPD (all subjects);
- 3 other senior leaders in FE, who had knowledge of mentoring and the capacity of the provider to support this (all subjects);
- 8 HEI colleagues with knowledge of teacher education and mentoring for the FE sector in relation to STEM subjects and/or more broadly;
- 3 senior colleagues with experience of leading, coordinating or providing programmes of external mentor support for secondary teachers of STEM subjects, or similar programmes in FE.[2]

All interviews were recorded and (with the exception of one, where the digital recorder failed) transcribed. Informed by an inductive analysis of the first 15 interviews and our review of literature, a coding frame was developed and all transcripts (or detailed notes or email responses) were subsequently coded using qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA). The coding frame was developed during the coding process to account for emergent findings which had not been anticipated in the original coding frame.

3) Online teacher survey

Thirdly, we ran a national online survey of teachers of all subjects/vocational areas in the FE and Skills sector. The survey focused on teachers' experiences of institution-based mentoring and the potential demand for external mentoring amongst a larger number and broader cross-section of teachers across the sector, including those based in FE colleges, Sixth-Form Colleges and other adult and community and employment and learning providers.

The invitation to complete the survey including the link to the online survey was distributed via a range of different regional and national networks, therefore utilising a snowball sampling technique. The platform used to host the survey was Bristol online surveys: www.survey.bris.ac.uk/

In total 392 usable survey responses were received, from teacher respondents across all nine regions of England: the North East; North West; Yorkshire and the Humber; East Midlands; West Midlands;

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[2] The numbers provided here for the different categories of participant sum to more than 40 because some participants occupied more than one role (e.g. head of department and mentor).

East of England; London; South East; and South West. A brief account of the sample characteristics are presented below, with further details provided in the Appendix.

- Around two-thirds (65%) of respondents were female and 35% male.
- The majority of respondents had been teaching for 6 years or more (76%), while 14% had been teaching for 2-5 years, 3% for 1 year and 7% had not yet completed their first year of teaching.
- Most respondents (79%) had successfully obtained an initial teacher training (ITT) qualification, while 6% were currently working towards one and 8% did not have or were not currently working towards one.
- Respondents taught across a broad range of subject/vocational areas: the most frequently cited subject was mathematics, followed by biology, chemistry and English.
- The most commonly cited qualification was first degree and/or postgraduate degree followed by Level 3 professional or technical qualification.
- Just under three fifths (59%) of respondents were from FE colleges, with 29% from Sixth-Form Colleges. A small proportion of respondents were from adult and community learning providers (5%) and employment and learning providers (including group training associations) (1%).
- In terms of job role, 61% of respondents spent the majority of their work time teaching and/or assessing students, while 25% had a mixed role of leadership, teaching and assessment. A smaller proportion (6%) had a predominately leadership role.

Uni-variate and bi-variate analyses were undertaken using SPSS statistical software. Chi-square tests of association were used as well as Cramer's V tests to give an idea of the strength of association. Given the nature of the sample (non-random) we cannot assume that the findings are generalisable to the population: ideally a random sample would have been drawn from the population but population data were unavailable. Therefore the findings presented here relate strictly to the sample alone.

Chi-square test of association

Chi-square tests of association are used to assess whether two variables can be regarded as statistically independent of one another. The test takes account of the sample size and the size of the contingency table whilst comparing the actual (observed) responses across the table with what would be expected if the two variables were completely independent. This process is used to calculate a test statistic that is then compared to the appropriate theoretical Chi-square distribution (determined by the table's dimensions: 2 by 3; 3 by 4 etc.). If this test statistic is large enough to conclude that it is unlikely to be created through chance/randomness a 'statistically significant' association is concluded. Commonly this is when the probability value (p-value) is less than 5% (or 0.05); i.e. the probability that a test statistic 'this size' being created randomly is found to be 5% or less. A non-significant finding can be seen as being as important as a significant one.

Cramer's V

Chi-square test statistics depend upon the size of contingency table under scrutiny and because of this they cannot be directly compared. Cramer's V is a statistic that standardises the Chi-square test statistic so that direct comparison is possible (regardless of the size/dimensions of the contingency table under scrutiny). Cramer's V values are used to determine the strength of association or dependency between two categorical variables after significance has been ascertained using chi-square tests. Cramer's V has a value between 0 and 1: values close to 0 show little association, values close to 1 show strong association. It has particular utility for comparing the relative strength of the associations.

Research ethics

The research, which was granted ethical approval by the University of Brighton and Sheffield Hallam University in early 2014, was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). This includes a commitment to:

- gaining the fully informed consent of prospective participants in the research;
- respecting the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of those who choose to participate;
- ensuring that participants are aware of their right to withdraw from the research at any time should they wish to do so;
- the secure storage of data to comply with Data Protection legislation.

In order to protect the anonymity of individual participants and the institutions in which they are employed, certain details have been deliberately omitted from the information about the participants which is provided throughout the report.

1.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have provided a brief rationale for the current research and have outlined the research aims and research design. In Chapter 2 we provide an account of our review of literature.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION: AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

This chapter provides a critical review of the academic, professional and policy literature base on mentoring teachers in the FE and Skills sector. The review focuses on:

- the purposes and reach of mentoring and the models of mentoring that underpin current mentoring practice;
- previous and current initiatives and resources, including mentor training programmes, that were designed with the intention of improving the quality of mentoring in the sector; and
- current issues relating to the mentoring of teachers in the sector.

To provide context for the review of mentoring, the first part of this chapter discusses the nature of the FE and Skills sector, the policy context and current approaches to supporting the professional learning and development (PLD) of teachers.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

To source academic literature we undertook a systematic key word search of the British Education Index, the Australian Education Index and the United States of America Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). We also used key word searches using Google and Google Scholar to identify policy and professional literature and additional academic sources. In accordance with the aims of the research, particular emphasis was placed on searching for literature that illuminated mentoring support for teachers of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Where appropriate we followed up sources cited in the documents retrieved from our systematic searches and searched key websites such as the websites of the Centres of Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs), the Excellence Gateway, the Institute for Learning, Ofsted and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

While there has been growth in research into the initial training and PLD of FE teachers from the early 2000s onwards, the evidence base is still very limited. For example, Duckworth and Maxwell's (2015) systematic literature search uncovered only thirteen peer reviewed papers since 2000 where the main focus was on the mentoring of student teachers in FE. Likewise, academic literature on mentoring beyond initial teacher training (ITT) in the FE and Skills sector is very limited.

Since this literature review is intended to scope the field, initiatives which may not be labelled as mentoring and/or which do not align fully with our working definition of mentoring have nonetheless been included if they have the potential to inform the future development of mentoring for FE STEM teachers. For example, we have reviewed documentation related to the previous LSIS (Learning and Skills Improvement Service) subject learning coaches' programme.

2.3 CONTEXT

FE and Skills: providers, provision and teaching workforce
The FE and Skills sector in England is large and diverse, comprising:

> '244 general FE [Further Education] colleges, 94 Sixth-Form Colleges, 15 specialist designated institutions…, over 1,000 private or charitable training providers, over 200 public bodies such as local authorities offering adult community learning, 38 higher education institutions which also offer FE courses, 18 National Skills Academies, training departments of major employers…, 14 NHS [National Health Service] Trusts, government departments…, the armed services and government agencies like the Prison Service.' (Lingfield, 2012b: 18)

The sector provides qualifications from National Qualification Framework entry level through, in larger colleges, to higher education awards. While in many colleges the core provision is focused on 16-18 year olds the sector is now able to enrol learners from age 14 and provide courses for learners throughout their working life and beyond. It is important to note that '[a] disproportionate number of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds go into the FE sector' (Ofsted, 2013: 6).

Staff responsible for teaching in the sector hold a variety of roles variously described as tutor, trainer, lecturer or instructor, and there is significant variation in employment contracts and conditions. The further education workforce differs from the school workforce in ways that have important implications for the manner in which mentoring has been perceived and implemented. Consideration of the further development of mentoring in the sector would need to take account of the following characteristics of the workforce, amongst others:

- most teachers enter teaching as a second career – teaching their vocational specialism;
- the majority of teachers learn to teach 'on the job', undertaking a programme of initial teacher preparation (ITP), 'education' (ITE) or 'training' (ITT)[3] alongside employment as a teacher. UCET (2009) estimate that 90% of beginner teachers undertake ITT courses on a part-time in-service basis;
- many teachers enter further education through the 'long apprenticeship' (Gleeson and James, 2007) – beginning as part-time casual teachers and gradually working towards full time employment;
- some teachers enter the sector through a pre-service FE and Skills ITT route
- some teachers enter FE teaching having previously taught and qualified as a teacher in secondary education or occasionally primary education;
- short term and fractional contracts and employment through agencies are common.

Professionalism and professional development in the FE and Skills sector

Policy context

The policy imperative of improving standards within the sector has been the driving force of continuous reform initiatives from the, then, Labour government's Success for All reforms (DfES, 2002) onwards. The coalition government's strategy for the sector, New Challenges, New Chances (BIS, 2011), like the earlier reforms, highlights the necessity of improving the quality of teaching and raising teaching professionalism in order to improve outcomes for learners. Coalition strategies have shifted the emphasis away from centrally driven reform initiatives to employer and sector responsibility for the professional learning and development and quality of teaching. Central to this was the independent review led by Lord Lingfield of professionalism in FE (Lingfield, 2012a; 2012b), and the subsequent FE workforce deregulation. Revocation of the 2007 FE Workforce Regulations means that from 2013 FE teachers were no longer required by legislation to hold specific teaching qualifications, nor fulfil the previously required 30 hours 'CPD' per year, which was made up of engagement in institutional events or activities and/or self-directed activity designed to support PLD. Furthermore, teachers were no longer expected to join the Institute for Learning, which had been established as a member-led professional body for teachers in the sector. Instead initial teacher training and PLD requirements are to be determined by employers so that they are appropriate to the organisation, teaching context and learners. The Education and Training Foundation was launched in August 2013 as an employer led partnership to improve professionalism and standards. The vision for the Foundation as set out by BIS (2012) brings together a number of policy streams, providing a mechanism for implementing the recommendations of the Lingfield review (Lingfield, 2012a; 2012b), the Commission on Adult and Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL, 2013) and the LSIS review

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[3] These terms are used interchangeably in this report, as are those of 'student teacher', 'trainee teacher' and 'trainee', to refer to those following programmes of ITP/ITE/ITT.

of teaching qualifications (LSIS, 2013a). A key underpinning principle of the Foundation's work is enabling sector employers to take collective responsibility for the main professional considerations affecting their workforce (ETF, 2013). It is, however, important to note that while employer led approaches are being driven forward, there is still a strong, and potentially conflicting, policy commitment to ensuring compliance with centrally determined professional standards. To take forward professional standards and workforce development, one of the four core priorities for the Foundation, activities in the first year of operation include refreshing the LSIS (2007) Professional Standards for Teachers, Trainers and Tutors, and launching a major programme to enhance ITT in the FE sector (ETF, 2013). There is a particular focus on supporting the teaching and learning of English, mathematics and STEM subjects, and provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Dual professionalism

A concept of dual professionalism (Robson, 1998) underpins initial and continuing professional learning and development and the professional standards for FE teachers. Teachers are required to be an expert in both their subject/vocational area and in teaching and learning. Drawing on this and linking professionalism to positive outcomes for learners the Institute for Learning defines professional development in the sector as:

> 'maintaining, improving and broadening relevant knowledge and skills in a subject or vocational specialism and in teaching and training methods so that it has a positive impact on practice and the learner experience'. (IfL, 2013: 1)

In addition the Institute for Learning has identified a third core area of learning – knowledge of how changes in policy and the local context affect teaching and learning.

However, as evidence presented to the Commission for Adult and Vocational Teaching and Learning demonstrated, becoming an effective dual professional requires time and support:

> 'it takes time for teachers and trainers to realise their dual identities. Dual professionals are not born, they need support to develop.' (CAVTL, 2013: 20)

It is important to note that constructing an identity as a dual professional is a complex social and individual process. As Panter's (2011) research illustrates, the desire to retain prior vocational identities and associated practices may impede teachers in the sector from fully engaging in the social practices that would enable them to construct an identity as a teacher. Furthermore, Panter (2011: 157) found that teachers 'demonstrated considerable depths of confusion in locating their individual role and professional identity' and that 'this confusion is systemic to the duality of roles and the context in which informants are required to play out their professional lives on a daily basis'.

Initial teacher training

ITT in most of the FE sector is provided through programmes run by universities in partnership with FE providers or directly by FE providers delivering awarding body qualifications. Since the majority of teachers are already employed when they embark on their ITT, the usual pattern of training requires half or one day a week course attendance over two years. Given the diversity of subjects within the sector most courses focus on generic teaching and learning knowledge and skills, with much of the support for the development of subject specialism provided through workplace mentoring. Pre-service trainee teachers undertake the same qualifications as in-service trainees over one year, combining course attendance with teaching placements supported through workplace mentoring. The qualification framework for teachers in the sector has recently been revised (LSIS, 2013b). It only provides specialist initial teacher qualifications for teaching literacy, ESOL, numeracy and disabled learners. Some teachers, particularly those in Sixth-Form Colleges and some science teachers, enter FE through a secondary specialist PGCE. Some teachers, particularly those in work-based training organisations where teaching is only part of their role, may only take a short introductory

qualification. The BIS evaluation of FE teachers' qualifications (GHK Consulting, 2012) found evidence that some work-based learning and adult and community learning teachers are not supported by their employers to go beyond this short qualification.

Initial teacher education in the sector had undergone a series of reforms since an Ofsted survey in 2003 reached the damning conclusion that 'the current system of FE teacher training does not provide a satisfactory foundation of professional development for FE teachers at the start of their careers'. (Ofsted, 2003: 2). The key issues rested, not with the quality of the training courses, but with the limited opportunities trainee teachers had to learn to teach their specialist subjects and weak mentoring and support in the workplace. Ofsted summary reports (2009, 2012) have charted significant improvements in the quality of ITT. However, a recent review found that more account needs to be taken of the development of dual professionalism by giving the application of specialist understanding and skills parity of esteem with generic teaching skills (Ofsted, 2012). The report goes on to highlight that some trainee teachers are not supported by good quality specialist work-based mentors.

Unlike primary and secondary teachers, FE teachers are not offered a structured NQT year. Between 2007 and 2012 the regulations required a programme of post-qualification study and supervised practice after which early career teachers were supposed to present evidence to the Institute for Learning to achieve 'qualified teacher status' – 'QTLS' (Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills). The onus for ensuring that this was undertaken was placed on individuals rather than providers. Drawing on evidence from the review of FE teachers qualifications, GHK Consulting (2012) found that only about 15% of teacher workforce in the sector had attained, or committed to the study required to attain, QTLS. The Lingfield review (Lingfield, 2012a: 14) concluded that 'QTLS/ATLS has not become a universal full licence to practice and a driver of teaching excellence'. As a consequence, it is no longer a statutory requirement. It will be for employers to decide what, if any, support should be available to FE and Skills teachers who have completed their ITT programme.

Since the deregulation of initial teacher qualifications was only implemented from September 2013 it is as yet unclear what the impact will be. The Education and Training Foundation has a central role in encouraging and supporting providers to ensure ITT is appropriate to their context and of a high quality.

Professional learning and development

Prior to the mandatory requirement in place between 2007 and 2012 for FE teachers to undertake and record 30 hours of activity designed to support professional learning and development (PLD) with the Institute for Learning, key issues regarding PLD were identified as:

- Considerable variation in the amount, types and purposes of opportunities for PLD available to FE teachers.
- A predominance of generic professional development rather than subject/vocational updating.
- Underdevelopment of teaching skills linked to trainees' subject/vocational area.
- A shortage of opportunities for work placements to support industrial and professional updating.
- A lack of cohesion in the approaches taken to supporting PLD across the sector, exacerbated since teachers were often also members of professional bodies operating within their own specialisms, which had their own PLD requirements.
- A lack of resources/finance allocated to PLD.
- A lack of easily available good practice resources.

(Hardman *et al.*, 2008; Crawley, 2012)

There is evidence of some progress in addressing these issues. The Excellence Gateway, previously maintained by LSIS and to be taken forward by the Education and Training Foundation, has become a repository for good practice materials. Records of PLD filed with the Institute for Learning (IfL) indicate that most teachers exceeded the 30 hour requirement for participating in PLD events or activities. They spent equal amounts of time on developmental activities focused on their subject/vocational area as on activities focused on generic teaching and learning. It is important to recognise that while the intention of the recorded activities or events is to support PLD, it cannot be assumed that all such activities and events did indeed lead to professional learning and/or development. Therefore, it is important to not simply equate increased time spent on PLD activity with increases in professional knowledge, learning or development. Nonetheless, the IfL records do indicate that increasingly over time PLD was shared between teachers, and approaches to PLD became more reflective and self-directed – with an increasing emphasis on collaborative learning and action research (IfL, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). Such approaches to PLD have been shown to be more effective in enhancing PLD than didactic training events (Stoll *et al.*, 2012).

While the IfL reports provide a useful indication of level and range of PLD activities and events that are being undertaken they are not based on independent evaluation and may over represent staff who are committed to their own PLD. Focus groups underpinning the research were self-selecting and towards the end of the period a membership boycott by the University and College Union meant that conclusions in IfL reports were only drawn from returns from teachers who felt committed to the work of the IfL.

Key issues for supporting PLD in the sector identified in recent reports and papers resonate with earlier reports, with the exception of the issue of a lack of good practice materials.[4] Issues highlighted include:

- Creating an entitlement to PLD for all FE and Skills teachers, particularly for those in work-based and adult and community learning settings and those on fractional or part-time contracts or who are isolated from colleagues.
- Enabling vocational teachers to undertake annual employer placements – keeping a 'clear line of sight to work' as advocated by the Commission on Adult and Vocational Teaching and Learning (2013).
- Integrating initial teacher training and PLD and establishing a full strategic linkage between Human Resources, ITT, PLD and Quality Assurance.
- For some employers, moving away from PLD as a 'tick box' performance target, towards embracing the IfL model of professional practice.
- Encouraging middle managers to understand the importance of developing staff in order to achieve strategic aims and objectives for organisational growth so that they play a key role in driving forward the PLD agenda.
- Addressing the important barriers to PLD of time and cost.
- Exploiting the potential of partnerships and consortia such as the Centres of Excellence for Teacher Training to provide more flexible PLD and address key issues such as mentoring.

(CAVTL 2013; Crawley, 2012; GHK Consulting, 2012; Robson *et al.*, 2009; LLUK, 2010)

Limitations of workplace learning in the FE and Skills Sector
Reports and peer reviewed papers draw attention to the ways in which FE and Skills sector workplaces often impede the learning of both beginner and experienced teachers (for example see: Lucas and Unwin 2009; Maxwell, 2010, 2014; Orr 2012; Orr and Simmons, 2010). Any plans to develop mentoring in FE would need to take account of these issues. Drawing on evidence from the

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[4] Resources to support mentoring were produced by LSIS and CETTs, although only some of these are still publicly available (see Section 2.5, below).

FE sector and wider workplace learning literature, Maxwell (2014) argues that three areas require attention to improve PLD for FE and Skills teachers:

- *Workplace culture* – studies consistently point to the limitations that the performative and managerial culture place on FE and Skills teacher learning. A culture of busyness and overwork is evident, in which it is difficult for more experienced staff to support less experienced staff. Inexperienced staff do not ask for support as they do not wish to further burden those that could help them (Lucas and Unwin, 2009; Orr, 2012). Furthermore, some FE organisations lack a tradition of professional development, particularly in relation to pedagogy (Orr and Simmons, 2010). It is, however, important to note that while the institutional culture may not be conducive to professional learning, departments or work groups may still be able to create a supportive learning environment for their staff (Lucas and Unwin, 2009).

- *Organisational strategies, processes and structures* – weak linkages between ITT, PLD and functions such as quality assurance and human resources have restricted opportunities for work place learning (Lucas and Unwin, 2009; Ofsted, 2003). While GKL Consulting (2012) found that much progress had been made in addressing this issue, the linkages are not always successful, particularly in the sector beyond FE colleges (LLUK 2010). Teachers' learning may be further limited by a lack of structures to support PLD, for instance the lack of an architecture for mentoring (Cunningham, 2007). This is explored further in Section 6.

- *Allocation and structuring of work* – the allocation and structuring of work determines the extent to which teachers work independently or collaboratively, the time they have to establish supportive professional relationships and the time available for PLD activities, such as mentoring. In turn this determines the opportunities available for teachers' workplace learning. There is evidence that the high workloads of trainee teachers combined with excessive paperwork means that they develop limited understandings of teaching and restricted approaches to practice (Orr and Simmons, 2010; Orr, 2012). This is compounded where the workload and/or timetabling of their mentor's work restricts the support available.

Current external STEM professional development
Targeted programmes for STEM FE teachers are currently available through Myscience and the National Centre for Teaching Excellence in Mathematics (NCETM). STEM teachers may also access PLD or resources from subject associations such as The Association for Science Education, The Institute of Physics, The Royal Society of Chemistry, The Institution of Engineering and Technology and the Further Mathematics Support Programme.

The former LSIS STEM support programme for FE colleges is now overseen by the Education and Training Foundation. This has extended provision beyond FE colleges to work-based learning providers and 'supports Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in its broadest sense, including many vocational courses' (ETF, 2014). Key lessons learnt from the first phase of this STEM programme that need to be taken into account in the development of mentoring for FE and Skills STEM teachers include:

- Pedagogy needs to lie at the heart of STEM support; PLD approaches should model effective pedagogies and mirror the active delivery methods recommended to improve teaching and learning.
- Engagement of managers and leaders is essential to achieve meaningful organisational impact and raise awareness of the importance of STEM.

- Teaching and learning support should be sector-led, but enabled to draw on additional subject-specific expertise, resources and support available from the wider STEM community.
- Practitioners should lead on needs analysis, identifying areas for improvement and support.
- A subject-specific focus needs to be at the heart of PLD.
- Follow-up support and monitoring of impact increases the effectiveness of PLD activity.
- It takes time to build capacity and expertise in the sector.

(Summarised from LSIS 2013c: 2)

NCETM has recently launched a programme for accrediting leaders of post 16 mathematics professional development. These accredited leaders are running a new Maths Enhancement Programme, subsidised by the Education and Training Foundation, which supports teachers who, following a policy change in post 16 mathematics teaching, will be moving from teaching functional mathematics to teaching GCSE mathematics. The implementation of the Wolf report (2011) recommendation that students entering FE who have not achieved grade A*-C at GCSE must study GCSE mathematics requires significant upskilling of mathematics teachers in the sector. To date over a thousand teachers have enrolled on the FE GCSE Maths Enhancement Programme (NCETM, 2014), which is being promoted, coordinated and quality assured by the Association of Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (ACETT). A further NCETM programme '*Vitalising Mathematics*' provides two days of free professional development for teachers developing mathematics skills in occupational and/or vocational contexts.

2.4 OVERVIEW OF MENTORING IN THE FE AND SKILLS SECTOR: PURPOSES, REACH AND MODELS

Mentoring in FE is not new. In 2001 the then Learning and Skills Council provided FE colleges with a folder of resources and guidelines (LSC, 2001), contributed to by 29 colleges, through the 'Mentoring towards Excellence' project which involved 700 staff. The aim was to improve the quality of teaching and learning by identifying excellent practice and practitioners who then shared their practice with new and experienced staff. In this sense, it is questionable whether the term 'mentoring' was appropriate. The model underpinning the project was based on Palmer's (1998) learning conversation approach and adopted a non-judgemental stance.

Mentoring is currently deployed in the FE and Skills sector for a range of purposes – to support the development and induction of new teachers entering the sector, to support professional learning and development with the aim of improving teaching, learning and learner outcomes, to support new leaders or those moving into new leadership roles and to address underperformance. There is no available data on the reach of mentoring across the FE and Skills sector – in terms of the purposes for which mentoring is adopted, the career stage of the mentee or the type of provider. The research evidence base is almost exclusively focused on mentoring in FE and Skills ITT.

Mentoring in Initial Teacher Training

As a consequence of the reforms of FE ITT (DfES, 2004) and the 2001 and 2007 teacher qualification regulations the mentoring of trainee FE and Skills teachers became a formalised requirement. Ofsted inspections of FE ITT, which were implemented from 2004 onwards, included inspection of the reach, quality, management and quality assurance of mentoring (Ofsted, 2004, 2008, 2014). Ofsted inspection has been highly influential in determining the nature of FE and Skills ITT mentoring. There is an expectation from the inspectorate that mentors will be subject specialists, who in addition to supporting the development of their mentees' subject knowledge and pedagogy, will contribute to assessing their teaching and setting developmental targets. It is a further expectation that ITT providers will ensure that all trainee teachers have a suitably qualified and trained mentor and will assure the quality of mentoring. Ofsted do not specify what constitutes appropriate training for mentors, however inspection reports written by Ofsted do indicate that training is expected to

include observing and assessing trainees' teaching and providing subject specific 'feedback'[5]. Ofsted summary reports on FE and Skills ITT present a mixed picture in progression towards the expectations set out in the inspection frameworks. While Ofsted found that nearly all trainees now have an allocated mentor, the quality of mentoring is variable. Issues that Ofsted consider still need further development are ensuring that mentors provide subject specialist (as opposed to generic) support, and the quality of mentoring beyond FE colleges in work-based and adult and community learning settings (Ofsted, 2009; 2012). These issues, together with further issues, are considered in more detail in section 2.6 below.

The variability in the quality of FE mentoring is also highlighted in the review of Hardman *et al.,* which found:

> 'wide variations in models, practices and approaches [to mentoring] and a lack of consensus about the nature of the systems that should be in place.' (2008: 3)

This resonates with the more recent GHK Consulting (2012: 9) finding that the FE teacher qualifications had:

> 'not led to significant changes… in terms of investment in mentoring… mentoring support appears variable among colleges and there is evidence that mentors are used less well in WBL [work-based learning] and ACL [adult and community learning] providers, where informal and ad hoc support is more common'.
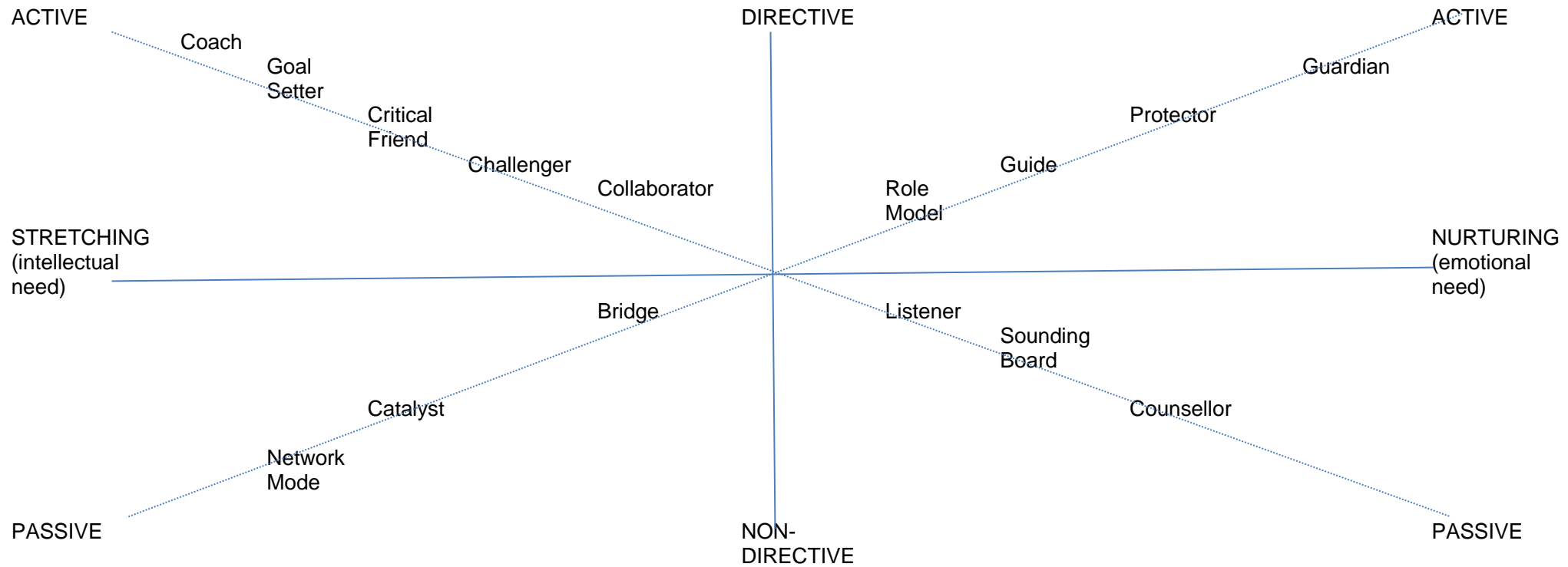
The model of mentoring advocated in the core text used by many FE and Skills ITT providers (Wallace and Gravells, 2005) is based on Klasen and Clutterbuck's (2002) development of Clutterbuck's (1985) four styles of helping – coaching, guiding, networking and counselling. As Figure 1 illustrates, mentors may take different roles determined by their assessment of what is an appropriate approach on a stretching-nurturing continuum and a directive-non-directive continuum.

We were unable to find any evidence that indicates the degree to which this model of mentoring is implemented across the sector. Exemplar FE and Skills ITT mentoring handbooks and materials found on the internet place a strong emphasis on supporting trainees to engage in reflective practice. However, Ingleby and Tummon's (2012) research found that not all mentors associate mentoring with reflective practice. FE and Skills ITT mentoring research draws attention to the tensions created by the imposition of trainee assessment into the mentoring process, with some mentors finding it difficult to balance the developmental and evaluative aspects of their role (Ingleby, 2010; Ingleby and Tummons, 2012; Lawy and Tedder, 2011, 2012; Tedder and Lawy, 2009). This issue is considered further in Section 2.6.

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[5] This is in a context where some academics (e.g. Malderez and Wedell, 2007) are advocating an approach to mentoring (as opposed to assessing or inspecting teaching) in which observation is not a key mentor activity, and in which a mentor's role, rather than *give* feedback on occasional lessons, is to support a teacher in noticing the feedback that their learners provide in every lesson.

ACTIVE DIRECTIVE ACTIVE
Coach
Goal
Setter
Guardian
Critical
Friend
Protector
Challenger
Collaborator
Guide
Role
Model
STRETCHING
(intellectual
need)
NURTURING
(emotional
need)
Bridge Listener
Sounding
Board
Catalyst
Counsellor
Network
Mode
PASSIVE NON-
DIRECTIVE
PASSIVE

Figure 1: Four basic styles of helping (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002)

Reproduced with permission from Klasen, P. and Clutterbuck, D (2002). *Implementing mentoring schemes: a practical guide to successful programmes.* © *Taylor and Francis*

Role	Responsibility	Relationship	Knowledge and Skills
ITT E.g. subject/ specialist mentor, subject learning coach	- Develop teaching skills and knowledge in subject/specialist area. - Develop range of teaching experience - Support progress on qualification - Formative and/or summative assessment	- Mentoring/coaching/ tutoring - More experienced/skilled in teaching subject area - Peer/manager/senior	- Excellent teacher in subject/specialist area - Up to date subject expertise, technical skills - Understand/apply minimum core - Works within community of practice - Knowledge of pedagogy, e.g. Curriculum, learning theories, use of reflection/research. - Requirements of teaching qualification - Observation/Feedback - Use of assessment criteria and application of assessment standards
Induction	- Organisational and institutional familiarisation	- Mentoring/coaching - More experienced - Peer/manager/senior	- Institutional knowledge, knowledge of relevant communities of practice
Performance	- Develop competence and capability - Improve performance outcomes for individual and organisation - Formative and/or summative assessment	- Mentoring/coaching - More experienced - Peer/manager/senior - Assessor	- Depends on area of expertise required - Observation/Feedback - Use of assessment criteria and application of assessment standards
CPD Staff including e.g. teacher educators - those new to role and those experienced in role	- Develop specific and/or general competence, capability and capacity in role	- Mentoring/coaching - Peer/manager/senior, e.g. SLC	- Depends on area of expertise required
Management	- As above plus leadership	- Mentoring/coaching, e.g. "executive coaches" "leaders as mentors"	- Depends on area of expertise required
Career	- Support progression	- Mentoring/coaching	- Generic/specialist facilitation skills + specific expertise in field of employment, if required.

Figure 2: Outline of range and types of application of coaching and mentoring in the lifelong learning sector (from Hardman et al. (2008:39))
Reproduced with permission from Hardman, J. Knight, S. and Hankey, J. (2008) *Coaching and mentoring in the Lifelong Learning Sector in England. A scoping study to inform the future work of LLUK.* London: Westminster Partnership CETT

Mentoring for continuing professional learning and development

Hardman et al. (2008:39) provide a useful overview (Figure 2) of the range and types of application of mentoring and coaching in FE. Beyond ITT it is harder to assess the reach of mentoring. GHK consulting (2012) found that most support provided by mentors was focused on the duration of ITT, with only a quarter of the case study providers involved in their research offering systematic support through either mentoring or advanced practitioner support during the professional formation period. The professional formation period is the time following ITT during which teachers were supposed to engage in further professional learning and development to achieve QTLS status. The research undertaken by GHK consulting (2012), however, did not focus on teachers beyond the professional formation period and so only offers a partial insight.

A further difficulty in ascertaining the reach of mentoring in the FE and Skills sector is the frequent confusion between, and interchangeable use of, the terms mentoring and coaching in the sector (Hardman et al., 2008).

Mentoring STEM teachers in the FE and Skills Sector

We were unable to find any overview of the current position in relation to the mentoring of FE and Skills STEM teachers. The only research relating specifically to mentoring FE and Skills STEM teachers that we were able to source was Swain and Conlan's (2012) small scale study commissioned by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation. Drawing on data from three focus groups (six trainee STEM teachers; six qualified STEM teachers; six STEM mentors), this research found that the experiences of STEM mentees differed little from those in the rest of the sector. Strikingly, the research found that little support was provided to help mentees develop subject knowledge. This may in part be because some new teachers embark on FE and Skills teaching with high levels of up to date subject knowledge from a previous career. Instead the trainee teachers in Swain and Conlan's study received most support in relation to developing generic teaching skills and improving outcomes for students. Teachers in their first year post qualification or later reported receiving support for both generic teaching skills and subject specific pedagogy. 'Subject specific pedagogy' is a contested term within the FE and Skills sector. This, together with the issue of subject specific mentoring and the other generic mentoring issues raised in Swain and Conlan's report, is explored more fully in Section 6.

2.5 SUPPORT INITIATIVES, PROGRAMMES AND RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING MENTORING

Over the last decade there have been a number of initiatives designed to support the development of mentoring and provide mentoring resources for the FE and Skills sector. Centres of Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs) received funding over several years to support the improvement of ITT and as part of that remit undertook a number of projects focused on mentoring that mapped, implemented improvement projects and produced resources. This has fed into some peer reviewed papers (for example, Tedder and Lawy's work), and there are some project reports and exemplar resources on CETT's websites – for example:

- consortium.hud.ac.uk/hudcett/
- www.loncett.org.uk/index.asp
  www2.warwick.ac.uk/study/cll/othercourses/wmcett/resources/practitionerarea/mentoring/

There is also a collection of items from some of the work undertaken by the CETTs on the Excellence Gateway. However, there are limitations on the extent to which the work undertaken by the CETTs forms a useful resource for the sector. It appears to be a fragmented collection of items spread across a number of websites and it is unclear whether all reports and resources produced by the CETTS are in the public domain. Most of the projects were small scale and while they indicate

some evidence of impact, there does not appear to have been any systematic review of impact across the projects to ascertain which approaches were most effective.

It appears that some CETTs may have facilitated cross institution mentoring to address issues of mentor supply and expertise. There is very limited publicly available information on the extent to which this took place or on the outcomes of such activity.

The 30 million pounds of funding given, in 2007-8, to providers to support the implementation of the workforce reforms, of which ITT mentoring was a part, was not closely monitored or evaluated (Hardman *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, there are no available reports on the types or effectiveness of approaches providers took to developing mentoring systems and processes.

Until it closed in 2013, LSIS provided mentoring and coaching programmes and services for FE organisations and individuals. These focused more strongly on coaching than mentoring – although as discussed earlier the boundary between 'coaching' and 'mentoring' can be fuzzy. A range of leadership and performance coaching group programmes and individual support were offered. These included an advanced coaching programme for key individuals in organisations wishing to set up coaching in their own organisation, coaching for executive leaders, leader coaching, career coaching and one to one coaching. Publicity material (LSIS, 2012) indicates that a variety of approaches to coaching - directive, solutions focused, analytical and person focused - were drawn on in these programmes and services, depending on clients' interests and context. Mentoring workshops (www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/21171) were offered as part of the suite of leadership coaching programmes, aimed at teams and organisations who wanted to develop mentor skills and/or to support the introduction of an internal mentoring scheme. We were unable to source either resources or evaluations of the LSIS mentoring workshops or any other leadership coaching activities. However in another (unlinked) part of the Excellence Gateway we did find a booklet providing advice on setting up a mentoring scheme (LSIS, 2011) and some exemplar resources: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/17227

Another former LSIS programme, Leadership of Learning, included a teaching and learning coach advanced certificate and a subject learning coaches' programme. Both of these programmes could be undertaken using online modules and supporting resources on the Excellence Gateway. The materials ceased to be available online in 2013.

Participant information on the advanced certificate teaching and learning coach programme webpage shows 841 registered online participants. However, this appears to significantly over estimate active engagement: 779 participants have been inactive on the programme website for 2 months or more, and 234 have not accessed the programme site in the last year. Similarly, for the subject learning coach programme there are 499 registered online participants, 464 participants have been inactive on the programme website for 2 months or more, and 98 have not accessed the programme site in the last year. We were unable to source any research or evaluation examining the advanced certificate or subject learning coach programmes.

The LSIS teaching and learning coaching model is based on peer coaching approaches. The advanced certificate focuses on whole organisation improvement and providing development programmes for teaching and learning coaches. It includes an optional additional module focused on supporting improvements in teaching and learning within STEM. The intention is that by the end of the STEM module participants will have:

- developed an awareness of STEM subjects;
- explored STEM resources via a virtual tour;
- considered how to harness Teaching and Learning Coaches to promote a positive agenda for STEM challenges, opportunities and issues.

<div align="right">(LSIS, 2013d)</div>

The module is intended for anyone irrespective of whether they have a STEM background, enabling them to 'engage more effectively on STEM issues with managers at senior and middle levels' and to 'enhance [their] ability to support STEM practitioners and Teaching and Learning Coaches'.

The subject learning coach programme supports the development and use of coaching skills to improve teaching and learning with the aim of increasing learner motivation, improving retention, enhancing learner success and boosting teachers' morale. Subject learning coaches are seen as 'change agents' (LSIS, 2013e). Within an overarching framework of peer coaching (Joyce and Showers 1996) a number of coaching and learning models are introduced on the programme, including Whitmore's (2003) GROW model (**g**oal setting, **r**eality, **o**ptions, what **w**ill you do?) and Boyatzis' (2006) model of intentional change. It is important to note that the programme is generic, and does not focus on any specific subject or vocational area.

2.6. ISSUES IN FE AND SKILLS SECTOR MENTORING

The earlier outline of mentoring in the FE and Skills sector has indicated that there are significant issues in relation to the quality of mentoring. These are explored in more detail below. As highlighted earlier the available research and evaluation evidence around FE and Skills mentoring focuses almost exclusively on mentoring new teachers who are undertaking an ITT qualification. It is therefore important to note that this section primarily refers to issues in ITT mentoring and may not fully reflect the position with regard to mentoring for other purposes.

Recruitment and selection and suitability of mentors
While problems with the sufficiency in the numbers of ITT mentors have largely been addressed (Ofsted, 2009), there is considerable variation in whether mentors are the most appropriate person to support their mentee. Evidence from HEI partnership mentor documentation indicates that while there are criteria that need to be met by mentors, for example teaching and subject/vocational experience and qualifications, in-service trainees are often expected to identify their mentor as a condition of receiving a place on an ITT course. This raises questions about whether trainees are matched appropriately with mentors, particularly in smaller organisations and in small departments where the trainee may be the only subject specialist.

There is also evidence that ITT mentors may passively, or actively, be coerced into mentoring roles, rather than choosing to be mentors (Cunningham, 2007). However, Cunningham's (2007) small scale survey found that even when mentors had not actively sought a mentor role, they were positive about the experience and the professional learning and development they gained from undertaking the role.

A further issue highlighted in the ITT mentoring literature is the deployment of line managers as mentors. This creates tensions between the non-judgmental support advocated in most models of mentoring and organisational performance requirements (Robinson, 2005; Cullimore and Simmons, 2010). Mentors with direct management responsibilities may approach what are intended by ITT providers to be supportive and developmental observations of teaching as they would observations conducted to monitor teacher performance.

A recurring theme, particularly across the mentoring projects conducted in the CETTs, is the central importance of the mentor/ mentee relationship in determining whether or not the mentoring is successful. As Lawy and Tedder (2009:77) found from analysis of data from 28 interviews (10 trainee teachers, 9 teacher educators or mentors and 9 FE managers):

> 'The quality of the relationship established between a mentor and mentee could be far more significant than subject qualifications. Trainees, tutors and managers valued relationships with mentors they admired, people who had a "passion" for what they do or are "passionate about teaching".'

Subject specific mentor supply and mentoring

Recruitment of subject specific mentors is problematic (CAVTL, 2013) and further work, requiring collaboration between providers, is required to address the supply of good quality subject specific mentors:

> 'We have, however, been told (Nasta, 2009) that it can be a challenge to provide sufficient good quality specialist mentors, usually college-based, who can work with new recruits in order to apply generic teaching and planning techniques to a specific occupational area. … **Collaboration between providers, including universities, may be necessary to improve this situation**. This is an area for development that we propose the Guild [now the Education and Training Foundation] should consider. (CAVTL, 2013: 21; emphasis added)

Subject specific pedagogy, subject specific mentoring and subject specific ITT are all contested issues within the FE and Skills sector. Most STEM subjects have well established subject knowledge bases and clearly defined pedagogical content knowledge – 'that special amalgam of content and pedagogy' (Shulman, 1987:8), which comprises 'the way of representing and formulating the subject to make it comprehensible to others' and 'an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult' (Shulman, 1986:9). In addition, compared with many subjects in the FE and Skills sector, a wide range of subject specific resources are readily available to support teaching and learning. However this is not the case across all FE and Skills provision. Indeed, vocational curricula are often structured and atomized in relation to workplace roles, crossing traditional subject boundaries (Maxwell, 2010). The complexity of the notion of 'subject' in FE may have led to the implementation of more generic approaches to ITT, continuing professional learning and development and mentoring. This underplays the significance of subject knowledge and pedagogy to those areas, such as STEM, where subject knowledge and pedagogy is more robustly established. The prevalence of generic, rather than STEM subject specific, approaches to mentoring in Swain and Conlan's research may be indicative of this position and highlights the needs to establish mentoring that provides a stronger focus on STEM knowledge and pedagogy.

The debate around subject specific mentoring in the FE and Skills sector is further confused by the government's and regulatory bodies' conflation of subject knowledge with subject pedagogy, which Eliahoo (2009a) argues adds to the lack of coherent policy on mentoring trainee teachers. Furthermore, this conflation contributes to mentors' uncertainty about the purposes and remit of their role, an issue explored further in the next section.

ASSOCiate Online, an online platform to link trainee teachers with subject specialists and specialist resources, was developed by four of the largest university providers of FE ITE using a grant from the Higher Education Academy from 2005-8. We were unable to source data on current usage or an evaluation of the effectiveness of the platform. However, Fisher and Webb's (2006) paper does indicate that over 1,000 trainee teachers were using the platform each year and it was intended that over the course of the project this would increase to almost 5,000. The online platform was intended to help build specialised communities of practitioners, who were able to access and share subject specific resources; discuss and compare subject teaching approaches and exchange and observe good practice, for example through web-based video links to advanced practitioners and subject coaches. It was envisaged that the platform had significant potential to support subject focused PLD as well as ITT (Fisher and Webb, 2006). It is important to note that the large scale of the project was considered crucial to generate viable numbers of participants in each specialist area.

It is, however, important to recognise, as indeed Fisher and Webb (2006) amongst others (for example Lucas, 2007) highlight, that FE and Skills teachers' roles extend far beyond 'delivering' subject knowledge – the teaching role is complex, student-centred and connective. There is an established evidence base that new FE and Skills teachers, particularly those following pre-service ITT programmes, struggle to reconcile their idealistic perceptions of learners and teaching in FE with their

experience in the classroom, where they find some learners uncooperative, badly behaved and unable to meet the demands of the course (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Wallace, 2002). Beginner FE and Skills teachers also exert a strong ethic of care towards their learners (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004) to the extent that 'caring appeared to be pivotal to their construction of a preferred identity as a lecturer' (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004: 306). It is therefore important that in addition to supporting subject knowledge and pedagogy, ITT mentors also guide and support mentees through the emotional aspects of becoming a teacher and their induction into the cultures of the organisation.

Mentor and mentee roles

A recurring issue in the mentoring in FE and Skills literature, identified in Duckworth and Maxwell's (2015) review of FE ITT mentoring papers published in academic journals, is confusion and uncertainty about the nature and purpose of mentors' and mentees' roles and the boundaries of these roles. Mentors and mentees have differing understandings of coaching and mentoring (Hardman *et al.*, 2008; Lawy and Tedder, 2011). In addition, ITT mentors often lack understanding of the aims and content of the training programme that their mentee is undertaking (Ingleby, 2010, 2011).

A range of approaches to addressing role confusion have been proposed. Hardman *et al.* (2008) and LLUK (2006) called for national standards and qualifications for coaching and mentoring and national role profiles. It is evident that many ITE partnerships produce role descriptors, and LSIS schemes such as subject coaches also provide specific guidance on roles, but this does not seem to reduce the uncertainties felt by mentors and mentees. Furthermore, Tedder and Lawy (2009) found that even trained and experienced mentors were uncertain about their role. It therefore appears that role descriptors and mentor training, while important, have not to date satisfactorily addressed or resolved the issue, leaving many mentors and mentees still uncertain about their roles.

Ingleby (2010, 2011) claims that role confusion arises because mentor roles are aligned with bureaucratic tasks and mentoring is not characterised as professional expertise. The need to recognise and give professional status to mentoring in FE has been strongly advocated (for example, see Ingleby and Tummons, 2012; and Crawley, 2012). Tedder and Lawy (2009) suggest that uncertainty arises in the ITT mentor role due to the differing models of mentoring implemented in the FE and Skills sector and because it is trying to address and support different types of transition, namely:

- induction into the organisation;
- induction into the subject area;
- induction into the teaching profession.

Developing their explanation for role confusion, Tedder and Lawy (*ibid*) go on to argue that the diverse purposes and processes of ITT mentoring are mediated by the mentors' past experiences, the diverse needs and expectations of trainee teachers and the learning culture. Mediation of mentoring purposes and processes by mentors, mentees and the learning culture is to be expected across all types of mentoring in the sector, even when purposes may be more clearly defined.

Cullimore and Simmons's (2010) research uncovered tensions between different aspects of mentors' roles, particularly between being a critical friend who provides constructive criticism, and being a role model for good practice in teaching and learning. Further tensions were found between being a critical friend and being a listener, counsellor and friend.

Conflicting purposes and models of mentoring

The issue of the conflicting purposes of mentoring – development and assessment – is well rehearsed in the FE and Skills ITT mentoring literature as well as more widely. It also underpins much of the confusion and conflict in mentor and mentee roles. Cullimore and Simmons (2010) and Tedder and Lawy (2009) argue that judgemental models of mentoring limit the potential for transformative

learning. This resonates with Hobson and Malderez's (2013: 90) argument (in relation to mentoring in the secondary and primary sectors) that judgemental mentoring or 'judgementoring', through which mentors, 'in revealing too readily and/or too often [their] own judgements on or evaluations of the mentee's planning and teaching…. compromise… the mentoring relationship and its potential benefits'. Lawy and Tedder in a later paper (2011: 394) argue that separating out formative support to develop teaching from the assessment of teaching is 'an unnecessary dichotomy that dislocates one coherent teacher practices from one another'. However, this view is strongly disputed by Ingleby and Tummons (2012) who posit that mentoring can only achieve its aims if it excludes assessment and is solely based on a developmental model underpinned by reflective practice.

The extent to which FE and Skills mentoring has become a bureaucratic process is also disputed. Ingleby and Tummons (2012) found ITT mentors in their research focused most strongly on producing documentation such as lesson observation forms. However, Lawy and Tedder (2011) found that mentors lacked commitment to bureaucratic processes that did not directly support their mentee's development, indicating that mentors placed greater emphasis on developmental than bureaucratic processes. Looking across the FE and Skills ITT mentoring research base, Duckworth and Maxwell (2015) conclude that most mentors prefer to adopt a developmental approach, placing importance on their relationship with the mentee.

Formality and informality of mentoring

The need to formalise mentoring, ensuring that regular meetings are held between mentor and mentee and agreed actions recorded, is a frequent recommendation of Ofsted inspections of ITT. Lack of formal mentoring support in the workplace is also a consistent finding in research studies (for example, Lucas and Unwin 2009; Orr 2012).

However, it is important not to lose sight of the importance of 'on the spot' informal mentoring. Drawing from 15 case studies undertaken across 5 different colleges Glasson (2008: 18) explains:

> 'What mentees valued most was help and advice when they needed it. This was frequently as a result of a specific issue that had come up in a teaching session, and the mentee wanted help and reassurance straight away. Or, in other cases help with administrative or organisational systems issues was needed quickly.'

A further theme that emerged from Glasson's (2008) study was that frequent and informal contact was facilitated by the physical proximity of the mentor and mentee in the workplace.

It appears that the ideal situation is for both formal and informal mentoring to be available. This resonates with Lucas's (2007: 98-99) argument that trainee teacher learning requires access to 'multiple opportunities for participation and learning with many mentors or "experts" that can build upon subject specific acts of teaching'. In developing mentoring for STEM teachers in the FE and Skills sector it is therefore important not to assume that a single mentor will necessarily be sufficient for every mentee, but to consider the range of experts who can best meet the mentees' developmental needs and attempt to ensure that teachers benefit from what has been termed 'dispersed mentoring' (Hobson *et al.*, 2009b: 103; Hobson *et al.*, 2009c: 41).

Mentor training

A further recurrent issue raised in the inspection of FE initial teacher training reports is mentors' participation in mentor training. Most ITE providers have developed mentor training programmes in response to inspection requirements. However, as Swain and Conlan (2012) point out mentors may not be employees of the providing institution, particularly where this is a university, so while attendance may be strongly encouraged it is difficult to enforce. Responses to this, including online training, have been developed, for example the HUDCETT online training (see resource links in Section 5).

Tummons and Ingleby (2012) draw attention to the further issue of the nature of mentor training. While inspections of ITT have led to mentor training that places emphasis on ensuring mentors are able to assess teaching, experienced mentors in Tummons and Ingleby's small scale study within one university partnership wanted to go beyond these practical elements to deepen their understanding of developmental and reflective models of mentoring. As Crawley (2012: 6) argues, 'preparation for mentoring is not solely a technical issue that can be enabled by a simple training programme on how to perform teaching observations and give feedback'.

Resources to support mentoring

As the earlier outline of mentoring resources indicated, some useful support materials produced for mentoring within the FE and Skills sector are available on the internet. However, they are spread over multiple sites and the quality of the materials is variable – making it difficult for mentors, mentees or those leading mentoring schemes within provider organisations to make effective use of the resource. It also appears that there may be other potentially valuable resources that are not, or are no longer, in the public domain.

Architecture for mentoring

As Cunningham (2007: 84) points out:

> 'the [mentoring] role will not be optimally effective where a supportive institutional framework, or architecture, is lacking'.

Such an architecture, Cunningham argues, is dependent upon:

- an institutional commitment to mentoring;
- a collegial institutional ethos; and
- physical resources.

We would add that it also requires (for example) an important time resource for initial mentor preparation and ongoing support for the PLD of mentors.

However, there are many issues evident across the studies of FE and Skills mentoring which indicate that such an architecture for mentoring is not well established. For example, indications of institutional commitment such as remission for mentors and a reduced timetable for mentees are sometimes absent, particularly in smaller work-based learning providers (GHK Consulting 2012). Indicators of a collegial institutional ethos, such as the promotion of professional learning communities, are not always visible and physical resources such as access to rooms for confidential discussions and the provision of resources for mentors, may be absent (Cullimore and Simmons 2010; Cunningham 2007).

Mentees' attitudes towards mentoring

There is well established evidence that demonstrated the significance of prior knowledge, skills and dispositions towards work and career on engagement in workplace learning (Eraut, 2007; Hodkinson *et al*., 2004). Mentees bring their prior experiences to the mentoring context and their attitude toward mentoring is also affected by their status in the workplace, for example they may be on temporary contract, employed by an agency or have a number of different jobs. Therefore, even with a supportive architecture for mentoring, different mentees will engage with the opportunities provided through the mentoring relationship and activities in different ways. Some mentees actively seek out opportunities for development and others engage at a minimum level of compliance (Maxwell, 2010). To address this Maxwell (2010) advocates that mentors have a key role to play in enabling mentees to recognise the impact of their beliefs, dispositions and prior experiences on their learning and challenging them to break away from past beliefs and experiences.

Measuring the impact of mentoring

It has been argued that insufficient attention has been paid to evaluating mentoring and that if such evaluation was more strongly embedded in the sector it would lead to improvements in mentoring (Crawley, 2012). We were unable to find any studies that systematically measured the impact of mentoring or gathered data to assess the effectiveness of different approaches to mentoring. However, preliminary work has been undertaken by Eliahoo (2009b) to begin to identify likely impacts of mentoring and what approaches to evaluating these impacts might be considered valid and reliable. Mentors in Eliahoo's small-scale study illuminated possible quantitative and qualitative ways in which mentors and mentees could capture the impact of mentoring on mentees, but capturing the impact of mentoring on mentees' learners in any way beyond drawing on mentors' and mentees' perceptions remained elusive.

2.7. CONCLUSION

The FE and Skills sector is diverse in terms of the range of education and training settings, learner groups and teaching roles, and many teachers enter the sector with significant vocational knowledge, expertise and life experience. This suggests that mentoring needs to be tailored to both the individual and the organisation. There is evidence that in some FE settings the workplace learning of teachers is limited due to the workplace culture, organisational systems and processes and the allocation and structuring of work. In addition, some staff are isolated from support due to the location of their work, part-time working and/or being the only subject expert in their team.

Over the last decade considerable effort has been put into developing mentoring schemes to support trainee teachers undertaking ITT qualifications. However, the support for some trainees remains variable – relying too much on ad hoc informal support and the goodwill of mentors. The learning and resources from initiatives to improve trainee teacher mentoring are not easily accessible to mentors, mentees or those leading mentoring schemes in the sector.

The reach and quality of mentoring beyond ITT is unclear. LSIS previously provided a support programme for FE providers wishing to develop mentoring in their organisation. There seems, however, to have been a stronger emphasis on coaching, for example through the subject learning coaches programme, which is still available online, and leadership coaching programmes.

Nearly all the research on, and evaluation of, FE and Skills sector mentoring relates to the mentoring of trainee teachers. With the exception of one small scale study – Swain and Conlan (2012) – there is no evidence of research on the mentoring of FE and Skills STEM teachers. There is insufficient evidence available to provide a definitive overview of the models of mentoring being adopted in FE. There is indicative evidence that approaches are influenced by Klasen and Clutterbuck's (2002) model of mentoring and emphasise reflective practice. Policies initiated by the previous government, designed to improve the quality of teaching and professionalism in the sector, and the associated inspection frameworks, have led to the adaption of ITT models of mentoring that incorporate the *assessment* of trainee teachers, which has been shown elsewhere to compromise the mentoring relationship (Clutterbuck, 2004; Hobson and Malderez, 2013).

Despite some innovative work, the provision of effective subject specific mentoring has been an ongoing issue for the sector, in part due to the diversity of subjects and vocational areas. This is evident in Swain and Conlan's study of the mentoring of STEM teachers, where support was found to be predominately focused on generic teaching and learning.

Further aspects of mentoring that our review of literature suggests may require attention are:

- *establishing a framework for mentoring* that is sufficiently flexible to be adapted to the range of contexts found in the FE and Skills sector, but where mentors' and mentees' roles are clear and mentoring models and processes are understood;

- *redefining the nature of the relationship between the developmental and assessment aspects of mentoring* so that the developmental approach forms a foundation to build trust and pave the way for formative assessment[6];
- *establishing a professional status for mentors* which ensures that FE and Skills providers recognise the value of their work, set expectations for mentors' training and development, and allow time for mentoring activity;
- *ensuring an appropriate supply of mentors matched to mentee needs* – for some subjects and/or small providers this may require collaboration or the use of external experts (notably external mentors);
- *providing consistent and high quality preparation and support for mentors* – using modes of learning that are easily accessible and appropriate in supporting mentors' learning, including making existing resources and knowledge more accessible;
- *ensuring all providers create an architecture that supports mentoring* – this includes providing physical resources such as spaces to meet, organisational systems and processes, for example to recruit and select mentors, and time allocations for mentoring as well as a culture that supports the types of formal and informal activities and interactions that are effective in supporting PLD;
- *evaluating the impact of mentoring* on mentors, mentees and outcomes for mentees' learners, and researching the effectiveness of alternative approaches.

Looking forward, plans for mentoring need to take account of likely or possible forthcoming initiatives, such as the potential establishment of a Vocational Education and Training (VET) centre, which might be able to provide expertise for subject specific mentoring, and the implementation of 'Teach Too' – which will create further challenges for ensuring effective mentoring of new teachers. The impact of the deregulation of initial teacher training qualifications and removal of the professional learning and development requirement for FE and Skills teachers has yet to work through and may also present further challenges for effective mentoring.

Key questions arising from this review of literature that we sought to explore as part of our empirical research include:

- How widespread is the mentoring of STEM and other teachers in the FE and Skills sector, for what purposes is mentoring undertaken, and what models of mentoring and mentoring processes are in place, particularly beyond ITT?
- Who mentors STEM teachers and how are they recruited, selected and trained?
- What do STEM teachers, managers and senior leaders perceive to be – and what are – the benefits of mentoring in the sector?
- What are STEM teachers', mentors', managers' and senior leaders' views on how the mentoring of STEM teachers can be improved?
- How might institutional-based mentoring be complemented by support for teachers' PLD from external mentors?

We address these and other questions in the Chapters 4-6. First, in Chapter 3, we provide a brief account of teachers' PLD needs, of their ability or willingness to openly discuss those PLD needs and of teachers' perceptions of existing support for their PLD.

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[6] In this way assessment would emerge from a position of honesty and mutual understanding, rather than being a detached judgement.

CHAPTER 3: TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF SUPPORT FOR THEIR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

3.0 CHAPTER OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

This initial findings chapter provides a brief context for those which follow – and which focus on mentoring and coaching – by providing an account of teachers' perceptions of:

- the support for their professional learning and development (PLD) more generally;
- their PLD needs; and
- their ability or willingness to openly discuss those PLD needs.

Key findings

Our findings show that some teachers feel that they receive appropriate and adequate support for their PLD but others do not, and we identify some of the reasons for this.

From the analysis of our interview data, it emerged that the most frequently mentioned PLD needs of STEM teachers related to:

- their ability to effectively employ a range of teaching methods – 'general pedagogical knowledge'; and

- their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 1987).

These findings are fairly consistent with the responses to our survey question which asked teachers to indicate in which areas they might benefit from additional training or support for their professional development. Here, the most frequently given responses (from teachers across all subjects/ vocational areas) were:

- differentiating teaching for different learners (40% of respondents); and
- the ability to use a range of teaching methods (35%).

We also found that some teachers (reported that they) are willing and able to acknowledge and discuss their PLD needs within their institutions, while some are less able to do so. This provides an impediment to the PLD of some teachers.

Finally, we outline a number of factors which encourage or impede teachers' ability and willingness to openly discuss their PLD needs, such as the culture of the organisation and the potential (or otherwise) for developing safe, trusting relationships with mentors, coaches, line managers and others.

3.1 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS' PLD

From our analysis of data generated from teachers and other stakeholders, it is clear that support for the PLD of teachers across the FE and Skills sector is extremely variable. Overall, slightly more teachers suggested that they were satisfied with the support they received than those who were not satisfied, yet a range of positive and negative aspects of support for teachers' PLD were identified.

In terms of the positives, just under half of our interview participants (17 interviewees) – including both new and more experienced teachers – indicated that they felt that teachers/they had been or were being well supported by their institutions. Positive features of support for their PLD that teachers themselves highlighted included:

- Having colleagues who offered support, were approachable and responded positively to requests for support

My line manager does say "You know, we should think about getting you on some courses, some enhancement courses," ... as of yet I haven't been on any, but some are being made available... and I would certainly say that the staff here if you are struggling will say "Try this." There's always a support network.

[I]f there's ever an issue or concern I know full well I can literally pick up the phone to certainly at least four people and sort of say "I've got this problem. What would I do?" ... and there's never once have I had "Oh, what now?" There's always a positive response because they would rather me ask and get it right than carry on on my own and get it wrong.

Since I've been here the guys around me have been really, really helpful, one or two in particular, and they've… I won't say carried me, but they showed me what to do at each step with the paperwork… When I came in you weren't expecting the amount of paperwork you have to do as a teacher. It's unbelievable, but they helped me along with that and they've sort of just guided me every step of the way. Every time something comes up it's "Alright, we need to get this done by Easter," or "We need to get that done by next term."

- Having opportunities to collaborate and network with other teachers

And also the networking that we've been doing in college with other teachers has been fantastic and where I am now it's like kind of homing in on the things that I need to develop on. I've recently done lots of visible learning like [name of colleague] *has been doing and that's been helping my practice.*

- Being supported to attend external courses or 'CPD'

The first thing I said even before I'd actually accepted the job was "Look, if I come on board one thing I want to do is I want to get my brand training from Vauxhall," and there wasn't even a bat of an eyelid. "Yes of course" instantly and as soon as I started that was one of the first things that they got me set up to do.

I think I've been quite lucky because when I became a curriculum manager four years ago I did get a lot of leadership and management INSET, both internal and external, and the most recent sort of thing that I've done was with the Science Learning Centres. I've done the 'Leading Effective CPD' [course]… *So I think I'm in quite a good place in that respect.*

- A small number of teachers also indicated that they appreciated the developmental nature of the support they received

I've never taught functional skills before and it is quite different to teaching GCSE and A Level – in terms of the actual teaching, my mentor and in fact everyone in the department has been extremely helpful, extremely supportive. If I ask a question I get an answer. If I ask "Where can I find this out?" I really like the fact that they don't just do it for me; they will tell me where to go and find it.

Unfortunately a not insignificant minority of interviewees (12 participants) – mostly teachers themselves – bemoaned what they considered to be insufficient support for teachers' (their) PLD and wellbeing. Specific issues included:

- The lack of a thorough programme of induction for teachers new to particular institutions

On paper we do have an induction programme, but it's a tick box exercise because no time is given to it. No time is allocated to doing it properly so it gets done on the run. "Do you know where the photocopier is?" Silly things like that.

- A lack of subject-specific support

  Subject specialism for me comes from the internet. I've got nowhere else to go. They updated the specifications in January this year for web related programming things and they also deprecated certain techniques and there are more to be deprecated next year and so on and so forth. That really affects the content that I can deliver. The teachers that are there at the moment are still delivering content that was written in about 2008. They've kind of stopped at that point and gone "Right, that's as much as we need and we'll present that to the children." So I'm coming in going "Did you see that that's been deprecated on such and such a thing?" and they go "Oh, we didn't realise that."

- Institutions not being sufficiently proactive in offering to provide support – e.g. for teachers taking on new (e.g. leadership) roles

  I think because I've been in the business for a while I was able to cope but perhaps someone who'd gone into a sort of Head of Department or similar sort of role sooner in their career might have required some help with how do you run a department, how do you manage meetings and things like that that I suppose because I've sort of been there and seen it anyway I haven't said "I need to go on some management courses," or whatever. But it wasn't really offered.

- Institutions not responding favourably to requests to attend training courses

  I have asked for such training and it's absolutely impossible to have anything significant. It's very, very hard to get a day out let alone a course out because of the vast amount of responsibilities that seem to be increasing as time goes on.

Some teachers felt that they had effectively been *left to 'sink or swim'*:

  [I]t's a very nice place and I like the people, but the sort of support, to answer your question, that I'd have liked when I started teaching maths for the first time was for somebody to say "Well, here's what a scheme of work looks like. Here are the sort of things you should be doing. This is what you might expect and actually you can work with me for the first couple of months or something, gradually tapering in and then over." Somebody did come and sit with me for the first two weeks, but apart from that I felt it was like sink or swim. You know, "There's your class. It's off site by the way. It's sort of down the hill there. Good luck"!

In addition, some interviewees:

- bemoaned *the lack of explicit discussion about pedagogy in their organisations*:

  [T]he concern for me is that when we have team meetings we do not talk about teaching method, we're not developing our teaching. All we do because we've become… I think teachers have got many hats. We've become administrators. So we're cleaning the system, we're making sure our registers are right, we're under all that statistical pressure and … actually we don't sit round as a team and go "What have you tried lately? Did it work? Was it any good? How about you try this?" That's just not happening… it [the college's approach to CPD] *is a bit tired. Because of the pressure of time they converted CPD into 2 days. So we have a day of admin clear up and then a CPD day, but the CPD day could include a chat on pensions, which is interesting but doesn't actually develop our teaching professionalism and I'm not sure that the college has got the will to change it. This is a terrible expression, but it feels like they're ticking a box. "Yeah, we've covered that. Tick that box. That's done then, move on"… We're not talking about how teenagers react, how teenagers think, how we could do it differently or better. That I don't feel is happening honestly and it bothers me a bit.*

- and/or felt strongly that **their senior leadership teams were preoccupied with the assessment of teachers' 'performance'**, with an implicit (and sometimes explicit) threat that 'under-performance' would not be tolerated, **at the expense of a genuine concern for and investment in teachers' professional learning and development:**

I had an issue with a colleague last year. He was new here but an experienced teacher and the results were not good from his first year and so straightaway it was "What are we going to do about this?" and … what really would have solved it would have been plenty of mentoring and that didn't really happen… Or afterwards there was no proper set of meetings set up in a constructive way to make sure that he was moving forwards in the right direction. It was more a case of a shot across his bows that "You can't let this happen. Don't let it happen again." Not "Well how did we get to this stage and how can we as a college help you to make sure that it doesn't happen again?"

3.2 TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

In our interviews with STEM teachers, mentors, teacher educators and others we asked what areas of PLD they/teachers had needed support for over the previous 12-24 months. The most frequently mentioned needs related to:

- **Teachers' ability to effectively employ a range of teaching methods – support for 'general pedagogical knowledge' (Shulman, 1987)**

I think [I would benefit from support for] *active learning definitely… I could see how much more* [students] *would get from that than me just standing there and telling them. I think those are kind of the main* [PLD needs] *that spring to mind.*

I think firstly coming from being in a different career I feel I'm developing a new set of skills, particularly around teaching and learning in the classroom. I'm used to doing presentations in a business context, but teaching in a classroom's quite a different experience, so I think certainly around communication skills and how to bring those to bear effectively in the classroom context.

My shortcomings stem from purely the educational side – things that are required like structure of the lesson, time management, plenaries and assessment… These sorts of things that are a practical application of your education or knowledge [that] *are effective in your work with the students.*

[The] *pedagogy of working with adults or whatever the word is for adult education…*

- **Support for pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)**

I think it's more about how a subject is best delivered. So whilst we have a scheme of work that says the next three weeks we're going to be, I don't know, teaching about momentum and rotation or something, for me it's been understanding why is it we're teaching it in that order and are the pieces we're introducing now pieces that either connect to and build on stuff that's been done before and should we be introducing certain things at this point or just sort of saying "Well, that's a little placeholder for something that's coming further downstream."

I would have liked some subject support. I think the university has been great in teaching me about how to be a teacher – what the content of delivering a lesson is about, how to think about the models and so on… but as for teaching maths… it was weeks before anybody gave me a scheme of work and said "You might like to look at this." There were resources on the placement computers for teaching functional maths, so I just used to sort of look at that and try and piece it together…

Some interviewees also identified PLD needs relating to:

- **Subject or vocational knowledge**

  I mean I did physics as a degree subject, but I completed that in 1985, so that gives you an idea of how many years ago it was. I have worked in electronics and computing for many years, so I've got a good understanding of that side of things. A lot of it is regaining the knowledge and the confidence I think that sort of goes with that to then be able to teach students.

  [F]or the subject specialism on the maths side of things that was a bit difficult because there was nobody really to talk to about that. You know, if I was having some kind of issue, then like just clearing up something in that there was nobody there just to say because nobody really either remembers or understands that subject now.

On the other hand, while support for subject or vocational content was identified as an area of need by and on behalf of some teachers, other participants made a point of stating that this was *not* the area in which they/teachers most needed support:

  [M]ost new teachers, most people who are training to become teachers, they're most worried about subject knowledge and that's the last of their worries… I think that's something that you can… If you're a good teacher you're going to be someone who enjoys learning I think and so the learning to keep on developing your own subject knowledge is something that'll come naturally anyway.

  {Interviewer: what sort of things have you needed help with do you think?} Well, I obviously know my subject because I've worked in the IT industry for over 15 years

The other main PLD needs identified by relatively small numbers of interviewees related to:

- **Leadership skills, including staff supervision and financial management**

  I think I'm going to be more and more involved in the sort of leadership stuff and I would like some more of that… because I feel quite conscious that there will be a shift in emphasis. I have been more of a manager whereas I think the emphasis is now going to be on leading and taking it forward and suggesting some of the changes rather than just making them happen, which is more what I've been doing probably.

  I think for me personally I'd like to have had … help with things like financial management and so on because as a departmental head I have this constant drive about saving money and so on as is typical in FE.

- **Knowledge/understanding of requirements of awarding bodies**

  I think it was really important to have somebody that taught the subject that I was teaching, particularly at the beginning because there were lots of things about the exam and exam technique and I had to put lots of resources together, so it was really important to be able to talk to somebody that knew about that.

  Obviously the change in geography that's been put back a year now. Obviously that will be something that might require attending some form of INSET somewhere just to make sure we truly understand what the specification changes are going to involve; and moving towards more linear A Levels and how that's going to affect the students and which students are going to take up your subject.

- **Marking and assessment**

Obviously guidelines of marking, assessment, the assessment strategies, how the department like to tackle assessments just so then we're all singing from the same hymn sheet and we're all doing the same assessment. Giving feedback as well. I think feedback's quite an important part and just making sure that we're all giving the right amount of feedback to the students and whether it be digitally or verbally, you know, making sure it's in the right method as well.

How to mark, that's always a good one. "What is the purpose of marking? Who are we actually serving? Is it for parents or do students actually read what you've written?" or whatever. So how to give effective feedback.

- **Lesson planning**

It's writing learning objectives and writing lesson plans…

Chunking lessons. I always used to start with saying "It's about pitch and pace." – so, you know, making sure that you're at the right sort of level for what the students actually need to know and that they can understand it and that you're going at a pace that's interesting and exciting. And I always used to say "Tell, tell, tell. Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them and then tell them that you've told them." Even now I still find that that's at the core of a good lesson. You know, if you want people to come out having gained something that's of relevance to the exam syllabus or whatever and also have got some notes to support it so they can revise it effectively and make sure that they've learned it, then those are still really… That's what it's all about – pitch and pace and tell, tell, tell. So it's about breaking those things down and making sure that people are happy to do those.

- **Time and workload management**

Something else that I find has become more important over the last I suppose 10 or 15 years is time management. I find that because trainee teachers come into teaching with … such high demands on them you have to tell people to manage their time properly at weekends and evenings and so on so they just don't burn out. You know, it's about being pragmatic about the job… I say it's about working smarter, not harder…

Struggles. Usually it's pressure of time… So the intentions of the department are good, the intentions of the college are good, but we're always stretched. I enjoy being stretched, but some people find it… I do get stressed I have to say, but some people get over-stressed, yeah… and it's stressful to witness. So usually we just talk it through. We grab a classroom, we go and have a sit down and there's an outpouring, I listen and then together we kind of say "Well perhaps you should do that"…

- **Teaching BTEC – including literacy and/or numeracy skills**

We, I think, as a college are going to be doing more BTECs and … We've got a couple of great chaps in biology who have sort of led the way and they've started the Applied Science BTEC and they have found it tough… They've had very much a mind shift of what they should be expecting from those sorts of students and they've struggled with the literacy of some of the students that we've got on the course and that has been one of their biggest bugbears. It hasn't been the science at all, it's been the literacy. Even with the GCSE, C grade GCSE in English, they can't write reports in the way that they should be doing, so the assignments are having to go back for correction lots of times. So I think we definitely do need to get the message across that BTEC is a shift, but it's not perhaps as bad as is being made out.

If you're used to teaching A Level physics… and you are now going to be teaching BTEC engineering there's going to be a different set of expectations then, very much so. The maths side of the physics they used to be able to say "Right, you know about this. You've done this in maths," and they all go

"Oh yeah," whereas in engineering it's going to be "Maths? What's maths?" a little bit. .. [W]e are hoping that some of the BTEC engineers will be doing maths anyway because if they want to do it at university they will need the maths, but I think it's almost going to be a two tier system in that some of the others are very much vocational engineers perhaps going off to the local college afterwards to do some welding qualifications … that sort of thing. So there is going to be a bit of a shift.

- **Differentiating teaching for different learners**

[F]acilitating learning with a group of students who are of quite wide range ability… So although we ask for a certain minimum level of maths and GCSE and a minimum level of science, physics is quite a challenging subject for a lot of students, so actually being able to effectively differentiate between students is something that I feel particularly I'm having to learn those skills and that's where I think the support of my college mentor and my subject mentor is really important. So that's probably a key area.

- **Working with students with SEN/inclusion**

I'd never come across anyone with severe autism before and Asperger's… and the student that I had was incredibly difficult to get through to, so having more support would have been beneficial. The support I did have was good, but I think I could have benefited from more training… for dealing with those students because the student with autism was very quiet and his teaching assistant did a lot of talking… the student … wouldn't talk to anybody and he wouldn't want to go in the dark room which is part of the course. So that would have been beneficial, to have more support.

- **Clarity regarding the criteria by which they/teachers will be evaluated**

The thing about having to teach especially in front of someone like an Ofsted inspector is having to teach in a way somebody else wants you to do it and what their expectations are… I get confused because in each of these inspections or … Ofsteds or whatever, everybody seems to have a different goal. So the goal posts even since I've been here over 7 months have moved several times as to what they're expecting to see in a lesson and talking to everybody else they're very confused about that. So a nice directional path that says "This is what we're expecting if that's being taught" … that's what is needed I think personally for myself…

- **The use of data – for example, to monitor student progress**

[S]omething that I probably would have liked to focus on… maybe a little bit more help interpreting data… to understand progression… looking at data and seeing how much progress students make within the 2 years that they're with us.

- **Using ICT in teaching**

I think myself quite weak in the IT department…

In our online survey we asked teachers to indicate in which areas they might benefit from additional training or support for their professional development. The responses are summarised in Table 1 which shows that the most frequently mentioned PLD needs related to differentiating teaching for different learners (40% of respondents) and the ability to use a range of teaching methods (35%). A relatively low 13% of survey respondents identified a need for support for their subject/ vocational knowledge, though 21% identified 'knowledge/understanding of contemporary industry techniques/practices'.

Table 1. What would you say are the areas, if any, in which you think you would benefit from additional training, professional development or support in the next 12 months?

Differentiating my teaching for different learners	40%
Ability to use a range of teaching methods	35%
Awareness of research findings about effective teaching methods	25%
Ability to work with gifted/talented students	23%
Knowledge/understanding of contemporary industry techniques/practices*	*21%*
Ability to work with students with special educational needs/inclusion	21%
Ability to deal with students' personal issues	20%
Knowledge/understanding of awarding body requirements	19%
Ability to maintain discipline amongst students	19%
Awareness of labour market information and employer requirements	19%
Knowledge/understanding of student motivation and behaviour	18%
Using ICT in subject/vocational teaching	17%
Ability to work with students with English as an Additional Language (EAL)	16%
Teaching A-level	*14%*
Support for my subject/vocational knowledge	13%
Marking and/or assessing competence	12%
Developing my confidence as a teacher, generally	12%
Knowledge/understanding of the principles of assessment for learning	12%
Leading subject/vocational team	12%
Knowledge/understanding of education and/or training policy	12%
Staff supervision/management skills	11%
Teaching literacy/numeracy skills	10%
Planning/organising	9%
Teaching vocational courses at Level 3	*9%*
Time management skills	8%
Teaching courses at Level 4/5/6	*6%*
Teaching GCSE	*6%*
Teaching 14-16 year olds	*5%*
Teaching courses at Entry Level or Level 1	*4%*
Teaching vocational courses at Level 2	*4%*
Other	6%
None	5%
Don't know	3%

Total n= 382

* Those items in italics will only be applicable to a (varying) proportion of respondents. (The percentage figure may thus underestimate the percentage of teachers for whom they are relevant who regard these as training, professional development or support needs.)

Responses to the above survey question were analysed by:

- the length of time respondents had been in teaching;
- whether respondents had (or were working towards) an ITT qualification;
- the type of institution in which teachers were employed (Sixth-Form College, FE College or adult and community learning provider); and
- the type of role teachers occupied (predominantly teaching, predominantly leadership, or a combination of the two).

The main statistically significant findings are listed below.

Length of time in teaching

New teachers (those who had not completed their first year or were presently undertaking their second year) were more likely than more experienced teachers to state that they would benefit from additional support/professional development in the following areas:

- the ability to maintain discipline amongst students;
- the ability to use a range of teaching methods;
- the ability to work with students with English as an Additional Language (EAL);
- the ability to work with students with special educational needs (SEN)/inclusion;
- developing their confidence as a teacher, generally.

Whether respondents had an ITT qualification

Similarly, those who did not have or were currently working towards an ITT qualification were more likely than qualified teachers to indicate that they would benefit from additional support/professional development in the following areas:

- the ability to maintain discipline amongst students;
- the ability to use a range of teaching methods;
- the ability to work with students with English as an Additional Language (EAL);
- knowledge/understanding of student motivation and behaviour.

Type of role
- Those with a mixed role of teaching, assessment and leadership were more likely than those who spent the majority of their time teaching and assessing students to indicate that they would benefit from support in leading a subject/vocational team.
- Those with a predominately leadership role and those with a mixed role of leadership, teaching and assessment were more likely to indicate that they would benefit from additional support/professional development in staff supervision/management skills.

Institution type
- Teachers in FE colleges and Sixth-Form Colleges were more likely than those in adult and community learning providers to state that they would benefit from additional support/professional development relating to the ability to use a range of teaching methods.
- Teachers in Adult and community learning providers were more likely to cite that they would benefit from additional support/professional development in teaching GCSE and in teaching A level.

3.3 TEACHERS' WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO OPENLY DECLARE THEIR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

One of the problems with supporting teachers' PLD is that for various reasons, exacerbated by the growth in recent years of a performativity culture, some teachers may be reluctant to acknowledge what they regard as limitations in their knowledge and expertise to those charged with supporting their PLD within their institutions. We thus asked interviewees about the extent to which they – or the teachers they were familiar with – were able to openly discuss their PLD needs within their institutions. Slightly over half of our interviewees suggested that they – or teachers they were supporting or were familiar with – were able to discuss their PLD openly at least with some colleagues within their institution. Some of the following comments are illustrative:

> I think in the majority of cases they can. I think in the majority of cases trainee teachers can approach their mentor…. and have that discussion.

> I feel like if I need to I'll ask for help.

> I felt that I could talk to them about anything that I was worried about.

> I can be completely honest and open with them.

> Yeah, I can be open and honest with my mentor and my departmental head. Obviously the extent you can do that depends on how you put it. You have to be sometimes tactful, but yeah, I can be totally. "I think I need more of this. Can I get this?" So yeah, I can be…

> I tend to be quite open with most people. I haven't really got anything to hide, to be quite honest with you.

That said, we need to treat these data with a degree of caution because if teachers are unable or unwilling to openly discuss their PLD needs with mentors, line managers and others, they may be similarly unwilling to declare this in a research interview. Indeed, one teacher who initially stated "I've never felt like I couldn't speak to somebody about anything, even with the mentor with like management staff or anything like that…. Everybody's made me feel very comfortable", went on later in the interview to state:

> I have autism myself and I feel a bit embarrassed to talk to people about that although I know I can. They've talked to me about the disability support here and everything's great, but I'd feel a bit embarrassed talking to my peers about that at the college. It feels a little bit personal to me rather than something specifically to do with the job as well. So I think it could be nice to be able to just say "Well, you know, I do struggle with this little specific area," and just have somebody to talk to and listen and be able to guide you to external resources as well and any kind of help and support externally that could be there.

In addition, several interviewees admitted that they or some teachers with whom they were familiar were indeed reluctant to acknowledge their PLD needs:

> I mean I had a meeting with a PGCE student last week who was having some difficulties with their mentor and… they certainly didn't feel that they could be open and honest with their mentor and with the management within that. It was another college that they were placed in, but they certainly didn't feel they could be open and honest.

> I can remember really struggling here actually when I first started with a learner having a really, really difficult time… and thinking "I'm supposed to be good at this. I'd better not say," and really having a really miserable time of it for a few weeks, which doesn't sound like very long, but it was at the time with one particular learner and I wish now I'd just thought I could have asked everybody,

you know, and just said "Look, is this okay?" or had somebody I could ask about things and ask them to pop into the class.

It'd be something to do with how embarrassed they would feel about their lack of knowledge and I think we've all got that in us… but some people will hold back and try and sort it out themselves no matter how much extra pressure they're putting on themselves and I've seen that in a workshop.

Factors impeding and promoting teachers' openness about their PLD needs

The extent to which teachers are willing and able to openly discuss their PLD needs with colleagues who may potentially be in a position to provide direct or indirect access to support for these will be influenced by a number of factors including:

- the disposition of the individual teacher

    I think it absolutely depends on the individuals involved. So it could be a two way thing. Some people just don't want to tell you or talk to people and they have a very suspicious view of any organisation frankly regardless of how benign. Other people even in the throes of say a restructure or redundancies are perfectly capable of coming forward.

    They're thrown into a very, very challenging environment that they really need a lot, a lot, a lot of support and, you know, if you're middle aged and you've been very successful in your past career I think it's very difficult to say "Actually I'm finding this really hard." Do you know what I mean?

    Not wanting to feel inadequate. You know, you've taken somebody on as let's say a manufacturing engineer and you want to look as though you know what you're talking about. A peer thing really looking as though you know what you're doing with your peers.

- the characteristics, approach and role within the organisation of the individuals responsible for providing support for PLD

    If that person hadn't been so approachable then it [the ability to openly discuss PLD needs] *would have maybe been affected.*

    If I say the wrong thing in the wrong way to either of the two [colleagues] *that are involved in the situation there can be backlash. Sometimes if you want to address a very sensitive aspect of something it can be a quite nasty sort of situation.*

    Having [an 'offline'] *mentor was absolutely invaluable because there would be things I could ask him that either I couldn't get hold of my line manager because she was so busy and barely there or I was perhaps a little bit embarrassed that I don't want to look incompetent, particularly as a new member of staff. I mean I'm not that shy, but when you're new to somewhere you don't want to look "Gosh, have they hired somebody who's incapable?" So to be able to quickly pick up the phone and grab … my mentor, and say "Gosh, what's going on here? How do I log into…?" something that was perhaps online that's a system I should know was absolutely invaluable.*

    Well, of course this [the extent to which teachers can be open about their PLD needs] *is very much based upon, if you like, how the mentor approaches it and this is why I gave you the example earlier about how some mentors view their approach to mentoring and it's a very kind of directive and didactic way perhaps of teaching them as opposed to regarding it as a development process whereby the trainee develops and becomes more confident… also it's very much that personal relationship between the mentor and the trainee, isn't it, and I suspect some will be quite fearful of revealing all, shall we say, in case they got the sack.*

- the potential to develop trusting relationships

[I]n my experience the best relationships are between people who've been in an organisation a long time or in a job a long time so there's that level of confidence and competence on both sides. So one of my team, for example, has been at the college 25 years. We have a very, very good relationship and had a very good relationship very quickly even though I didn't know her until she worked for me and what that's saying is we both got the confidence really from the off to be quite honest and it works very well because neither of us are shy in coming forward, but we actually know the parameters within which we're working. Other people who I found difficult initially it's simply because they've had to build up that trust.

I did feel the relationship was there. I think that I probably was very aware that she was my curriculum leader as well, but after doing mentor reviews with her and us talking about what I needed to develop in my practice I think that my guard was brought down completely and I thought "Yeah, this is the right thing to do, is to discuss what went wrong because that's how you develop and how you learn." So in the first couple of months I was a bit guarded, but then the trust was built and my guard was down and it was fine.

- the culture of the organisation and the extent of the emphasis on evaluative lesson observations in particular

What I like about it is nothing's frowned upon – whether I make a mistake, whether or not I've done something or whether I've got dates wrong or something like that. It's okay because it's not every day and also they probably know.

And part of it as well is this fear of observation, of being observed teaching and I just think it's really important that we get over that... Now you have an observation and people … I mean the print room have told me that people send things over at four in the morning… really, really frightened of being observed, which is terrible, isn't it? I mean that's awful. I just think you'd be much more relaxed and casual if you could say to your mentor "Oh, could you just pop in? I'm having a bit of bother with this learner."

If [it is] a grade 3 college there is often limited support and then staff are out. There is a harshness in the sector that may make teachers less willing to be open.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this initial findings chapter we have provided a valuable context for those which follow – and which focus on mentoring and coaching – by providing an account of teachers' perceptions of:

- the support for their professional learning and development (PLD) more generally;
- their PLD needs; and
- their ability or willingness to openly discuss those PLD needs.

In the following chapter we present findings on:

- the reach of mentoring and coaching in the FE and Skills sector, and which categories of teacher have institution-based mentors or coaches;
- who was acting as institution-based mentors and coaches and their relationships to the teachers they were supporting; and
- the duration and frequency of mentor/coach support.

The findings presented in this and other chapters are discussed in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 4: THE NATURE OF INSTITUTION-BASED MENTORING AND COACHING

4.0 CHAPTER OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

In this chapter we present findings on:

- the reach of mentoring and coaching in the FE and Skills sector – or which categories of teacher have institution-based mentors or coaches;
- who was acting as institution-based mentors and coaches and their relationships to the teachers they were supporting; and
- the duration and frequency of mentor / coach support.

Key findings

Amongst the findings presented, we show that:

- just over one-third of survey respondents (teachers of varying degrees of experience) indicated that they currently have – or in the last two years had had – a mentor or coach in the institution within which they were employed;
- the vast majority of those working towards an ITT qualification were being or had recently been mentored/coached, as were/had around 25-30% of those who were not working towards an ITT qualification or who had previously successfully obtained one;
- over two-thirds of those respondents who had a mentor or coach indicated that their mentor/coach was someone working in the same subject or vocational area as themselves;
- just under half of respondents who indicated that they had a mentor or coach stated that this was their line manager;
- approximately a third (33%) of respondents who indicated that they had a mentor or coach stated that they discussed their work or development as a teacher with their mentor / coach at least once a week, while 32 per cent indicated that they did so less than once a month;
- there was a lack of consensus amongst our research participants on the question of which teachers most needed mentoring and coaching, although many perceived teachers in their first four or five years in the profession to be amongst those with the greatest need.

4.1 WHICH TEACHERS HAVE INSTITUTION-BASED MENTORS OR COACHES?

As Table 2 shows, just over one-third of survey respondents indicated that they currently have – or in the last two years had had – a mentor or coach in the institution within which they were employed.

Table 2. Do you currently have a mentor or coach – or have you had a mentor/coach in the last 2 years – who works in the same institution as you do?
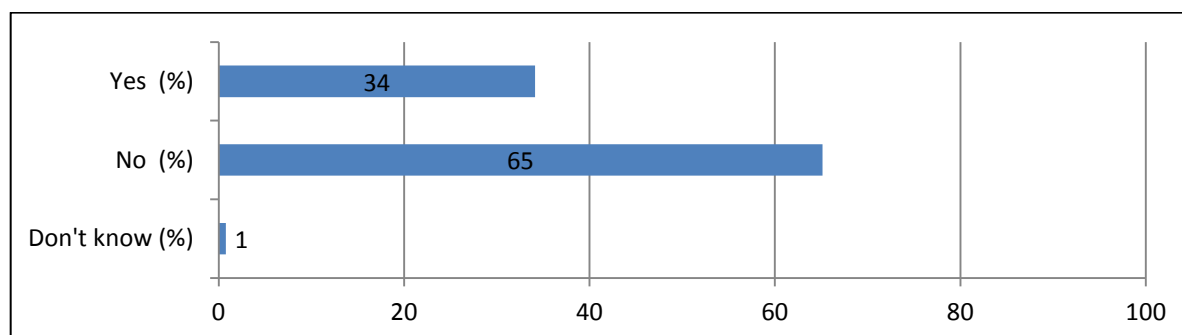
Total n = 387

Responses to this question were subsequently analysed by a number of other variables to explore which categories of teacher were most likely to have a mentor or coach. It was found that:

- Those who have less teaching experience are statistically more likely to have had a mentor/coach in last 2 years in the same institution (Table 3). Nearly all respondents presently undertaking their first year of teaching reported having an internal mentor/coach whilst only 16% of those with 16-20 years' experience did so. This was found to be statistically significant (p<0.01).
- Those who are currently working towards an ITT qualification are statistically much more likely (p<0.01) to have had an internal mentor in last 2 years: 92%[7] compared with 29% of those who do not have and are not working towards an ITT qualification, and 31% of those who have successfully obtained one (Table 4).
- Teachers who spend more time in the classroom are statistically more likely (p<0.01) to have had an internal mentor than those with more substantial leadership roles (Table 5).
- Teacher respondents in adult and community learning providers were slightly more likely than those employed by other types of institution in the sector to report having an internal mentor, though the differences are not statistically significant (Table 6).

Table 3. Do you currently have a mentor or coach – or have you had a mentor/coach in the last 2 years – who works in the same institution as you do, by length of time in teaching

Years teaching	Yes	No	Total
0 (I have not yet completed my first year of teaching)	21	7	28
	75%	25%	100%
1 (I am presently undertaking my second year of teaching)	12	1	13
	92%	8%	100%
2 to 5	26	27	53
	49%	51%	100%
6 to 10	29	58	87
	33%	67%	100%
11 to 15	18	60	78
	23%	77%	100%
16 to 20	7	38	45
	16%	84%	100%
21+	19	61	80
	24%	76%	100%

P<0.01, CV=0.4

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[7] Twenty-three out of the 25 survey respondents who were working towards an ITT qualification stated that they had an institution-based mentor, and two indicated that they did not. Our interview data suggest that trainees were infrequently allocated mentors who were external to the institution, especially in smaller providers and others where there were no suitable same subject or vocational specialists to undertake this role.

Table 4. Do you currently have a mentor or coach – or have you had a mentor/coach in the last 2 years – who works in the same institution as you do, by whether respondent has or is working towards an ITT qualification

	Yes	No	**Total**
No I do not have and I am not currently working towards an ITT qualification	9	22	**31**
	29%	71%	**100%**
Yes I am currently working towards an ITT qualification	23	2	**25**
	92%	8%	**100%**
Yes I have successfully obtained an ITT qualification	93	212	**305**
	31%	70%	**100%**

$p < 0.01$, CV=0.32

Table 5. Do you currently have a mentor or coach – or have you had a mentor/coach in the last 2 years – who works in the same institution as you do, by type of role of respondent

	Yes	No	**Total**
Teacher or trainer who spends the majority of their time teaching and/or assessing students	84	149	**233**
	36%	64%	**100%**
Mixed role of leadership and teaching and assessing	27	70	**97**
	28%	72%	**100%**
Predominately leadership role with little or no teaching	4	20	**24**
	17%	83%	**100%**

$p < 0.01$ CV=0.18

Table 6. Do you currently have a mentor or coach – or have you had a mentor/coach in the last 2 years – who works in the same institution as you do, by type of institution

	Yes	No	**Total n**
Adult and community learning provider	9	10	**19**
	47%	53%	**100%**
FE college	76	150	**226**
	34%	66%	**100%**
Sixth-Form College	41	71	**112**
	37%	63%	**100%**

Employment and learning providers (including GTSs) were excluded from this analysis because there were too few respondents in this category for a meaningful comparison.

Findings from the analysis of interview data support the survey findings reported above insofar as they show that mentoring is most likely to be provided for those undertaking a programme of initial teacher training (for which it is a requirement) and those who are new to teaching in a particular institution, as part of a programme of induction support which typically lasts for one year:

> *When you're employed at the college you're given a mentor to help you through the initial phases of your job and then just as a point of call really. So in your induction you have a chance to meet your mentor and pass on details and then if there's anything you feel like you need to ask you know that there's a face there already.*

> [T]*he mentor is there to support the individual during that first year in employment.*

The interview data also reveal that many providers are also providing mentors or coaches (sometimes referred to as Teaching and Learning Coaches, Teaching and Learning Mentors and Subject Learning Coaches) for teachers of varying degrees of experience. In the majority of cases such support appears to be focused on those whose teaching is rated as an Ofsted 3 ('requires improvement') or 4 ('inadequate') – as opposed to 1 ('outstanding') or 2 ('good') – notably through observations of their teaching in Ofsted inspections or by the institution's own quality assurance mechanisms:

> [Coaching is] *focused on people who were getting* [Ofsted] *grade fours or grade threes 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, which could be anybody, if they get a grade three 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.*

> *If I were to get a grade four I'd be allocated a Teaching and Learning Coach.*

In a relatively small number of institutions, there was evidence that teachers who were promoted to a leadership position would also be provided with – or offered – a mentor:

> *And also … if somebody gets promoted as well; so they would be allocated a mentor in their new post.*

When interviewees were asked about who most *needs* institution-based mentoring or coaching, most gave one or other of two broad kinds of response:

1) **New or beginning teachers** – including new unqualified teachers, trainee, newly and recently qualified teachers

I think people coming into teaching new have a lot to cope with and a lot of process really, especially in the first year and a bit in the second year too really, but the change is so sudden for some people that it involves complete change of mind set really and so I think it is absolutely valuable to get input from more than one person on a regular basis.

I'm looking forward to going into an institution where there will be some sort of safety net so that I'll feel more wrapped up in a sort of institutional, protective blanket in a sense around "This is the way we do things," so there'll be something to fall back on.

2) **All teachers** – the suggestion being that it is not possible to generalise and/or that any teachers can potentially benefit from the support of a mentor or coach

> *I think it's continual. I mean as an NQT you would have had all the training the year before, but it's very different being told in a lecture to applying it in a classroom and I suppose after you've been in the profession a few years you might get somewhat complacent and stuck in certain ways of teaching and it's nice to have new ideas.*

> *You need good mentoring all the way through… ideally I think that you do need to have on-going mentoring; it's not just the first year…*

> *All sorts. I don't think it's easy to categorise. XXXX last year was a new teacher but fantastic. I think*

she had her eyes open as a student at school, had observed without even knowing that she was going to become a teacher. She'd learned some tricks at school, she was very, very on the case whilst she was in her PGCE year and she learned very quickly here, but then again you get PGCE trainees who don't necessarily… you know, they're not observant, they're slow on the uptake… And similarly you come across people who have been teaching for years … who just some things haven't quite clicked. They've been successful in that they've managed to survive and, you know, they've stayed in post and so on. They've been okay for that particular little habitat that they've been within, but you drop them into here and it's… I'm not saying it's sort of a greenhouse or high pressured, but because of the nature of what we are and because it's competitive we do here have to show that we can get the results. In some ways it's easier to come in here as a new teacher because you just learn as you go, but then again it doesn't always work.

A small number of interviewees suggested that the following categories of teacher would also particularly benefit from mentoring or coaching:

- experienced teachers who needed to update their knowledge and skills;

I could be here for 20 years and not have had training in new ways. It's no good being a doctor and handing out medicine from 20 years ago because you need to be kept up to date and that's quite a thing in engineering, isn't it? It's moving on, isn't it, so quite possibly people do need mentoring after they've been here for a while, yeah.

- those teaching subjects they hadn't studied to a high level / hadn't trained to teach / had relatively little knowledge of;
- 'underperforming' teachers; and
- those teachers in need of emotional or psychological support.

4.2 WHO ARE THE MENTORS AND COACHES AND HOW ARE THEY SELECTED?

Responses to a number of survey questions cast some light on who were acting as institution-based mentors and coaches, and their relationships to their teachers they were supporting. From Table 7 we can see that:

- just under half of respondents (45%) who indicated that they had a mentor or coach stated that this was their line manager;
- over two-thirds (68%) of those respondents who had a mentor or coach indicated that their mentor/coach was someone working in the same subject or vocational area as themselves (Table 7).

Additional analysis found that amongst those (23)[8] respondents who were working towards an ITT qualification and who reported having an institution-based mentor, all but one indicated that their mentor shared the same subject/vocational specialism as themselves. Our interview data also suggest that ITT providers normally seek to provide and are successful in providing subject-specific mentors for trainee teachers, while both induction mentoring and mentoring and coaching for more experienced colleagues may or may not be undertaken by the same subject/vocational-specialist: this tends to vary across and within providers.

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[8] In total 25 respondents were working towards an ITT qualification, though two of these did not answer the question relating to having an institution-based mentor in the same subject area as them.
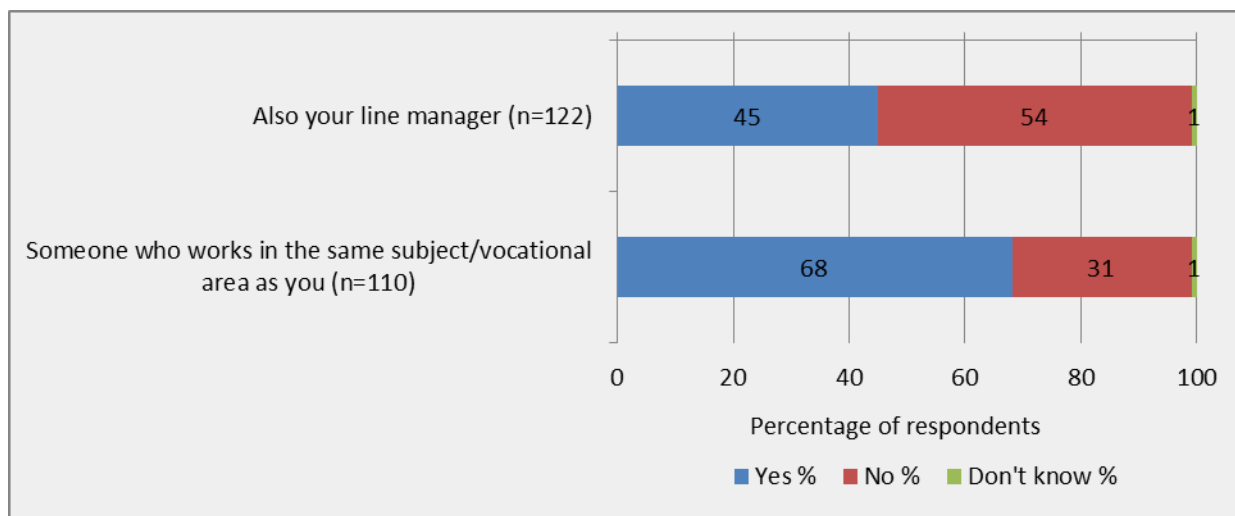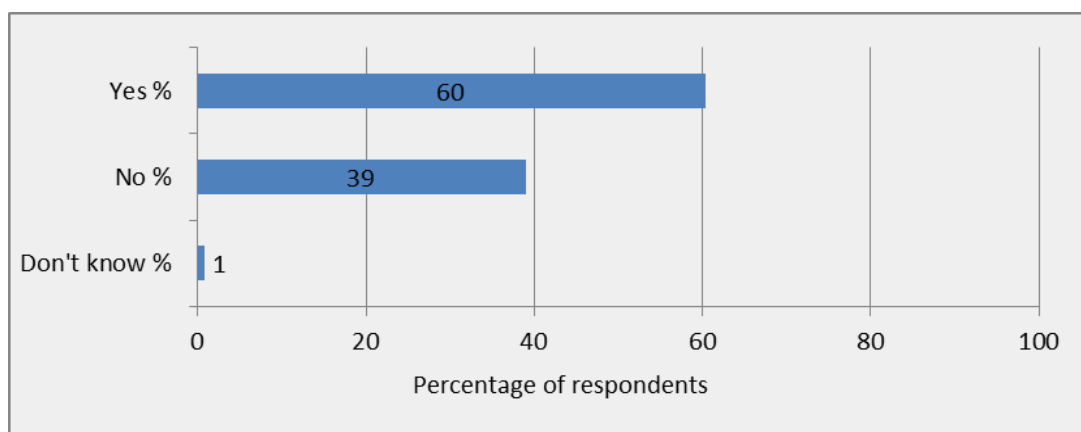
Table 7. Is/was your mentor or coach:

Table 8a shows that:

- 60% of respondents who stated that they had a mentor or coach indicated that their mentor/coach was responsible for or involved in the formal assessment of their performance as a teacher.

If we exclude from this analysis those teachers working towards their ITT (where the mentor is expected to contribute to the student teacher's assessment), the percentage of mentors and coaches involved in assessing the 'performance' of their mentees/coaches falls slightly to 58% (Table 8b).

Table 8a. Is/was your mentor or coach responsible for or involved in the formal assessment of your performance as a teacher? (All respondents who stated that they have a mentor or coach)
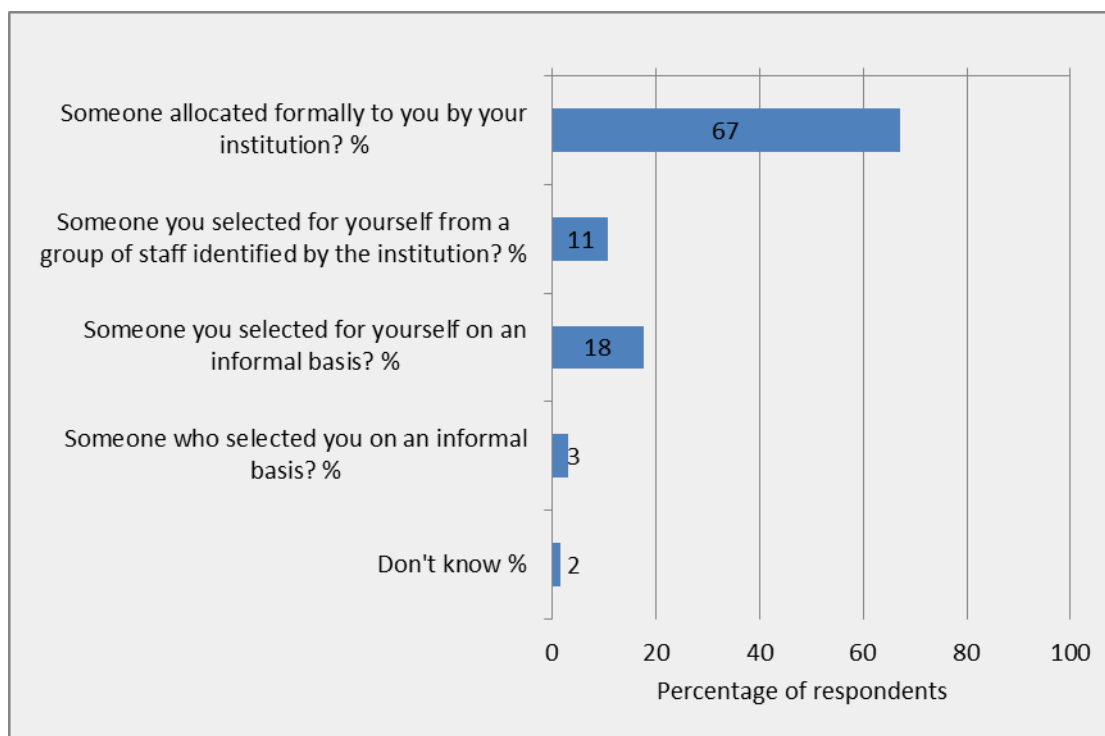

Total n = 131

Table 8b. Is/was your mentor or coach responsible for or involved in the formal assessment of your performance as a teacher? (Excluding teachers working towards their ITT)
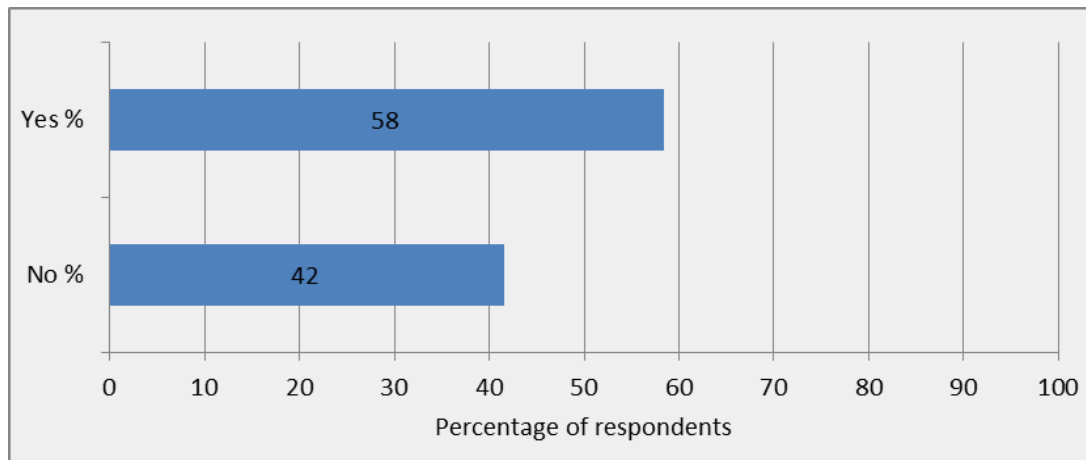
Total n = 101

Both survey and interview data provide information about the selection of mentors and coaches and their pairing with mentees/coaches. Table 9 shows that over two-thirds (67%) of survey respondents who had had a mentor in the last two years indicated that these had been formally allocated by their institution, while a minority (bit over a quarter) of such respondents had been able to select their own mentor or coach on a formal or informal basis.

Table 9. Is/was this mentor or coach

Total n = 131

The interview data suggest that some institutions employ formal methods of selecting mentors and coaches and of pairing these with the teachers they support:

> *I think we can apply for it… I think it might be 2 yearly, the mentors change. So there is a rotation…* [Mentor] *applied for it. Had to apply, go through an interview why he wanted to do it, what he thought he could bring to it and then he was appointed.*

In the majority of cases, however, mentors appear to be selected mainly on the basis of their subject specialism, and (teaching and learning) coaches on the basis of their perceived expertise as excellent practitioners (normally judged in Ofsted terms). Other criteria such as interpersonal skills, ability to support the PLD of adults, and interest in and willingness to undertake the role(s) appear to be less significant:

> *I've not heard of there being any selection criteria.*

> *The question is whether they* [mentors] *have a choice to be a mentor or not and many mentors do not.*

> *You know, I took on* [mentee] *by default if you like.*

4.3 THE DURATION AND FREQUENCY OF MENTOR/COACH SUPPORT

Around three-quarters of survey respondents who had had mentors or coaches reported that this support had lasted for 6 months or more, with just under half (47.7%) indicating that they had the support for over a year (Table 10). Table 11 provides an insight into how often respondents were able to discuss their work or development as a teacher with their mentor or coach:

- approximately a third (33%) of respondents who indicated that they had a mentor or coach stated that they discussed their work or development as a teacher with their mentor / coach at least once a week, while
- 32% indicated that they did so less than once a month.

As we will see in the next chapter, the biggest single frustration amongst both mentees and mentors related to difficulties of finding sufficient time to meet.
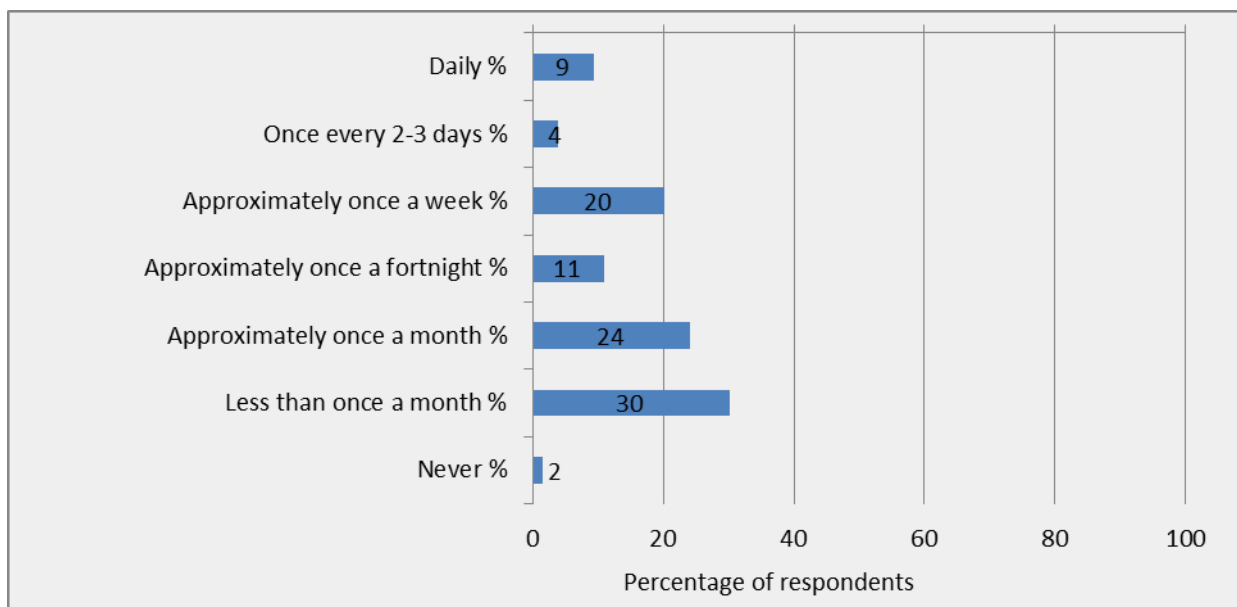
Table 10. Over what overall duration did/do/will you have the support of the mentor/coach?
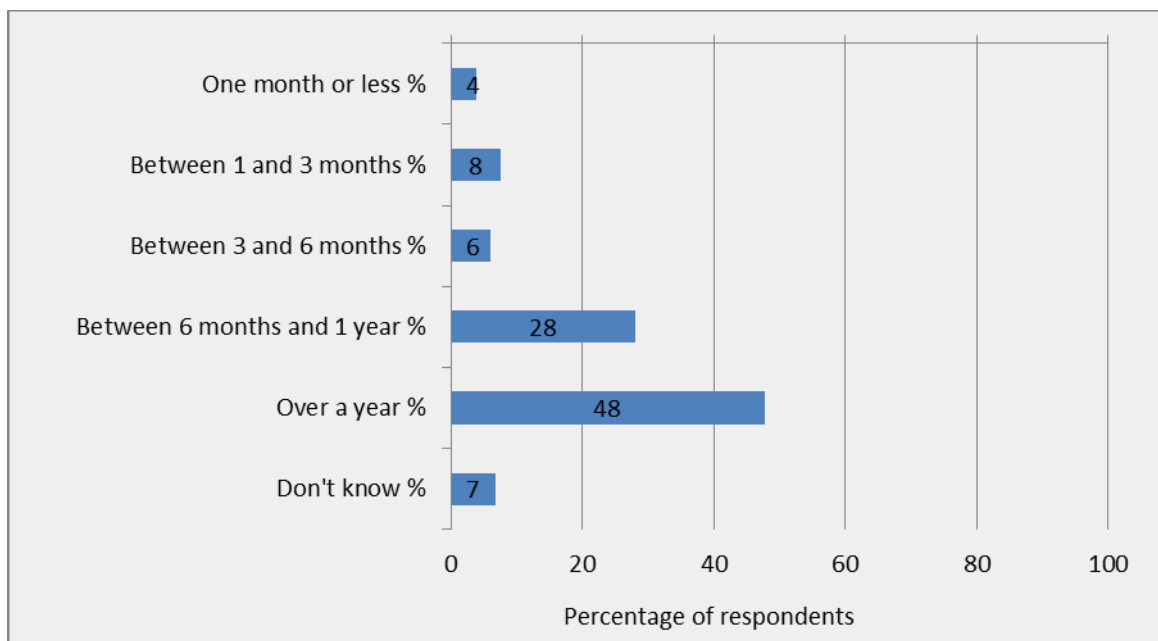
Total n = 132

Table 11. Approximately how often do/did you discuss your work or development as a teacher with your mentor/coach?

Total n = 129

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have presented findings on:

- the reach of mentoring and coaching in the FE and Skills sector;
- who were acting as institution-based mentors and coaches, and their relationships to the teachers they were supporting; and
- the duration and frequency of mentor/coach support.

In the following chapter, we address:

- the value and benefits of institution-based mentoring and coaching for teachers in the FE and Skills sector;
- the current limitations and factors impeding the effectiveness of mentoring and coaching; and
- how mentoring and coaching might be better able to realise its potential across the sector.

The findings presented in these and other chapters are discussed in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 5: BENEFITS, LIMITATIONS AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTITUTION-BASED MENTORING AND COACHING

5.0 CHAPTER OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

In this chapter we present findings on:

- the value and benefits of institution-based mentoring and coaching for teachers in the FE and Skills sector;
- the current limitations and factors impeding the effectiveness of mentoring and coaching; and
- how mentoring and coaching might be better able to realise its potential across the sector.

Key findings

- Our findings suggest that while the quality of mentoring has improved to some extent across the sector in the last decade or so, it remains extremely variable.
- We provide evidence of a range of impediments to effective mentoring and coaching, including those relating to issues with the selection and training of mentors and coaches.
- We show that, where they are working well, mentoring and coaching can result in a range of benefits for the teachers being supported, including: enabling them to talk about a range of difficulties that they experience; supporting their emotional wellbeing; helping them develop general pedagogical techniques; and helping develop their subject pedagogy.
- We also provide evidence to show that a number of factors enhance the effectiveness and impact of institution-based mentoring and coaching, including: having mentors/coaches who share the subject/vocational specialism of the teachers they are supporting; and regular and sustained contact between mentors/coaches and the teachers being supported.

5.1 BENEFITS OF MENTORING AND COACHING FOR TEACHERS[9]

Around six of our interviewees had a deep knowledge of mentoring in the FE sector and had been working – and in some cases conducting research – in the field for several years. The consensus amongst this group of participants was that the coverage and quality of mentoring across the FE and Skills sector had improved over the last decade or so:

Overall across the sector [there has been] *enormous improvement…*

Well, I do think that [institution based mentoring in the FE sector] *has improved from where it was back in 2005 because there was some resistance then…*

I have to say that there has been improvements in mentoring because college managers and WBL institution managers know that Ofsted inspectors will start asking questions about it and that is sadly a kind of risk. I've got to reduce the risk of getting a low grade in the Ofsted inspection by ensuring that mentoring's good, which is the wrong reason obviously… but inevitably when people have got very, very busy lives, working lives particularly, if something isn't made a priority they'll probably de-prioritise it.

I think it has got a lot better… and I think Ofsted seem to be saying that it has improved. [But] [i]*t's not as good as it could be…*

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[9] In this research we have focused on the benefits and potential benefits of mentoring and coaching for the teachers they are supporting. Previous research has found that mentoring and coaching have wider benefits too, notably for the mentor / coach (Hobson *et al.*, 2009).

Despite the claim in the last quotation that mentoring is not as effective as it might be, which we explore later in this chapter, it is clear from our interviews that many teachers are receiving excellent support from institution-based mentors and coaches – support which is benefiting their PLD and their effectiveness and wellbeing as teachers:

> [W]*hat we have are mentors who know their subject content very well, who are very supportive, very sensitive to students' needs, aware of trainee teachers' capabilities and of their confidence level and thus adjust their mentoring in line with the capabilities and the competency of that individual.*

> *So you can see quite quickly and easily this person has identified that their mentor is very good and they can give you examples of where the mentor has helped them to improve their teaching…*

> *I mean I've been really, really lucky. I've had a mentor that has been my curriculum leader as well and she's been amazingly supportive. She's been mentoring for many years so she's very experienced and she's been really supportive towards me and whenever I've needed her she's been there for me and it's been fantastic.*

> [S]*o in terms of professional development I think* [my mentor has] *done a lot to help me improve.*

Both survey and interview data provide insights into what it is that is especially valuable and beneficial about the mentoring and coaching carried out. Here, interview findings support the survey analysis summarised in Table 12 below in showing that many teachers and other stakeholders consider mentoring and coaching to be beneficial in terms of:

- **Enabling teachers to talk about a range of difficulties they may experience**

> *I can sound off* [about] *anything pretty much. So some weeks it's just a general bit of frustration about certain things and being able to talk that through.*

> [Y]*ou can catch issues before they become real problems, whereas if it gets to stew for a few weeks until the meeting it can bubble over and become a real issue, a real problem… It means that hopefully issues wouldn't become major problems…*

- **Supporting teachers' emotional wellbeing**

> *I think the mentor is really just your first line of support in the job. I think it's more a case of knowing there's somebody there who will listen to you, who will kind of take on board any issues or any comments you have and kind of reassure you as well if things do go wrong.*

> *The mentor isn't just supportive in terms of how I teach, but also in an emotional sense as well so you don't feel like you're out there on a limb really. I think even if you're a 50 year old man who goes into teaching for the first time I still think you're going to feel very vulnerable stood at the front of a classroom in terms of that interaction.*

- **Helping teachers develop general pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies**

> *I've gone to my mentor with a few things that have just come up and I just wanted a bit of advice where I had a little bit of a behaviour management issue. We talked that through with some protocol things about how do I deal with this situation and he's also given me some specific input around areas he feels would be helpful for me to either read a bit more about or to try and get some practice in in terms of things to develop. So transitioning between learning activities and he's then sort of observed me doing some of that and given me feedback. So yeah, I've found all of that's been a good formative sort of piece really.*

I learned a great deal from her. Some of the students we have because of the catchment area can be a bit challenging. They're a bit difficult and she's come along with "a sense of humour can diffuse many an angry situation."

- **Helping teachers develop their skills of critical reflection**

So I was still even after every session as we were walking back to the staffroom "How do you think that went? What would you have done better?" So we were having a reflective discussion on the way back to the staffroom so I was constantly getting informal feedback pretty much after every lesson.

My mentor is very good at giving constructive feedback, very good at drawing it out of me – so asking questions which make me think and work it out.

- **Helping develop teachers' subject pedagogy**

On the subject mentoring side [mentor's] *input has been really very helpful… I think particularly around the subject matter itself – how we teach it, why we teach it a certain way, what we're trying to do and to help me, I think, become clearer about what the big idea is I'm trying to deal with in each lesson and how to package that up within the context of the way we want to teach the course here.*

One was very much subject [pedagogy]. *It was about using iPads in science education and so sounds kind of very technical really.*

- **Providing access to teaching resources and equipment**

We would meet and talk about things that I needed to do and she might give me resources or ideas to help with that…

She was able to give me quite a lot of resources and things and active learning that I could adapt or use…

- **Helping teachers to plan and develop skills of planning lessons and/or schemes of work**

So [mentor] *was the perfect person to mentor me because actually it's … the strategies of teaching and the way of planning lessons and more practical based sort of on the job of teaching that I needed help with.*

[J]ust talking about like the way that she structured her course [was beneficial] *– so the scheme of work.*

- **Helping teachers develop their subject or vocational knowledge**

{Interviewer: What kind of things did you talk about?} I suppose more about the subject itself for me… Some of the things I was teaching specifically on machine dynamics I knew the theory behind a lot of it … but I'd never seen it really applied to machine parts. So we were looking at engines and large industrial machines and things like that. I'd never seen that kind of thing done, so there were some issues to begin with of "I don't know this. I've never seen this" … but once … [mentor] sat going through it with me then I realised "Oh, it is only just the things I've done previously but just applied differently."

Interviewees also pointed to a number of related specific or additional benefits of mentoring and coaching, notably:

- induction support aiding their socialisation and acculturation, and enabling them to 'hit the ground running' in their new posts;
- helping with writing assignments for ITT programmes;
- improving their knowledge and understanding of awarding body requirements;
- helping them to manage relationships with other people;
- helping them prioritise in their work and set targets for development;
- helping them to avoid feeling isolated and to feel accepted or part of a team.

Importantly, a number of teachers stated that without the support of their mentor or coach during difficult times, they might not have continued in the teaching profession:

I think not having [mentor] *would have been much… Well, to be honest, I don't think I would have been, I probably would have given up, to be honest, without some support like that in place.*

Table 12. To what extent is/was the mentoring/coaching beneficial in terms of:
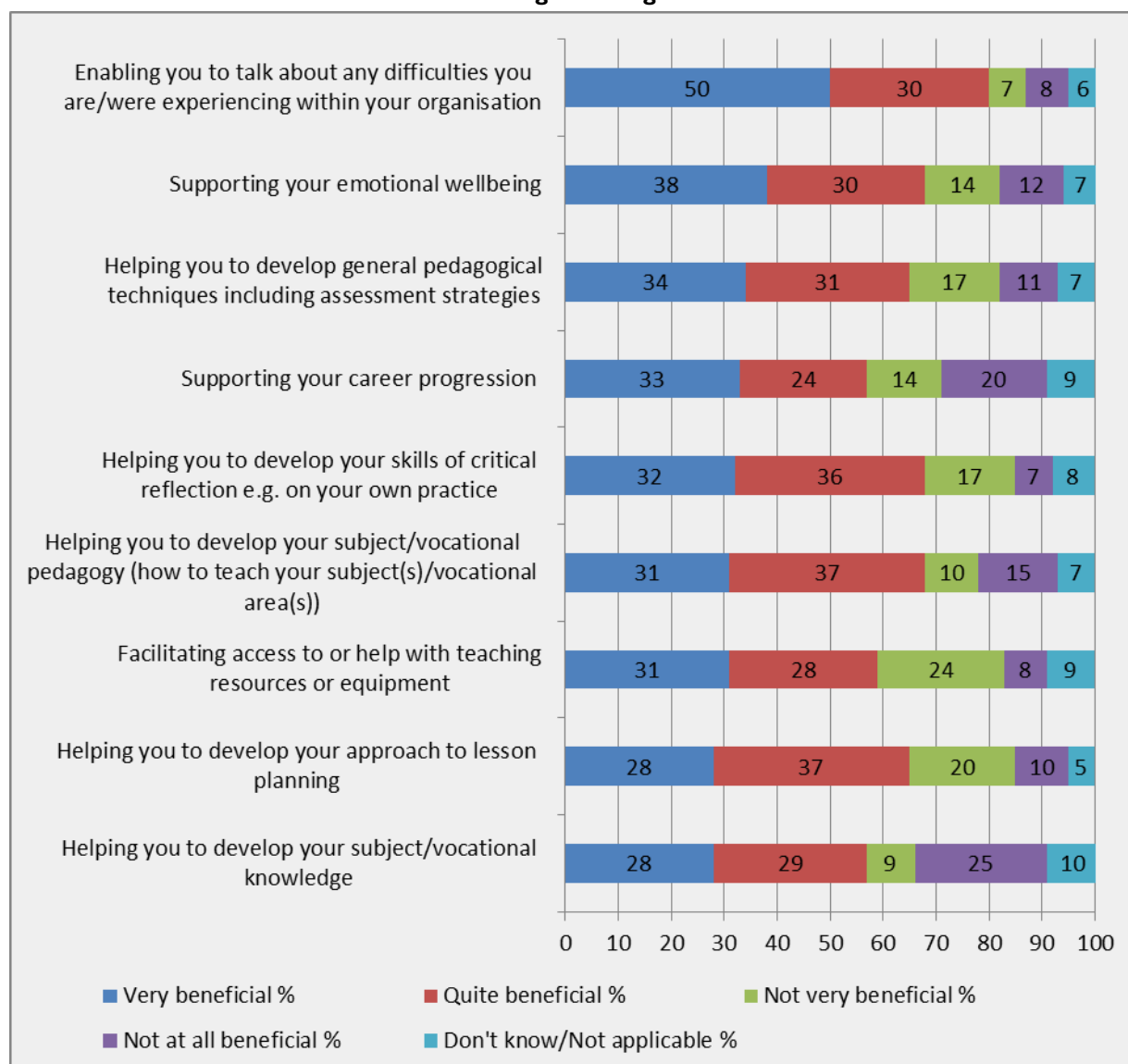
Total n range = 130-132

5.2 DISADVANTAGES AND DRAWBACKS OF MENTORING AND COACHING IN USE

Variable quality of support

Despite the apparent improvement in the quality of mentoring over the years, and the various benefits of mentoring and coaching outlined in the previous section, the evidence from our interviews demonstrates that mentoring and coaching provision in the sector is nonetheless extremely variable in quality both across and to some extent within individual providers:

> *I think people say that they're mentored and again there will be some extremely good examples, but I think across the sector… there is a total lack of consistency… it depends on the organisation. We get so many different stories and variations of what happens with mentoring that there isn't any consistency.*

> *[O]ne of the interesting things about mentoring that certainly we've seen – and this is based on research we've done as well as kind of just our general experience – is that it's hugely inconsistent… across organisations. The quality of mentoring's hugely inconsistent… and a measure of that will be*

feedback from student teachers on what they've experienced as well as from the tutors who've gone in and done joint observations and also supporting trainee teachers... So there's some fantastic work going on that's absolutely brilliant, but there's some not very good stuff as well, clearly not very good stuff...

I mean I've just been talking to a colleague actually about an example where there's some really fantastic practice in place for supporting students on initial teacher education... but the shame is that they're kind of the exceptions. You know, we're talking about them as being innovative and interesting, but they're the exceptions to the rule rather than the rule.

I have to watch some mentors like a hawk because they don't really do what they're supposed to do and others are absolutely outstanding.

Discussing with my colleagues on the PGCE and ... listening to some of them discussing their placements and their mentors I'm sort of like "Phew! I've hit the jackpot with mine."

There is also some evidence of variation in the effectiveness of mentoring and coaching across provider *type*. In particular, Table 13 below shows that teachers in Sixth-Form Colleges were statistically less likely than those in other types of institution to state that they felt the mentoring/coaching had been very or quite beneficial in helping develop their subject or vocational knowledge. In general, those in Sixth-Form Colleges were less likely to rate their mentoring as beneficial across the other items listed in Table 13 (with the exception of 'helping you to develop general pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies' and 'supporting your career progression'), though none of these differences were found to be statistically significant.

Table 13. To what extent is/was the mentoring/coaching (very or quite) beneficial by type of institution

	Adult and community learning provider (n range = 8-9)(%)	FE college (n range = 66-71) (%)	Sixth-Form College (n range = 36-39) (%)	Statistically significant?
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational knowledge	67	71	42	p<0.05, CV=0.28
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational pedagogy (how to teach your subject(s)/vocational area(s))[10]	75	77	63	Not statistically significant (NS)
Helping you to develop general pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies	67	72	68	NS
Helping you to develop your approach to lesson planning	67	72	59	NS
Facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment	75	69	53	NS
Helping you to develop your skills of critical reflection e.g. on your own practice	88	70	75	NS
Supporting your emotional wellbeing	78	76	65	NS
Supporting your career progression	56	67	56	NS
Enabling you to talk about any difficulties you are/were experiencing within your organisation	89	87	76	NS

Employment and learning providers (including GTSs) were excluded from this analysis because there were too few respondents in this category for a meaningful comparison.

Sufficiency and appropriateness of support

Our analysis suggests that many teachers in the sector do not receive *sufficient* support from their mentors or coaches, or do not receive *appropriate* support from mentors and coaches who are not fully committed to the role, do not take the role sufficiently seriously, do not fully understand the role and/or are perceived to be too critical of the work of the teachers they are supporting:

> *One of the problems I had actually was that my mentor… I saw her to start with, but then the meetings just dried up really and that was it.*

> *I've heard stories from some of my classmates where mentors have disappeared, haven't made themselves available for observed sessions, haven't even given paperwork back when observed sessions have been done. So I think there are a few who enter into it too lightly.*

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[10] Here and elsewhere, figures relating to subject and general pedagogical knowledge should be treated with a degree of caution as some participants may have found it difficult to differentiate between the two categories.

> *A bonus* [for mentors] *is that they can also have a trainee teacher to cover lessons whilst they get on with admin*[istrative] *duties. This can lead to the trainee teacher being deserted.*

> *Some feel that their mentors are highly critical of them.*

> *I think that's something with weaker mentors where you do have mentors who totally control what the trainee's doing instead of letting them develop and they keep them reined in when actually they could develop further and faster with some support.*

Negative impact

In such cases, not only are the potential positive impacts of mentoring and coaching on teachers' PLD, effectiveness, retention and wellbeing not realised, but the mentoring and coaching that teachers experience can actually have a detrimental impact in these areas, including on teachers' confidence and motivation, as some interviewees suggested:

> *I think… obviously it impacts on their experience, but I think it is very often about their confidence level and also about moving those trainees* [on]*… and you can see examples where trainees are actually encouraged to move on and to fly where others are just kind of contained or not fully supported and I think that's the impact.*

> [T]*he impact on trainees is that sometimes there's kind of a lack of confidence* [though] *some of the stronger characters will just get on with it.*

> *If you don't provide good support at the start you lose staff or they'll become jaded or they'll pick up bad habits or what have you.*

Another consequence of ineffectual mentoring and coaching is that other teacher colleagues within the same or partner institutions sometimes seek to compensate the mentee/coachee by putting more of their own time and/or resource into supporting them, which has implications for their own workloads, wellbeing, effectiveness and capacity. This is keenly felt by some ITT providers, whose provision is judged by Ofsted partly on the basis of the perceived quality of mentoring in partner institutions:

> *What we do here if we think there's any issue or if there's anything where mentors are not fully supporting or in fact if their subject specialism isn't a very close match is we put in additional support from our tutors here… We put in further mentoring and mentoring support from the university.*

5.3 IMPEDIMENTS TO EFFECTIVE MENTORING AND COACHING

Our interview analysis reveals a number of factors which contribute to the variability in the quality of mentoring and coaching reported above. One of these is that, as suggested in Chapter 3:

- **many institutions do not employ rigorous methods of selecting mentors and coaches** or of pairing these with the teachers they support, with many mentors in particular assuming the role '*by default*':

> *I think the problem is that a lot of people who are asked to do mentoring are asked and they don't necessarily volunteer. They may not want to do it, but they're the only person available.*

The most significant factor, however, which was mentioned by most of the participants we interviewed as an impediment to effective mentoring or coaching, was:

- **insufficient time for mentors/coaches** to meet with and provide support for their mentees/coaches; which was often exacerbated by mentors/coaches and the teachers they are supporting **not normally being timetabled to be free at the same time** during the working day:

> [Q]*uite often mentors do not have sufficient time to support individuals adequately. It's very variable obviously across the sector, but I find time is the biggest barrier to good mentoring.*

> *I think one of the biggest issues… is the fact that there isn't any sort of allowance given to individuals for mentoring… They do it as part of their role, which is good because it's part of a professional role, but if you're running round like a headless chicken trying to do lots of other things, then it is actually another thing to do, isn't it?*

> *It would be unusual for* [mentors] *to get any sort of remission from teaching for that. Some colleges do recognise it and they do build it into people's workload, but I think by and large it's something that's just regarded as you do it as part of your normal practice and… it does mean that if anything crops up the mentoring tends to be given a low priority.*

> *Like if I speak to* [TLC] *and if I need to sit down and speak to* [him] *for an hour he'd struggle to find an hour to give to me.*

> [W]*ith* [mentor] *we've had to carve out the time to actually work together and I think that's always going to be an issue perhaps where teachers are busy and it's not scheduled. You know, it's not time that's scheduled into their timetable necessarily to give trainees or new people the support they need.*

One of the consequences of the lack of remission awarded to mentors and coaches in most institutions is that it makes it difficult to recruit mentors and coaches, which exacerbates the problems of variability and weak mentoring and coaching:

> [I]*t's not an easy sector to find mentors for. Because colleges don't have a lot of money they don't always pay their mentors or they will pay their mentors but the mentors themselves have such enormously full timetables that some mentors have said to me "I'd rather they gave me the hours than the money. I don't want the money. I want the hours."*

> *What happens there is often again you can't find or people just don't want to* [be a mentor]… *they don't really have the time. It's not built in. They* [mentors] *don't get any remission off their teaching, so they're still teaching 24 hours a week and they don't have much time to meet that person.*

Other factors which our evidence strongly suggests are impeding the effectiveness of mentoring and coaching in the sector include:

- **Many mentors/coaches are not appropriately trained for the role:**

  > *I mean we have a kind of basic training afternoon or a basic training day… But, you know, you try and get mentors to come to these sessions. They literally don't have time.*

  > *Yeah, there's lots of mentors that aren't trained.*

  > *So that type of* [face-to-face] *training is very, very important and yet it's very difficult for mentors to get release and that's why we have the online training, but even the online training they'll often find it very difficult to find the time or even have the motivation to undertake that. I think there's often an assumption made by people who are asked to be mentors that because they're experienced teachers they've already got the skills that are needed to be able to be a mentor and, you know, there is more to it than that.*

- **Some mentors/coaches do not have a specialist knowledge of the subject/vocational area of the teachers they are supporting:**

  > *I've been a mentor and I'm mentoring for* [mentee] *and I think that didn't work very well. I don't think it worked very well because … I wasn't a subject specialist and … I've no idea of anything to do*

with her subject. I remember sending her some things that I thought were to do with engineering once and she said "No, this is nothing to do with engineering," and I said sorry.

Previously the Teaching and Learning Mentor could come from anywhere. So no disrespect, the previous TLM for engineering was from [different subject area]. Lovely lady. Didn't actually hit the right note because she didn't quite know what we do.

I think it's a false economy – if the word's appropriate – to assume that general teaching skills are replaceable between professions. Some of them obviously are, but in the advanced teaching of subjects like mine I certainly would benefit more from the specialist teacher.

- **Many mentors and coaches line manage their mentees/coachees**

  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.

  [T]here's a difficulty when you have more than one role. So a mentor and a line manager is not quite the same role, though I've always wanted to play it in a kind of constructive partnership sort of way... It's where there is a disagreement or where my perception is that that person is not meeting a standard that is a reasonable standard that the two roles are a bit... There's a collision there because that person would obviously benefit from someone who's independent.

  We're moving towards sort of payment by results, aren't we, and there is a little bit of a conflict there – the person who's trying to support you but needs to know what the issues are is also the person who ultimately could be grading you and affecting your pay. So there's a potential conflict there... it's difficult, isn't it, if the person who's saying "No, I'm your best friend, you can trust me, I'll support you, you know, tell me what you're worried about" is also the person who's judging you and there's conflict.

- Beyond ITT, mentoring and (in particular) coaching are sometimes (and our evidence suggests increasingly, in recent years) employed as **remedial strategies to address the perceived under-performance of teachers**, and – partly in consequence – have a stigma attached to them:

  [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.*

  Well, my personal view of what happened with ... subject learning coaches and teaching and learning coaches ... was that at its worst it was then confused with a lesson observation scheme and the resource was then focused on people who were getting [Ofsted] grade fours or grade threes in lesson observations and about getting them up from a three...

  There's a reluctance on the part of some staff to... approach [the mentor/coach] ... and I think at times we have to say… well let's say they're graded 3, "There's no option."

  I remember this woman recounting a story of going into the staffroom as a coach to work with someone and people there going "Oh, have they come to pick me?" because it's like… So it's actually like a bad thing. You know, it means you're doing something wrong if you're working with a mentor or working with a coach.

- **Insufficient recognition or reward for the work of mentors/coaches:**

    I think one of the biggest issues with that is the fact that there isn't any sort of allowance given to individuals for mentoring and there isn't any payment or additional payment given in any form at all to mentors.

    I couldn't give you very many examples where staff have actually been paid, when we [ITT provider] pay an organisation where that is actually passed on in any *payment or anything to the staff.*

- **Some teachers have mindsets not conducive to receiving effective support from a mentor or coach, or have inappropriate expectations of mentors / coaches:**

    [S]*ome* [teachers] *have been less easy to work with because their mindset was less adaptable because they were independent, which can be a good thing, but in a way that was sometimes counterproductive because it wasn't obvious to them how to co-operate and in my limited experience that's the biggest, single difficulty. If you've got something to work with you can do an awful lot, but if your basic tools of communication and co-operation are kind of somewhat limited from the start every step can be quite, quite hard actually.*

    Of the three people that I have in mind actually [name of teacher-] *has been the one who has been most likely to say "I think I would benefit from this"* [support]*... whereas the others who were quite self-contained it wasn't in their nature to discuss what their needs were, so that was quite hard actually.*

    So occasionally we have a trainee who is not a very strong trainee who expects their mentor to kind of almost babysit them through the programme. So it's managing those expectations that actually it is not somebody's role to do everything for you...

With the exception of this last point, evidence suggests that many of the impediments to effective mentoring and coaching outlined above may be explained, at least in part, by two more general issues. Firstly, there are suggestions that **mentoring and coaching are not properly understood, taken sufficiently seriously or adequately supported by the senior leadership teams** of some institutions:

    I think there are organisations that take [mentoring and coaching] *very, very seriously and it's a very important aspect... and, to be quite honest with you, I think there are organisations that the seriousness of how they take it depends on how much money we pay them to actually undertake mentoring and to take a trainee teacher. I think there is an element of that in smaller organisations. It is important and they are interested, but they have a very different driver unfortunately.*

    The leaders of the institution have got to demonstrate that they understand that mentoring is an investment in their staff from which there will be a good return instead of looking at it as a cost. But it's the usual argument, isn't it, about both development, mentoring or CPD – how much is it going to cost, not what is the benefit – and it's very difficult to get that argument across to people, I find anyway.

Secondly, there is evidence that some senior leadership teams do indeed take mentoring and coaching seriously but are unable to effectively resource and support it within their institutions due to **insufficient resource across the sector**:

    [T]*here's sometimes a tension between* [senior leaders] *thinking* [mentoring's] *very important and then being able to support their own staff in terms of time to mentor trainee teachers... [O]our Director of HE brings in very senior managers and the vice principals of curriculum or vice principals of whatever or principals and they come in and I talk about initial teacher education and bang on*

about mentoring. It's not that they don't consider mentoring to be important. It is because there is too much change and there is too little funding. I'm sorry but if you think that schools get more funding per person than FE colleges that is a complete and utter disgrace. If the government's rhetoric about how important FE and skills are is to be believed, then you must fund FE students in the same way or to the same amount as schools. It's an equal opportunities issue and let me tell you New Labour was no better.

5.4 FACTORS ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTITUTION-BASED MENTORING AND COACHING

Four factors have been identified by the analysis of both our survey and interview data as means of enhancing the effectiveness and impact of institution-based mentoring and coaching.

1) Mentoring/coaching tends to be more beneficial where mentors/coaches share the subject/vocational specialism of the teachers they are supporting

Table 14 below shows that, in general, respondents were much more likely to find the support of mentors/coaches beneficial where these worked in the same subject/vocational area as themselves. This was especially the case in relation to support for teachers' subject/vocational knowledge, subject/vocational pedagogy and access to or help with teaching resources or equipment. The support of same subject/vocational area specialists was also rated more highly than that of non-specialist mentors/coaches in other areas too, such as support for teachers' emotional wellbeing. On these and most questions listed in Table 14, the differences were statistically significant.

Many interviewees explicitly made the same point regarding the subject/vocational specialism of mentors and coaches:

Going to have somebody in the same department that's teaching the same thing I think is… well, for me anyway it's been crucial… that was really essential.

Going straight into teaching just at A Level you do need someone with the subject knowledge behind it to be able to support you… Yeah, without a doubt.

I was lucky mine [mentoring] *is actually subject related… [M]y mentor because he teaches the same subjects as I do he can actually go "Have you thought about doing it like this? This is how I teach this bit." "Oh, that's a really good idea. I'm stealing that one." So I think that a subject related mentor is a good thing… it's nice to have a mentor that can have a little bit of feedback on the subject matter as well.*

Table 14. To what extent is/was the mentoring/coaching beneficial by whether mentor works in the same subject/vocational area

	Very/quite beneficial		
	Does not work in the same subject/ vocational area as you? (n range = 27 to 32)	Someone who works in the same subject/ vocational area as you? (n range = 65 to 71)	Statistically significant?
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational knowledge	11%	84%	p<0.01, CV =0.68
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational pedagogy (how to teach your subject(s)/vocational area(s))	47%	87%	p<0.01, CV =0.43
Helping you to develop general pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies	57%	80%	p<0.01, CV =0.24
Helping you to develop your approach to lesson planning	58%	76%	Not statistically significant (NS)
Facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment	33%	80%	p<0.01, CV =0.46
Helping you to develop your skills of critical reflection e.g. on your own practice	79%	78%	NS
Supporting your emotional wellbeing	57%	87%	p<0.01, CV =0.34
Supporting your career progression	52%	69%	NS
Enabling you to talk about any difficulties you are/were experiencing within your organisation	75%	91%	p<0.05, CV =0.22

2) Mentoring and coaching is more beneficial where there is regular and sustained contact with the teachers being supported

Table 15 shows that those teachers who have more regular contact with their mentors or coaches (e.g. who discussed their work or development as a teacher with their mentor/coach once a fortnight or more frequently) are much more likely to find the mentoring/coaching beneficial than those who discussed their work or development as a teacher with their mentor/coach approximately once a month or less than once a month.

Table 15. To what extent is/was the mentoring/coaching beneficial by how often the respondent saw the mentor

	Very/quite beneficial					
	Once every 2-3 days/daily (n range=15-17)	Approximately once a week (n range = 21-25)	Approximately once a fortnight (n range =13-14)	Approximately once a month (n range = 27-30)	Less than once a month (n range = 33-38)	Statistically significant?
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational knowledge	88%	77%	85%	64%	30%	p<0.01, CV=0.46
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational pedagogy (how to teach your subject(s)/vocational area(s))	100%	75%	100%	62%	56%	Not statistically significant (NS)
Helping you to develop general pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies	94%	74%	93%	72%	47%	p<0.01, CV=0.38
Helping you to develop your approach to lesson planning	88%	77%	86%	80%	42%	p<0.01, CV=0.41
Facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment	94%	81%	86%	59%	43%	p<0.01, CV=0.41
Helping you to develop your skills of critical reflection e.g. on your own practice	75%	78%	93%	77%	59%	NS
Supporting your emotional wellbeing	94%	88%	100%	82%	36%	NS
Supporting your career progression	87%	59%	93%	67%	40%	p<0.01, CV=0.39
Enabling you to talk about any difficulties you are/were experiencing within your organisation	100%	100%	100%	87%	61%	p<0.01, CV=0.46

Similarly, Table 16 shows that teachers were more likely to report that mentoring and coaching had been very or quite beneficial, especially in terms of developing subject/vocational knowledge, supporting emotional wellbeing and supporting career progression, where the support had been sustained over a longer period of time. The importance of regular contact, facilitated by timetabling and release time for mentors/coaches, was highlighted in our interviews with teachers and other stakeholders:

> *Not a lot of providers are giving release time for their mentors to allow the mentors to focus on their role and also in a way part of that is not recognising the role and not recognising the work that's being done by the mentor. And so what you have is some very committed, very professional teachers … who want to support other teachers into the role and there's not a lot of recognition for them and I think that's something that still needs to be addressed and still needs to be tackled.*

> *[I]f an organisation [is] serious about everybody being mentored then that means everybody's going to take half an hour out every fortnight or something, which I don't really see as a problem since I dare say there's half an hour out for smoking or, you know, chatting. You know, no matter how hard pushed you are I think if you've got that time it then formalises it a wee bit.*

> *Ultimately you've got to find the cash to be able to pay for a mentor… to be off timetable to do that. People don't like doing those sorts of things in lunch times or after work.*

Table 16. To what extent is/was the mentoring/coaching beneficial by length of time for mentoring

	Very/quite beneficial			
	Less than 6 months (n range = 18-23)	Between 6 months and 1 year (n range = 33-34)	Over a year (n range = 55-60)	Statistically significant?
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational knowledge	42%	71%	73%	p<0.05, CV=0.24
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational pedagogy (how to teach your subject(s)/vocational area(s))	57%	77%	79%	Not statistically significant (NS)
Helping you to develop general pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies	68%	73%	74%	NS
Helping you to develop your approach to lesson planning	67%	77%	68%	NS
Facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment	44%	68%	72%	NS
Helping you to develop your skills of critical reflection e.g. on your own practice	76%	67%	79%	NS
Supporting your emotional wellbeing	59%	70%	86%	p<0.05, CV=0.26
Supporting your career progression	37%	64%	75%	p<0.05, CV=0.29
Enabling you to talk about any difficulties you are/were experiencing within your organisation	78%	85%	93%	NS

3) Mentoring and coaching tend to be more beneficial where there is a rigorous process for the selection of mentors/coaches and for pairing them with specific teachers

Table 17 shows that those teachers who selected their mentor or coach themselves from a group of staff identified by the institution were in general more likely to find the mentoring/coaching beneficial, especially in terms of developing subject/vocational knowledge and supporting teachers' career progression, than those whose mentor or coach was allocated by the institution (p<0.05). While the issue of mentee/coachee choice received little attention in the interviews, the broader issue of the importance of rigorous methods of mentor/coach selection and pairing with the teachers they are supporting did:

> My feeling is that they chose a good match for me in terms of a mentor, so I think some consideration is given to the matching of people which is a very good thing… I had a conversation with my PGCE supervisor about it and she sort of works out who's a good mentor… We talked about what I would find helpful, what my needs were, so she matched me with somebody who actually had previously worked somewhere else and come into teaching later on so, you know, sort of understood some of that transitional stuff that I've been trying to work through.

Table 17. To what extent is/was the mentoring/coaching beneficial by how the mentor/coach was allocated

	Very/quite beneficial			
	Someone allocated formally to you by your institution (n range = 75-83)	Someone you selected for yourself on an informal basis (n range = 21-25)	Someone you selected for yourself from a group of staff identified by the institution? (n range = 13-14)	Statistically significant?
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational knowledge	59%	58%	93%	p<0.05, CV=0.23
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational pedagogy (how to teach your subject(s)/vocational area(s))	69%	71%	100%	NS
Helping you to develop general pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies	69%	63%	79%	NS
Helping you to develop your approach to lesson planning	65%	67%	86%	NS
Facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment	63%	57%	86%	NS
Helping you to develop your skills of critical reflection e.g. on your own practice	69%	87%	79%	NS
Supporting your emotional wellbeing	67%	83%	93%	NS
Supporting your career progression	52%	76%	86%	p<0.05, CV=0.27
Enabling you to talk about any difficulties you are/were experiencing within your organisation	78%	96%	100%	NS

4) Mentoring and coaching tend to be more beneficial where the mentor/coach is not also the line manager of the teacher they are supporting

Table 18 shows that teachers who have a mentor or coach who is not also their line manager are more likely to find them beneficial in terms of developing skills of critical reflection. Whilst none of the other findings listed proved to be statistically significant:

- higher percentages of teachers whose mentor/coach was *not* their line manager also stated that the support was very or quite beneficial in terms of helping them to develop general pedagogical techniques, supporting their emotional wellbeing and enabling them to talk about any difficulties they were experiencing within the organisation; although
- a higher proportion of teachers who *were* mentored/coached by their line manager reported that the support was beneficial in terms of facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment, and helping them to develop their subject/vocational knowledge – possibly because line managers are more likely to be same subject specialists.

A small number of teachers responding to the open-ended survey question 'How could mentoring/coaching be improved (if at all) in your organisation?' wrote '*Mentoring/coaching could have been improved if I hadn't chosen my line manager for my mentor*' and '*Someone other than your line manager*', while several interviewees highlighted some of the benefits of 'offline' mentoring:

> [W]e *wouldn't appoint a mentor that was in* [a teacher's] *line management chain because there's some things you want to ask that you maybe wouldn't feel as comfortable asking if it was your manager or in the management chain.*

> [T]*hey're probably giving you a shoulder to cry on as well as much as anything in the first year. It's quite difficult to take some of those things to your head of department when actually you just want to have a bit of a sounding off about something in a way where it's treated in confidence. I think it* [having an 'offline' mentor] *has worked successfully…*

It is clear that in some cases line managers can make perfectly good mentors or coaches, and the fact that line managers normally have the same or a similar subject/vocational specialism as the teachers they are line-managing is an advantage in the provision of support for some kinds of PLD. However, given the power differential and some of the other issues referred to in the quotations above and in Section 5.3, it seems that – other things being equal – mentoring and coaching are more likely to be successful where the relationship is 'offline'.[11] The point is illustrated to some extent by the following comment from one our interviewees, which was informed by the participant's own research with teachers associated with a mentoring programme they were coordinating:

> *I mean it* [whether or not teachers could be open about their PLD needs] *came up probably when we talked about "Would you accept your line manager as your mentor?"… So yes, some people said "Yes, quite happy. My line manager's a great person. I can talk to him/her about anything," and others would say "No. No, absolutely not"!*

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[11] Additional survey analysis suggests, however, that the explanation for this finding may not relate to line managers' involvement in assessing the teaching of their mentees/coachees. (See Postscript to this chapter.)

Table 18. To what extent is/was the mentoring/coaching beneficial by whether mentor/coach is line manager

	Very/quite beneficial		
	Not also line manager (n range = 55 to 60)	Is also line manager (n range = 49 to 52)	Statistically significant?
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational knowledge	55%	68%	NS
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational pedagogy (how to teach your subject(s)/vocational area(s))	75%	71%	NS
Helping you to develop general pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies	75%	67%	NS
Helping you to develop your approach to lesson planning	68%	65%	NS
Facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment	57%	72%	NS
Helping you to develop your skills of critical reflection e.g. on your own practice	83%	65%	p<0.05, CV=0.2
Supporting your emotional wellbeing	76%	68%	NS
Supporting your career progression	59%	63%	NS
Enabling you to talk about any difficulties you are/were experiencing within your organisation	87%	81%	NS

The analysis of our interview data suggests that, other things being equal, the quality of mentoring and coaching will also tend to be enhanced where the following conditions are met by and within individual institutions.[12]

- **Support for, funding and recognition of mentoring/coaching by institutions' senior leadership teams**

  The leaders of the institution have got to demonstrate that they understand that mentoring is an investment in their staff from which there will be a good return instead of looking at it as a cost. But it's the usual argument, isn't it, about… mentoring or CPD – 'how much is it going to cost?' not 'what is the benefit?' – and it's very difficult to get that argument across to people, I find anyway.

  [I]f the leaders are emphatic and underline their support for something like mentoring it will happen, but if they're silent on that and there's nothing raised, then it's something that will just slip away.

- **Explicit role descriptions for mentors/coaches, with minimum entitlements for the teachers being supported**

  I think it is just about ensuring that you get the right people and that there are some… not ground rules, but some clarity of what it's about because there's no point in just saying "You're a mentor," and then they don't do anything.

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[12] Due to the more limited range of issues/questions covered in the online survey, it is not possible to provide support for the following factors from our survey data.

But it is about getting the perception, if you like, of what mentoring is that's crucial. You know, it's not about you dictating almost and directing people on how to teach. It's a much more subtle process and I think that's the important thing to get across

…putting mentor support in place so that trainees are aware that, you know, mentor support is not just about sitting down once a week with your mentor and having a meeting, that there's lots of things happen that are supportive.

- **Ensuring that all mentors and coaches are appropriately trained (and that there is capacity-building in this area) and have opportunities to network with other mentors/coaches**

Mentors <u>must</u> have access to training.

[O]ne of the other things that we've started to do is to train our second year in service trainees as they get towards the end of the second year as mentors and on that basis what we're hoping is, if you like, to build up a bank of [mentors]… At least they've done the basic training of what it is to be a mentor and they're in the colleges or the WBL institutions so they're out there. You know, this is the point that we've got to now, that we're starting to say we're going to start checking to ensure that the centre managers have ensured that all the second years have undertaken mentor training… It's not the only approach, but it is an approach which helps to improve and increase the stock of mentors out there.

(Interviewer: what factors would you say impact on the effectiveness of institution-based mentoring and coaching?} Training of the trainers, so the links tutors are trained to carry our mentor training.

[It would be beneficial to have an] annual conference for mentors to share best practice.

- **Ensuring greater accountability for the quality of mentoring and coaching within institutions, with effective means of identifying and addressing poor mentoring/coaching**

What I think is needed in terms of ensuring that the institution upholds the value and the investment in terms of the mentoring and the CPD is to have quite a rigorous reporting system. I'm basing that now on what I've observed around mentoring and what I've observed recently in my own university… I know I'm going a bit off track now, but I think it still applies to mentoring and CPD systems. I've got a number of doctoral students and over the years the system of reporting has become much more rigorous and I think it is an improvement. It is an actual improvement on the pre system which was very much a kind of laissez faire free for all and students got very good support and others less so, let me put it like that. I think the same should apply to mentoring – that you have an internal, robust system for saying this person will be mentored and they should receive mentoring at least once a week, every fortnight or whatever and there will be a reporting system on that.

[T]he QA reporting system I was mentioning earlier… has to be made a priority by the leaders and it has to be embedded into the systems. So you need both I think. You need strong leadership and support for staff, whether it's staff development or mentoring or CPD, and you need that reporting system and it has to be a rigorous reporting system because otherwise people will say "Somebody's knocking on the door. They want me to do X. I'll put this to one side because it doesn't matter if I forget to fill out a form or forget to report on this. I'll push the mentoring meeting back to next week," and that can go on forever and we know it does, particularly in the FE and Skills sector.

- **Ensuring that mentoring/coaching are not deployed as and perceived to be forms of remedial support but seen in positive terms as supporting all teachers' and leaders' PLD / lifelong learning**

    I've got a mate of mine who's like really high up in Cable and Wireless… You know, there are people I know who are in business who've got like executive coaches, do you know what I mean? It's certainly not like remedial. They'll be at the top of their game in business and they have a coach.

    I'm thinking that it's really kind of driven by quality organisations from what I've seen. In a lot of organisations it's driven by a quality kind of function in the organisation and it's driven by grades and grading. Rather than necessarily having a focus on developing the teacher, the focus is "How can we increase the grade of this teacher?" and whether that's a grade three at the moment or whether it's a two at the moment and they're trying to get them to a one, it's really driven very narrowly I think by the grades which isn't necessarily the way teachers might want it to be… I … see it as strangely remedial in its focus in that it's focused on that grade and not kind of the impact of that teacher necessarily or the development of that teacher… even organisations that are trying to increase the number of outstanding grades that they're getting it's still driven by the grades… They're using that as the measure rather than the impact on the learners and learning necessarily.

    I mean it's brilliant to know you've got very good teachers and continue to focus resources on developing them…

    I mean obviously there's going to be some high performing colleges out there with some progressive leaders that are saying, you know, "We're going to have coaching at all levels." I'm sure they're out there who buck that trend.

It seems likely, as some interviewees suggested, that the conditions for effective mentoring and coaching outlined above will be more likely to be met by and within institutions if there is greater support, resourcing and coordination at the national level, specifically:

- **Increased and ring-fenced funding to support and invest in mentoring and coaching across the sector**

    [O]f course the FE and Skills sector doesn't get the same amount of support for mentoring as does the school sector and you can see the difference straightaway in how much sometimes management in colleges, even where they recognise its benefit, are struggling to support it quite genuinely.

- **A national framework for mentoring and coaching, coordinated and regulated by an appropriate body**

    I'm sure there is a recognition of the need to develop teachers but it doesn't come across as being recognised. The development of future teachers is vital for the sector, but it's not always treated as such… I don't know how achievable this is but certainly if there was more structure and [if mentoring was] more professional body led; if it was more highly regulated so that it was recognised as something that was vital, that a mentoring structure within organisations was seen as essential rather than a voluntary issue…

    I think the concept of having some kind of agreed development programme, some kind of recognition of the [mentoring] role and something that was at the national level would actually be a very strong message and be something that people could… You know, we'd be mobilising resources together rather than lots of people doing lots of different things across different education partnerships with varied levels of success… I mean I don't know if you're aware of the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Maths and the maths enhancement work that they've been doing and the professional development programme they've been doing for the maths leads that they've

been using in each region. I think that's obviously more narrow. It's a smaller number of people because we're talking about leads in each region who are doing professional development across organisations, but a programme like that with some kind of national profile with clear badging, a quality assurance badge so that people who've done that mentoring programme would automatically gain some recognition, then I think people's line managers, principals of colleges and executive teams in colleges would pay more attention to it because it's not just something that they would see then as it's nice to have and maybe you can do this professional development and maybe you can't and maybe it would fit in with what you want to do. It would give it more of a profile I think. I think that's something that would actually support us all and it also gives the mentoring of new teaching staff… it just widens who the responsibility for it falls with because at the moment the management of mentors and the quality assurance of mentors and support for mentors [in relation to ITT] *does sit with initial teacher education partnerships rather than necessarily the organisations these mentors work within.*

5.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have presented findings on:

- the value and benefits of institution-based mentoring and coaching for teachers in the FE and Skills sector;
- the current limitations and factors impeding the effectiveness of mentoring and coaching; and
- how mentoring and coaching might be better able to realise its potential across the sector.

In Chapter 6, which follows, we address:

- the extent to which different teachers might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach for one or more of the subjects they teach;
- the potential benefits of providing teachers with access to an experienced subject specialist teacher who is independent of their institution;
- factors which might encourage or discourage teachers from engaging with an external mentor or coach; and
- potential barriers to the introduction of a programme of external mentor/coach support, and potential means of overcoming such barriers.

First, in a Postscript to Chapter 5, we discuss further findings relating to mentors'/coaches' involvement in the assessment of the teachers they are supporting.

CHAPTER 5 POSTSCRIPT: MENTORS' AND COACHES' INVOLVEMENT IN TEACHER ASSESSMENT

We have seen in this chapter that both our survey and interview analyses suggested that mentoring and coaching are perceived to be more effective and beneficial where they are not provided by teachers' line managers. One possible explanation for this, which is supported by some of the illustrative quotations in this chapter and by some of the literature and previous research reported in Chapter 2, is that line managers' involvement in teacher appraisal or in the observation and assessment of teaching conflicts with the mentor/coach support role, for example by providing an obstacle to the development of an open trusting relationship. However, when we analysed responses to our survey question about the perceived benefits of institution-based mentoring/coaching by responses to the question 'Is/was your mentor or coach responsible for or involved in the formal assessment of your performance as a teacher?', the analyses revealed no statistically significant differences. In fact, we can see from Table 19 that on most items, a slightly higher percentage of respondents whose mentors/coaches *were* responsible for or involved in their formal assessment indicated that they found their support beneficial, especially with respect to:

- helping them develop their subject/vocational knowledge;
- helping them develop their subject/vocational pedagogy; and
- facilitating access to or helping with teaching resources or equipment.

Table 19. To what extent is/was the mentoring/coaching beneficial by whether mentor is involved in the formal assessment of their performance as a teacher

	Very/quite beneficial		
	Not responsible for or involved in the formal assessment of your performance as teacher? (n range = 42-47)	Responsible for or involved in the formal assessment of your performance as teacher? (n range = 70-76)	Statistically significant?
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational knowledge	55%	68%	NS
Helping you to develop your subject/vocational pedagogy (how to teach your subject(s)/vocational area(s))	64%	77%	NS
Helping you to develop general pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies	63%	73%	NS
Helping you to develop your approach to lesson planning	67%	68%	NS
Facilitating access to or help with teaching resources or equipment	56%	69%	NS
Helping you to develop your skills of critical reflection e.g. on your own practice	67%	76%	NS
Supporting your emotional wellbeing	72%	73%	NS
Supporting your career progression	55%	66%	NS
Enabling you to talk about any difficulties you are/were experiencing within your organisation	89%	81%	NS

Some of these findings might be explained by the fact that those involved in the assessment of mentees' teaching are (like teachers' line managers) more likely to be same-subject specialists. On the other hand, a slightly higher percentage of respondents whose mentors/coaches were *not* responsible for or involved in their formal assessment indicated that the mentoring/coaching was beneficial in enabling them to talk about any difficulties they were experiencing within their organisations.

CHAPTER 6: THE POTENTIAL VALUE OF AND DEMAND FOR EXTERNAL MENTORS OR COACHES TO SUPPORT TEACHERS' PLD

CHAPTER OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

In this chapter we report outcomes of our analyses of survey and interview data relating to:

- the extent to which teachers might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach for one or more of the subjects they teach;
- which categories of teacher were most likely to indicate that they might benefit from such access;
- the potential benefits of providing teachers with access to an experienced subject specialist teacher who is independent of their institution;
- factors which might encourage or discourage teachers from engaging with an external mentor or coach; and
- potential barriers to the introduction of a programme of external mentor/coach support, and potential means of overcoming such barriers.

Amongst the key findings, we show, for example, that:

- almost half (48%) of the teachers responding to our online survey indicated that they felt they might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach for at least one of the subjects/vocational areas they teach;
- slightly higher percentages of teachers who had been teaching for between one and five years (56-57%) than those who had been teaching for longer stated that they might benefit from the support of an external mentor/coach for at least one of the subjects they teach; though
- a *lower* percentage (42%) of those currently working towards an ITT qualification stated that they felt they might benefit from access to an external mentor/coach, which is likely to be at least partly explained by the fact that they should already have a mentor and other forms of support as part of their ITT;
- those survey respondents who stated that they felt they might benefit from the opportunity to access an external mentor/coach for at least one of the subjects they taught indicated that they might wish to take advantage of such support for a variety of reasons – the most frequently given being support for their subject/vocational pedagogy;
- factors which might discourage some teachers from taking advantage of the opportunity to access the support of an external mentor or coach include: being confident about their teaching and subject/vocational knowledge; feeling that they are already able to access all the support they need within their institutions; and feeling that they would not have sufficient time to engage with an external mentor or coach on top of other commitments;
- interviewees suggested that potential benefits to teachers of external mentor/coach support included: an increased likelihood that teachers would be able to be open about and seek support for their PLD needs; improved time and workload management; and improved teaching methods;
- there are a wide range of potential barriers to the introduction of an effective programme of external mentor/coach support, amongst which are issues relating to cost and sustainability.

6.1 WOULD TEACHERS BENEFIT FROM AN EXTERNAL MENTOR OR COACH?

Teachers responding to our online survey were asked whether they felt they might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach for any of the subjects/vocational areas that they taught.[13]

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[13] External mentors/coaches were defined for respondents as experienced subject/vocational specialist teachers, who do not work within the same organisation as the teachers they support, and

Almost half (48%) of the respondents gave a positive response for at least one of the subjects/vocational areas they taught (see Table 20 below). Furthermore, all of our interviewees felt that the opportunity to access an external mentor or coach would be advantageous for themselves or (other) STEM teachers with whom they were familiar in the FE and Skills sector.

Table 20. Did respondents feel they might benefit from an external mentor (overall)*

	n	%
Yes for one or more subjects taught	166	48
No for one or more subjects taught †	128	37
Not sure ††	51	15
Total	**345**	**100**

* Teachers were asked to list up to three subjects they taught, or taught most frequently, and for each of these subjects to indicate whether they felt they would benefit from an external mentor

† These figures do not include respondents who indicated they might benefit from an external mentor/coach for any of the subjects they listed.

†† These figures do not include any respondents who said 'yes' or 'no' for any of the subjects they listed.

6.2 WHICH TEACHERS MIGHT BENEFIT MOST FROM AN EXTERNAL MENTOR OR COACH?

The figures in Table 21 show that there are no substantial differences between the responses to whether or not they might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach of **teachers at different career stages**.

- Slightly higher percentages of teachers who had completed between one and five years in teaching (56-57%) than any others stated that they might benefit from the support of an external mentor/coach for at least one of the subjects they teach, but the differences are not statistically significant.

Again there are no substantial (or statistically significant) differences between the responses to this question of **teachers who had or had not completed an ITT programme** (Table 22).

- The lower percentage of those currently working towards an ITT qualification stating that they felt they might benefit from access to an external mentor/coach may be partly explained by the fact that they should have a mentor as part of their ITT.

Table 23a thus shows that a slightly higher percentage of **teachers who do not have an institution-based mentor** indicated that they might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach, though again the differences are relatively small and not statistically significant. Table 23b shows that, amongst those respondents who did have an institution-based mentor, 55% of those whose **mentor did *not* share the same subject/vocational area as themselves** indicated that they might benefit from the support of an external mentor, compared with 44% of those who had a same subject/vocational specialist mentor.[14]

who provide face to face or online support for teachers' subject/vocational knowledge, subject/vocational pedagogy, or other teaching-related issues.

[14] Again this finding is not statistically significant, though the lack of significance is at least partly explained by the relatively small (sub-) sample size, since we are only the comparing responses of 94 respondents.

Table 21. Whether respondents feel that they might benefit from an external mentor (overall) by length of time in teaching

		Yes for one or more subjects taught	No for one or more subjects taught †	Not sure	Total n
Number of full years in teaching	0 (I have not yet completed my first year of teaching)	45%	30%	25%	**20**
	I (I am presently undertaking my second year of teaching)	56%	44%	0%	**9**
	2-5	57%	24%	18%	**49**
	6-10	52%	30%	18%	**79**
	11-15	51%	35%	14%	**74**
	16-20	37%	53%	9%	**43**
	21+	41%	46%	13%	**71**

† These figures do not include respondents who indicated that they might benefit from an external mentor/coach for any of the subjects they listed.

Table 22. Whether respondents feel that they might benefit from an external mentor (overall) by whether respondent has an ITT qualification

	Yes for one or more subjects taught	No for one or more subjects taught †	Not sure	Total n
No I do not have and I am not currently working towards an ITT qualification	54%	23%	23%	**26**
Yes I am currently working towards an ITT qualification	42%	37%	21%	**19**
Yes I have successfully obtained an ITT qualification	49%	37%	14%	**281**

† These figures do not include respondents who indicated that they might benefit from an external mentor/coach for any of the subjects they listed.

Table 23a. Whether respondents feel that they might benefit from an external mentor (overall) by whether respondent has or has had a mentor/coach in the same institution as them

		Yes for one or more subjects taught	No for one or more subjects taught †	Not sure	Total n
Mentor/coach in same institution	Yes	46%	37%	18%	**112**
	No	50%	37%	13%	**229**

† These figures do not include respondents who indicated that they might benefit from an external mentor / coach for any of the subjects they listed.

Table 23b. Whether respondents feel that they might benefit from an external mentor (overall) by whether respondent has or has had an institution-based mentor/coach who works in the same subject/vocational area

		Yes to one or more subjects taught	No to one or more subjects taught	Not sure	**Total n**
Institutional mentor in same subject/ vocational area	Yes	44%	33%	22%	**63**
	No	55%	35%	10%	**31**

We also examined possible differences between the responses to the question about whether or not teachers felt they might benefit from access to an external mentor/coach of:

- teachers of different subject/vocational areas (Table 24a-c);
- teachers who did or did not have substantive qualifications in the subject/vocational areas they were teaching (Table 25a-b);
- teachers who had varying degrees of leadership responsibility (Table 26);
- teachers based in different kinds of institution (Table 27);
- male and female teachers (Table 28).

The findings of these analyses are summarised below.

While the differences did not prove to be statistically significant[15], Table 24a shows that there is **some degree of variation between the percentages of teachers of different subject areas** suggesting they might benefit from the opportunity to access an external mentor/coach. Amongst STEM subjects, six out of ten teachers of Computing felt they might benefit from external mentor/coach support, while a relatively low 38% of mathematics teachers did so.

Table 24a. For each of the subjects/vocational areas you teach please indicate whether you feel you might benefit from the opportunity to call upon the support of an external mentor/coach by subject

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[15] This is partly a consequence of the relatively low number of respondents for some of the subject areas.

	Yes	No	Not sure	**Total n**
Computing	60%	40%	0%	**10**
Education and training	58%	33%	8%	**24**
ICT	58%	38%	4%	**24**
English	56%	41%	4%	**27**
Construction/building services	54%	31%	15%	**13**
Chemistry	50%	33%	17%	**36**
Health and social care	47%	47%	6%	**17**
Physics	45%	36%	18%	**22**
Arts (visual, performing and textiles)	42%	42%	17%	**12**
Biology	39%	45%	16%	**38**
Social sciences	39%	39%	22%	**18**
Mathematics	38%	35%	27%	**79**
Humanities	31%	63%	6%	**16**
Business and administration	29%	57%	14%	**21**

Subjects where the total number of respondents was less than 10 are omitted.

Table 24b shows that if we group subjects into STEM and non-STEM:

- teachers of STEM subjects were, in general, slightly less likely to state that they felt they might benefit from the support of an external mentor/coach, although the differences were not statistically significant.

If we break this down further we can see that appears to be a slight difference between the teaching of more 'academic' and 'vocational' STEM subjects (Table 24c). That is:

- respondents who were teaching more vocational STEM subjects appeared more likely to feel that they might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach for the teaching of those subjects than those teaching more academic STEM subjects, though again these results were not found to be statistically significant.

Table 24b. For each of the subjects/vocational areas you currently teach please indicate whether you feel you might benefit from the opportunity to call upon the support of an external mentor/coach, by STEM/non-STEM subjects

	Yes	No	Not sure	**Total n**
Non-STEM	52%	36%	11%	**223**
STEM	46%	37%	18%	**238**

Table 24c. For each of the subjects/vocational areas you currently teach please indicate whether you feel you might benefit from the opportunity to call upon the support of an external mentor/coach, by STEM vocational/academic[16]

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[16] Subjects classed as *STEM vocational* were: Anatomy, Applied Science, Construction/building services, Design Technology, Electronics, Engineering, Functional Skills (English, Maths, ICT), ICT, Motor

	Yes	No	Not sure	Total n
Non-STEM	52%	36%	11%	223
STEM vocational	53%	35%	13%	55
STEM academic	44%	37%	19%	183

Table 25a shows that, overall (across all subjects), there was little (and no statistically significant) difference in whether respondents felt that they might benefit from an external mentor/coach for a particular subject according to whether they had, or the level of, their qualification in the subject.

- Those holding a first degree and/or postgraduate degree *or* a Level 3 professional or technical qualification in a particular subject were slightly less likely than those holding none of these qualifications to suggest they might benefit from the support of an external mentor/coach for that subject.
- However, those holding both of these qualifications were slightly more likely to indicate that they would benefit from an external mentor, while the differences between the different categories of respondents are not statistically significant.

When we explored the same question purely in relation to the teaching of STEM subjects (Table 25b), we found that those respondents with a first degree and/or postgraduate degree (who did not also possess a Level 3 professional or technical qualification) were somewhat less likely and those who did not have a first degree, postgraduate degree or Level 3 professional or technical qualification more likely to indicate that they might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach for those subjects. Again, however, this result was not statistically significant. Additional analysis revealed that there was no real (or statistically significant) difference on this question between teachers of STEM vocational and STEM academic subjects.

Table 25a. For each of the subjects/vocational areas you currently teach please indicate whether you feel you might benefit from the opportunity to call upon the support of an external mentor/coach, by qualification type (all subjects)

	Yes	No	Not sure	Total n
First degree and/or postgraduate degree	44%	41%	15%	239
Level 3 professional or technical qualification	44%	40%	17%	114
First degree and/or postgraduate degree and Level 3 professional or technical qualification	55%	35%	11%	66
None of these qualifications	49%	31%	20%	90

Table 25b. For each of the subjects/vocational areas you currently teach please indicate whether you feel you might benefit from the opportunity to call upon the support of an external mentor/coach, by qualification type (STEM subjects)

	Yes	No	Not sure	Total n
First degree and/or postgraduate degree	39%	44%	17%	113

vehicle. Subjects categorised as *STEM academic* were Biology, Chemistry, Computing, Mathematics, Physics, Statistics.

	50%	41%	9%	32
First degree and/or postgraduate degree and Level 3 professional or technical qualification	50%	41%	9%	32
Level 3 professional or technical qualification	48%	34%	18%	50
None of these qualifications	54%	20%	26%	35

Table 26 shows that there is a minor degree of variation in whether respondents felt that they might benefit from an external mentor according to the type of role they occupied, with those respondents with more substantial leadership responsibilities marginally less likely to indicate that they might benefit from the opportunity to access an external mentor/coach for one or more of the subjects/vocational areas they currently teach. However, the differences were not statistically significant.

Table 26. Whether respondents feel that they might benefit from an external mentor (overall) by respondent role

	Yes for one or more subjects taught	No for one or more subjects taught †	Not sure	Total n
Teacher or trainer who spends the majority of their time teaching and/or assessing students	51%	33%	16%	212
Mixed role of leadership and teaching and assessing	44%	49%	7%	86
Predominately leadership role with little or no teaching	43%	39%	17%	23

† These figures do not include respondents who indicated that they might benefit from an external mentor/coach for any of the subjects they listed.

Table 27 shows that little difference is apparent between teachers employed by different institutions, on the question of whether they might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach.

Table 27. Whether respondents feel that they might benefit from an external mentor (overall) by institution type

	Yes for one or more subjects	No for one or more subjects	Not sure	Total n

	taught	taught *		
Adult and community learning provider †	50%	25%	25%	**16**
FE college	48%	38%	14%	**202**
Sixth-Form College	49%	38%	13%	**104**

*These figures do not include respondents who indicated that they might benefit from an external mentor/coach for any of the subjects they listed.

† Employment and learning providers (including GTSs) were excluded from this analysis because there were too few respondents in this category for a meaningful comparison.

Finally, a marginally higher proportion of female than male teachers stated that they felt they might benefit from the support of an external mentor/coach for one or more of the subjects/vocational areas that they teach (see Table 28 below), though again the differences were not statistically significant.

Table 28. Whether respondents feel that they might benefit from an external mentor (overall) by gender

	Yes for one or more subjects taught	No for one or more subjects taught †	Not sure	**Total n**
Female	50%	36%	14%	**216**
Male	45%	40%	15%	**126**

† These figures do not include respondents who indicated that they might benefit from an external mentor/coach for any of the subjects they listed.

When we asked interviewees which categories of teacher they felt might most benefit from – or need – the support of an external mentor, most responses related to **beginning** *teachers, particularly those moving into teaching from industry:*

> *I would say first of all transition of the teacher that comes from an industrial environment who has never been exposed to teaching.*

> *For me it is that transition from industry into teaching, especially now Ofsted are getting so hot on teaching and learning assessment that there's just that much pressure to get up to speed and kind of be good as a teacher.*

Some interviewees suggested that trainee teachers were less in need of an external mentor/coach than other beginning teachers on the grounds that they already have access to a mentor as part of their ITT, with some trainees themselves suggesting that having an external mentor on top of existing sources of support might amount to 'support overload', and some participants felt that there may be a particular need for **newly and recently qualified teachers to have access to an external mentor once the support provided via ITT and/or an institution's induction programme falls away**:

> *I've already got my peers, 30 of them, to establish a relationship with and obviously my* [ITT tutor and mentor]*, so adding another person that you've got to create a relationship with might not necessarily be the best thing.*

> *I think having an external mentor … that you could go to that's totally independent of uni and placement would be a very useful resource for many student teachers and in the first year of teaching as well because that is one thing that concerns me slightly because at the moment I've got this big safety net – I've got my mentor there and I've got the other teachers there. Next year when I'm actually working it's sort of like "Oh, I'm on the high wire all by myself with no safety net," and that is slightly scary sometimes.*

A small number of participants suggested that in some respects beginner teachers were less in need of the support of an external mentor/coach than **more experienced teachers** who in some cases might be employing outdated teaching methodologies, while other participants suggested that you couldn't generalise about which categories of teacher would most benefit and/or that **teachers at all career stages** could do so:

> *People that are new to teaching will generally take on board 'today' but … [w]e have some teachers that have been here 19, 20 years, technically brilliant, but they're not really tuned into how to get a student engaged in 2014 would be the answer. They've not seen that change. A lot of them still want to talk and chalk and it's very difficult to get them out of that… You know, over the last 10 years, 5 years here, the way that we teach predominantly now, certainly within my section, has changed beyond belief really.*

> *I think anybody can benefit from somebody outside the organisation mentoring you no matter how experienced you are in your sort of subject or knowledgeable.*

> *Well, I think all benefit from that constant reviewing what's going on not just within the organisation but outside of it and, you know, from speaking to other teachers I don't think it's just limited to trainee teachers or even newly qualified teachers.*

Finally, some participants suggested that amongst the teachers that might most benefit from access to an external mentor would be **those who do not have access to a same-subject or vocational specialist within their institution**, while others suggested that it ought to be a priority to provide additional support for teachers of shortage or 'hard to recruit to' subject or vocational areas:

> *[W]here they're teaching quite a diverse subject and it's difficult within the organisation to find someone that can support them, so they would have to look outside of the organisation.*

> *I think that … it would be remiss of us not to seek opportunities for particularly some subject areas. I keep coming back to mechanical engineering, maths and physics, where we find it incredibly difficult to recruit people…*

6.3 FACTORS WHICH MIGHT ENCOURAGE TEACHERS TO ENGAGE WITH AN EXTERNAL MENTOR OR COACH

Those survey respondents who stated that they felt they might benefit from the opportunity to access an external mentor/coach for at least one of the subjects they taught were asked which of a range of factors might prompt them to take advantage of such support. The responses are summarised in Table 29, which shows that teachers might wish to take advantage of the support of an external mentor or coach for a variety of reasons. In particular, over a half of these respondents stated that they would welcome additional support for their subject/vocational pedagogy (56%) and for their subject/vocational content knowledge (54%), while half indicated that they would welcome an independent perspective on some issues.

Table 29. Which of the following factors might prompt you to seek the support of an external mentor/coach?

I would welcome additional support to develop my subject/vocational area pedagogy (how to teach my subject(s)/vocational area(s))	56%
I would welcome additional support to develop my subject/vocational knowledge	54%
I would welcome an independent perspective on some issues	50%
I would welcome additional support to facilitate access to or help with teaching resources or equipment	47%
I would welcome additional support to develop general pedagogical techniques (teaching methodologies)	46%
I would welcome additional advice or guidance regarding career progression	38%
I would welcome additional support for my emotional wellbeing	25%
Lack of a subject/vocational specialist in my organisation	24%
General lack of support in my organisation	20%
Performance management and/or other issues can make it hard to talk about any difficulties within my organisation	19%
Lack of collaborative ethos in my organisation	19%
Pressure to conform to the organisation's teaching and learning models	19%
Issues with an organisation-based mentor/coach or line manager	10%
Other	10%

Total n = 221

Amongst the 'other' survey responses, some teachers suggested that the following considerations might also encourage them to seek the support of an external mentor/coach:

> How to reduce paperwork! (Paperwork/admin/bureaucracy is currently the biggest barrier to delivering successful lessons!)

> Lack of time for qualified people in [my] organisation to be able to help.

> Working as a part-time lecturer 4 hours a week evenings is extremely isolating. The remoteness from colleagues working for the same organisation creates particular difficulties in accessing resources and facilities. This is increased by lack of induction and training procedures.

Potential benefits and impact of external mentor/coach support
The survey findings reported above were generally supported by our interview participants, who referred most frequently to the following factors in discussing how STEM teachers might potentially benefit from the opportunity to access an external mentor or coach:

- **The benefits of gaining an independent perspective on a range of matters**

> [I]t would be nice to think sometimes there would be somebody there that if I did have an issue I could talk to that was totally independent.

> [I]t's just that fresh perspective. I think a lot of people have been here a lot of years and so we plod on doing things in our usual way with a bit of inertia and a bit of "if it ain't broke don't fix it" and that doesn't necessarily make you feel good, does it?

> Sometimes issues arise and really it's because people can't see the wood for the trees. They're so caught up in their own little issue and personalities come into play and so on and sometimes someone coming in who's not really embroiled in how the situation has developed can see a lot more simply what needs to be done or what the potential things are that could be done. Sometimes a fresh pair of eyes brings wisdom into something where you can't really see it if you're too close to the action yourself.

- **The difficulty of being unable to talk about problems within their own institutions**

    [A]*lthough at my placement I feel I could say, and I have said this, "Isn't there any opportunity for more professional training?", to an external mentor you can say more things like "I'm desperate." There's something about being at work which means you have to consume a bit of your own smoke otherwise you look like you're just rocking the boat and that's not good.*

- **Support for the subject/vocational pedagogy and content knowledge of those who don't have access to a subject-specialist within their institution**

    I think that [having access to an external mentor/coach] *would be useful for those student* [teacher]*s who find it difficult to get a subject specialist mentor. You know, so where you've got someone working in a very small organisation, mainly work based learning providers, there simply isn't a specialist within their organisation, so that would be a clear, obvious need at a basic level.*

Some interviewees also noted that the (perceived) **credentials and credibility of the external mentor/coach** would be important in encouraging teachers to take advantage of any support available to them:

> *I think you're probably more likely to take it on board if it's an external body coming in saying we need to do this similar to an Ofsted inspection. If they come in and say you should be doing this then we should be doing it.*

> [I]*f you could have a bunch of people who had kudos and maybe they'd be linked to one of the institutes or they had a recommendation from like the Institute of Physics or the Royal Society of Chemistry or something so that it's a name that people know and trust … and a sense that they are really here to support, that they have got some good ideas themselves and they have a bit of a track record…*

> *Basically they need to be subject experts, don't they, as well as teaching experts.*

> *We have team meetings and you're kind of forever talking to them on ways to improve and things that they need to do and it's just something else they've got to take in. If somebody else comes in and, you know, tells them this is how to deliver a grade one session they're more likely to take note and think "This chap knows what he's talking about"... I think it's got more of an impact.*

Interviewees also highlighted a number of (other) potential benefits and impacts of STEM teachers having access to an external mentor/coach, including:

- **An increased likelihood of teachers being able to be open about and seek support for their PLD needs**

    It might make some people more… that they felt that they could approach them and it not be detrimental to what some people thought were their own teaching capabilities.

- **Improved time and workload management – and teacher wellbeing in general**

    [T]*hat might benefit them and it might help them reduce their overall workload.*

    I think there would be because it would stop things building up. We had a teacher breakdown last week over an issue that was similar to bullying within a department which actually isn't my own department, but I did witness it and it was distressing.

- **Improved teaching methods and (in consequence) student learning**

[We could benefit in terms of a]*ny new practices or any new possible ways of delivering a subject because there's a tendency to sit back and rest on your laurels and not improve, but I think somebody outside coming in would give you that incentive. "You need to do this. You really need to because it's good and it's proven it works." Yes, I think that could be* [really helpful].

I'm sure we'd become familiar with it and it would lead to better results.

6.4 FACTORS WHICH MIGHT DISCOURAGE TEACHERS FROM ENGAGING WITH AN EXTERNAL MENTOR OR COACH

Those survey respondents who stated that for at least one of the subjects/vocational areas that they teach they did not feel they might benefit from external mentor/coach support were also asked which factors might discourage them from taking advantage of such support. The responses are summarised in Table 30, which shows that the majority (61%) of those respondents felt they would not need to access external mentor/coach support because they were confident about their teaching and subject/vocational knowledge, while 57% felt they were already able to access all the support they needed within their institutions. Just over a third of these teachers suggested that they would not have sufficient time to engage with an external mentor or coach on top of their other commitments.

Table 30. Which of the following factors might discourage you from seeking the support of an external mentor/coach?

I am sufficiently confident about my teaching and subject/vocational knowledge	61%
I am able to access any support that I need within my organisation and/or from other sources	57%
I do not feel I would have sufficient time to engage with an external mentor/coach given my existing work and non-work based commitments	36%
It wouldn't look good to have to ask for help	5%
Other	5%

Total n = 206

Amongst the 'other' responses to this question, some teachers suggested that the following additional considerations might also discourage them from seeking the support of an external mentor/coach:

At the level that I teach this subject I do not require any additional mentoring. If I was to teach it at a higher level then additional support would be sought.

Confidence in the potential mentor.

Probably would not be supported by employer.

All of the above considerations were mentioned by interviewees as factors potentially discouraging teachers from accessing an external mentor or coach, with lack of time to engage being the most prominent, sometimes related to concerns about geographical proximity to the mentor/coach and potential need (and lack of time) to travel to meet them:

Your problem would be uptake because [teachers] *would see it as out of their own time and that would be a massive problem just in the same way … that* [the Stimulating Physics Support programme for early career secondary teachers is] *offering coaching to people… [E]ven though I'm confident the people that we've recruited as coaches … have got credibility… in my eyes and in the eyes of the rest of the teaching staff as having something to offer and people might think "Yeah,*

I'd like to do that," but then they just hit the ground in September and they've just got loads to do and they come up for air in the vacation.

I think geography… because you spend so long sort of getting here but then the closer they were probably the less likely they would be to be able to give me that oomph [independent perspective] *that I'm talking about, you know.*

Another issue raised by interviewees, which relates to the 'confidence in the potential mentor' point made by the survey respondent quoted above, is that some teachers may have doubts about the credentials of the external mentor or coach, especially one who was not currently engaged in teaching:

I mean your job would be recruiting somebody that would have credibility because I don't know who they would be. You know what it's like in terms of institution specific stuff and sector specific stuff and how quickly things move. I'm not talking about fads. I'm just thinking they would … I don't know. You know what it's like when you're meeting inspectors or you hear experts talking about teaching and you think "I just don't agree with that. It's just not right," and they lose credibility with me and I would struggle then to be putting people their way.

[Impediments would include getting] *quality people or personnel… The problem is when you appoint those people they're not teaching anymore…*

A final issue which our interviews suggested might discourage some teachers from taking advantage of the opportunity to access an external mentor or coach relates to the current fairly widespread perception/misapprehension of mentoring and coaching as evaluative and remedial forms of support – which is entirely understandable given the context in which teachers are working today and given how 'mentors' and 'coaches' are deployed in many organisations:

I suppose I view mentoring sometimes as somebody sitting in watching you and just making notes and that can put people off. So if say for instance I went to see a learner and I had a mentor there who was sat in a corner just writing notes you'd be like "Is he picking fault or…?"

So again it's very much from the angle [of] *get external contractors, let them work on the weak teachers, although I'm not sure that some of us were weak.*

6.5 POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE EXTERNAL MENTOR/COACH SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Through our interviews with teachers, teacher educators and other stakeholders we have identified a number of potential barriers to the introduction of an effective and successful programme of external mentor/coach support for teachers of STEM subjects. Some of these are similar to some of the impediments to effective institution-based mentoring and coaching (discussed in Chapter 5) and some relate to factors which might discourage teachers from engaging with an external mentor/coach, discussed in the previous section. We list and illustrate the various considerations under four categories – micro (mentor-relationship level), meso (institution-level), meso (external mentor/coach provider level) and macro (policy-level).

Potential micro-level barriers

1) A lack of time for teachers to engage with an external mentor or coach

I think at the moment with the amount of work that some teachers have that expecting them to give up time not within the college day might [be problematic].

I think one of the main barriers is that fulltime FE teachers have very heavy workloads and often very little time available for CPD.

2) Some teachers may be insufficiently committed to their PLD/change

This is going to sound a bit rude and I'm generalising here, but there is an element of our staffroom that says "I've always done it like this. Why would I do it any differently? The kids are becoming more random, but that's not my problem, that's secondary's problem for turning them out like that. I've been doing this for 20 years." I'm really quoting someone! "I've been doing this for 20 years. Why would I change?"

3) Mentoring/coaching may be treated as a 'bolt-on' or additional imposition

Are trainee teachers going to see it as just another level of bureaucracy... that they have to engage with?

I think people see it as an extra. I mean you probably know how busy FE teachers are. They're very, very busy and, to be entirely honest, in the past I've had a few attempts at teaching some courses on how to integrate literacy – just as an example – in the hope that it would be helpful and useful for them, but they tend to see a lot of things as another imposition. "That's something else we've got to do and not at all helpful"... I mean not everybody, but ... morale's quite low here anyway at the moment.

Mentors have often reported that the mentees' lack of time during the initial training year, and then in the first years of teaching, are limiting their ability to engage with the [Stimulating Physics Support] *mentoring programme. There are so many other responsibilities and so many other individuals (mentors, tutors, managers) that they are required to keep in contact with that this voluntary programme is pushed down the list of priorities, or seen as 'just another' person to keep in touch with. This is disappointing, because the purpose of the mentoring programme is to provide support during this particularly challenging time. We have not resolved this yet, and we don't want the mentoring programme to be something that is competing for the attention of the mentees.*

4) Teachers who most need support may be less likely to engage with an external mentor/coach

Yeah, it tends to be the ones who most need the support are the ones who are drowning and don't go to the meetings that are add-ons if it involves travel or, you know, coming out on a Monday afternoon or having to make a decision between something ... that your boss is telling you you really ought to go to and maybe they don't really value this. Those are the issues. You don't tend to really get the people who need it most.

5) A lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of the mentor/coach, of the context the teachers they are supporting

I suppose people don't necessarily understand the culture of where you're working, where you're at at the moment [may be an issue].

Maybe them not knowing the college and the students you teach... could be a big issue. You could be talking to somebody in a totally different catchment area or totally different kind of college situation. You do have very specific problems to the area in which you're teaching and to the area which people come from. I think with this college it's generally people from kind of either lower or middle class backgrounds. Let's say if you're talking to somebody who's never experienced that or never known that, that can be a bit difficult or could be difficult, I don't know.

6) Potential lack of sufficient face-to-face contact

[T]*he lack of personal contact hampers the development of the important mentoring relationship.*

7) Issues with online support

I suppose going back to the conversation we were just having about [the ASSOCiate Online programme[17]], *I think access both in terms of if there was an online component how do people get online access. I think one of the issues … was moderation, that you can't necessarily leave online communities to themselves for various reasons, so therefore you need some sort of system for tracking who's taken part and if you then get into passwords and things like that people tend to find access difficult.… [And] colleges often tend to block anything that looks like social media, so if you had something that looked a bit like that to your college system you might find that* [staff] *just couldn't get access from work at all. So there's all those sort of practical difficulties.*

8) Mentors' allocation of time to mentees

On the issue of time allocations, mentors need to be careful that their time is used in a roughly equitable manner; this is an issue we have encountered as the programme has developed. Particularly if some mentees are not engaging with the programme… mentors can easily be drawn into a situation where very few, or even just one mentee is dominating all their allocated mentoring time – and usually with an issue which is not the focus or purpose of the mentoring programme. So we have had mentors who have spent (and felt obliged to spend) days and days counselling an individual through a personal crisis, after which the mentee has left teaching, which was always the most likely outcome. In some ways it is nearly impossible to refuse support to an individual who is in this situation, but from the point of view of the programme it is not an effective use of the mentor's time.

9) Teachers' lack of physical proximity to an external mentor/coach

[F]*or me it was difficult not having somebody* [an institution-based mentor] *here… I mean I think ideally if there is someone that teaches your subject that can be nearby I think that's really good…*

10) Potential lack of consistency, coordination and fit with other sources of support for teachers' PLD

[T]*he risk is that a mentor like this doesn't understand internal politics of this college. So they may be perfect in their subject, they may be a very high grade teacher, but unless they have some sort of recognition from the college and understand the policies of the college and internal expectations of what the college assumes is best to score highly in the Ofsted inspection or in the internal structure of revision, I can see potentially lack of pulling in one direction.*

Potential meso (institution-level) barriers
11) Institutional-based opposition

[W]*ould the* [institution-based] *TLM be put out by it? That's another interesting aspect, isn't it? Would they go "Why would they go to them instead of me?" That's a human thing, isn't it?*

Probably the only impediments I would envisage would be suspicion from some senior managers as to is there an implied criticism perhaps of how we're doing things and suspicion from some individuals who would say "Well what's the point? Are you saying I can't do my job well? Why are you here?" But for me personally I think it would be great.

12) Institutions' SLTs may be unwilling or unable to invest in mentoring/coaching and teachers' PLD more generally

I think one of the main barriers is that … managers are not keen on spending lots of money on training and support.

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[17] This programme was discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.

[T]he other thing is the position of development, including mentoring, in terms of the profile of the institution and their CPD or staff development support and how it's viewed, particularly by the leadership, because I certainly think that unless the leader or leaders within the particular institution – so whether you're talking about an FE college or work based learning – if they don't demonstrate that they value CPD and mentoring and other staff development activities it will very quickly die. It will wither away…

Potential meso (mentor/coach provider-level) barriers

13) Finding a sufficient number of suitable mentors/coaches in different regions

The problem – and it's a problem we have with teacher training – is that if you've got a bloody good STEM teacher why would you lend them to teacher training? You know, you're trying to keep up your results in maths and so on and so forth. Why on earth would you give them to a teacher training department? That is the problem. We just don't have enough.

I mean I understand. Unfortunately, I understand from a college's perspective you've got to get people through these courses and you've only got a limited number of STEM teachers and I'm going to have to have a real selling job to the senior managers to allow them to be teacher educators.

Well, STEM is huge so what would you do? One for physics, one for chemistry, one for maths, one for engineering? How will it be divided? That's another… You know, how will it be divided? And if you said to a biologist "Well it's physics, but it'll be fine for you," what they will say is probably unrepeatable I would have thought. So there's that that might be difficult.

14) Persuading organisations to buy in to the scheme

[I]t's a skilled game getting any senior leader to respond to you, and sign up, and then middle managers to actually take on the programme.

Whereas headteachers in secondary schools might have heard of the IOP and be happy to acknowledge the lack of specialist staff and sign up for support, not sure about FE leaders.

Well, I think the potential problem is who has an investment in the development of that programme and the procedures around it so that they are fully signed up to it.

Macro-level barrier

15) Cost and sustainability related to scarce resource in and for FE and Skills sector

The potential barrier to the establishment of a successful programme of external mentor/coach support that was mentioned by more interviewees than any other related to the cost and sustainability of such a programme. There were serious doubts about whether the government or ETF, for example, would be able to fund or subsidise such a programme beyond a pilot, and further doubts about whether, given financial constraints across the sector, institutions would be able to pay for their teachers to receive such support post-pilot and subsidy[18]:

> *Because of our dealings with ETF… I don't think, in the FE and skills sector and I'm pretty certain in saying they would not agree to continue funding beyond a pilot. So yes, they might do a pilot, but then it would be "That's it. It's over to you." and in my experience, you know … the biggest problem I think is obviously resources.*
>
> *All I just think is "Well, are they going to have the funds to do that? Who's going to pay for that external mentor?" I was at a meeting yesterday where because we have a consortium and a*

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[18] That said, a small number of interviewees suggested that their institutions might be willing to pay under certain conditions, as discussed in Section 6.6 below.

number of partners obviously in our consortium, they were talking about the cuts and how it's affecting them inevitably and things are just getting so much tighter. So I suspect that a suggestion of having an external mentor would be received quite well, but it would be quickly followed by "Well, who's going to pay for it?"

I think the concern I would have is how much willingness there would be [on the part of institutions' SMTs] *to then pick up the funding at the end of it... I mean the colleges are like everyone else – they're strapped for cash, aren't they?*

But is it sustainable? I mean it's such a cash strapped sector generally and particularly now at this stage of the economic cycle, but even at the height... I've worked in colleges that have been really struggling and it's one of those... You know, it [mentoring] *is seen as or it can be seen as one of those sort of softer sort of bonus things.*

You know, different networks in regions have started up and not been supported beyond initial or piloting stage and they haven't really cracked that sustainability angle. I think they had been really welcomed, but have been kind of very short lived.

6.6 POTENTIAL MEANS OF OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO AND ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN EFFECTIVE EXTERNAL MENTOR/COACH SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Addressing the cost and sustainability issue and encouraging institutional buy-in

- **Demonstrating impact**

Organisations won't fund some of the things that we need to do, so there has to be some sort of commitment to this. I know there has to be some analysis as to how effective it's been down the line, but some consistency for a period of time so that we can actually start to see how it's working I think is really, really quite important.

I think if there's evidence of a positive impact and it improving quality and engagement with employers and placement providers… I think if in all those things there was an enhancement of those, then obviously it would possibly lead to the project being continued forward. It would depend on the impact on the organisation.

{Interviewer: So just going back to cost because obviously that's important, realistically – and this is nothing anyone's going to hold you to – do you think the company would be prepared to pay for an external mentor or coach?} Yeah… There is a budget set aside for training, but it's got to have the desired impact.

- **Seek to secure prestigious industrial sponsorship**

[Institutions/SMTs may be more likely to buy in] [i]*f there were industry backing (e.g. sponsored by Rolls Royce)* [it] *might be different. Or endorsement by the appropriate Sector Skills Council…*

- **Setting a precedent**

I suppose one advantage is that it would have a certain momentum of its own. There would be a core of experienced mentors there who are used to doing this, so they're not having to pick it up from scratch, they're already au fait with what's involved and I think it then becomes easier to just acknowledge that as part of someone's normal work load and for a college to say "Yeah, okay, so a certain number of hours per year of your work load is mentoring," as part of that.

- **Establishing a mentoring and coaching network across institutions**

I think what you kind of have to accept is that if a strong network of providers has been established, then they should continue to kind of buy into that network because they're receiving the benefit of being part of it, but I think also you kind of have to accept that there'll be a certain amount of wastage, won't there, and you'll lose some of these leads... unless there are some agreements between providers to share resources like a shared services type model, I don't see long term that you'd keep those individuals acting as mentor leads in the region.

I mean there could be the opportunity maybe with another college to say "We'll do yours, you do ours." So there's no cost implications, but if there's a commitment from the 2 colleges to do it I think it's more likely to happen.

- **Encourage government to ring-fence a share of an institution's funding for teachers' PLD and mentoring/coaching in particular**

My own experience was that schools have to have money available and it has to be ring-fenced. So you can actually go in as a mentor and say "Well why wasn't so and so able to come down?" "Oh, because they were busy. We've had to change their timetable." So you say "No, you can't do that. You can't do that. That money is there so that they can travel," and it ultimately comes down to that really. I've had that conversation so many times with people.

- **Lack of sustainability not as serious as sometimes thought**

[B]ut [if institutions aren't able to sustain an external mentor/coach programme after the end of a pilot programme] you haven't really lost anything because the resource has gone into the providers where they're based. So I think you have to see it as it's an investment in the sector. The expertise hopefully remains in the sector even if those individuals don't carry on working across the sector... I mean one way would be if it was within teacher education I suppose. I'm just thinking if a mentoring lead was appointed in a teacher education provider then you're already working with a range of external organisations I suppose, so that expertise remains there and it's held by a range of organisations because by their very nature they're working across organisations with the teachers.

- **Ensure the external/mentor coach programme (or a pilot programme) is effectively and formatively evaluated and evidence of impact recorded**

- **Ensure effective marketing of external mentor/coach programme – e.g. highlighting benefits to organisations – to encourage institutional buy-in including to release teachers to external mentor/coach roles**

I mean obviously what you're doing in putting [teachers] through this programme [to become external mentors/coaches] is enhancing the set of skills of this person. So from a principal's point of view you're saying I'm helping to develop your capacity to improve within your organisation and as part of your payment for us giving this training to this mentoring lead we require that in the first year or the first two years after they've got the status that they do X number of hours working with X number of organisations in the region so it's kind of payment in a sense.

{Interviewer: So a full-time secondment wouldn't really work because the college wouldn't be getting benefit for themselves then?} I mean speaking for my college... they wouldn't go for that, but if it's presented as "We're giving you capacity to support your organisational development as well as requiring you pay to support others," then yes, I think they'd go for that, especially if there's some status attached to it. You know, "Leading organisations have these people" talk as part of that as well.

- **Seek to provide some kind of recognised status for external mentors/coaches – and the organisations to which they belong – through some kind of kite mark or regulatory body approval**

If it could be made part of what we're calling this new FE charter status… If arrangements for internal and external mentoring could be made part of that sort of kite mark, then colleges would be more willing to engage with it I think. So, you know, it's not necessarily about money being made available, but I think it's about a clear lead being given at a national level by the organisations that are responsible for professionalism.

- **Seek to involve organisations in the development of the programme to encourage buy-in**

Addressing other potential barriers and other means of maximising the effectiveness of an external mentor/coach support programme

- Ensure that external mentors and coaches are appointed following a **rigorous selection process** to ensure they have the necessary knowledge, experience, expertise and attributes.

- Ensure external mentors/coaches are **appropriately trained**, notably in mentoring and coaching.

- Ensure **those who are training** the external mentors/coaches are also appropriately trained.

- Ensure mentors/coaches have **opportunities to network** with each other.

- Ensure that external mentors/coaches **spend some time in and learn about the institutions** of the teachers they are supporting.

- Encourage external mentors/coaches to **demonstrate their capability** in the classroom to mentee/coachee to establish credibility.

- Ensure there are **opportunities for regular face-to-face contact** between mentor/coach and teachers they are supporting, especially in the early stages of the relationship to help establish trust.

- Ensure external mentor/coach is **accessible at short notice** if needed.

- Ensure **geographical proximity** of mentor/coach to teachers they are supporting.

- Ensure teachers **aware of the parameters** of external mentor/coach support.

- Ensure teachers are provided with **time off timetable** to work with the external mentor/coach.

- Ensure external mentors/coaches provide **opportunities for teachers to collaborate and network with other same-subject specialist teachers.**

- Promote mentoring and coaching as an '**offline' supportive relationship** as opposed to an evaluative and remedial one.

- Ensure an appropriate **financial reward** for mentors/coaches to promote the status associated with the role, to encourage suitable colleagues to apply for the role, and to facilitate accountability.

6.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have reported findings on:

- the extent to which different teachers may benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach for one or more of the subjects they teach;
- the potential benefits of providing teachers with access to an experienced subject specialist teacher who is independent of their institution;
- factors which might encourage or discourage teachers from engaging with an external mentor or coach;
- potential barriers to the introduction of a programme of external mentor/coach support, and potential means of overcoming such barriers.

Shortly, in our final chapter (Chapter 7), we highlight our key findings and present a number of recommendations for policy makers and FE and Skills providers.

First, in a Postscript to this chapter, we briefly discuss what kinds of organisations might be best equipped to run an external mentor or coach support programme for teachers of STEM subjects in the FE and Skills sector.

CHAPTER 6 POSTSCRIPT: WHAT ORGANISATIONS WOULD BE BEST PLACED TO RUN AN EXTERNAL MENTOR OR COACH SUPPORT PROGRAMME?

In our interviews, we asked participants – where appropriate – whether they had any thoughts on what kinds of organisations might be best equipped to run an external mentor or coach support programme for teachers of STEM subjects in the FE and Skills sector. We would not wish to place too much weight on these data (and have thus chosen not to include them as substantive 'findings' of our research) since only 12 interviewees were able to provide an informed response, and a disproportionate number of these had had direct involvement in the work of the Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs) – a regional network of organisations across England committed to promoting excellence in ITT and CPD in the FE and Skills sector. These participants are thus likely to be unrepresentative of all those who have valuable insights into and suggestions relating to this question. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the most frequently mentioned response (by 5 of the 12 interviewees in question) was that an external mentor/coach support programme could be effectively implemented by the (10) CETTs.

> [Y]*ou could do it through the CETTs because the CETTs have got national networks. So for example the maths* [enhancement programme]*... I mean we did them all over the place – Isle of Wight, Abingdon, Witney. It was east, west, you name it.*

> *The CETTS have the capacity to interact and communicate with the sector. They were the organising vehicle for the* [NCETM] *maths enhancement programme and are 'really rated' and continue to lead CPD. They can really work well.*

> *I think I might go for the CETTs for the main reason… I mean obviously they're going to be led by universities, so you've got the university involvement anyway, but I think if you're going to reach down to where some of the real problems are, which are in things like work based learning providers, I think you'd want maybe a broader reach and I think as a CETT certainly we try to get as many of these smaller providers or groups of providers as possible involved with the CETT … rather than just sticking at FE colleges…and there's some pooling of energies within there as well, and I think it would just be so important to get employers on board as well and a CETT tends to involve employers as well. So it would have advantages rather than just being located in a university.*

A smaller number of interviewees suggested that universities could take on such a programme in their own right, especially:

> [An] *HEI that is outstanding in its own mentor training, with a solid research informed foundation to develop, implement and evaluate an excellent programme.*

However, apart from the issue of more limited 'reach' referred to above, some interviewees highlighted additional problems of having universities alone run such a programme:

> [There are p]*reconceived ideas that HEIs are not connected to the grassroots of the classroom. Ideas of the 'Ivory Tower' still exist and are a real barrier for research informed practice being introduced into the Lifelong Learning Sector.*

> [S]*ome universities are not necessarily interested in developing something like that, so you'd have to ensure that it was something that they did bid for and was managed because otherwise again it could go off the rails quite easily I think… my experience is that some universities are committed to this kind of work and development for the sector and others are just not interested.*

One interviewee expressed the view that neither universities nor CETTs would be best placed to lead on the introduction of an external mentor/coach support programme for teachers. This interviewee also added a note of caution about the potential existence of a 'neat' solution, suggesting that the

most appropriate bodies would comprise different networks or provider groupings, the specific make-up of which would vary from region to region:

> *I think that some of the existing networks that are already in place, I think it makes sense to work through them… We have a very active CETT here, but I don't actually think the CETTs should be the lead in this. I think actually it's provider groupings that should be the lead; and different regions do have different employer forums and strategic groupings and things like the maths enhancement strategic hubs for example that actually feel more like they are actually led by providers and I think they should have a role in keeping some of the momentum going on this. But also some of the people who've been involved in mentoring research in the past, some of the providers who've been involved in coaching at different levels in the past. I think there are clear areas where different projects, different developments and different groups of providers have come together and I think a little bit of research looking at what's gone before in a region and how could you build on it I think is a way to go… I think each region might be different and I know that's not a popular answer because everyone wants a nice, neat, national model that kind of works across the board…*

Whoever were to take the lead in introducing and coordinating a programme of external mentor/coach support for teachers, it would also seem prudent to seek to involve organisations that are currently successfully running or have successfully managed or coordinated similar programmes in the recent past, such as the Institute of Physics, the NCETM and CETTs.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we highlight what we see as the key findings of our research, and discuss some possible implications of those findings for policy, practice and further research. Before doing so, we acknowledge that, like all research, the present study is not without its limitations. Amongst these, firstly, our survey sample was not random and may not be representative of all teachers in the sector – especially those in adult and community learning providers and employment and learning providers, from whom we had a relatively small number of respondents. Secondly, of the teachers we interviewed who had current or recent experience of mentoring or coaching as mentees/coachees, most had done so as part of ITT and/or induction programmes for newly qualified teachers or teachers new to a particular institution. Around a dozen interviewees spoke knowledgeably about mentoring or coaching for more experienced staff, but only a handful had recent direct involvement in this. It is possible that teachers who had been identified as in need of coaching due to perceived poor 'performance' in Ofsted terms, on the basis of lesson observations, were less likely to volunteer or 'be volunteered' (subject to being given the subsequent opportunity to grant or decline their own informed consent) to participate in the research. This is one area that would especially benefit from further research.

Despite these and other limitations, the current study represents one of the most substantial pieces of research ever conducted on teacher mentoring and coaching in the FE and Skills sector in England. As well as providing support for some of the findings of a number of earlier, smaller-scale studies, our research also begins to address some of the gaps in the evidence base that existed hitherto.

7.2 KEY FINDINGS

General support for teachers' PLD

In Chapter 2, we provided an overview of previous research which suggested that while there had been some improvement in recent years in terms of support for teachers' PLD in general, several issues remained. The findings we present in Chapter 3 support those of earlier studies by showing – for example – that some teachers feel that they receive appropriate and adequate support for their PLD but others do not, and by identifying some of the reasons for this. On the positive side, some of our teacher interviewees stated, for instance, that they benefited from:

- having colleagues who offered support, were approachable and responded positively to requests for support;
- having opportunities to collaborate and network with other teachers;
- being supported to attend external courses or 'CPD'.

On the other hand, some participants bemoaned what they considered to be insufficient support for their PLD and wellbeing, referring – for example – to:

- the lack of a thorough programme of induction for teachers new to their institution;
- a lack of subject-specific support;
- institutions not responding favourably to requests to attend training courses;
- a feeling that they were left to 'sink or swim':
- a lack of explicit discussion about pedagogy in their organisations; and/or
- a feeling that their senior leadership teams were too preoccupied with, and put too great a resource into, the assessment of teachers' 'performance', at the expense of a genuine concern for and investment in their PLD.

We also provide, in Chapter 3, an account of the PLD needs of teachers of STEM and other subjects. From our interviews, it emerged that the most frequently mentioned PLD needs of STEM teachers related to:

- their ability to effectively employ a range of teaching methods – 'general pedagogical knowledge'; and

- their pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987)

These findings are fairly consistent with the responses to our survey question which asked teachers to indicate in which areas they might benefit from additional training or support for their professional development. Here, the most frequently given responses (from teachers across all subjects/vocational areas) were:

- differentiating teaching for different learners (40% of respondents); and
- the ability to use a range of teaching methods (35%).

(Findings relating to support for teachers' subject knowledge and PCK are discussed further below.)

Chapter 3 also presents original findings on:

- the extent to which teachers feel willing and able to acknowledge and discuss their PLD needs within their institutions – a key consideration which acts as an impediment to the PLD of some teachers; and
- factors which encourage or restrict such openness, such as the culture of the organisation and the potential (or otherwise) for developing safe, trusting relationships with mentors, coaches, line managers and others.

The reach of institution-based mentoring and coaching

We concluded from our review of the existing evidence base discussed in Chapter 2 that little was known about mentoring in the FE and Skills sector post-ITT, and that the limited research that had been conducted suggested that there was not a great deal of such activity post-ITT. As a result of our research, we now know a little more about these matters. We know, for example, that while the vast majority of those working towards an ITT qualification were being mentored/coached (as required by ITT providers and Ofsted frameworks), around 25-30% of those who were not working towards an ITT qualification or had previously successfully obtained one were also experiencing or had recent experience (in the last 2 years) of being mentored or coached.

Our interview data suggest that much of the institution-based mentoring or coaching provided for more experienced teachers is of an evaluative and remedial nature – focused on those whose teaching is judged through lesson observations to be Level 3 ('requires improvement') or 4 ('inadequate') in Ofsted terms.

The variable quality of and impediments to effective institution-based mentoring and coaching

Previous research has found that mentoring in the sector is of variable quality and has identified a number of reasons for this. Our research suggests that while the reach and quality of mentoring has improved to some extent across the sector in the last decade or so, it remains extremely variable. While concurring with much of the existing literature, we have provided a more comprehensive account of the limitations and likely causes of this variability than had previously been available. For example, our data suggest that each of the following issues present impediments to effective mentoring and coaching:

- Many institutions do not employ rigorous methods of selecting mentors and coaches.
- Many mentors/coaches and the teachers they are supporting have insufficient time to meet, and/or are hampered by not being timetabled to be free at the same time during the working day.
- Many mentors/coaches are not appropriately trained for the role.
- Some mentors/coaches do not have a specialist knowledge of the subject/vocational area of the teachers they are supporting.
- Many mentors and coaches line manage their mentees/coaches.
- Mentoring and coaching are not sufficiently understood in such a way that will help realise their potential for supporting teachers' PLD.
- In particular, mentoring and (especially) coaching are inappropriately employed as remedial measures to address the perceived 'under-performance' of teachers, which can impede the development of the kind of trusting relationships most conducive to effective mentoring and coaching and to facilitating teachers' PLD.
- There is insufficient recognition or reward for the work of mentors/coaches.
- Some teachers have mindsets not conducive to receiving effective support from a mentor or coach (Searby, 2014) and/or have inappropriate expectations of mentors/coaches, some of which is understandable given the performativity context and lack of appropriate 'architecture' (Cunningham, 2007) for mentoring and coaching in many institutions.
- Mentoring and coaching do not appear to be taken sufficiently seriously or adequately supported by the senior leadership teams of many institutions.
- There appears to be insufficient resource across the sector to adequately support effective mentoring and coaching.

Benefits of and factors enhancing effective institution-based mentoring and coaching

We concluded in Chapter 2 that there was relatively little research on the impact of mentoring and coaching in the FE and Skills sector, especially that which draws upon the perspectives of both mentors/coaches and mentees/coachees. Our study has strengthened the evidence base in this area, highlighting a range of benefits of institution-based mentoring and coaching (notably where they are working well) for the teachers being supported, including:

- enabling teachers to talk about a range of difficulties that they experience;
- supporting teachers' emotional wellbeing;
- helping teachers develop general pedagogical techniques including assessment strategies;
- helping teachers develop their skills of critical reflection;
- helping develop teachers' subject pedagogy;
- providing access to teaching resources and equipment;
- helping teachers to plan and develop skills of planning lessons and/or schemes of work; and
- helping teachers to develop their subject or vocational knowledge.

Furthermore, we have provided evidence to show that a number of factors enhance the effectiveness and impact of institution-based mentoring and coaching. Amongst these, we have provided evidence from both our survey and interview data analysis to show that mentoring/coaching tends to be more beneficial where:

- mentors/coaches share the subject/vocational specialism of the teachers they are supporting;
- there is regular and sustained contact between mentors/coaches and the teachers being supported;
- there is a rigorous process for the selection of mentors/coaches and for pairing them with specific teachers; and
- the mentor/coach is not also the line manager of the teacher they are supporting.

Support for teachers' subject knowledge

In Chapter 2 we noted that in a recent small scale study of STEM mentoring in FE, Swain and Conlan (2012) suggested that mentors provide little support for the development of mentees' subject knowledge. Our research provides some support for this finding: we found, for example, that some of our (STEM) teacher interviewees bemoaned a lack of subject-specific support, which was sometimes related to the lack of a same-subject specialist mentor within their institution. Our analysis also reveals that some (STEM and other) teachers felt that they needed or would benefit from support for their subject or vocational knowledge but others did not. For example, a relatively low 13% of survey respondents identified a need for support for their subject/vocational knowledge (13%), compared with the 40% of respondents who stated that they needed support with differentiating their teaching for different learners.

On the other hand, amongst those teachers who indicated that they might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach for one or more of the subjects/vocational areas that they teach, 54% stated that they might approach the mentor/coach for support for their subject/vocational knowledge. The apparent contradictions in these findings appear to be at least partly explained by our findings about the reluctance of some teachers to admit to perceived deficiencies in their subject/vocational knowledge to institution-based colleagues, which tallies with similar recent research findings from the secondary sector (Hobson and McIntyre, 2013).

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)

We also noted in Chapter 2 that while it is fairly well established in science and some other STEM subjects, the notion of subject specific pedagogy or pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987, 1986) is something of a contested issue within the FE and Skills sector more broadly. Our research suggests that across a range of subjects and vocational areas, this was an area where some teachers were benefiting and other teachers also felt they could benefit from additional support for their PLD:

- in Chapter 3 we saw that support for PCK was one of the most frequently mentioned PLD needs referred to by our (STEM) interviewees;
- in Chapter 5 we saw that 68% of those teachers (across all subjects) who had recently had a mentor or coach felt that they had been 'very' or 'quite' beneficial in helping them to 'develop their subject/vocational pedagogy (how to teach your subject(s)/vocational area(s))'; and
- in Chapter 6 we showed that, amongst those survey respondents who indicated that they might benefit from the support of an external mentor for one or more of the subjects/vocational areas that they teach, over a half (56%) stated that they would welcome additional support for their subject/vocational pedagogy – the most frequently given reason for potentially seeking the support of an external mentor/coach.

The involvement of mentors and coaches in the assessment of their mentees/coaches

We noted in a Postscript to Chapter 6 that whilst our evidence suggests – as others have previously argued – that mentoring and coaching tend to be more effective as 'offline' activities, the findings of this study do not show that they tend to be more effective where mentors or coaches are not responsible for or involved in the formal assessment of their mentees'/coachees' capability as teachers. In fact, while our analyses revealed no statistically significant differences, on most items a slightly higher percentage of survey respondents whose mentors *were* responsible for or involved in their formal assessment indicated that they found their mentors' support beneficial, especially in terms of helping them develop their subject/vocational knowledge; helping them develop their subject/vocational pedagogy; and facilitating access to or helping with teaching resources or equipment. As previously suggested, this may be partly explained by the likelihood that those involved in the assessment of mentees' teaching are more likely to be same-subject specialists than those who are not – since we have established that mentoring/coaching tends to be more effective when

provided by same subject/vocational area specialists. There are other possible explanations too. For example, it may be that many teachers in the FE and Skills sector maintain a primary focus on their original (subject/vocational-oriented) professional identities and never fully develop or take some time to develop their identity as dual professionals (Robson, 1998; cf. Panter, 2011). Some such teachers may be more likely to believe that there is 'one right way' of teaching or facilitating learning, and thus more likely to 'buy in' to the support provided by those involved in teacher assessment and recognised to have an appropriate knowledge of relevant criteria/'standards'. Nonetheless, we are not able to provide empirical support from the present study for this possible explanation, and it is clear that more research is needed in this area.

The potential of external mentor support for FE teachers

As noted in Chapter 1, little or no previous research had been conducted on the potential value of external mentor support for teachers of STEM or other subjects in the FE and Skills sector, and this marks the most substantive contribution of this study to the evidence base. In Chapter 6 we have shown that:

- almost half (48%) of the teachers responding to our online survey indicated that they felt they might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach for at least one of the subjects/vocational areas they taught, which is in line with the responses of primary and secondary school teachers to an earlier survey (Hobson *et al.*, 2012).

On the question of which categories of teacher were most likely to indicate that they might benefit from such access, we have found that:

- slightly higher percentages of teachers who had completed between one and five years in teaching (56-57%) than those who had been teaching for longer stated that they might benefit from the support of an external mentor/coach for at least one of the subjects they teach; though
- a *lower* percentage of those currently working towards an ITT qualification stated that they felt they might benefit from access to an external mentor/coach, which is likely to be at least partly explained by the fact that they should already have a mentor and other forms of support as part of their ITT;
- teachers of STEM subjects were, in general, slightly less likely than teachers of non-STEM subjects to state that they felt they might benefit from the support of an external mentor/coach (although the differences were not statistically significant); though
- teachers of vocational STEM subjects appeared more likely to feel that they might benefit from the support of an external mentor or coach for the teaching of those subjects than those teaching academic STEM subjects (though again these results were not found to be statistically significant);
- there was little (and no statistically significant) difference in whether respondents felt that they might benefit from an external mentor/coach for a particular subject according to whether they had, or the level of, their qualification in the subject; nor according to the type of institution in which they were employed.

With respect to the potential benefits of external mentor/coach support, and the factors potentially encouraging or discouraging teachers from accessing such support, our analyses revealed the following amongst other findings.

- Those survey respondents who stated that they felt they might benefit from the opportunity to access an external mentor/coach for at least one of the subjects they taught indicated that they might wish to take advantage of such support for a variety of reasons – the most frequently stated responses being support for their subject/vocational pedagogy, for their

subject/vocational content knowledge and to gain an independent perspective on some issues.

- Interviewees suggested that the opportunity to access the support of an external mentor or coach could result in: an increased likelihood that teachers would be able to be open about and seek support for their PLD needs; improved time and workload management (and teacher wellbeing in general); and improved teaching methods and (in consequence) student learning.

- Our survey data suggest that the main factors which might discourage some teachers from taking advantage of the opportunity to access external mentor or coach support are: confidence in their own teaching and subject/vocational knowledge; a perception that they are already able to access all the support they need within their institutions; and the feeling that they would not have sufficient time to engage with an external mentor or coach on top of their other commitments.

- Some of the teachers we interviewed also suggested that doubts about the credentials or appropriateness of the external mentor or coach (especially one who was not currently engaged in teaching) might discourage them from seeking their support.

We have also provided, in Chapter 6, a comprehensive account of potential barriers to the introduction of a programme of external mentor/coach support, which exist at micro (mentor-relationship level), meso (institution-level and external mentor/coach provider level) and macro (policy-level), and an account of a range of potential means of overcoming such barriers. Amongst these, we propose a number of possible measures to address the issue of cost and sustainability, and encourage institutional buy-in to a potential external mentor/coach teacher support programme.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the existence of pockets of excellent mentoring and coaching, it is clear from our research evidence and that provided by earlier studies that – across the FE and Skills sector in England – most institutions are failing to realise the potential of mentoring and coaching for supporting the PLD and wellbeing of their teachers, and they (and the sector and society as a whole) are thus missing out on the associated resultant benefits of such support, notably for teacher retention and student learning (Wang and Odell, 2002; Hobson *et al.*, 2009a). Given the benefits that can be derived from effective mentoring and coaching, some of which have been evidenced earlier, we would argue that efforts should be made at both policy and institutional levels to strengthen institution-based mentoring and coaching across the sector. In addition:

- in an ideal world – given the variable quality of institution-based mentoring/coaching and the difficulties many teachers experience in acknowledging and seeking support for their PLD needs within their institutions in the current climate – *all teachers* should have the opportunity to access an external mentor or coach (a subject specialist teacher who has recent experience of teaching within the sector and who is a trained mentor/coach);

- *at a minimum*, teachers who do not have access to the support of a trained mentor or coach with the same subject specialism within their existing institution should have the opportunity to access a same-subject trained external mentor/coach.

With respect to more specific recommendations:

- in Chapter 5 (Section 5.4), we highlighted a range of factors which our (and other) evidence has shown to enhance the effectiveness of institution-based mentoring and coaching); and

- informed by our research evidence, in Chapter 6 (Section 6.6) we proposed a number of potential means of overcoming barriers to and enhancing the effectiveness of effective programmes of external mentor/coach support for teachers.

We do not propose to repeat all of those individual points here but would recommend that anyone concerned with introducing or seeking to enhance the effectiveness of institutional or external mentoring or coaching should refer to or be guided by these findings.

In what follows we seek to bring this report to a conclusion by highlighting a more modest range of recommendations for the attention of policy-makers (and those responsible for, or potentially interested in, contributing to an improvement in the quality of teacher mentoring and coaching across the sector) and individual institutions or providers (notably their senior leadership teams).

Recommendations for policy-makers

On the evidence of our research, we would make the following recommendations to policy-makers and other national organisations and stakeholders responsible for, or interested in, improving teachers' professional learning and development (and improving teacher mentoring and coaching in particular). This has particular relevance, at this time, for the Education and Training Foundation (ETF).

- Introduce or support the introduction of a national framework and/or qualifications for mentoring and coaching that:

  - establish a professional status for mentors/coaches that ensures FE sector providers recognise the value of this work, sets expectations for mentor/coach training and development, and allow time for mentoring/coaching activity;

  - are sufficiently flexible to be adapted to the range of contexts found in the FE sector, whilst ensuring that mentoring/coaching roles models and processes are clear

- Take measures to ensure that all mentor/coach training and development programmes adhere to the principles that have been demonstrated to best support mentees/coachees – e.g. through some kind of approval process (at least for the training of mentor/coach trainers) and/or a register of mentor/coach trainers (or at least trainer trainers).

- Make it a requirement that all mentors and coaches undertake/have undertaken appropriate training for the role – and that mentor/coach trainers (and trainer trainers) have also been trained or have demonstrated competence in their roles.

- Seek to ensure that mentor/coach training and development programmes prepare mentors / coaches to deal with and effectively support teachers with a range of dispositions towards mentoring/coaching and PLD, including reluctant and reticent mentees/coaches and those who find it difficult to acknowledge their PLD needs.

- Identify any existing training schemes and/or establish a pilot training scheme for *teachers* in how to make the most of mentoring and coaching for the benefit of their PLD; and evaluate the impact of this/these with a view to potentially recommending their widespread adoption.

- Support further research designed to evaluate the impact of mentoring and coaching (on the teachers being supported, on their learners and on mentors/coaches themselves), and the relative effectiveness of alternative approaches, and seek to ensure that the outcomes of such research inform improvements to mentoring/coaching 'architecture', models of mentoring and practice.

- Ensure the effective dissemination and promotion of research which highlights the positive impact of mentoring and coaching – including to SLTs, middle leaders, individual teachers, mentors and coaches – to (amongst other things) help encourage support for mentoring/coaching, the recruitment of suitable mentors/coaches and engagement with mentors/coaches by teachers.

- Support the introduction and evaluation of a pilot programme of external mentor/coach support for teachers of one or more subjects, which can potentially inform wider provision at a later date. Some such programmes, most notably relating to the teaching of secondary physics, have been effectively introduced and evaluated (Hobson *et al.*, 2012), though the introduction of similar schemes within the FE and Skills sector would inevitably bring new challenges.

- Support the establishment of a national register of external mentors/coaches for different subject/vocational areas.

- At a national level, and through the work of Ofsted, seek to reduce the emphasis on the observation, assessment and evaluation of teachers' 'performance' and increase the emphasis and importance placed on developmental support which values risk-taking, accepts that making mistakes is part of the learning process and thus encourages teachers to openly discuss and seek to address their perceived limitations and PLD needs in a safe, trusting environment.

- Seek to ensure that sufficient resource is provided – and if possible ring-fenced – to ensure adequate support for teachers' PLD and to support and invest in mentoring and coaching across the FE sector: mentoring and coaching are not 'cheap' options for supporting teachers' professional development, as is sometimes perceived to be the case, but with adequate support and resourcing can be an extremely powerful and cost effective means of doing so, with resultant benefits for teacher retention and student learning.

Recommendations for FE and Skills providers

On the evidence of our research, we would make the following recommendations to SLTs of FE colleges, Sixth-Form Colleges, employment and learning providers and adult and community learning providers.[19]

- Seek to ensure that all teachers have access to the support of a same-subject/vocational specialist mentor or coach – within and/or outside of the institution.

- Encourage and engage in collaboration with other providers to ensure the availability of trained mentors and coaches across all subject/vocational areas.

- Ensure that all teacher mentors and coaches are trained for the role and have subsequent opportunities both to undertake refresher mentor/coach training courses and to network with other mentors/coaches.

- Ensure that your institution has an appropriate architecture to support mentoring/coaching, which includes organisational systems and processes, for example, and time allocations for mentoring, as well as the development of a culture that supports the kinds of formal and informal activities and interactions that are effective in supporting PLD.

- Ensure that your institution has rigorous and effective processes for the selection or appointment of mentors/coaches (based on criteria for effective mentoring/coaching, not just on whether prospective mentors/coaches are effective teachers themselves) and for pairing them appropriately with specific teachers, and that mentees/coaches have an element of choice in who they are mentored/coached by.

- Ensure as far as possible that teachers are not mentored or coached by their line managers.

- Try to ensure that mentors/coaches have regular and sustained contact with the teachers they are supporting – e.g. that they have formal/timetabled meetings or other forms of

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[19] While the following recommendations are addressed to providers, they may be promoted and encouraged by policy-makers and other national bodies and stakeholders.

meaningful contact at least once a month, together with additional opportunities for informal contact.

- Seek to bring about change in the culture of the organisation, with a reduced emphasis on observing, assessing and evaluating teachers' 'performance', and a corresponding increased emphasis on developmental support which values risk-taking, and accepts that making mistakes is part of the learning process, all of which encourage teachers to openly discuss and seek to address their perceived limitations and PLD needs in a safe, trusting environment.

- In particular, seek to ensure that mentoring and coaching are not deployed as, or perceived to be, forms of remedial support but are rather used and seen in more positive terms as supporting the PLD and lifelong learning of all teachers and leaders: the current emphasis on coaching as a remedial or even punitive measure to 'address' the effectiveness of teachers judged to be weak in Ofsted terms is actually having a detrimental impact on the potential effectiveness of mentoring, coaching and PLD within institutions and across the sector.

- Ensure that sufficient resource is set aside and invested in the institutional architecture for mentoring and coaching (e.g. to meet specific recommendations laid out above such as sufficient time for mentoring/coaching, mentor/coach selection and training), to ensure adequate support for effective mentoring, coaching and teachers' PLD.

Where scarce resources do not support the provision of (institution-based or external) mentors/coaches for *all* teachers, we suggest that policy-makers and individual providers prioritise:

- those teachers who are most in need;
- those subjects where there is greatest need in terms of teacher shortage;
- the provision of support at key moments, such as when there are changes to the curriculum.

As we reported in Chapter 4, there was a lack of consensus amongst our research participants on the question of which categories of teacher most needed mentoring and coaching. In addition, it is clear that:

- on the one hand, there is variable need within all categories of teacher – so, for example, some experienced teachers may benefit from mentoring and coaching more than some beginning teachers (e.g. to update their knowledge and skills); and

- on the other hand, any and all teachers can potentially benefit from mentoring and coaching.

Nonetheless, on the evidence of our research and that of previous studies, it would seem prudent to ensure that – at a minimum – effective subject specialist mentoring or coaching is provided for:

- teachers in their first four to five years in the profession;
- teachers new to particular institutions;
- teachers who do not have access to a same subject/vocational specialist in their own institution.

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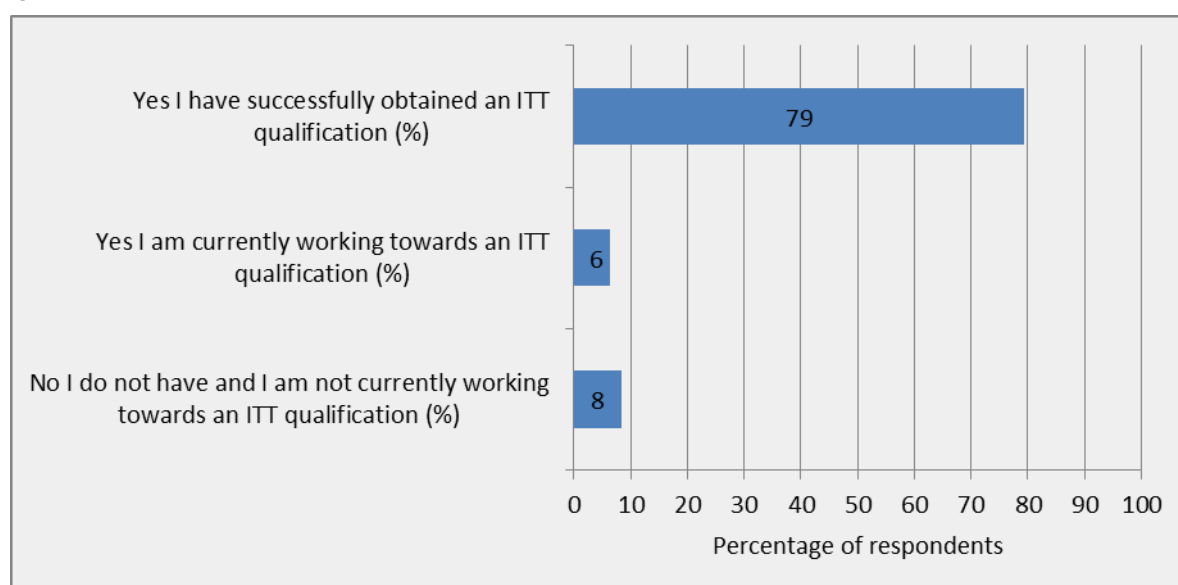(accessed 2nd February, 2012).

APPENDIX: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

SECTION 1: ABOUT YOU AS A TEACHER

**q1. How many full years of teaching experience do you have?**
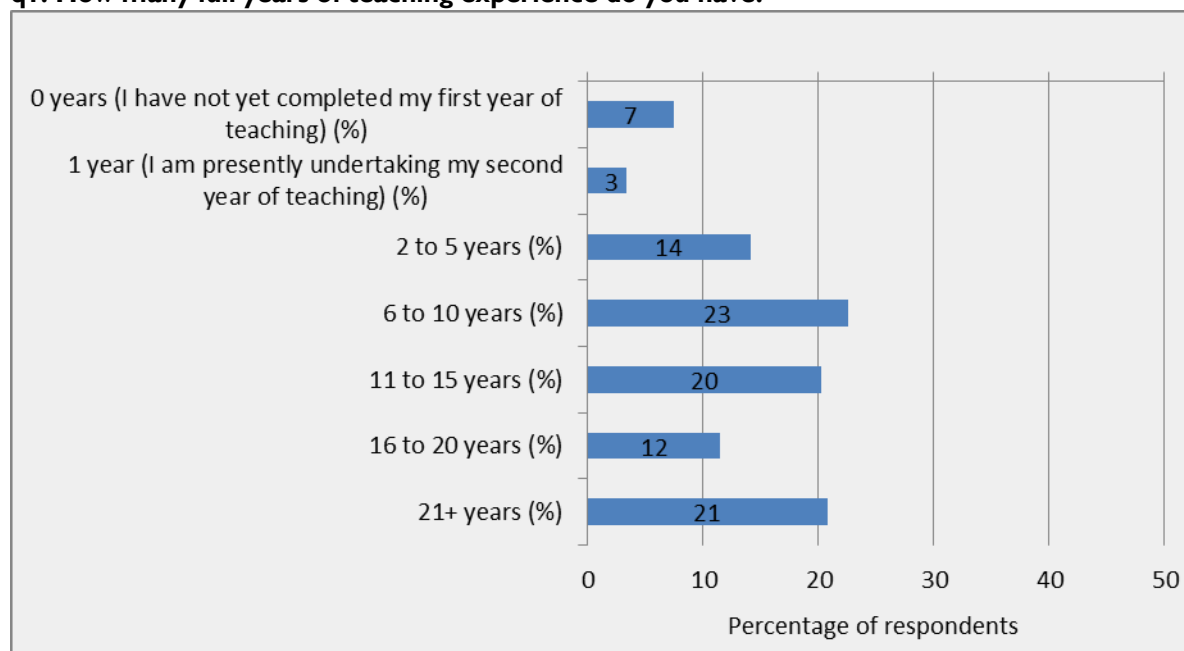
Total n = 390

q2. Do you have or are you currently working towards an initial teacher (ITT) qualification?*

Total n = 387

* Note that 22 respondents stated that they did not have or were not working towards an ITT, but went on to specify the type of ITT in q3. As a result of the lack of clarity about their qualified teacher status, they have thus been omitted from the above analysis and any other analyses relating to this question.

q3. If you do have or are currently working towards an ITT qualification please indicate the type of qualification(s) below
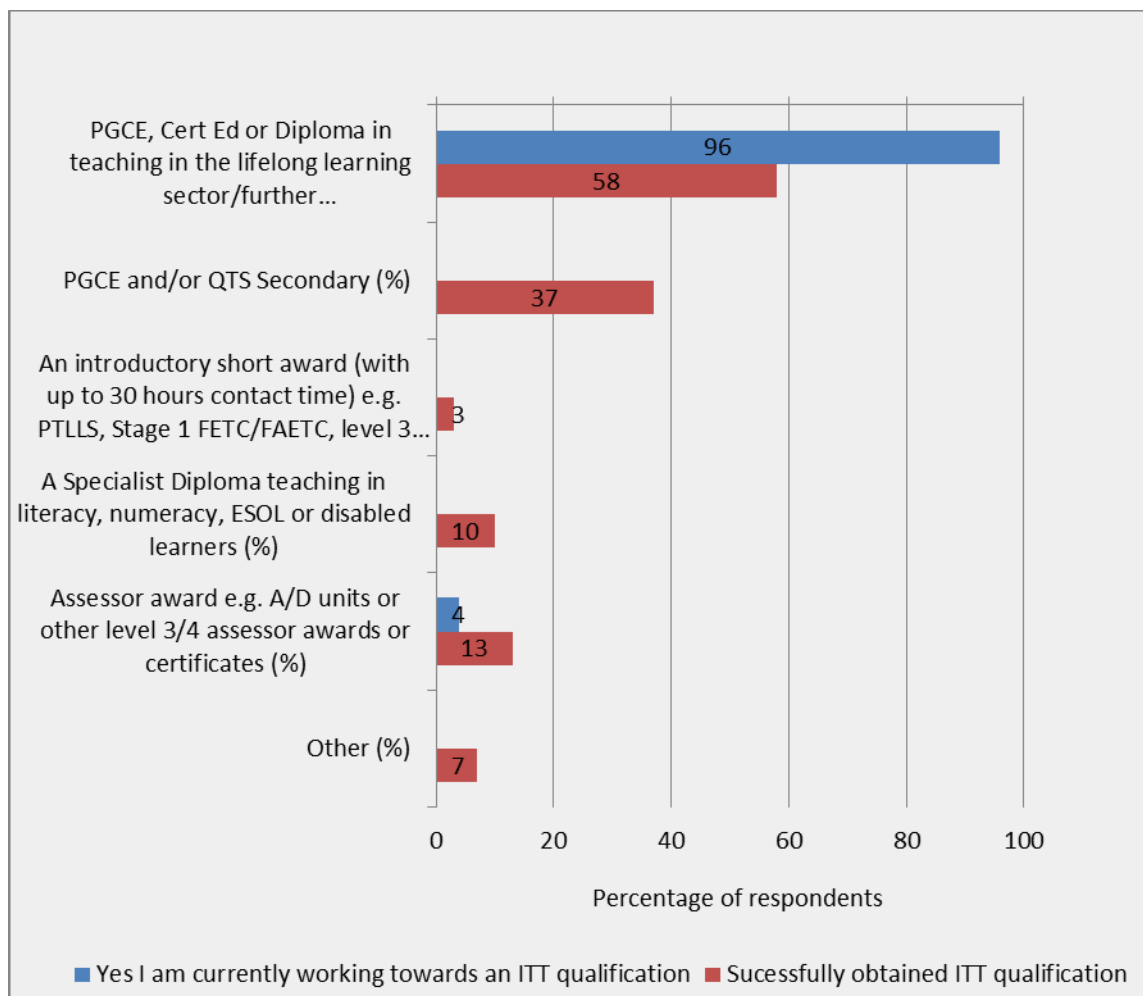
'Other' qualifications listed included undergraduate degrees in Education (mostly BEd Hons), Master's degrees in Education, City and Guilds, and various overseas qualifications.

q4 (Pt.i). List of subjects taught

Subject	n	%
Mathematics	89	14
Biology	44	7
Chemistry	38	6
English	38	6
Education and training	29	5
ICT	27	4
Physics	25	4
Business and administration	23	4
Health and social care	22	4
Humanities	19	3
Social sciences	19	3
Arts (visual, performing and textiles)	14	2
Construction/building services	14	2
Media and publishing	13	2
Early years and playwork	12	2
Computing	11	2
ESOL English for Speakers of other languages	11	2
Beauty therapy	10	2
Others*	172	27

Respondents could list up to 3 subjects that they taught. Note that the percentage figure used is calculated from the total number (584), which includes 'Others'.

*Others (each taught by fewer than 10 respondents) include: Sport, recreation and leisure; Engineering; Hospitality and catering; Employability training; Motor vehicle maintenance and repair; Travel and tourism; Complementary health studies; Environmental science/conservation; Law; Family learning; Public services; Community learning/development; Hairdressing; Independent living and leisure skills; Languages (MFL and classical); Media Studies; Anatomy; Animal Care; Applied Science; Architecture; BTEC Creative Media Production; Customer Service; Design technology; Dyslexia Assessor; Electronics; English for Speakers of Other Languages; Film Studies; First Aid; Functional Skills; Horticulture; Learning Support; Media make-up; Pastoral topics; Personal Tutor; PSD; Residential Conveyancing; Retail; Sport Injuries; Sport Massage; Statistics; Study skills.

q4 (Pt.ii). For each of the subjects/vocational areas you currently teach (or the 3 that you teach most frequently), please indicate whether or not you have studied the subject/vocational area as a major part of the following qualifications

|	n	%
First degree and/or postgraduate degree	276	46
Level 3 professional or technical qualification	145	24
First degree and/or postgraduate degree *and* Level 3 professional or technical qualification	80	13
None of these qualifications	106	18
Total	**607**	**100.0**

SECTION 5: ABOUT YOU

q17. Please select the type of organisation from the list below that most closely matches the organisation you work in
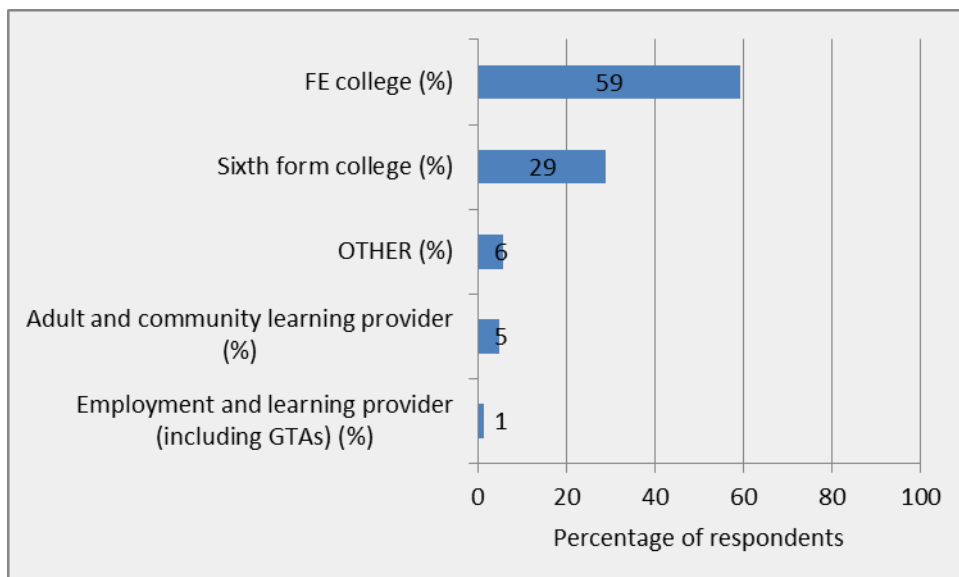
n = 388

q18. Please select the role that most closely matches your own from the list below
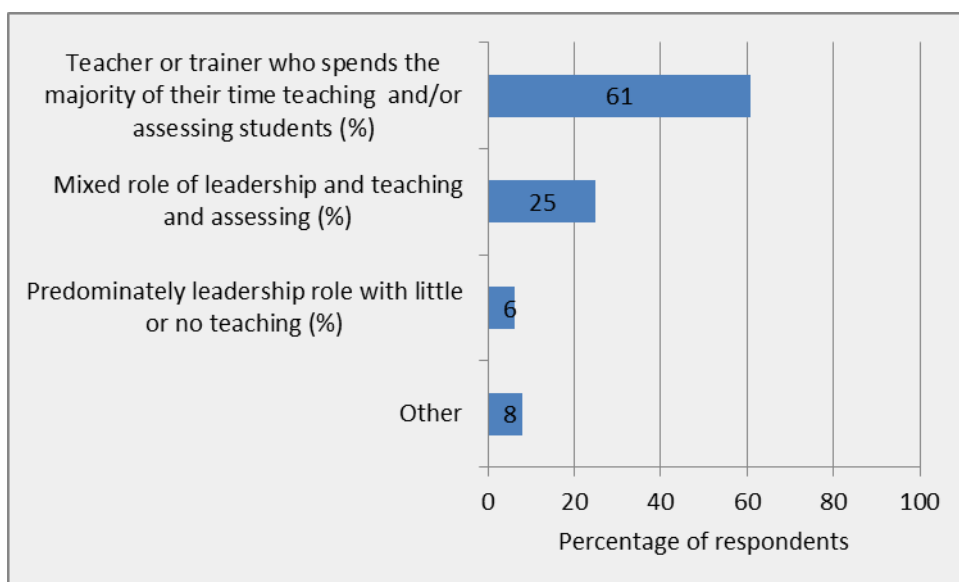
n = 388

q20. How do you identify or describe your gender identity?

Female	65%
Male	35%
Total n	**385**