

Beyond binaries in supporting teacher learning: the vital role of mentors

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Outline

- ▶ ELT binaries, and why /how we have ‘gone beyond’ them
 - ▶ Reasons why teachers need a mentor
 - ▶ Conditions required for effective mentoring
 - ▶ Benefits of mentoring: why education systems need mentoring schemes.
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Beyond Binaries in ELT

Example 1

Right (correct) Vs Wrong (incorrect)

“ I digged the garden”

Is the utterance above right or wrong?

1: new views suggest *overlaps*

Example 2

- ▶ ‘Fluency’ and ‘Accuracy’
- ▶ *Are these enough to be a competent communicator in a language?*

2: needed to add to, or *extend*



Example 3

▶ Reader & Writer (Author)

Does (should, can) a reader (seek to) understand what a writer means?

3: labels created for ‘spaces between and around ...’

(in this case, the notion of ‘intertextuality’)

The essence of a rose ...

- ▶ ‘You don’t get at the essence of a rose by pulling off its petals ...’ (Alan Maley)



- ▶ And/but it is useful that people have, in the past, labelled parts e.g. thorns, or colours, so that I can use these words to talk about ‘the essence’ as I see it.

‘Beyond binaries’ in supporting teacher learning

Declarative knowledge (Knowing about) &
Procedural Knowledge (Knowing how)

- ▶ *But how do we explain situations where we know a T ‘knows about’ something, and they have shown us they ‘know how’ to do something, but they don’t actually, at an appropriate moment, use that knowledge in a classroom to support particular learners’ learning?*
- ▶ We have needed to add ‘knowing to’

A View of Teacher Knowledge

- ▶ 3 types of teacher Knowledge, learnt in different ways:

(i) Know about

(ii) Know how

(iii) Know to

Only someone with a close, on-going, collegial relationship (a mentor) can support the development of (iii), and the integration of all 3 types of knowledge.

Teacher Education vs Teacher Training

- ▶ Teacher Education (knowing about, ‘theory’)
- ▶ Teacher Training (knowing how, ‘practice’)
- ▶ ? (knowing to)
- ▶ And ‘theory’ & ‘practice’ = another binary we have ‘gone beyond’ (**replace**) – ineffectiveness of ‘theory–application’ models of teacher learning, and the importance of social–constructivist and socio–cultural models)
- ▶ Initial Teacher Preparation (ITP) (3 x K, praxis, identity, professionalism, ‘robust reasoning’)

Defining Terms

Mentor = someone who is willing and able to undertake each of five main roles with respect to the learning and (further) integration into the profession of a particular (beginner) teacher.

- ▶ Acculturator
 - ▶ Sponsor
 - ▶ Support
 - ▶ Model
 - ▶ Educator
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Definitions (cont.)

Mentoring = providing conditions for teacher learning, including (main common observable feature):

- one to one collegial conversations about particular instances of practice.

Mentor Conversations

- ▶ Guiding mentee to think aloud from details of past experience, in order to make decisions for future experience (and considering the experiences of others on the way)
 - ▶ Mentee's 5 Steps
 - (i) Description (re-viewing)
 - (ii) Interpretations
 - (iii) Remembering/finding out other knowledge/ others' ideas
 - (iv) Choosing interpretation
 - (v) Making decisions for the future
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- ▶ Main aim of mentoring= teacher ‘learnacy’

Literacy

Numeracy

Learnacy

- ▶ i.e. to leave the mentee with the skills, and willingness to engage in on-going learning from their own, and others’, experiences of teaching.

Reasons why teachers NEED Mentors

1. Current views on the nature of teacher knowledge and learning (see above)
2. Challenges in the experience of becoming a teacher (and the risk of drop out if appropriate support is not available);

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2. The experience of becoming and being a Teacher

BaT research confirmed:

1. 4 themes characterising the experience:

- ▶ Relationships
- ▶ Emotions
- ▶ Relevance
- ▶ Identity

2. Availability or not of 'support' from a mentor = key factor in issues connected with retention.

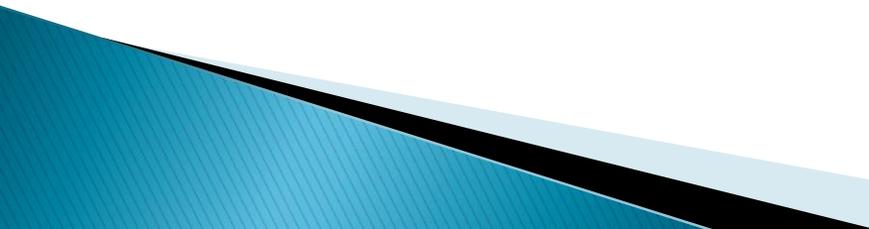
3. Professional workforce...

3. Most countries say they want a 'professional' workforce

Professionals, e.g.:

- belong to a professional body,
- keep up with latest research in their fields and often contribute to this, and
- make their own informed judgments

Mentors in their various roles support Ts in becoming professionals.



Conditions for Effective Mentoring

- ▶ Generally supportive environment
- ▶ Provision of opportunities for mentor preparation and development
- ▶ Mentors who have:
 - TIME
 - To mentor
 - For development of own new KA, KH, & KT
 - RECOGNITION

Benefits of Mentoring

(i) For systems/schools:

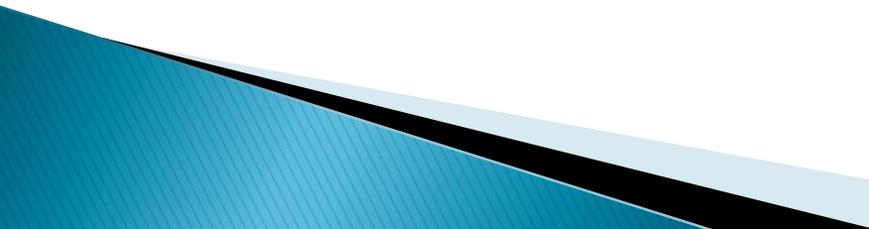
- ▶ retention
- ▶ increased genuine collegiality
- ▶ Improved student learning

(ii) For mentees:

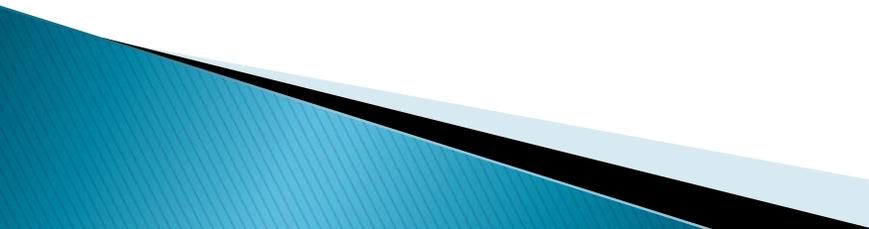
- ▶ Support in both educational and personal senses

(iii) For mentors:

- ▶ new challenges, increased self-esteem – and learning

(research support for (iii), but not yet enough for (i) & (ii)!)


Summary messages ...

- ▶ 1. Talking in binaries? Might they overlap, or need something 'between', or need to be extended, added to, or even replaced?
 - ▶ 2. Learn to learn daily from your own and others' experiences – & use a mentor to support you in this, if available...
 - ▶ 3. Find/take up opportunities to become a mentor
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Some References

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