

## **MA in Learning and Teaching**

**Student name:** Paula Philpott

**Dissertation title:** Teacher perceptions of the impact of peer mentoring on professional practice within a further education context.

**Supervisor:** Leo Casey

**Examiner I:** Meera Oke

**Examiner II:** Sheena Hyland

## Declaration

I certify that this assignment is my own work, except where indicated by referencing.

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## KEYWORDS

## ABSTRACT

Mentor

Teacher education

Practice

Teacher mentoring

Further Education

*This study examines teacher perceptions of the impact of peer mentoring on professional practice within a Further Education context. Interviews and surveys were carried out with teachers who have completed a peer mentoring programme within a Further Education, to identify the perceptions of the impact of mentoring on professional practice against four themes: job satisfaction and commitment to the profession, knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching, reflective practice and self-efficacy as well as competence,. The peer mentoring programme was set up in 2008 and over 400 teachers have completed the mentoring programme since then. A total of 33 teachers completed an online questionnaire, which focused on teacher perceptions of professional practice since completing a peer mentoring programme as well as their reflection on the overall mentoring experience. This was a mixed methods study, comprising both quantitative and qualitative elements including semi-structured interviews. A two-way ANOVA was used to examine if there are any significant differences between the perceptions of Generation X / Y teachers and those with or without a formal teaching qualification. Mentees perceived benefits in knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching and reflective practice because of the mentored support they received. Limitations of the study and future implications are discussed.*

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background and context

Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) define teacher professional development (PD) as “activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher” (OECD, 2009, p. 49). This definition is broadly drawn and yet the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2009) notes that in some countries one in four teachers do not engage in professional development. There is an interplay, they suggest, between factors such as a positive climate, teaching beliefs, cooperation and collaboration between teachers and the PD activities, which shape the learning environment. The report also notes that targeted teacher professional development is an important lever towards improvement. However, much of the literature on teacher professional learning focuses on the school sector and there is a paucity of empirical research within a Further Education context which evaluates the impact of specific approaches on professional practice.

In discussions on teacher professional learning, much centres around an outcome-based model as part of a whole school or college improvement agenda. Often the complaint of teachers is that training is simply passive learning, not relevant to their role and not tailored to their or their learners’ needs. Teachers want meaningful professional development activities which draw on the facilitator’s expertise and which allow time to master and integrate the new strategies into practise. However, this leads to questions such as:

- What role does disposition have on whether an employee engages with the learning opportunities they have been given?
- Do various profiles of teachers engage differently with professional development?
- How does an employee’s view of self, their attributes, social roles and goals influence their perceptions of the impact of professional development?

In recent years, mentoring as a professional development approach has become more prevalent in pre-service teacher education (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Price & Chen, 2003). Research appears to validate mentoring as an effective strategy to support novice teachers (Conway, Hansen, Schulz, Stimson, & Wozniak-Reese, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 1996; West, 2002). However, there is a need to also evaluate the impact on experienced teachers. There seems to be no compelling reason to argue that a mentee who is at the start of their teaching career will need more support than one at the end (Le Maistre et al., 2006).

Schools and universities are firmly embedded in the psyche of the general population, as are the progression pathways between them. Central to government thinking, universities and schools influence much of education policy. Lord Lingfield in his report, *Professionalism in Further Education*, comments that the Further Education (FE) sector is perceived as: “in between schools and Higher Education (HE), apparently lacking a distinct and unique personality of its own” (Lingfield, 2012, p. 3). However, the distinctive and role that Further Education plays within Northern Ireland, contributing to the rebalancing of the economy and the agenda of social inclusion, is less understood by those with limited experience of it. The FE sector has needed to be flexible, solution focused and responsive to the needs of businesses, changing curriculum, as well as learners. FE teachers are dual professionals; both vocational experts and professional teachers. This dual professionalism raises a number of questions regarding the efficacy of continuous professional development (CPD) and optimising evidence based approaches (Guskey, 2003). A strategic approach to CPD at the highest level is essential. The tension between lecturers in FE being professional / technical experts as well expert teachers, is noted as a challenge in much of the published literature. Their CPD needs are diverse. Curriculum changes responding to business needs impact on emerging CPD needs throughout the year. Creating learning agility is an important aspect of workforce development in any sector and never more so than in FE. Hence the need for this research to focus on the perceived impact of peer mentoring amongst FE teachers, as there is a paucity of quantitative research in this area. Due to the distinct nature of FE, these teachers may or may not already have a teaching qualification (S. H. Fletcher & Barrett, 2004; Hanson & Moir, 2008) and one cannot assume that older FE teachers have a teaching qualification. Within Further Education, teacher profiles vary. Teachers coming into FE may come from industry bringing with them business and industrial experience. They may or may not have a teaching qualification. Full time, part time and casual part time FE teachers work in conjunction with industry to facilitate agile business needs. The average age of FE teachers has risen. However, there is little published research on the profile of teachers within further education. Hence the focus of this study will look at those who do and do not have a teaching qualification as well as the age profile of the teachers. In categorising teachers by their age profile, the researcher has looked at generational labels. Two of the most studied generations are Generation X (born 1965-1983) and Generation Y (1984- 2002) (Biggs, 2007). Studies have shown that for these generational profiles there are crucial differences in their aspirations and values. Companies have started to consider the issues around training Generation X and Y. Professional development programmes are being adapted to meet the needs of these demographic groups (Parry, 2014). The values, communication styles and life experiences of these demographic groups differ and hence their training needs may also vary. If demographic groups have different values then their teacher beliefs and values differ, changing their perception of the

impact of mentoring on professional practice based on generational profile. The research question and sub-objectives are stated below and a more detailed discussion and rationale provided in each section.

### *1.1.2. Research question*

#### **Research question:**

How do Further Education teachers perceive the impact of peer mentoring on their professional practice?

#### **Sub-objectives**

The review of the current research has prompted the proposal of the following research questions.

1. Do perceptions of the impact of mentoring on professional practice, differ for diff teachers?
2. Do perceptions of the impact of mentoring on professional practice, differ for mentees with and without a teaching qualification at level 7?
3. Are there any correlations between the two teaching profiles regarding their perceptions of the impact of mentoring on professional practice?

### *1.1.3. Approaches and focus of teacher professional development*

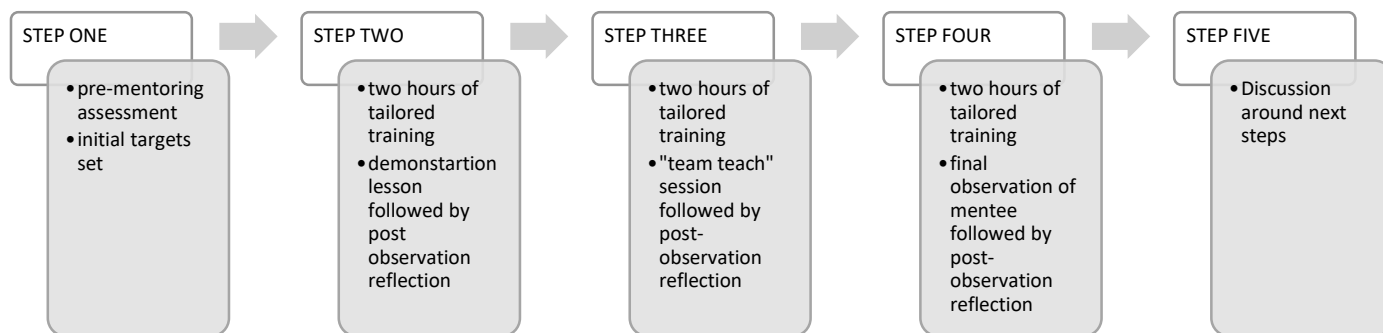
In the middle of the last century, research on teaching focused on teacher attributes, linking these with performance and effective practice. This was followed towards the end of the 20th century by a move towards teacher evaluation. With the development of classroom observation, teaching research looked at what constituted effective teacher behaviour, attempting to find connections between it and students' skills development. By the 1980s researchers had begun to look at teaching models and practices that enhance learning. This started a trend towards instructionally focused professional development for teachers which was primarily teacher rather than student-centred. With a changing economic climate there was a need to develop the wider transversal skills of learners: critical thinking, problem solving and collaborative learning. Hence, what was deemed to constitute effective practice shifted from how teachers teach to how students learn. This shift from a behaviourist perspective to one that focuses on cognitive learning theory has led to a greater understanding of the social context of learning and an expanded view of learning and teaching. Studies by Biggs (1978) reported the difference between deep and surface learning with deep learning linked to higher quality learning outcomes. Approaches to learning were thought of as being relational and therefore learners would engage better if tasks were not simply about memorisation and recall of information. This has ramifications not simply for the classroom but also for teacher CPD. In the last twenty years, researchers have contributed to the knowledge of what defines effective teacher professional development. Staff development in the 21st century has broadened to include collaborative CPD activities which provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on practice, draw on the expertise of others, alongside

time and support to integrate these new strategies into current practice. The challenge of designing meaningful CPD for intergenerational workplaces has led to greater emphasis on adaptive learning opportunities. There is a need to make CPD relevant to the employee as well as creating a format that will engage and inform, enhancing skills and knowledge and impacting attitudes and behaviours. This contrasts with professional development (PD) activities that are mass needs-based, passive and external. The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland's report 'School-Based Professional Development', notes that professional development programmes are "performance-orientated and often consist of bursts of professional development activities, with little or no follow-up support to ensure impact and secure sustainability" (Galanouli, 2010, p. 8). This report also notes the need for teachers to be active participants in their learning, yet this is not their experience for many teachers. Starkey, Yates, Meyer, Hall, Taylor, Stevens and Toia (2009) concur that teacher professional development which enables networking and adaptive personalised learning alongside facilitator expertise, has a more positive impact. There is a greater emphasis than ever before on creating a collaborative culture of professional inquiry. Every profession has a language around professional practice and facilitated conversations allow opportunities to debate, question and interrogate new ideas before integrating them into practice (Danielson, 2011). This concurs with Nilsson (2014) who notes that where professional development is collaborative rather than instructionally focused, more successful professional development outcomes result. Therefore, does mentoring which elevates dialogue around professional practice and encourages teachers to 'audit' their practice, have a positive impact in the classroom? Variables across the range of mentoring programmes have made objective assessment of the effectiveness of mentoring as a professional learning approach difficult (Okereke & Naim, 2001).

#### *1.1.4. Mentoring model*

The teachers in this study took part in a peer mentoring programme that has been in place since 2008. It was designed around the Japanese lesson study model and is tailored to the FE sector and its needs. More than 400 FE staff have completed the peer mentoring programme. The programme included six hours of tailored training, three classroom sessions and post observation reflection as part of the professional discussions. Teachers could self-refer to the mentoring programme through their line manager. Line managers could also nominate staff for mentoring. The length of the mentoring depended on the pace the mentee wished to progress through it and took between approximately 2-6 months.





*Figure 1 Five step mentoring model*

The mentoring followed the GROW model (Goal, Reality, Opportunities and What next) developed by Sir John Whitmore (Whitmore, 2010). The programme was designed to enable mentees to tailor their professional development around their perceived training needs.

### 1.2. Generational Profile

There is little published information on the profile of teachers within the Further Education sector. As already noted, the age profile of teachers in this sector is changing. Demographers indicate that generational cohorts may share similar cultural and economic experiences as well as have comparable outlooks and values. Does this mean that they also will interpret mentoring through their own distinct lens? Research appears to imply a basis for generational characteristics, where one generation view and interpret the world in slightly different way, but there is also an argument that these merely reflect commonalities present amongst a larger group of people (Young, 2009). The implications of these characteristics may impact the workplace (Johnson & Lopes, 2008). Differences between Generation X (born 1965-1983) and Generation Y (1984- 2002) (Biggs, 2007) may change their perception of and engagement with PD. Therefore, this study sought to compare the perceived impact for each demographic group to determine if there was any correlation between the profile of the mentee and their perception of the mentoring programme. For example do younger Generation Y mentees perceive the mentoring has had a greater impact on their professional practice? Research findings in this area may impact how professional development can be adapted to consider generational influences.

### 1.3. Teaching profile

The maxim that the quality of an education system cannot rise above the quality of its teachers, reiterates the central role that teachers have in the development of learner skills. Teacher education is at the heart of any education system. Ensuring teachers have the skills, knowledge and attributes required to innovate and improve the learner experience, is the challenge when designing any PD approach. Innovation requires

teacher preparedness and this in part may be influenced by the relevance and impact of their teaching qualification as well as other teacher characteristics such as experience, subject knowledge, disposition and academic background. Qualifications for those teaching within Further Education have gone through a number of revisions in terms of regulatory status (Lucas & Unwin, 2009). For those entering the profession with no formal teaching qualification, in-service training programmes provide support.

Part-time teachers within FE, combine their professional career with teaching. This presents a challenge to ensure access to appropriate professional development support to develop their professional practice. Having or not having a teaching qualification may impact on a teacher's perceptions of a mentoring programme where their current professional practice is being challenged.

Barnett, (2003), noted that there is a relationship between teacher qualifications and program quality, in contrast to Buddin and Zamarro, (2009), whose research found that student achievement was not impacted by advanced degrees. This research will consider whether holding a teaching qualification impacts perceptions of the impact of mentoring on practice.

#### 1.4. Philosophical approach

A cross-sectional, mixed-method design, comprising both quantitative and qualitative data collection was used to identify teacher perceptions of mentoring and its impact on professional practice. This allowed both a breadth and depth of analysis. A two-way ANOVA was employed to determine any significant differences between the perceptions of Generation X / Y teachers and those with or without a teaching qualification. Ordinal data was collected through an online survey using a five-point Likert scale. Related constructs can be measured using more than 400 different instruments but almost all depend on the use of 'Likert-type' scales with varying numbers of choice points. The Likert scale has proved reliable over a wide variety of forms. It allows a bidimensional scale with a neutral mid-point. There is discussion in the literature regarding categorical naming associated with the Likert scale and the psychometric distance between categories. Appendix B shows the scale used in the survey for this study. Likert scales have the advantage that they allow for an expanded range of opinions beyond yes / no answers as well as no opinion at all. As this research employs a survey that was used in earlier studies, the same scale has been used here to facilitate comparison. The five-point scale enables determination of strength of agreement on one side of the scale and strength of disagreement on the other side as well as the option for a neutral response. A five point Likert scale may increase response rate and response quality along with reducing frustration amongst respondents (Babakus & Mangold, 1992). Additional questions captured the demographic information of the respondents. Using an interpretive epistemology to study the perceptions of the impact of mentoring, face to face interviews were undertaken and recorded. This required an interactive, more idiographic approach to enable a greater

understanding of the meaning and perception mentees placed on the mentoring. Although the accuracy of any interpretation may be relative, in conjunction with the statistical information gathered through the survey, it provided a narrative into the thinking behind the responses. This mixed methods approach enabled deeper insights into the problem. Research was from a naturalist rather than positivist perspective, as the success or failure of mentoring is dependent on the viewpoint of the individual. Primary data generated through interviews and surveys with mentees may be influenced by a range of factors including disposition, personal viewpoint, values and goals when coming onto the mentoring programme. The research used an interpretive constructivist viewpoint. The background, disposition and profile of mentees may mean their perception of the impact of mentoring has been filtered through distinct lenses. Those staff who have completed the mentoring will construct meaning to the mentoring, not merely based on their own interpretation, but also because of their shared understanding.

### 1.5. Summary

The challenge when designing effective PD for teachers remains to identify and implement an effective evidence based mentoring approach (Wasburn-Moses, 2010). There is however a paucity of quantitative research on the impact of mentoring and less still in the context of FE. Mentoring in teacher education is fairly new (beyond initial teacher training), although it has been well established in other fields. In recent years there has been an attempt to establish empirical evidence regarding what makes mentoring effective and the outcomes on professional practice. The changing complexities of work and organisational structures is driving the need to identify evidence-based approaches which develop learning agility. This research will be important in guiding priority-setting and decision making at an institutional and educational policy context regarding peer mentoring. This research seeks to consider unanswered questions about Generation X and Y's perceptions of the impact of peer mentoring, as well as whether a teaching qualification impacts perception, to identify any correlations, giving practical insights for those involved in strategic decision making in this area.

## 2. Teacher Professional Learning

The Department for Education in their consultation titled: *A world-class teaching profession*, noted “that teaching should be a learning profession” (Department for Education, 2014, p. 4). This is emphasised in high-performing systems where teachers take responsibility for their own personal and professional development (Department for Education, 2014; Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull, & Hunter, 2016). Providing opportunities for teachers to have access to ongoing, evidence driven, professional development to develop and enhance their skills, is essential. Teacher quality is an important lever when it comes to improving

student outcomes (Barber & Mourshed, 2007) and high-performing systems were those which took professional development inside the classroom. The turbulence of government policy has provided a challenging climate for the education sector. To improve teacher quality requires improvements in professional development. For example, in Shanghai teachers are required to visit and observe at least eight lessons by colleagues each term. The Japanese Lesson Study Model, used in adapted form with teachers in Hong Kong and Japan, builds capacity in lesson observation. For all high-performing systems professional learning is integral to their job role and guides priority-setting and decision making. It is not a “bolt on”, something that they do (or have done to them) three or four times a year. “In high-performing systems, evaluation and accountability are integral to the success of professional learning in schools.” (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 5). This firmly links professional development and evidence-based outcomes for learners.

The FE workforce has been declining over time at an average rate of around 3 percent per year in England (Frontier Economics, 2017). Overall, there is a 12 percent turnover rate is reported, which is higher than the school sector for the same period. This report also noted that data showed that 75 percent of all FE teachers hold a teaching qualification at level 5 or above in England, this compares to 91 percent in Northern Ireland (Department for the Economy, 2017). Whether a teacher has a teaching qualification or not, may impact their perceptions of the professional development approach being used.

Colleges in Northern Ireland like those in England, Scotland and Wales are facing swingeing cuts to their budgets, further emphasising the need for effective professional development which is evidence-based, and meets the needs of both teachers and learners. Research has shown that teacher attrition results in a sizeable number of new teachers abandoning the profession within the first five years of teaching (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Yet no initial teacher training programme can effectively prepare teachers for the landscape of education in the years after qualification. Teachers as a result may exit the profession due to the lack of support as they deal with the changes. Studies have shown that the number of teachers abandoning teaching in the first five years of appointment, can be reduced where teachers have positive mentoring relationships (Delaney, 2012). The level of support and the range of support options available has a direct impact on teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2012). Professional learning is central to job roles and not merely an add-on. It cannot simply be summarised as something undertaken during a few days each academic year and should be firmly linked to the learning experience of students. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on teacher policy noted that:

“Research on the characteristics of effective professional development indicates that teachers need to be very active agents in analysing their own practice in the light of professional standards, and their own students’ progress in the light of standards for student learning” (OECD, 2005, p. 10)

Improvement strategies must be explicitly anchored to professional development. In John Hattie's (2012) meta-analysis which ranked the impact of a variety of professional learning activities, feedback and formative assessment, ranked 10<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) found the greatest impact on professional practice came from activities which challenged teachers' beliefs about teaching and the ways in which students learn. These activities focused on the skills the teachers needed to improve the learner experience and outcomes. Teaching is a complex activity and teachers are required to make decisions based on their own belief system, responding to the learner needs and curriculum demands. Therefore Timperley et al. noted that it is important "to set up conditions that are responsive to the ways in which teachers learn" (2008, p. 6) and which shape the teachers' current practice. The integration of theory and practice is central to any professional development approach. Learning is not linear and teachers need to be able to revisit ideas and have opportunities to apply their emerging understanding in the context of their classroom practice, over time. Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 2014) assumes that for experiential learning to be fully effective, the learner must have the opportunity to actively plan and set objectives as part of the learning experience. Providing learners, with the opportunity to test out their learning is an important part of the learning cycle which is often missing in traditional staff development.

One approach to addressing this has been through teacher mentoring. Reports by the Department for Education and Skills (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) and also the Teacher Development Trust (Cordingley et al., 2015) have cited mentoring as an effective professional development tool to support subject pedagogy. The collaborative element of professional development where peer support is included, is seen to be a common feature of effective CPD (Cordingley et al., 2015). In the context of peer-based mentoring relationships, the challenge of intergenerational mentoring (mentoring across a range of age profiles) may impact on perceptions of its effectiveness. Each generation may have their own ideas of what constitutes effective staff development, shaped in part by the events that have moulded their collective characteristics such as economic, cultural, technological and political factors. Data on the perceived impact of mentoring from different generational profiles will indicate whether there are generational distinctions.

### 3. Literature review

#### 3.1. Further Education

With a plethora of unfamiliar qualifications: diplomas, certificates, extended diplomas, Higher Level Apprenticeships, Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and professional examinations, the FE sector appears confusing to the uninitiated. For so long FE was considered simply a vocational education provider and that may have contributed to the low status it has been held in historically

compared to school and university sectors. There are differences across Further Education in the United Kingdom (UK) in terms of education policy, learning contexts, funding and even qualification frameworks. FE as a label is limited at best. The general population lack an understanding of the breadth of its function and remit. Northern Ireland (NI) has six Regional Colleges, operating across 40 campuses and 400 outreach communities<sup>1</sup> and they are the main providers of professional and technical education and training in NI. FE has a central role in providing opportunities for learners to improve their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills. It also provides work-based learning programmes to upskill and reskill the population as well as opportunities for learners to progress to further study. In Northern Ireland, Further Education colleges offer provision from levels 1 -7 on the Qualification and Credit Framework to a wide range of learners with diverse needs and ambitions. These include Higher Education provision (HNCs, HNDs, Foundation Degrees, Higher Level Apprenticeships) and professional qualifications. Through school partnerships, the FE sector assists and supports the post-primary sector in delivering a broader range of technical and professional courses. The Further Education sector also has provision for Adult and Community Education. Lord (Lingfield, 2012) in his report on *Professionalism in Further Education* noted that the aims associated with Further Education could be summarised as:

- Remedial FE, redressing the shortcomings of schooling
- Community FE, offering lifelong learning opportunities to local people, with benefits to their health, longevity and wellbeing, as well as continuing education;
- Vocational FE, teaching occupational skills;
- Academic courses up to Level 3;
- Higher education studies.

(Lingfield, 2012, p. 2)

This perhaps gives a limited synopsis of what FE is and what it does, however it does not note the support given to business by Further Education staff as they bring new knowledge to help small to medium businesses innovate and grow.

The Further Education sector has been subject to a barrage of change and it looks likely that will continue to be a significant theme, with substantial reforms to Northern Ireland's professional and technical education and training system in response to new strategies such as: Apprenticeship Strategy and Generating our Success and the Strategy for Youth Training. The potential effects of Brexit and new funding models for Further Education bring fresh opportunities and challenges. It is anticipated that there will be a further push towards blended learning to enable flexible delivery models and allowing colleges to extend their traditional

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/universities-and-colleges-northern-ireland>

geographic catchments. A blend of educational approaches has always been evident within FE (before technology even came to the fore), with experiential learning, 'learning by participation', formative and summative feedback and real-world problem solving. However, due to the diversity of the sector it is difficult to formally define a vocational pedagogy framework. With apprenticeship reform there is the challenge to innovate, developing not only the technical skills needed but also the wider transversal skills that will enhance learners' employability. A recent report for the Department of Education (Greatbatch & Tate, 2018), on the FE sector in England, reviewing the evidence on teaching, leadership and governance in the FE sector, noted that teaching quality has largely been scrutinised through lesson observation, however, there is little evidence as to how this has improved the quality of the learner experience and learning outcomes. Traditionally lesson observations which monitor teacher quality within the FE sector in Northern Ireland have been carried out as part of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), inspections by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) or as part of staff appraisal (completed once every two years). These do not provide sufficient opportunities for staff to identify how their current professional practice can be further strengthened to improve the learner experience and learning outcomes. O'Leary's research (2013) carried out with ten colleges, noted that staff perceived observation as a performance management or quality assurance tool, rather than supporting their professional development. Undoubtedly there are examples of outstanding teaching practice, but few opportunities within FE to hear about these and less still to observe them 'live'. There is little published research about how any these established observation processes have improved quality (Lahiff, 2014). Lucas, Nasta and Rogers, (2012) in their research, investigated initial teacher training courses and the support teachers were offered in their vocational specialism. Few offered support (two out of twenty) for teachers to develop the skills related to their vocational area or specific teaching context (for example, community education, work-based learning or students with specific learning needs). The application of the generic principles was left to each teacher to translate into the context of their own vocational area.

Since 2013, there has been a mandatory requirement for all new permanent lecturers who do not hold a recognised teaching qualification to complete an in-service qualification. This is a two-year postgraduate certificate in education in further education and must be completed within three years of appointment. Northern Ireland is ahead of other regions of the United Kingdom, because it requires and supports all permanent Further Education teachers to obtain a recognised teaching qualification. Due to the dynamic nature of Further Education provision, colleges in Northern Ireland use the vocational and technical expertise of part time lecturers who are not required to hold a teaching qualification. Parity and fluidity between academic and vocational routes into teaching benefit learners, education providers and society, as we prepare students for the economy of the future. Colleges may appoint part-time lecturers on a temporary basis to deliver specialist courses of short duration. There is currently no requirement for

lecturers teaching part-time, less than eight hours per week, to have attained or be in the process of attaining, the PGCE (FE). The Success through Skills Strategy – Transforming Futures (Department for Employment and Learning, 2011) and more recently the Further Education (FE) Means Success Strategy (Department for Employment and Learning, 2016) maintain the focus on the important dual role that the FE sector has in supporting economic development and social inclusion. One of the nine key themes contained within the FE means Success strategy is that of Excellence. There is a policy commitment to embed high quality teaching through a range of initiatives, including the continual professional development of lecturing staff. However, teacher attrition within Further Education, may undermine the establishment of a culture of excellence and so initiatives that attract, support and ultimately seek to retain high quality teachers with FE are central to any discussion on teacher professional learning. Supporting teachers irrespective of contract or age profile is at the heart of any CPD model. Analysis of the Staff Individualised Records data based on 176 English providers in 2015-16 (Frontier Economics, 2017), found that more than half of staff in the FE sector are over the age of 45, indeed 40 percent of teaching staff are aged 50 or older. Although the workforce within FE is continuously changing, there is an upward trend in the proportion of teachers aged 45 and over. Therefore, the FE Sector needs to prepare both new and experienced teachers for the challenge of working in such a dynamic environment.

Like other professionals, teachers and trainers in Further Education (FE) need to keep a record of their continuous professional development (CPD). In Northern Ireland, FE teachers must complete 36 hours CPD a year. CPD undertaken by FE teachers varies, reflecting the diverse nature of the sector, the range of subject areas, a wide age range, professional background and qualifications as well as different lengths of service. FE teachers are dual professionals; they are both vocational experts and professional teachers. The dual professionalism of FE teachers is a distinguishing factor. This dual professionalism raises a number of questions regarding the efficacy of CPD and optimising evidence based approaches (Guskey, 2003). The tension between lecturers in FE being professional / technical experts as well expert teachers, is noted as a challenge in much of the published literature. Teachers are committed to continuing to develop their dual role to ensure the best possible outcomes for their learners. This however means that their CPD needs are diverse. Curriculum changes impact on emerging CPD needs throughout the year. Creating learning agility is an important aspect of workforce development in any sector and never more so than in FE.

Revised professional standards for teachers and trainers were developed by the Education and Training Foundation (Education and Training Foundation, 2014) to provide a national reference point that organisations could use. These standards consider three domains:

- Professional values and attributes,
- Professional knowledge and understanding, and



- Professional skills.

This provides a benchmark to the sector of what constitutes effective practice. Following the publication of *A world-class teaching profession* it noted that, “Teachers do not, at present, have ready access to a clear evidence base on “what works” to allow them to make informed decisions about their own professional development” (Department for Education, 2014, p. 10). An umbrella review of the evidence of effective teacher professional development undertaken by CUREE, UCL, IOE and Durham University (Cordingley et al., 2015), found that there is a need to clarify which aspects of teacher professional development are successful in ensuring teachers adapt current practice, adopting and embedding new practice in the classroom.

Teacher attrition and apprehensions about the quality of learning and teachers’ skills, have plagued education in recent years. The Department for Education’s school workforce statistics for England (Department for Education, 2017), show that between 2013 and 2016 the number of qualified teachers entering the profession reduced to 10.1 percent. However, the teacher leavers’ rate, increased between 2013 and 2016 to 9.9 percent. This equates to almost 43,000 teachers in England who left the sector in 2016. Although the number of teachers retiring has reduced the number of out of service teachers leaving the profession in England has risen between 2011 and 2016 by 38 percent. In 2016, the percentage of teachers leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement was 82 percent. The percentage of teachers remaining in post, one year after qualifying and taking up their first post, has remained static at 87 percent. This drops to 74 percent after three years. Teachers in service ten years after qualifying, drops to 60 percent and after twenty years of service drops to 48 percent. A report by the School Teachers Review Body (STRB) in July 2017, noted that teacher salaries remain considerably lower than other graduate professions (Rice, 2017) and that teacher recruitment and retention continue to present a number of challenges because of the rising number of teachers leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement. The report noted that the cumulative impact has resulted in schools not being able to recruit and retain high quality teachers. A briefing paper produced for the House of Commons Library (Foster, 2018) outlined a number of initiatives aimed at improving the retention of existing teachers and these included “[enhancing] teachers’ continuing professional development and career development opportunities in order to improve the attractiveness of teaching as a profession” (Foster, 2018, p. 4). Much of the cited research refers only to the school sector. Further Education (FE) has a central role in the provision of professional and technical education and training in Northern Ireland and further research is needed into effective CPD approaches to support staff in their role as dual professionals.

### 3.2. Active collaboration

Educational institutions can be hesitant to welcome innovation that does not have evidence supporting their effectiveness in terms of observable changes. A quality education system is inextricably linked to the quality of teaching and by extension the teachers (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Staff training is a fundamental tool for developing teacher competence and developing the attitudes, skills and knowledge for the role. Teachers have a pivotal role as change agents (Hattie, 2012) , but more than that, the OECD report *Teachers Matter: attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers* noted that teachers need to be “active agents in analysing their own practice” (OECD, 2005, p. 10).

Professional development opportunities are often driven at an organisational level and by organisational priorities, rather than determined by individual needs. The *Teaching, Leadership and Governance in Further Education Research Report* (2018) highlighted that the impact of different forms of continuous professional development (CPD) remains unknown. Yet, it notes that CPD initiatives that allow colleagues to collaborate, remain amongst teachers most valued approaches. This concurs with the OECD’s review of teachers ((OECD, 2005), which noted:

Effective professional development is on-going, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up support. Successful programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students, and encourage the development of teachers’ learning communities. There is growing interest in developing schools as learning organisations, and in ways for teachers to share their expertise and experience more systematically. (OECD, 2005, p. 90)

Guskey (2003), also noted that effective professional development is characterised by the promotion of collegiality and collaborative exchange. It is important to conceptualise learning as something that is an ongoing, integral part of workplace learning for teachers (Lucas & Unwin, 2009). In a workplace setting, knowledge may be seen as being created in a social space or community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this context there is interdependency between the teacher and their world, activity, cognition and learning. There is a socially negotiated nature of meaning. Vygotsky (1979) recognised that every level of human activity had two processes at work, internalisation and externalisation. He proposed that complex mental functions begin with a human interaction between people. This prompts movement in thinking in the "zone of proximal development" because of the interaction between individuals. Vygotsky linked the cognitive process with the mechanism of social interaction. Murray, Ma and Mazur’s research (2009), considered teachers working collaboratively in partnership, enabling mutual gain. Their model incorporated a “community of practice” where social relationships are formed, and through which, learning takes place (Wenger, 2011). This type of community enables teachers to renegotiate the meaning of effective teaching.

John Hattie (2012), noted that there is little evidence that improving teacher education colleges has improved the overall quality of teaching. This would mean that intervention needs to come at individual or organisational level. This aligned with the earlier research of Levin (2008), who noted that school improvement lay in improving the everyday practice of teachers and this necessitated a collaborative approach for success. Coherence and alignment through partnership was at the heart of Levin's strategy within the Ontario education system, recognising, as Hattie (2012) noted, that teachers are the agents of change. Unfortunately as Gage (2009) commented, even the information technology revolution failed to change the structural aspects of the classroom and the professional demands made upon teachers have stilted the change in practice which Hattie had noted was necessary.

### 3.3. Mentoring definition

The term "mentor" has been part of the vernacular from early descriptions by Homer in the Iliad, and thousands of years later the term continues to have common parlance. A wide variation in the working definitions of mentoring has meant that the concept has been undervalued. Loose definitions, due in part to the diversity of relationships in the range of mentoring models, have meant that research outcomes appear conflicting (Dawson, 2014; Renton, 2010). Dawson (2014) argues the need for clarity in any mentoring definition, as without an operational definition, comparisons between qualitative and quantitative research have little meaning. Mentoring in a business context has been well defined, however mentoring in an education context, lacks consensus. Wasburn-Moses (2010) defined mentoring as the relationship between a novice and expert, which develops the mentee's skills. Mullen (2005) defined mentoring by its two approaches: technical and alternative. Technical mentoring, as defined by Mullen, has similarities to Wasburn-Moses' (2010) definition where the mentor has the authoritative knowledge. In contrast, alternative mentoring, may include peer mentoring models where the skills of the mentor are a step ahead. However, Koballa, Bradbury and Deaton (2008) defined different styles of mentoring by their methodologies: mentoring as personal support, mentoring as apprenticeship and mentoring as co-learning. Broad definitions of mentoring may make assumptions about the level of expertise of the mentor (Dawson, 2014). Mentors may have varying degrees of expertise and experience and still positively impact the mentee's skills and knowledge. In this the emphasis in mentoring, shifts from skills acquisition, to addressing the learning needs in specific teaching contexts (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

The extant research on teacher mentoring focuses on initial teacher education and induction. Indeed, sometimes the terms induction and mentoring are used interchangeably. There is little agreement as to its conceptualisation among educators and researchers even in this narrower context. In recent years teacher mentoring programmes have become more prevalent as part of teacher induction (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Strong, 2009). There is a trend towards practice based professional

development, where there is a shared commitment by teachers to support one another's development and a clear link to existing practice, as well as noting aspirations for their students (Cordingley et al., 2015; Education and Training Foundation, 2014). Further research is needed on the impact of mentoring on teacher professional learning especially within the FE sector. Mentoring approaches have become more prevalent in pre-service teacher education in recent years (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). Limited research exists regarding mentoring as part of in-service development. The skills-based approach to mentoring dominant in initial teacher education, but may be mechanistic, narrowly focusing on skill acquisition. This focus on the "how to" of teaching resonates with the research of Bradbury and Koballa (2007), who note that quick fix solutions do not encourage the teacher to consider the 'why' of their teaching approach, nor lead to reformed practice. Although no single definition of mentoring arises from the literature, many define an apprentice style model, where the mentor is the experienced practitioner (Conley, Eugenia, & Scull, 1995; Fowler & O'Gorman, 2005; McCormack & West, 2006). Indeed, Fairbanks, Freedman and Kahn, refer to mentoring as: "complex social interactions that mentor teachers and student teachers construct and negotiate for a variety of professional purposes and in response to the contextual factors they encounter" (Fairbanks, Freedman, & Kahn, 2000, p. 103). Roberts however notes that there is no "single animal called mentoring" (Roberts, 2000, p. 162), rather a group of specific tasks associated with the process. Going further, Smith defines mentoring as a relationship where support is offered, but which also "challenges them productively so that progress is made" (Smith, 2007, p. 277).

There is much debate amongst academics and practitioners about the similarities and differences between coaching and mentoring. In some literature the terms are used interchangeably. Mentoring normally infers a hierarchical relationship between the parties and peer mentoring implies "a consultation between teachers of equal status" (Conley et al., 1995). Both mentoring and coaching can be viewed as "dyadic partnerships" (Garvey, Stokes, & Megginson, 2017, p. 22). This resonates with Vygotsky (1979) who stated that the cognitive process was affected through the mechanism of social interaction. One possible contrast between coaching and mentoring is that between output and process similar to Roberts' thinking (2000). Clutterbuck defines mentoring as an approach that "addresses performance in some aspect of an individual's work or life; while mentoring is more often associated with much broader, holistic development and with career progress" (Clutterbuck, 2008, p. 9). Coaching can be time constrained and target focused, whereas mentoring tends to be protracted and process focussed. The context in which someone is mentored or coached is suggested to hold the key to which definition should be applied (Garvey et al., 2017). Bokeno summarised that, "while mentoring practices can and sometimes do include coaching behaviors, the latter does not necessarily include the former" (Bokeno, 2008, p. 5). For this research, mentoring is defined as a dyadic partnership using an apprentice style model, where the mentor is an experienced practitioner. The mentor and mentee engage in a dialogic process, using reflection and feedback to tailor the training to the

mentee. The mentoring not only focused on skill development but also considered the mentee's thinking about teaching clarifying what good teaching is. This mentoring programme integrated theory and practice through training and classroom sessions. Although, similar to coaching, the mentoring for this research was built around agreed targets, these were however able to be changed and amended following each training and classroom session. This allowed an adaptive approach responding to the needs of the mentee and the student feedback after each classroom session. Therefore, as part of the research, teachers (mentees) will be asked questions around the theme of knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching and the perceived impact of the mentoring programme on their skills and knowledge in this area.

### 3.4. Feedback

Vygotsky (1979) considered that the cognitive process was affected through the mechanism of social interaction and this links with the work of Hattie and Timperley (2007) who noted the influence of feedback on learning and achievement. Showers and Joyce (1996) explained that long term retention of new strategies was greater following coaching. The model they developed emphasised concerns around the use of verbal feedback as part of the coaching process, because it could be perceived to be evaluative. Hence the mentoring model used in this research, includes post observation feedback following each of the three classroom sessions. Murray, Ma and Mazur (2009) noted however, that feedback is an important dialogic process within mentoring. The influence of emotional and professional support in any evaluation process was also noted by Israel, Kamman, McCray, and Sindelar (2014). However, mentoring must extend beyond simply administrative or emotional support to be effective. The belief that mentoring can achieve positive outcomes is in contrast to the "gap between the intent of the mentoring policy and practices in schools" (Wasburn-Moses, 2010, p. 3). Israel et al., (2014), in their study of early career special education teachers, noted that mentor feedback specifically addressed the observed weakness of the mentees and recommendations were made regarding possible instructional strategies and classroom procedures. The emotional support within the mentoring programme, was perceived by these new teachers as an important component of the professional support they were being given. Therefore, as part of the research, teachers (mentees) will be asked questions around the theme of reflective practice and the perceived impact of the mentoring programme on their skills and knowledge in this area.

### 3.5. New teacher induction and mentoring

New teacher induction is central to addressing the professional challenges that teachers face and mentoring support can be an effective tool in any induction process. Induction programmes should "improve the performance and retention of beginning teachers, that is, to both enhance and prevent the loss of teachers'

human capital, with the ultimate aim of improving the growth and learning of students” (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 203). Sometimes the concepts of induction and mentoring are used synonymously (Israel et al., 2014) because of the perceived emotional and professional support being offered. Much of the research on teacher mentoring is focused around early career support for teachers (Clark & Byrnes, 2012; L. D. Hobson, Harris, Buckner-Manley, & Smith, 2012; Kardos & Johnson, 2010; E. R. Smith & Evans, 2008) in specific curriculum areas (Appleton, 2008; Delaney, 2012; Kissau & King, 2015). For a new teacher settling into their role within the culture and structure of an organisation, (Feiman-Nemser, 2003) notes the influence that colleagues have in shaping the teacher’s professional practice. This builds on Dewey (2003) where educative experiences are designed to lead to growth and richer subsequent experiences. Professional development programmes, Starkey et al. highlighted (2009), are not simply the domain of early career teachers, but for teachers at all stages of their career. Therefore, as part of the research, teachers (mentees) will be asked questions around the themes of self-efficacy and competence as well as job satisfaction and commitment to the profession.

### 3.6. Mentoring framework and characteristics

Researchers offer little agreement as to what constitutes effective professional development design (Starkey et al., 2009), however perhaps the most important stakeholder in the design of any professional development activities and their evaluation, are the learners (in this case teachers) and their voices need to have more prominence (Eisner, 2017). (Dawson, 2014) notes that mentoring frameworks differ in the experience and age of the mentor. In peer assisted teaching schemes, as described by Dawson, the mentor is a step ahead of the mentee in terms of expertise, but is recognised as an excellent teacher. Similarly, (Waddell & Dunn, 2005) consider that the mentor-mentee experience as one between practitioners of similar experience, while (Kissau & King, 2015) matched teachers of similar age and experience in peer mentoring roles. In contrast, where there is an imbalance of power associated with some expert-novice relationships, there may be a negative impact on trust relationships. Murray et al. (2009) concluded from their research that there needs to be a clear definition regarding the roles of the observer and observee which include a challenge dimension. Similarly Dawson emphasises that a mentoring framework needs to have the roles and responsibilities clearly defined: “assumptions about mentoring need to be made clear by specifying who is involved and what exactly they do” (Dawson, 2014, p. 141). Mathur, Gehrke and Kim (2013) also noted that participants need to be clear regarding the purpose, structure and goals of the mentoring programme. Unidirectional knowledge sharing has little impact on the mentor and can limit the impact on the mentee (Delaney, 2012). However, this can be overcome where the framework encourages confidentiality and where the mentoring is facilitative and collaborative, thus encouraging mentor–mentee interaction and reflection. Mentoring narrowly focused on teaching skills, misses the chance to tailor a

programme to the individual teacher's strengths and areas of development. It should provide opportunities to clarify what good teaching is, problem solve and provide ongoing support (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). This links to the earlier discussion on the socially negotiated nature of meaning and the need for collaboration. The context of the mentoring relationship is paramount (Fairbanks et al., 2000). Similarly, Feiman-Nemser notes that "teachers need to learn to teach in a particular context" (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p. 26). This is important in an FE context where there are less opportunities for teachers to discuss their vocational and professional roles. Perhaps, in part, because of the autonomous nature of teaching, most mentoring occurs, in educational contexts, outside of the classroom (Eble and Gaillet, 2008; Mullen, 2005). This research has focused on mentoring programmes that include opportunities to embed the training in classroom practice and where feedback is an essential component. Hobson et al., (2012) noted that mentoring programmes should be tailored to the actual needs of the teachers. This concurs with (Pawan & Fan, 2014) which noted that professional development should be situated in the specific circumstances of the teacher. Variables across the range of mentoring programmes have made objective assessment of the effectiveness of mentoring as a professional learning approach difficult (Okereke & Naim, 2001). However, Nora and Crisp (Nora & Crisp, 2007) and Kardos and Johnson (2010) emphasised the need to identify the key elements of effective mentoring which lead to changed practice, better decision making and improved student outcomes. More recently Delaney (2012) posed questions about the effect of a range of variables on the mentor-mentee relationship and subsequently on changed practice. Although the research appears to validate mentoring as an effective strategy to support novice teachers (Conway et al., 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 1996; West, 2002), further research is needed to evaluate the impact on experienced teachers (Fletcher & Barrett, 2004; Hanson & Moir, 2008). Indeed, Devos (2010) noted that mentoring is important as a means of promoting effective teaching. Bouquillon, Sosik, and Lee (2005) conclude that the nature of the mentoring relationship is dynamic, changing over time. There is a paucity of quantitative research on the impact of mentoring in the Further Education sector, hence the focus of this research.

### 3.7. Impact on mentees

Murray, Ma, and Mazur, (2009) noted the positive impact of peer mentoring and the opportunity it offered staff to collaborate, share ideas, techniques and strategies, as well as being able to receive feedback from their mentor. A strong relationships exists between effective mentoring and teachers' ratings of their own abilities. (Rockoff, 2008) highlighted from his research how mentoring impacted the performance of mentees. The theoretical basis of Murray et al.'s (2009) research was based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) applied in a peer mentoring context. Referencing the identified characteristics of the "collaborative ZPD", Murray et al. (2009) linked these to the characteristics of successful peer mentoring



where teachers reflect and challenge each other's thinking following a classroom observation causing a change in attitude or behaviour. In Israel et al.'s research (2014), the emotional support given to new teachers through the mentoring programme, was perceived as an important component of the overall professional support they received. These new teachers valued both the professional and emotional supports provided by their mentors. Similarly, Kissau & King (2015) found that the mentoring relationship extended beyond the mentoring programme itself and created a transformative, professional environment. Pawan and Fan's (2014) research noted that the reflective nature of the process, not only enabled a focus on learning and teaching, which other researchers have commented on, but also the bigger picture of the context and constraints that teachers face. However, in their research, with an albeit small sample size, Mathur et al. (2013) reported less positive feedback regarding the mentoring experiences of special education teachers. Similar research undertaken by Israel et al. (2014), with special education teachers did not concur with Mathur et al.. The benefits of using a more knowledgeable colleague in supporting teachers as they seek to develop their learning and teaching practice, is documented by various researchers. Mentoring enables tailored training, where mentees are more likely to disclose the challenges they are facing in their teaching practice (Murray et al., 2009) and discuss strategies for improvement (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2010). Mentoring which includes lesson observation, provides time for teachers to observe others, thus they learn how to conduct a lesson observation (Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull and Hunter, 2016). Jensen et al. (2016) note that in Hong Kong, using a model adapted from the Japanese Lesson study model, teachers' capacity in lesson observation is built. Mentoring programmes can help create greater cohesion and collegiality within a school through improved relationships (Hobson et al., 2009). These mentoring relationships are important in helping create the environment which positively impacts the teacher's classroom practice (Fletcher & Strong, 2009). Zan and Donegan-Ritter (2014,) noted that in observations of mentored teachers, there were improvements in four areas: behaviour management, productivity, language modelling and quality of feedback. The areas arising from the research have been incorporated into the survey and interview design. This will be used to determine whether they are identified outcomes of the mentoring programme undertaken with FE teachers. Other themes not identified as having a significant impact on the mentee's professional practice have been included to see if this mentoring approach and the profile of the mentees differs from the published research.

### 3.8. Impact on students

Some research suggests a correlation between the mentored support given to new teachers and the engagement of their students (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Although a range of researchers and practitioners suggest a link between the experiences that teachers provide and the impact on student learning, there is



also research which counters this claim. (Murray et al., 2009) undertook research to address the perceived gap in empirical data to underpin the claims being made around peer mentoring / coaching and found no evidence to support mentoring improving student achievement. (Rockoff, 2008) concurred with Murray et al. (2009) noting weaker evidence to support any direct link between the quality of mentoring and student achievement. However, he did note that a possible relationship exists between the number of mentoring hours and student achievement. Similarly, Zan and Donegan-Ritter (2014) noted that there was only a modest improvement in teacher–child interactions in their study of Head Start classrooms. Analysis of pre and post test scores for students in classes where teachers were mentored, showed no statistically significant effect (Murray et al., 2009). In contrast Onchwari & Keengwe (2010), stated that students with mentored teachers, showed significant improvement over students with non-mentored teachers. They also noted that these benefits were perceived even three years after the mentoring and recommended ongoing mentoring to sustain these learning and teaching gains.

### 3.9. Obstacles to success

Hobson, Harris, Buckner-Manley, and Smith, (2012) noted that the obstacles to the success of pre-service and novice teachers were poor mentors and role models, lack of mentoring and ineffective time management. The barriers to effective mentoring, identified by Murray et al. (2009) were scheduling issues between the observer and observee and the geographical distance between them. This may have been unique to the rural community where the research was undertaken. The findings of their research stated that these barriers may affect staffs' commitment to the programme and the collaborative opportunities afforded by the mentoring process. Mullen (2011) concurs and emphasises the importance of time being set aside for mentoring and the need for school management to facilitate the scheduling of contact and access to resources. Similarly, Kissau and King (Kissau & King, 2015) also noted that there were logistical challenges when scheduling observations and face to face meetings with teachers and this might impact on mentoring success. Greene (2004) found that coaching / mentoring was a positive experience for teachers and this was reinforced through the shared planning experience. Greene also noted the need for consistency between what a mentor said and what they did. The expertise of the mentor did not limit the experience of the mentee, as the collaboration enabled the mentor and mentee to evaluate and modify current practice. The main factors hindering the adoption of new instructional practice were identified by Greene as time, scheduling constraints and teacher resistance. Graves (2010) noted that a challenge with mentoring was managing mentee expectations. When these were met, the mentoring relationships were viewed positively. However, the converse was also true, and where mentee expectations were not met (even if the expectations were unrealistic) the mentoring was viewed negatively. Time and lack of mentee-mentor communication were viewed as barriers by a number of researchers and practitioners (Graves, 2010;

Greene, 2004; Kissau & King, 2015; Murray et al., 2009). Research suggests however that there can be a conflict between the needs of the mentored teacher and the needs of the learners in a mentoring programme (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). To overcome these obstacles:

1. Time - the mentoring model used in this research allows six hours to be recorded against the CPD record of mentees.
2. Communication – a dialogic process has been built into the mentoring framework to ensure that mentees and mentors have time to reflect and get feedback, feeding forward into the next steps of the training.
3. Expectations – mentees meet the mentor before coming onto the programme and the initial mentoring objectives are set at this stage, ensuring expectations are clear from the outset.

### 3.10. Generational Profiles

Advances in educational technology and innovation around technological pedagogies have given teachers a new tool kit with which to support and enhance the learning environment. These advances have disrupted the traditional role of the teacher in relation to student learning and left teachers to navigate this, often in a vacuum, without the opportunity to work collaboratively to shape this new landscape with those more digitally enabled colleagues to guide and advise. This may have led to teachers leaving the profession. There is no compelling reason to argue that a mentee who is at the start of their teaching career will need more support than one at the end (Cathrine Le Maistre et al., 2006), with the ever changing digital landscape. Generations are simply defined as age cohorts who share similar formative experiences and hence develop values, memories and attitudes that are characteristic of their generation and which affect their modes of thought and behaviour (Gilleard, 2004; Underwood, 2007). Theorists argue that a generational identity is formed in the early adult years and these impact and shape attitudes and behaviours in later life (Joshi, Dencker, & Franz, 2011). Howe and Strauss defined a generation as a “society-wide peer group, born over a period roughly the same length as the passage from youth to adulthood” (Howe & Strauss, 2009, p. 40). Research appears to imply a basis for generational characteristics, where one generation view and interpret the world in slightly different way, but there is also an argument that these merely reflect commonalities present amongst a larger group of people (Young, 2009). Research has centred on the implications of these characteristics and the potential impact on workplaces today (Johnson & Lopes, 2008). Hence, the focus of this study will look at those Generation X and Y teachers, to compare and contrast their perceptions of mentoring and its impact. The mentoring model used in this research included technology integration. Although much has been made in the press about the differences and challenges of intergenerational working, there is little academic research on the impact on workplace dynamics and practice. The research infers that, through the lens of generational groupings, there would be differences evident in the work

domain (Dencker, Joshi, & Martocchio, 2008; Joshi et al., 2011). However, Lyons & Kuron (2014) note that evidence on intergenerational differences in terms of personality, values and attitudes, is limited to the descriptive. Research in this area, they attest, remains fragmented and contradictory making broad generalisations nearly impossible. Becton, Walker and Jones-Farmer (2014) concur with Lyons and Kuron (2014), noting that current empirical research provides mixed evidence for generational differences. Wong, Gardiner, Lang and Coulon (2008) noted that there was little meaningful difference between generational groups. However Lu & Gursoy (2016), in their research which looked at professional efficacy and employee satisfaction, found that there were differences between generational groups, in terms of job satisfaction and turnover intention. Staff training for a multigenerational workforce poses challenges. Connecting the research with evidence-based strategies and approaches can be perplexing given the inconsistency of the literature regarding the impact on work attitudes and behaviours (Sullivan, Forret, Carraher, & Mainiero, 2009). The specific generational labels vary in much of the research, as do their classified start and end dates, but there is a general descriptive consensus regarding the range of values, behaviours and preferences that may characterise each cohort. Generational differences have been widely discussed, particularly in relation to millennials and their use of technology in education and training. Oh & Reeves (2014) discuss the impact of generational differences and the use of educational technology on the student population. Although as already noted there is disparity in the literature regarding the specific birth years for each generational cohort, the years being used in this study are:

1. Generation X born between 1965-1983
2. Generation Y born between 1984- 2002

(S. Biggs, 2007)

There is an argument that some of the differences evidenced in the literature, may be due to age related effects. Despite these challenges this research will focus on establishing if there are any generational differences that arise following the completion of a mentoring programme in relation to their perceptions of its impact on professional practice.

The average age of college staff has increased, but with more intergenerational teaching teams, Generation Y are having a greater influence on the curriculum and learning environment. Generation X and Y employees represent the core of the workforce in Further Education, yet there is a lack of empirical literature that examines the impact of professional learning on Generation X and Generation Y employees. Generation X make up the majority of teachers as well as those in a leadership role within an organisation. In contrast Generation Y are mainly early career teachers. Research in this area should help to inform as to efficacy of mentoring as a professional development strategy to support professional practice for Generation X and Y

teachers, helping to manage generational differences and identify unifying themes. The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (2010), recommended, that Generation X have opportunities to work interdisciplinary, input in formal mentoring programmes and support opportunities for formal and informal interactions. The meaning that employees attach to their work role may be based on their generational profile and may shape and influence their thinking on programmes such as mentoring. Wiedmer, (2015) notes that Generation X prefer to be given direction and receive appropriate feedback. In contrast Weidmer notes that Generation Y are typically more digitally literate. They prefer electronic forms of communication rather than face-to-face. Achievement and team focused, Generation Ys also value feedback and guidance, and Wiedmer (2015) emphasises their adaptability and ability to learn independently. Research proposes that Generation X and Y differ in personality, which may impact their work attitudes and other performance (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001). However, Lovely and Buffum (2007), highlight how these differences may become a strength in an intergenerational education context. Thus, the focus of this mixed methods study will investigate the mentee's perceptions of the impact of mentoring on professional practice within Further Education.

### 3.11. Teaching profiles

This proposed study seeks to make a critical comparison between mentee's perceptions of the impact of the mentoring on professional practice, whilst considering qualifications and generational profile. Although the research appears to validate mentoring as strategy to support for novice teachers (Conway et al., 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 1996; West, 2002), further research is needed to evaluate the impact on experienced teachers (Fletcher & Barrett, 2004; Hanson & Moir, 2008). In many countries there is a perception that teaching quality and teaching qualification are linked, This becomes the target in quality improvement programmes. However, does a lack of teaching qualifications impact teacher preparedness for professional development programmes? There is a paucity of literature in this area and the evidence from different studies is contradictory. Qualifications for those teaching with Further Education have gone through a number of revisions in terms of regulatory status (Lucas & Unwin, 2009). In service programmes such as mentoring programmes are provided for part time teaching staff who have no formal teaching qualification. Barnett, (2003), noted that there is a relationship between teacher qualifications and program quality, in contrast to Buddin and Zamarro, (2009), whose research found that student achievement was not impacted by advanced degrees. There is a need to critically assess the scope and merit of teacher mentoring and the perceived impact of it by those with and without a formal teaching qualification within the FE sector.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Research Philosophy and methodology

The participants contributing to the research were recruited from one college in the further education (FE) sector. The research was designed around a cross-sectional, mixed-method design, comprising both quantitative and qualitative elements. This will allow both a breadth and depth of analysis, highlighting any correlations. The design is divided into 2 distinct elements:

(1) a questionnaire-based survey using random sampling (see appendix B).

(2) semi-structured interviews, capturing qualitative information about respondents' perceptions pertaining to the mentoring. The participants will be selected from a purposive sample based on demographic information related to teacher qualification: Level 7 teaching qualification equivalent to PGCE / no equivalent Level 7 teaching qualification and teacher profile: Generation X / Generation Y (see appendix A).

Ordinal data was collected which included the demographic information related to the respondents. Using an interpretivist epistemology, this research acknowledges the differences between participants in their role as social actors. It will be from a naturalist rather than positivist perspective, as the success or failure of mentoring is dependent on the perspective of the individual. Primary data generated through the interviews and surveys with mentees may be influenced by a range of factors such as their disposition, personal viewpoint, values and goals in coming onto the mentoring programme. Positivists endeavour to broadly generalise findings but in taking the naturalist approach the researcher is aware that themes may arise from the mentees' perspectives, but that these may differ depending on the context, organisation, profile and disposition of the mentee. Thus, in looking at the literature available in this area, the researcher has sought to look for anomalies, unanswered questions, gaps and interesting topics related to peer mentoring and its impact on professional practice. Although the statistical evidence from the survey will be presented, this will be reviewed in conjunction with the interviews. In the interview process the researcher has been cautious not to impose their expectations on the interviewees and has sought to be careful that they do not interpret what they see and hear through the filter of their own expectations. Clarification, if necessary, was given during interviews to ensure that interviewees understood the questions asked. In terms of ontology, which is concerned with the nature of reality and can be defined as the study of being (Blaikie, 2009), this research has taken a subjectivist view. Individuals impacted by mentoring as a CPD activity are also situated in their specific context, which impacts how they perceive the actions of the mentor and the value of mentoring to them. Mentees' perception of mentoring can be as a consequence of their own view of their self, their attributes, social roles and goals. These different views may affect their actions and their interaction with

their mentor. This research has sought to understand the subjective reality of the mentees to make sense of their responses regarding their perceptions of the mentoring. An inductive approach was used to determine mentee perceptions of the impact of mentoring against four themes and make sense of the data collected. Identifying and understanding the relationship between the profile of the mentee and their perception of the mentoring reveals their underlying view of the world. In the mentee survey (see Appendix A), they were all asked the same questions that measured perceptions of mentees' practice following mentoring as well as capturing demographic information. These approaches supplement each other, and this was useful because of the complexity of the area being studied. Using an interpretive constructivist view, the researcher is aware that because of the background, disposition and profile of mentees they will interpret their perception of mentoring through their distinct lenses. Those staff who have completed the mentoring will construct and attach meaning to the mentoring not merely based on their own interpretation but also because of their shared understanding. Through the supplementary survey questions and interviews the researcher has sought to elicit the interviewees' views of their work, role and the mentoring experience. Cultural lenses of both participants in the research and the researcher have been considered. The researcher has sought to examine any bias that may arise from their own assumptions.

Based on the review of the literature in this area, a survey was identified that measured the view of mentees regarding the impact of mentoring on teaching practice (Mathur et al., 2013). This survey was distributed to Further Education teachers who completed a formal mentoring programme in 2014 – 2018, collecting relevant data. These teachers took part in a peer mentoring programme that has been in place since 2008.

A random sample of the respondents formed the basis of the research. Mentees were sent a link to the online survey. Respondents were asked to participate in research designed to evaluate their mentoring experiences and to examine the degree to which mentoring had affected their view of their own classroom practice. The mentoring questionnaire is a closed-response questionnaire, using primarily categorical and ordinal data, allowing for a quantitative analysis. Participants were able to select a response to each survey item from a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was created by Mathur, Gehrke and Kim (2013), originally modified from earlier teacher surveys which measured the perceptions of mentees' practice following mentoring (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Whitaker, 2000). The survey includes 12 questions overall, split into four thematic blocks arising from the literature on the effects of mentoring to improve (Bandura, 1997; Berliner, 1988; Moir & Bloom, 2003; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007) (see appendix B):

**Theme 1:** Job satisfaction and commitment to the profession

**Theme 2:** Knowledge and understanding on learning and teaching

**Theme 3:** Reflective practice

#### **Theme 4: Self-efficacy and competence**

The original survey was amended reducing the number of survey items from 18 to 12. Some items from the original survey were not relevant in the context of this study. Mathur et al. (Mathur et al., 2013) reports that the original survey by Whitaker (Whitaker, 2000) had test-retest reliability correlation coefficients ranging from 0.74 to 0.93.

The questionnaire has three main sections.

**Section (A)** biographical information (7 questions)

**Section (B)** information on perceptions of the degree to which having a mentor has improved mentee abilities across four themes (12 questions)

**Section (C)** information regarding the mentoring process (3 questions)

The survey items asked mentees to rate how they perceive the mentoring had impacted various aspects of their teaching practice. The scale ranged from no impact (1) to having a sizeable impact (5). A two-way ANOVA was used that examined if there was any significant difference between Generation X / Y and level of teaching qualification and analysed in SPSS. A two-way ANOVA allowed a comparison of the mean differences between the two groups. In the final section of the survey, mentees were asked to provide further information on the mentoring process. The respondents noted how many times they have been mentored, their satisfaction with the mentoring process and how they came to be on the mentoring programme (see appendix B).

The second stage of the data collection process took the form of semi-structured interviews (see appendix A) with individual respondents (n=2) and complemented the quantitative results by providing more detailed information respondents' perceptions of the mentoring programme they have participated in. Two of the respondents to the online survey were approached as part of a purposeful sample to take part in a semi-structured interview. Mentees were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality. They were free to withdraw at any stage. In the semi-structured interview, participants were asked to answer a number of open-ended questions (responses transcribed and available in appendices D and E). Frequency counts were used as part of the data reduction for coding and categorising responses. Through this, themes were identified, emergent understanding tested and alternative explanations sought.

An interview protocol consisting of 8 questions (see appendix A) was designed and used the data generated from the online survey to inform the types of questions that would be relevant. Alongside demographic questions, open ended questions were asked which encouraged the interviewees to expand on the answers given in the online survey. Follow up questions were used to clarify responses or to elicit further information. The interviews were recorded and the data transcribed verbatim and analysed through content analysis (see

appendix D and E). Data has been anonymised in the published research and information on the ethical management and use of data was highlighted to participants. The interviewees' responses were initially coded and analysed using an iterative approach which involved in process self-correction (Morse et al., 2002). Using the methods suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2003) to identify themes in the data, coding centred on word repetition, key words, unmarked text and missing text was noted as well as the connectors and transitions between discursive elements of the conversation. Following the qualitative data analysis guidelines outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), a descriptive coding method was used to analyse the data. The data was broken down into first level concepts and then into second level categories.

Mentee A was an experienced Generation X teacher with a level 7 teaching qualification and Mentee B was a new Generation Y teacher, with no Level 7 teaching qualification at the time of completing the mentoring. Participants were informed of the nature of the research through email and in the initial section of the survey and asked to consent before contributing. Participation was voluntary, and the email was sent out several times to ensure as many staff as possible responded to the survey. An example of the consent form is available in Appendix C. Initially a descriptive analysis of the data (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values) was undertaken. Correlational analysis was completed to see if there was any association between the two controlled variables (Pearson and Spearman) and if there were any possible connections between the variables. The variables being the perceptions of mentoring of Generation X/Y teachers and that of those with / without a teaching qualification. For the statistical analysis, SPSS was used.

#### 4.2. Ethical considerations

Although the researcher is a manager within an FE college, the surveys were not sent to any direct line employees. Data has since been anonymised. Interviewees and survey respondents were required to give a declaration of informed consent and this was freely given, after having received a comprehensive overview of the study. Participants were told of the research interests and given the opportunity to choose whether to proceed. Information has been stored in secure, encrypted cloud storage. Audio files were saved automatically to a secure area in the cloud where log in information will be required to access the files. It was not possible to anonymise personal information in the audio recordings; however, audio file transcripts have been anonymised. Data will be destroyed 5 years after conclusion of the research. The researcher will have the responsibility for the data generated by the research.



Participants have been allocated unique IDs where interview or survey data is discussed. Furthermore, any information that may reveal the identity of the participant e.g. specific job role has been excluded from discussion. Permission from the participating FE College was sought.

Interviews were carried out in a meeting room, on the College campus, which allowed some privacy whilst being in a public space. Having been briefed on the research project and the methods being used, participants had the opportunity to discuss the project with the researcher before confirming consent. Confirmed consent was through a participant consent form.

Any information published based on the questionnaire and interview data has been reported as descriptive summaries and does not contain any information that would enable the identification of the respondent.

### 4.3. Data Analysis and results

#### 4.3.1. Survey results

Demographic information on the mentee was captured as part of the survey and this is displayed in Tables 1 and 2. The tables show that the sample was representative in terms of generational profile and teaching qualification.

*Table 1: Demographics of Generation X and Generation Y mentees participating in the peer mentoring programme*

Demographic		Generation X teacher	Generation Y teacher	College
Response rate		23(70%)	10(30%)	33(100%)
Gender	Male	6(26%)	8(80%)	15(45%)
	Female	17(74%)	2(20%)	18(55%)
Teaching experience	< 10 years	12(52%)	7(70%)	14(42%)
	≥ 10 years	11(48%)	3(30%)	19(58%)
Employment status	Full time or associate	19(83%)	7(70%)	26(79%)
	Part time	4(17%)	3(30%)	7(21%)

33 mentees completed the survey and participated in the study without remuneration. 15(45%) of respondents were male and 18(55%) were female. 18(55%) of the respondents had a teaching qualification

at level 7 or above and 15(45%) did not. Teaching experience varied across the respondents. 14(42%) taught 10 years or more and 19 (58%) had been teaching for less than 10 years.

Comparing those born before 1982 (Generation X) 23(70%) were born before 1982 and 10(30%) were born in or after 1982 (Generation Y). 32 of the 33 respondents found the mentoring a positive (52%) or extremely positive experience (45%). One respondent remained neutral. In the survey 97% respondents noted the mentoring as a positive or extremely positive experience, with 70% of the respondents having completed it more than once, despite only 27% being self-referrals to the mentoring (48% had been asked to do it by their head of school and the rest (24%) were being mentored as new teachers).

*Table 2: Demographics of mentees participating in the peer mentoring programme with a teaching qualification at level 7 or above (equivalent to a PGCE)*

Demographic		Teaching qualification at level 7 or above	No teaching qualification at level 7 or above	College
Response rate		18(55%)	15(45%)	33(100%)
Gender	Male	5(28%)	10(67%)	15(45%)
	Female	13(72%)	5(33%)	18(55%)
Teaching experience	< 10 years	10(56%)	11(73%)	14(42%)
	≥ 10 years	8(44%)	4(27%)	19(58%)
Employment status	Full time or associate	17(94%)	9(60%)	26(79%)
	Part time	1(1%)	6(40%)	(21%)

The research question guiding this study was: How do Further Education teachers perceive the impact of peer mentoring on their professional practice? The data showed there was no significant main effect for the generational groups or teacher profile for any of the items in the survey (Table 4). This means that the perceptions of the impact of mentoring on professional practice is not different for different teacher profiles. For example, the impact of mentoring that is perceived by those with a teaching qualification is the similar to those without a teaching qualification. Therefore, it would not be anticipated that mentoring would have a greater impact on specific generational profiles or teachers with/without teacher qualification at level 7. The means and standard deviations for professional practice as a function of the two factors (generational group and teaching qualification) are presented in Table 3. Responses for Generation X and Y teachers were

similar for each of the 12 survey items. The one area where their answers appeared to differ, although only marginally was in regard to the impact of peer mentoring on job satisfaction. 61% of Generation X teachers noted that the mentoring impacted their job satisfaction (scoring a 4 or 5 where 5 denotes major impact) whereas only 50% of Generation Y rated it similarly. A similar comparison between those with and without a teaching qualification at level 7, does not indicate any difference. However, the sample sizes are more pronounced between the generational profiles ( $n=23$  and  $n=10$ ) than they are for the teacher qualification profile ( $n=18$  and  $n=15$ ) and so it would not be possible to make any inferences from this.

Table 3: Generation X and Generation Y lecturers, full-time and associate lecturers, part-time lecturing staff, means and standard deviations for each survey item

ITEM	Teaching qualification				Lecturer profile			
	Teaching qualification at level 7 or above		No teaching qualification at level 7 or above		Generation X		Generation Y	
	n =18		n = 15		n = 23		n =10	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Confidence in teaching	3.94	.802	3.67	1.113	3.91	.900	3.60	1.075
2. Ability to reflect	3.56	.784	3.67	1.113	3.61	.941	3.60	.966
3. Knowledge of student learning	4.00	.686	4.07	.799	4.09	.668	3.90	.876
4. Awareness of evidence-based practices	3.67	.907	3.80	.941	3.70	.974	3.80	.789
5. Job satisfaction	3.83	.924	3.67	1.047	3.91	.900	3.40	1.075
6. Ability to engage and motivate students	3.94	.873	3.80	1.014	3.96	.825	3.70	1.160
7. Intention to remain in teaching	3.22	1.114	3.67	1.345	3.48	1.344	3.30	.949
8. Lesson planning and implementation	4.00	.686	4.00	1.069	3.96	.928	4.10	.738
9. Listening skills	3.06	.998	3.53	1.060	3.35	1.071	3.10	.994
10. Knowledge of new teaching techniques	4.33	.840	4.47	.640	4.39	.783	4.40	.699
11. Ability to examine and adjust instruction	3.78	.943	3.87	.990	3.91	.848	3.60	1.174

<b>12. Classroom Management</b>	3.22	1.309	3.53	1.187	3.48	1.201	3.10	1.370
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The results of the two-way ANOVA for each area of professional practice noted in the survey, did not show any significant main effect. As discussed earlier this would indicate that the perceived impact of mentoring has no significant difference for different profiles of teachers. Therefore, it would not be anticipated that mentoring would have a greater impact on specific generational profiles or teachers with/without teacher qualification at level 7.

*Table 4: Tests of between subjects effects*

ITEM	Teaching qualification		Lecturer profile		Teaching qualification and lecturer profile	
	F	P value	F	P value	F	P value
Confidence in teaching	1.279	.267	.733	.399	1.140	.295
Ability to reflect	.007	.933	.007	.933	1.022	.320
Knowledge of student learning	.638	.431	.401	.531	1.820	.188
Awareness of evidence-based practices	.003	.957	.052	.822	1.151	.292
Job satisfaction	.792	.381	2.077	.160	1.726	.199
Ability to engage and motivate students	.526	.474	.526	.474	.882	.355
Intention to remain in teaching	.336	.566	.232	.634	1.009	.323
Lesson planning and implementation	.032	.859	.162	.690	.162	.690

<b>Listening skills</b>	1.070	.309	.526	.474	.283	.599
<b>Knowledge of new teaching techniques</b>	.105	.748	.000	.990	.105	.748
<b>Ability to examine and adjust instruction</b>	.042	.838	.747	.394	.042	.838
<b>Classroom Management</b>	.704	.408	.652	.426	.157	.695

#### 4.3.2. Survey results

The interviews were coded and the major categories and associated concepts identified (see table 5 below). The transcriptions of the interviews can be found in appendices D and E.

Table 5: Major categories of impact of peer mentoring

Major Categories from interviews	Associated concepts
Job satisfaction and commitment to the profession	<i>Confidence in teaching, time to collaborate, supportive environment, responsibility and accomplishment, intention to remain in teaching</i>
Knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching	<i>Lesson planning and implementation, blended learning, student centered learning, self-efficacy of learners, knowledge of new teaching techniques, pedagogical and professional knowledge, skills and competencies</i>
Reflective practice	<i>Ability to reflect, ability to examine and adjust instruction</i>
Self-efficacy and confidence	<i>Confidence to learn independently, confidence in use of technology, confidence in design of blended learning, pedagogical strategies</i>
Mentored support	<i>Peer learning, flexible approaches, tailored CPD, mentor's skills and attitude, listening skills</i>

#### Reflective practice and feedback

Coding the interview data revealed the emphasis that the mentored teachers, placed on the dyadic nature of the mentoring, noting the importance of being to reflect on the lessons together, for example Mentee A noted:

Chatting over afterwards was good because when [my mentor] was able to see me use it, or see my students or how they responded to it, it was good then to have that discussion where we could say “well next time we could” or “this might be an idea” or “oh I have seen something that you could use on that”.

Mentee B also noted:

I think as well, the classroom, and evaluating how the classroom went, was very very helpful, and just generally the support of talking to someone else and maybe asking questions of someone who wasn't necessarily in my department and who might have a different approach to how things are done.

I feel that we benefit when it's something that we can sort of play with and create and discuss and we're maybe not the best at listening sometimes, we kind of always think that we have the best idea, but it's that listening and getting that feedback and then being able to adapt it and change it is really exciting.

Mentee B also commented on how the mentoring made them think more about their teaching:

I think the strengths, probably for me the big strength was having that time with another lecturer to ask questions that maybe I could think about....it was someone who had dedicated time to spend with me to allow me to ask those questions. And also just kind of discussed with them about different things that I maybe hadn't considered, or wanted to know about how students react, you know, is this usual if students react a certain way.

Feedback as part of the reflection was an essential element of the mentoring and interviewees discussed the positive impact this had, "The reflection was good... I found the give and take of a discussion and simple questions then really did make you think about it that bit more" (Mentee A). Improved reflective practice skills was not noted in the survey responses.

### **Self-efficacy and confidence**

Both interviews and survey responses noted the impact of mentoring in improved confidence in teaching. The feedback they received helped alleviate some of the stress associated with having appraisers in the classroom (not the mentors). Mentee A commented on this noting:

I get uptight when somebody's in the classroom... On the other hand, that was, I think, very helpful then when I had the appraiser coming in...because you sort of go "well, I can do this and I've got that feedback" and there's been somebody else in the classroom that has said you're doing OK, so it gives you that wee bit more confidence that no one's going to tap you on the shoulder and say you shouldn't be here.

Both interviewees noted the increased confidence that the mentoring gave them: "It made me an awful lot more confident to use different things" (Mentee A)

I did find that process very useful, as I said, partially for the confidence it gave me, looking at ... the things that I had done right and the things that I needed to improve on, but it also, whenever I looked at the way that I had delivered part of the class, and my mentor had delivered her part of the class, I kind of was able to see how I can push that a bit further and kind of use those other tools. (Mentee B)

And also it was confidence building as well, whenever you're in the classroom and they say "that was really good... I liked what you did there", that kind of helped me, as quite a new teacher, to



understand that maybe I was doing certain things right, maybe there were certain things that I needed help with, but generally I was on the right track. So that was very helpful. (Mentee B)

### **Mentored support**

The mentees noted the importance of the role of the mentor and the classroom sessions. The dyadic relationship between mentor and mentee enabled greater reflection and an open positive rapport. The skills and attributes of the mentor that positively impacted the mentee and which were commented on during interview, included, their teaching skills, experience and knowledge of current technologies and learning and teaching approaches. They appreciated the time that was given to reflect together on their lessons: “I think the strengths, probably for me the big strength was having that time with another lecturer to ask questions that maybe I could think about ... it was someone who had dedicated time to spend with me to allow me to ask those questions”. This flexible, tailored approach was commented on by the interviewees and contributed to their commitment to the programme. Mentoring can best be described as a “mutual non-evaluative relationship” (Mullen, 2005) and it is this exchange between mentor and mentee that is the platform for the programme: “discussing it with my mentor, and because she was teaching as well, it was sort of, “this is how I would use it”, and I thought, oh right, OK, well then I could use it in that way or we discussed and we came up with different ideas”. Mentors did not goal set but facilitated a dialogue where the mentee set the professional development outcomes they wanted from the training. This was noted by the interviewees, who appreciated the individual approach which allowed them to tailor the sessions around their developmental needs. This emphasised the mentoring approach as distinct to a coaching approach. Mentee A noted, “Having somebody that I could ask at a certain time, and that was prepared to go with what I wanted rather than just, you know, “you’re learning this” or “you’re learning that”, so the fact that it was individualised probably as much as anything else [is what stood out]”. Mentee B, a new part time teacher, had identified that he would like additional support to identify ways in which he could check student understanding and confirm that learning had taken place. Indicators of strong enduring relationships were highlighted in the interviews between the mentor and mentee.

### **Knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching**

The interviews along with the surveys noted the importance that teachers placed on the impact it had on the students and classroom practice and on their understanding of student learning, “it was trying to assess that they were taking in the message I was trying to get across, and that was difficult to do before the mentoring scheme”. The knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching gained through the mentoring included areas such as lesson planning, building learner self-efficacy, questioning techniques, technological pedagogies, creating engagement, learner experience and assessment.

Mentee B commented on the way in which the mentoring facilitated support from a mentor not in his curriculum area who had a different approach which challenged his thinking. His professional development target was to be able to use a range of strategies to check student understanding.

I think the main thing that I've learnt, is being able to assess the learning that's taking place, and also identifying areas that need extra work. As well as that, getting that engagement with the student and getting them excited about the subject.

Both mentees provided compelling evidence that the mentoring was transformative, highlighting the impact the student / classroom focus had: "because [my mentor] was very aware of the stuff I was using, and seeing her use it as well, those ... demo lessons were very helpful", "it was this is how I use [technology], so you could very clearly see how you could use it, rather than getting something and then thinking well, what would I use it for?" (Mentee A). This in turn meant that the interviewees felt that their classroom practice had changed, although their focus was different. Mentee B noted creating learner engagement was a key outcome from the mentoring: "getting [the students] excited about the subject" and "getting [the students] engaged". Both the interview and survey noted the impact the mentoring had on their ability to adopt new teaching techniques.

Similar themes arose in the interviews as in the survey. Interviewees were able to explain in more detail the rationale behind their responses.

### **Sub-objectives**

The review of the current research has prompted the proposal of the following research questions.

- a) Do perceptions of the impact of mentoring on professional practice, differ for Generation X and Generation Y teachers?
- b) Do perceptions of the impact of mentoring on professional practice, differ for mentees with and without a teaching qualification at level 7?
- c) Are there any correlations between the two teaching profiles regarding their perceptions of the impact of mentoring on professional practice?

From the data, there was no significant difference between the perceptions of the impact of mentoring between the different generational groups and those teaching with and without a level 7 teaching qualification. Mentoring in education has been traditionally the domain of new teacher induction, and this study showed that neither demographic profile nor academic qualifications change how mentees perceive

the impact of mentoring. Research on induction and new teacher learning strongly supports the importance of mentoring new teacher (Conway et al., 2004; West, 2002), however the respondents in this study noted the positive impact of the mentoring and with 42% of the respondents having taught for more than 10 years this would imply the mentoring could support teachers at various stages of their career. However it was clear from the responses that, irrespective of generational profile or qualification, teachers considered the mentoring to have had a positive impact against the 12 item areas noted in the survey. Experience alone is not always educative for teachers (Feiman-Nemser and Buchman, 1985). This was emphasised in the interview where one mentee noted that “it’s that listening and getting that feedback and then being able to adapt it and change”. As peers, the mentees noted their shared background was helpful and this concurs with Driscoll et al. (2009) and Mullen and Forbes (2000). Whereas one of the mentees interviewed commented on the strength of being mentored by someone not from their vocational area as they brought their pedagogic expertise. Mentoring that impacted the knowledge / understanding of student learning was highly rated by respondents, similarly lesson planning and implementation. The student focused nature of the mentoring model centred round classroom practice, may account for this. As the mentoring incorporates training on technological pedagogies, it is unsurprising that the impact of mentoring on the mentee’s knowledge of new teaching techniques also scored highly across all respondents and this is back up through the discussions during the interviews. Feiman-Nemser (2001) noted that beginning teachers’ reflective practice will improve through mentoring. 42% of respondents were teaching more than 10 years. 79% of these teachers rated the impact that mentoring had on their ability to reflect as 4 or 5 in a 5 point Likert scale (where 5 denotes sizeable impact). Previous research (Kochan, 2002) has shown that successful reflection in mentoring requires three key elements should be present:

1. Purpose
2. Partnership Functioning
3. Progress

From the interviews it was clear that these elements were apparent and perhaps contributed to the impact the mentoring had on the mentee’s ability to reflect. The collegiality of the mentoring relationship as described by the interviewed mentees, provided the necessary bedrock for their professional learning.

#### 4.4. Limitations and further research

This study provided foundational understanding into the mentees’ perceptions of the impact of the mentoring programme on their professional practice. Random sampling based on those who responded to the initial email contact was used and the resulting sample group was small. However, the results have some

value to the participating College. Student learning and achievement in relation to the impact of mentoring as a teacher professional learning mechanism needs further study. The study focused on only one mentoring programme and it would be difficult to know, if in the context of a different approach, the same results would be achieved. The number of responses was relatively low and a further longitudinal study would be of benefit.

The research did not include the perceptions of the mentors. These staff were not the focus of the study, but their voice would add to the wider picture regarding the perceived impact of mentoring on teacher professional practice. Interviewing mentors would also enable them comment on their perceptions of the value added. Future research would benefit from looking at teacher perceptions prior to and following completion of the mentoring. This will allow for a more longitudinal study.

Teachers' professional practice impacts students. Identifying effective teacher professional learning which have positive outcomes in the classroom is critical. The findings from this study have implications for learning and development in Further Education, because when teachers engage positively with professional learning they are more likely to comment on job satisfaction and note the impact it is having on their professional practice. The FE workforce needs to be agile, responding to the changing needs of industry and curriculum. Tailored training such as mentoring, that impacts professional practice as noted in this study, is not only the domain on early teacher education. Continuous professional development which incorporates mentoring appears to benefit a range of demographic profiles, but further research would be needed on the characteristics of effective mentoring as there are many models and research in this area is currently conflicting.

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## 6. Appendix A

### Interview Questions for peer mentored teacher's view of their practice

#### **Demographic information:**

1. Employment Status: Are you currently:
  - a. Full time member of staff
  - b. An associate
  - c. A part time member of staff
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. Have you a teaching qualification equivalent to a PGCE?
4. What levels do you teach?
5. When did you take part in the peer mentoring programme? 14-15 or 15-16 or both years
6. Were you born before 1982?

#### **Perceptions of mentoring:**

1. Think about your experiences during the peer mentoring. What aspects were memorable to you?
  - a. What made these so memorable?
2. Which area of learning and teaching was your main focus during the mentoring?
3. Reflecting on the mentoring, what impact do you think it has had, (if any), on your teaching practice?
  - a. In what way?
  - b. Why do you think that is?
4. What kinds of support did you receive from your mentor or wish you had received?
5. Do you enjoy teaching? Where do you see yourself five years from now?
6. Can you tell me how you found the experience of reflecting after the classroom sessions with you mentor?
  - a. Is reflection something you do now?
7. Do you think taking part in the mentoring has made you a better teacher?
8. In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the peer mentoring program? How might it be improved?



# Mentoring survey

## SECTION A – demographic information

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
2. When were you born?
  - a. Born before 1982
  - b. Born in or after 1982
3. What is your employment status as a teacher?
  - a. Full time member of staff
  - b. An associate
  - c. A part time member of staff
4. Have you a teaching qualification equivalent to a PGCE?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. How long have you been teaching?
  - a. <10 years
  - b. ≥10 years
6. When did you take part in the peer-mentoring programme? 14-15 or 15-16 or both years
7. What levels do you teach? Select all that apply
  - a. Levels 0-3
  - b. Level 4-6

## SECTION B – views on teaching practice following mentored support

For each of the items listed below on a scale of one to five (1= no effect and 5 = significant effect), please identify the degree to which having a mentor has improved your:

1. Confidence in teaching
2. Ability to reflect
3. Knowledge of student learning
4. Awareness of evidence-based practices
5. Job satisfaction
6. Ability to engage and motivate students

7. Intention to remain in teaching
8. Lesson planning and implementation
9. Listening skills
10. Knowledge of new teaching techniques
11. Ability to examine and adjust instruction
12. Classroom management

#### SECTION C – mentoring process

1. How many times have you completed the peer-mentoring programme?
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3 or more times
2. How did you come to be on the mentoring programme?
  - a. I asked to do it
  - b. I was asked by my school to do it
  - c. I am on it because I am completing the Certificate in Teaching or the PGCE(FE)
3. Overall, how did you find the mentoring experience?
  - a. Extremely positive
  - b. Positive
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Negative
  - e. Extremely negative

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Study:** Teacher perceptions of the impact of peer mentoring programmes on professional practice within a further education context.

**Researcher:** Paula Philpott

**Introduction**

- You are being asked to be in a research study of Further Education teachers' views of practice
- You were selected as a possible participant because you completed the peer mentoring programme within the college in the last two years
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

**Purpose of Study**

- The purpose of the study is to see how generational profile and teaching qualification affect a teacher's view of professional practice after completing a peer mentoring programme.
- This research is part of Master's dissertation and may be presented as a paper at a conference or published in a journal.

**Description of the Study Procedures**

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: complete a short questionnaire / take part in a short recorded 30 minute interview

**Benefits of Being in the Study**

- Answering the survey / interview questions will provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your view of your teaching practice and also help inform and shape the nature of mentoring in the College.

**Confidentiality**

- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in an encrypted cloud storage which requires password access. Videos will be accessible only to the researcher and transcriber. They will only be used for educational purposes, and then will be erased/destroyed within two years of the completion of the research. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

#### **Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns**

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Paula Philpott at [x15008860@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x15008860@student.ncirl.ie) or by telephone at 02891276602 ext 8233

- I have read the information sheet about this study
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study
- I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions
- I have received enough information about this study
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study:
  - At any time (until such date as this will no longer be possible, which I have been told)
  - Without giving a reason for withdrawing
- I understand that my research data may be used for assignment submissions, pilot studies, as part of a paper or for a conference, in anonymous form
- I agree to take part in this study

Signed (participant)

Date

Name in block letters

Signature of researcher

Date

This project is supervised by: Leo Casey ([leo.casey@ncirl.ie](mailto:leo.casey@ncirl.ie) )

Researcher's contact details (including telephone number and e-mail address):

Paula Philpott

[X15008860@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:X15008860@student.ncirl.ie)

02891276602 ext 8233

## 9. Appendix D

### **Interview with Mentee B**

**Researcher:** I know you've already completed the online survey for me so thank you for that. Just to through a little bit of demographic information really, again just to set the scene for us. So you're a full time member of staff?

**Mentee A:** Full time, yes.

**Researcher:** And you've been teaching for how long?

**Mentee A:** 12 years.

**Researcher:** 12 years, thank you. And you have a teaching qualification, a PGCE don't you?

**Mentee A:** A PGCE, yes.

**Researcher:** And what levels do you teach?

**Mentee A:** At the minute only level three. In the past I've taught everything from level two to the HND.

**Researcher:** And what subject do you teach?

**Mentee A:** Sciences – biology and chemistry.

**Researcher:** And you took part in the mentoring program which years, can you remember? There was 14-15, 15-16 or both.

**Mentee A:** Probably both actually, I did it twice, but I didn't think they were two years running.

**Researcher:** Right, well sure I'll look up the information from your survey and double check against what's there. And because we may look at Gen-Y, Gen-X, can I ask were you born before 1982?

**Mentee A:** Yes.

**Researcher:** We're just trying to look at what the variables are that we're going to compare at this stage if that's OK. So that's us kind of going into the mentoring, so hopefully because you've done the survey, you'll know roughly the direction that we're looking at. When you think about your experiences during the mentoring, which aspects stand out to you? Which aspects were memorable to you?

**Mentee A:** Having somebody that I could ask at a certain time, and that was prepared to go with what I wanted rather than just, you know, "you're learning this" or "you're learning that", so the fact that it was individualised probably as much as anything else.

**Researcher:** And in terms of what you looked at, I know that that kind of was the process in terms of being able to maybe get a tailored approach, and the fact that it was bespoke to you and what you needed. In terms of what you looked at, can you remember some of the themes around the types of things that you looked at?

**Mentee A:** Well, I looked at Edmodo, and I quite liked it, but then the next time round we looked at the Office Mix, and it's just easier to use, so that was the one I went with more.

**Researcher:** So there was a focusing in on the technologies, and in terms of, in saying that these things were memorable to you, what made them memorable, why do they stick out? You said initially that the fact that you were asked, that you were able to ask what you wanted to do and it was a much more of a tailored approach, what made that, why did that stick out to you?

**Mentee A:** It's just because my mentor was able to show me exactly how I could use it in the classroom, to make life easier, or to get points across to the students, to provide more resources for them to use, in class or outside of class. It was really more than just this is how you use it, it was what ways can you apply it?

**Researcher:** I've sort of touched on this already, but which area of learning and teaching was your main focus? I know you've given me the technologies, so Edmodo would be an assessment technology, Office Mix would be a presentation technology, or maybe a reflective one depending on whether you're using it or the students but, which areas of learning and teaching were your main focuses?

**Mentee A:** Probably more for independent assessment, for the students themselves to use, and getting more of an idea of how to incorporate some of the technology, rather than just having a full class based on that, how to incorporate it in maybe a 10 minute session or as part of something else.

**Researcher:** So really you were looking more at how you embedded that technology into the scaffold of an overall lesson, so you know, we don't tend to use technology throughout the whole lesson, as you know, so that makes sense. Reflecting on the mentoring, what impact do you think it had, if any, on your teaching practice?

**Mentee A:** It made me an awful lot more confident to use different things, and I know that I can go back and torture my mentor every time I run into problems. It is good to know that there's somebody there, that if I do use something new, again they'll come alongside again.

**Researcher:** So you feel the main focus really has been on developing your confidence, in terms of the range of approaches that you were looking at, and those may be, I assume, the technology you've been using as well as how you put it into the scaffold of a lesson?

**Mentee A:** Yes, more the technology. I was happy enough with how, sort of, discussing it with my mentor, and because she was teaching as well, it was sort of, "this is how I would use it", and I thought, oh right, OK, well then I could use it in that way or we discussed and we came up with different ideas. It was mainly the confidence.

**Researcher:** In terms of the impact that it's had, obviously you've said that it gave you more confidence, what sort of aspects of the mentoring, why do you think that that did give you more confidence, I think you talked about the fact that your mentor was able to relate it to her experience, the fact that it's based in the classroom.

**Mentee A:** The fact that it was based in the classroom, so it wasn't a matter of this is this wonderful product, it was this is how I use it, so you could very clearly see how you could use it, rather than getting something and then thinking well, what would I use it for?

**Researcher:** What kinds of support did you receive from your mentor, or wish you had received?

**Mentee A:** The sort of support was, we were able to discuss things, whenever she was going to do an observed class, if I was having any problems I could just send her an email, and she was able to answer me, because she was very aware of the stuff I was using, and seeing her use it as well, those sort of demo lessons were very helpful.

**Researcher:** And I know that within the mentoring program it's broken down into a number of stages so just to remind you, there was the 6 hours of tailored training, that was interspersed, probably into 2 hour chunks or 1 hour chunks depending on your timetable, but you would have had the demo lesson, the team teaching, the final session where your mentor would have observed and kind of given you some feedback in terms of making sure that you were comfortable using it, and in terms of the overall teaching experience. So thinking about each of those component parts of the mentoring, did any of those specific parts you feel give you the additional support, you talked about the demo lesson, at the end of each lesson you would have had a chance to chat over what happened with the mentor, is there anything from that you remember?

**Mentee A:** Chatting over afterwards was good because when she was able to see me use it, or see my students or how they responded to it, it was good then to have that discussion where we could say "well next time we could" or "this might be an idea" or "oh I have seen something that you could use on that".

**Researcher:** Do you enjoy teaching, and where do you see yourself 5 years from now?

**Mentee A:** I do enjoy the teaching. I enjoy being in the classroom. I enjoy it when they get that breakthrough. I tend to use, because of the students I teach, I tend to use an awful lot of the technology for them outside the classroom, so blended learning once I introduce a topic, or for them to revise from, more because we have so much work to get through, whereas when I'm teaching the other level 3's, the BTEC's, I would incorporate an awful lot more into all of their classes, rather than just a few classes. So yes, probably still here in 5 years.

**Researcher:** Same job, same role do you think?

**Mentee A:** Probably, I don't think anybody would give me anything else!

**Researcher:** Well you have an additional part of your role at the moment. Can you tell me how you found the experience of reflecting after the classroom sessions with your mentor?

**Mentee A:** The reflection was good, I was quite glad it didn't have to be, sort of, very detailed afterwards, because I found the give and take of a discussion and simple questions then really did make you think about it that bit more, rather than "oh my goodness, it's something else I have to find time to fill in", so that was good.

**Researcher:** The reflection, is that something that you incorporate into your practice now?

**Mentee A:** Yes, whenever I use something new I would tend to scribble notes and how I would use it or ideas of this would be better or this student liked it, you tend to sort of find that one cohort will and one cohort won't, so it's using different things, and if an idea comes to you when you're using it or something is said, I would record that so that then I can change it.

**Researcher:** Thank you. Listen, it's purely subjective, so feel free to answer it honestly, but do you think that taking part in the mentoring has made you a better teacher?

**Mentee A:** Yes in terms of, I mean I've always been confident with my notes, that probably had to come down rather than go up, Power Point I used through uni, and I had no problems with that, but it does add an extra dimension, so yes I think it has, certainly for giving them resources that they can use in their own time, which I think is very very important for students doing exams.

**Researcher:** So their self-efficacy, or their ability to manage their learning in a more independent way, which might be key at a level 3 stage with that transition into higher education.

**Mentee A:** That and the fact also that I have evening classes that only see me once a week, so I think it works really well for them as an extra support, so all of the Power Points that I use in class are there, but then there are extra quizzes and Padlets and things like that for them to sort of feel that they can interact that bit more. That has definitely helped.

**Researcher:** And this is the final question, you'll be glad to hear that, but in your opinion, what are the strengths and the weaknesses of the peer mentoring program, and added into that maybe how might it be improved?

**Mentee A:** I think the strengths of it are very definitely that it's somebody you know, it's not somebody coming in from outside and it's somebody that you know is in the classroom, so they understand very much what you're needing, they understand the time constraints, and they're able to say to you, if you don't know, because if you're not out there looking at what's coming in and what's new and so forth, they can come to you with ideas and say this might be useful or that might and this is how I use it. Because it is peer, I think that is one of its strengths, that it is sort of peer teaching, really.

**Researcher:** I suppose just to clarify, if anyone listens to the recording, by peers we're talking about other teachers. Anything that you think, actually, with hindsight that wasn't an effective part of the program, or any weaknesses that you perceive from the mentoring?

**Mentee A:** The only weakness really, and this is probably a reflection of myself more than anything else was that I get uptight when somebody's in the classroom, so it's the sheer time to put together a class, because you spend so much more time on it because somebody else is going to look at it. On the other hand, that was, I think, very helpful then when I had the appraiser coming in, at sections, because you sort of go "well, I can do this and I've got that feedback" and there's been somebody else in the classroom that has said you're doing OK, so it gives you that wee bit more confidence that no one's going to tap you on the shoulder and say you shouldn't be here.

**Researcher:** So that confidential approach to peer mentoring then helps feed forward into your formal observations which will be with a manager who's appraising you or potentially the inspectorate, as we've had them this year already. Is there anything you would say about the mentoring in terms of how we could improve it?

**Mentee A:** I don't think so to be honest, I mean I have gone through the process twice, and would quite happily go through it again just to learn more techniques, I find that's easier. I have since signed up and done some of those free distance learning courses on using technology in the classroom, and I thought yes, this would be good and I can see how that would be useful, but the peer mentoring was so much better as you could talk over it with somebody who



would come up with their own suggestions, and so it has given me that I would want to try others, but it was better coming from somebody who was alongside you anyway rather than trying to do it yourself.

**Researcher:** OK, that's all the questions I had. Is there anything you would like to add or anything you meant to say?

**Mentee A:** I don't think so, I think I've said everything.

## 10. Appendix E

### **Interview with Mentee B**

**Researcher:** Thank you for agreeing to take part in the interview. I want to go through some general questions initially, that will help me to set the scene and then we'll go into some questions around your perceptions of the mentoring. So, can you just tell me, are you a full time, permanent member of staff, or associate member of staff or are you a part time teacher?

**Mentee B:** I'm full time, when I went through the mentoring I was still part time, but since I've gone full time.

**Researcher:** And how long have you been teaching?

**Mentee B:** This is my third year, but two and a half terms worth.

**Researcher:** And have you a teaching qualification equivalent to PGCE?

**Mentee B:** Yes.

**Researcher:** What levels do you teach?

**Mentee B:** I teach level 2, 3 and 5.

**Researcher:** OK thank you, and when did you take part in the mentoring, in 14-15 or 15-16 or both?

**Mentee B:** The end of 15-16.

**Researcher:** And were you born before 1982?

**Mentee B:** No, I was born after, 1986.

**Researcher:** OK, thank you. When you think about your experiences during the mentoring, what aspects are memorable to you, and why do you think they are, why do they stick out in your mind?

**Mentee B:** I think probably two of the most memorable sessions that I had, was the first session I had with the mentor just on their own. It had been, originally it was supposed to have been one of my colleagues in the Music department, but what happened was I ended up with someone from Sociology, so initially there was kind of a, because we use Mac and we were trying to work out between us how to get on to the different software, so that was kind of helpful because it meant that we had to find ways around problems that if we had of had those in the classroom it would have been, you would have wasted class time. And also, it was great to talk to somebody about just the different things that were out there, and I hadn't realised the kind of range of software that was available even the resource free stuff, so that was really really beneficial. The other thing that I found really beneficial was the session in the classroom with the students, when [my mentor] sort of looked after organising the class. Because we were from different departments, [my mentor] didn't necessarily understand the context of the class, but the different devices, sitting down and explaining through the context of the Performing Arts Business class, with [my mentor] beforehand, and then going into the class and seeing how she'd adapted the lesson plan was really interesting to see how we could kind of engage in different ways. That unit is a particularly written work based unit,

so it's very hard sometimes to keep the students engaged, and that was the first time I'd taught it, and it's a subject that I'm very passionate about, but I completely understand that they're not that interested in it, because when you're 17/18 you're not interested in learning how to get a career or build your CV, so that was very difficult to engage with them. But the tasks that she created really helped to get them engaged with that subject.

**Researcher:** Thank you. Question 2 was really around what area of learning and teaching was your main focus during the mentoring, so I know that a lot of mentoring is around technology enhanced learning, but in terms of the tools that you were using, what sort of areas of learning and teaching were the focus?

**Mentee B:** Sorry, in terms of...?

**Researcher:** What area of learning and teaching was your main focus during the mentoring? So you probably remember the tool you were using, and that might help you remember what your focus was...

**Mentee B:** Oh OK, so, a lot of the time, particularly with the unit that we focused on, because it was the one that I struggled with the most, Performing Arts Business, what we focused on a lot was questioning, and making sure that the students were understanding the learning outcomes fully, that learning was taking place, because it was so difficult to measure that, when it was just me trying to talk and cajole them and get them round to doing some work. So that was quite nice getting that feedback and that discussion going, and getting them engaged, so I think that's what we really focused on, because we used a lot of things like Padlet and Popplet, which was really great to get engagement from them and get them together, and then we used the likes of Socrative as well to really assess that learning and find out what they learned, and if they enjoyed it as well and if they engaged, so that was really helpful.

**Researcher:** Reflecting on the mentoring, what impact do you think it's had, if any, on your teaching practice? And if you think it has had an impact, in what way and why do think that is?

**Mentee B:** I think the main thing that I've learnt, is being able to assess the learning that's taking place, and also identifying areas that need extra work. As well as that, getting that engagement with the student and getting them excited about the subject. My background is a lot in performance, so I'm used to getting people on their feet and doing performance workshops, and that's very easy to get people engaged with, because you're physically getting them on their feet and making them use the space and everything, whereas when it came to units such as Performance Arts Business, it was trying to assess that they were taking in the message I was trying to get across, and that was difficult to do before the mentoring scheme, because it was so difficult to get them to speak up and ask questions as well.

**Researcher:** Thank you. So what kinds of support did you receive from your mentor, or wished you had received?

**Mentee B:** Initially we started off looking at the different software that was available to us, that was one of the main things, and going through Moodle, and it was really the restructuring of some of my Moodle sites that helped to make it easier, not just for me to see what was being done. We changed my, rather than being one topic with a whole list of different things underneath, we divided it up into tasks and different assessments, so they were able to see how each class related to the assessment that they were going to be asked to create. So that was really really helpful because it broke it down a little more, put in a wee bit more structure. It also helped me to formulate a

decent week-by-week schedule, and I knew how I needed to progress with that unit. I think as well, the classroom, and evaluating how the classroom went, was very very helpful, and just generally the support of talking to someone else and maybe asking questions of someone who wasn't necessarily in my department and who might have a different approach to how things are done. And also it was confidence building as well, whenever you're in the classroom and they say "that was really good, that was nice, I liked what you did there", that kind of helped me, as quite a new teacher, to understand that maybe I was doing certain things right, maybe there were certain things that I needed help with, but generally I was on the right track. So that was very helpful.

**Researcher:** Thank you. Question 5, from what you're saying I probably know the answer to this one, but do you enjoy teaching?

**Mentee B:** Yeah, I love teaching. It's not something that I ever set out to actually do, it was never in my mind that I was going to be a teacher, but when the opportunity came up to join the part time lecturer register I was quite excited and I applied. But I think I've enjoyed it more as time has gone on. I've obviously, given the department, Performing Arts, it's quite creative anyway, and seeing that kind of spark of creativity from young people as well is very enjoyable, it's a very enjoyable process, to see the penny drop.

**Researcher:** Yes, that lightbulb moment.

**Mentee B:** The lightbulb moment, yes definitely.

**Researcher:** Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?

**Mentee B:** At the moment really, I'm working, in my personal life anyway, I'm working, I just got engaged last year, so really the only thing I'm focused on over the next year is getting the wedding done and sorted. But then beyond that, I think I see myself in a very similar role down the line, I think I'd like to take up some more of the performing that I used to do part time as well, but I would hope to still see myself at SERC teaching.

**Researcher:** Thank you. Can you tell me how you found, I think you mentioned this already in part, but how did you find the experience of reflecting after the classroom session with your mentor, and is that something that you're still doing now?

**Mentee B:** I did find that process very useful, as I said, partially for the confidence it gave me, looking at how I, the things that I had done right and the things that I needed to improve on, but it also, whenever I looked at the way that I had delivered part of the class, and [my mentor] had delivered her part of the class, I kind of was able to see how I can push that a bit further and kind of use those other tools. It was even the simple things, the technology was great but the tactile elements, the cards and the whiteboards, small personal whiteboards, the students really engaged with that, and I haven't seen that so much before, and that was really nice to see how that more physical, tactile element can really inspire them.

**Researcher:** I think you mentioned earlier that even getting that feedback as well I think is part of that whole reflection, just seeing what they liked and what they didn't like.

**Mentee B:** Well, I mean, I don't know if this is something particular to a Performing Arts student, as a previous Performing Arts student myself, I feel that we benefit when it's something that we can sort of play with and create and discuss and we're maybe not the best at listening sometimes, we kind of always think that we have the best idea, but it's that listening and getting that feedback and then being able to adapt it and change it is really exciting.

**Researcher:** And in terms of having now come this side of the mentoring, you've gone through the process, do you feel it has impacted on your teaching?

**Mentee B:** I think so. There was a lot of things that I didn't know, and didn't even know to ask about, probably things like the software I never even knew existed, so I never even knew to ask about it. And it was even the simple things like the class tools, classroom tools, with the free site with all the timers and different bits and pieces, they were really useful just to kind of keep things going and keep the pace in the class up. In Performing Arts, we don't really have a problem with people volunteering for things, but at the same time what was nice was even the name generator, it kind of just built a little bit of excitement and they were actually watching for it. And those kind of quieter people in the class, it was drawing them out of themselves as well.

**Researcher:** It's a very useful tool, for sure. I think our last question then, so, in your opinion, what are the strengths and the weaknesses of the peer-mentoring programme, and have you any suggestions as to how it could be improved?

**Mentee B:** I think the strengths, probably for me the big strength was having that time with another lecturer to ask questions that maybe I could think about, rather than just popping into my head and trying to find someone that was close by, it was someone who had dedicated time to spend with me to allow me to ask those questions. And also just kind of discuss with them about different things that I maybe hadn't considered, or wanted to know about how students react, you know, is this usual if students react a certain way, if maybe this had been happening in some of my classes. I think probably for me that was the greatest strength, was kind of having that time, as well as learning about those things that I previously didn't know about. I don't think it's a weakness as much but for me, what I would love to have is a mentor scheme that looked at assessment and how assessment happens, because even though I'm sort of nearly three years in the job, I still struggle sometimes with kind of making sure that I'm kind of dotting all my i's and crossing all my t's, and making sure I have everything in the right order.

**Researcher:** You mean the documentation as opposed to the actual designing of assessments?

**Mentee B:** A bit of both, so like, making sure that the documentation fits, particularly with when you're building larger projects and things like that, to kind of make sure that everything is done correctly before we move forward with it, and just like, with the mentoring, if there was a way to look at that as well and just to kind of clarify and make sure that everything was right, in the right order.

**Researcher:** OK, thank you very much.