Developing mentoring as a space for [trans]formative conversations

Professor Rachel Lofthouse

Carnegie School of Education,

Leeds Beckett University

@DrRLofthouse @CollectivED1 R.M.Lofthouse@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Formative

- …. serving to form something, having a profound influence on a person's development

Transformative

- …. causing a marked change in someone, to change in form, appearance, or structure, to metamorphose

3 engagement activities

3 research propositions

3 reflective questions

Engagement activities

Paired conversation → Individual observation → Small group review

Paired conversation

- Who do you talk with about your own work?

- Why them?

- What do you typically talk about?

- Are your conversations ones during which, and from which, you learn?

- Does your practice change as a result?

Individual observation

- For each of the next 3 images ....

  - Note down a few words or phrases to describe the nature of the situation and interaction

2

Small group review

- What might these two activities tell us about conversation as part of mentoring students teachers?

Research propositions

Cautionary tales → Mentoring 'spaces' → Developing mentoring talk

Cautionary tales

What keeps me awake at night

We train teachers up just to break them down

AFTER A recent round of school visits, on which I observed student teachers, I find myself taking stock. I have been training teachers for more than a decade. I have seen four standards rewrites, designed PGCEs split between professional and master's level, accommodated the changes needed to welcome School Direct and worked with trainees doing university courses. I have interviewed hundreds of prospective student teachers, watched thousands of lessons and developed working relationships with dozens of mentors.

The numbers creep up: quotas filled, placements completed, qualifications awarded and jobs secured. Am I proud? Yes. But my overriding thought is how pleased I am that I don't know the number of teaching posts abandoned by those bright newcomers who have so much to offer. When I go back into schools, people I had hoped would become mentors are often no longer even teaching.

And why is this? Well, we have subverted school visits to provide [quality] assurance rather than support, [...] complexity of

chats with distracted mentors as we dash along corridors. Summaries of trainee teachers' progress often extend only to "I hardly see them", "They're doing fine" or "We're still working on the same two targets".

I observe lessons from behind a pile of "evidence files", trying to make sense of the context and the practice. I must assess teaching and learning in a snapshot.

And then there's the lesson review: "Let's talk about learning – your pupils' and yours." I try to resist the inevitable routine of ticking off targets – they are a poor substitute for professional repertoire. This system is so devoid of passion and has been simplified beyond use. We need to work harder at the entrance stage of the profession to ensure that these talented teachers stick around.

People I had hoped would become mentors are often no longer even teaching

The writer has worked in teacher [education] ... the UK for more

- It [is] difficult for teachers to engage in interaction [with each other] with sufficient frequency, specificity, and depth to generate new insights into teaching dilemmas or to foster instructional innovation.

Horn & Little (2010)

Judgementoring and other threats to realizing the potential of school-based mentoring in teacher education

Andrew J. Hobson
Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK, and
Angi Malderez
University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

Mentoring 'spaces'

PHYSICAL / TEMPORAL 'SPACE'

What activities occur;
How individuals undertake their activities;
How the space is configured & set up;
How resources are deployed;
The productiveness of actions.

SOCIAL 'SPACE'

How individuals connect & relate to each other;
What roles are taken;
Formal or informal relationships;
Ssignificance of power, trust & solidarity;
How individuals feel in the social space

'Doings'
PHYSICAL / TEMPORAL 'SPACE'

'Sayings'
SEMANTIC 'SPACE'

'Relatings'
SOCIAL 'SPACE'

SEMANTIC 'SPACE'

What is said & written;
The nature of the language used;
The balance of formality or informality;
The meaning, intention & comprehensibility of communication;
How communication is received & responded to.

Theory of Practice Architecture, Stephen Kemmis, cited in Lofthouse & Thomas (2014)

Developing Mentoring Talk

Stimulate

Know how to initiate thoughtful reflections and stimulate decisions but also know when to hold back and let the other take the initiative.

Use what is available to create stimulus, to provoke discussion. Try video, agreed observation notes, teacher learning journal, pupils' work, planning etc

Scaffold

Introduce a sense of scale in discussion. Be aware of the relationships between …

Critical moments (unplanned but interesting),

Planned learning episodes,

The lesson as a whole,

Broad themes which open up discussion about Teaching and Learning,

Big ideas – exploring the relationship between school, individuals and society.

Sustain

Think about your tone of voice – keep it neutral and curious.

Create opportunities for time travel - think ahead, think backwards, think laterally.

Create a dynamic conversation in which there are opportunities to share problems, to pose & respond to questions, to extend thinking, to build solutions.

http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/viewpoints/experts/improving-mentoring-practices-.htm (Lofthouse, 2017)

Reflective questions

In mentoring what are our formative and transformative aims?

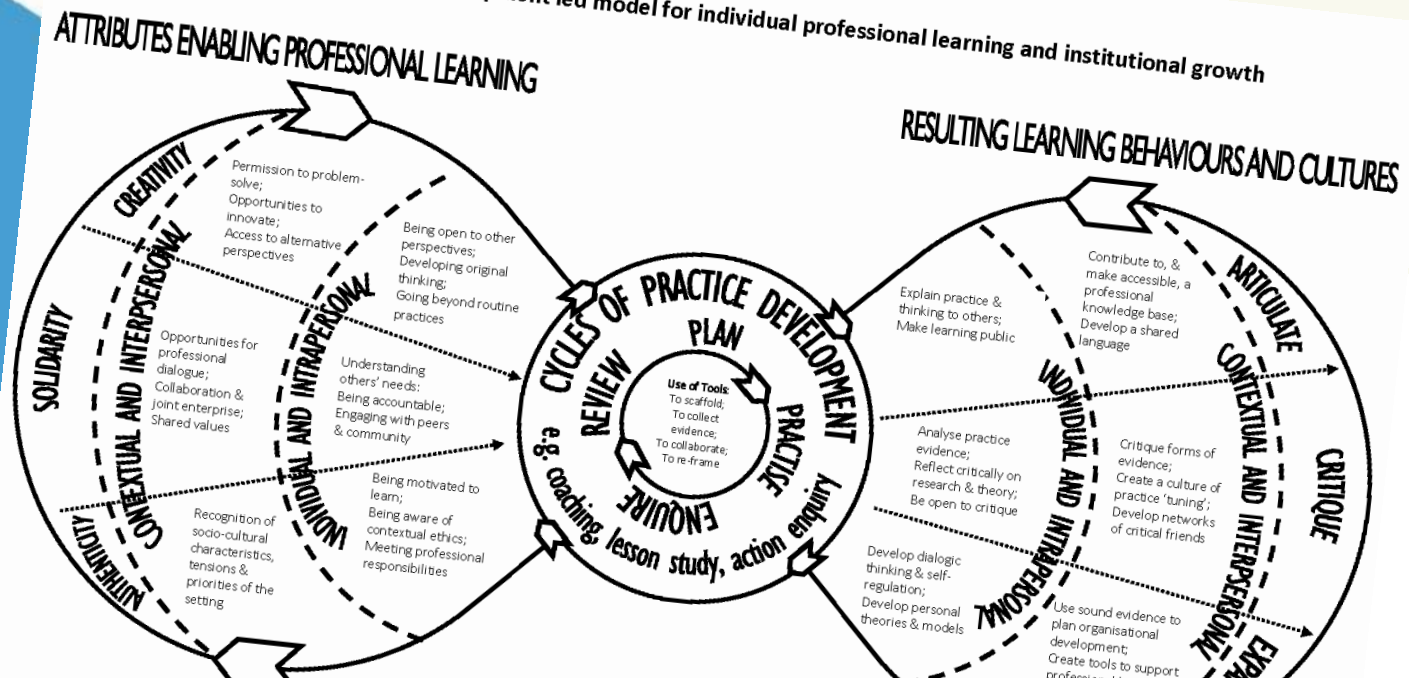*How can we create a space for [trans]formative conversations?*

What changes can I make in my practices?

Newcastle University
Research Centre for Learning and Teaching

TEACHER COACHING

A collection of think-pieces about professional development & leadership th... teacher coaching

Enablers for effective professional conversations

AITSL commissioned Professor Helen Timperley, University of Auckland, to undertake the *Professional Conversations and Improvement-Focused Feedback* literature review to draw together national and international research in relation to conversations that support professional growth. The purpose of the review was to examine the characteristics and impact of these conversations, synthesise the common themes and identify the enablers and barriers to effective professional conversations. The review looked at professional conversations that achieved real changes in teaching practice, improved student outcomes, created better solutions to problems or developed new practice.

The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* are underpinned by a view of professionalism that goes beyond technical competencies. This view encompasses the type of individual who is driven by the moral imperative to promote the engagement, learning, and well-being of each of their students and continues to learn and improve their knowledge and skills. The analysis in *Professional Conversations and Improvement-Focused Feedback* was framed in terms of the type of professionalism the ... ...moted and collated under the descriptor of adaptive ...tant societal and ...texts.

These enablers are the... that support professionals to examine the effectiveness of their practice and be committed to make appropriate changes for improvement.

Clear purpose and structured processes that engage and test ideas and solutions about the possible causes of teaching and learning problems

Resources in the form of tools and expertise to help identify effective practice and relevant evidence

Enablers for effective professional conversations

Develop and use refined / revised / new actionable knowledge for practice

Relationships of trust, challenge and mutual respect to develop agency for improving outcomes

An inquiry-focused and problem-solving culture with collective responsibility for solving problems and making a difference

Context forms the wallpaper for all the other conditions and processes and serves to shape the professional conversations but at the same time is shaped by them.

Contexts include national, jurisdictional, sector, region and school contexts, as well as the professional learning context in which the conversations are situated.

Resources
► Resources in the form of tools and expertise are essential in shaping the quality and direction of conversations.
► Tools and expertise bring high quality information to conversations, supporting participants to challenge each other to improve practice, solve problems and promote better outcomes for students.
► Expertise in conversational processes is essential for productive conversations.

Relationships
► Relationships are developed through conversations and do... necessarily exist pri... them.
► Relationships ... and mutual resp... to be accompan... by challenge ... expectations ... conversations ... effective.
► Agency ... commitm... that it is ... individual ... capacity ... differen...

Knowledge

Culture
► A culture focused on improving outcomes ...ies purpose and is ...ler and an ...

Dialogue Question Develop Reflect Learn Feedbac Listen Improve Observe Support

CfBT Education Trust

Coaching for teaching and learning: a practical guide for schools

Guidance report

Rachel Lofthouse
David Leat
Carl Towler

Metamorphosis: a practice development led model for individual professional learning and institutional growth

ATTRIBUTES ENABLING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

CREATIVITY
Permission to problem-solve;
Opportunities to innovate;
Access to alternative perspectives

Being open to other perspectives;
Developing original thinking;
Going beyond routine practices

SOLIDARITY

CONTEXTUAL AND INTERPERSONAL

Opportunities for professional dialogue;
Collaboration & Joint enterprise;
Shared values

INDIVIDUAL AND INTRAPERSONAL

Understanding others' needs:
Being accountable;
Engaging with peers & community

AUTHENTICITY

Recognition of socio-cultural characteristics, tensions & priorities of the setting

Being motivated to learn;
Being aware of contextual ethics;
Meeting professional responsibilities

CYCLES OF PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT
PLAN
Use of Tools:
To scaffold;
To collect evidence;
To collaborate;
To re-frame
REVIEW
PRACTICE
ENQUIRE
e.g. coaching, lesson study, action enquiry

RESULTING LEARNING BEHAVIOURS AND CULTURES

Explain practice & thinking to others;
Make learning public

Contribute to, & make accessible, a professional knowledge base;
Develop a shared language

ARTICULATE

CONTEXTUAL AND INTERPERSONAL

Analyse practice evidence;
Reflect critically on research & theory;
Be open to critique

Critique forms of evidence;
Create a culture of practice 'tuning';
Develop networks of critical friends

CRITIQUE

INDIVIDUAL AND INTRAPERSONAL

Develop dialogic thinking & self-regulation;
Develop personal theories & models

Use sound evidence to plan organisational development;
Create tools to support profes...

Useful reading and references

- Lofthouse, R (2016) Teacher Coaching; A collection of think-pieces about professional development and leadership through teacher coaching. Research Centre for Learning and Teaching, Newcastle University, UK http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/assets/Documents/Coaching%20Collection%20R%20Lofthouse.pdf

- Lofthouse, R., Leat, D & Towler, C. *Improving Teacher Coaching in Schools; A Practical Guide,* CfBT Education Trust

- Lofthouse, R. & Thomas, U. (2014) Mentoring student teachers; a vulnerable workplace learning practice, *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education* Vol. 3 (3) pp. 201 – 218

- Lofthouse, R. & Thomas, U. (2017) Concerning collaboration; teachers' perspectives on working in partnerships to develop teaching practices. *Professional Development in Education,* 43 (1) 36-56

- Timperley, H. http://www.aitsl.edu.au/professional-growth/research/professional-conversations