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1 **What role do teaching mentors play in supporting new university lecturers to**
2 **develop their teaching practices?**

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9

10 **Abstract**

11 We examine the support mentors provide to new lecturers as part of a postgraduate
12 programme designed to familiarise them with university teaching. Drawing on qualitative
13 data collected from 13 new lecturers and nine mentors, we document the support new
14 lecturers' call upon to shape their practice. We identify important issues surrounding the
15 significance of mentor choice, both in terms of a mentor's experience, position and knowledge
16 of their role, which determine the effectiveness of professional learning. Difficult issues were
17 observed relating to prioritisation and workload for new lecturers and their mentors, and as a
18 consequence the wider networks of colleagues and peers new lecturers drew upon were seen
19 as an essential source of advice. Indeed, the extent of their use depending on assistance
20 available from mentors. Our data indicate the need for careful framing of mentoring
21 relationships in terms of professional development and teaching enhancement to ensure the
22 benefits of these interactions are realised. Equally both parties need to be encouraged to use
23 reflection to scaffold interactions to promote professional learning. Our data also identify the
24 need for recognition for those performing mentoring roles, to ensure they can dedicate
25 necessary time so that productive relationships are sustained for the duration over which
26 support is required.

27 **Keywords:** Higher Education; Professional Development; Professional Learning;
28 Informal learning, Reflection

29

30 **Introduction**

31 Internationally there has been a proliferation of courses that seek to professionalise
32 the practice of being a university teacher (Kandlbinder and Peseta 2009). The
33 primary focus of this provision is teaching and learning, preparing lecturers to address
34 issues relating to student support, quality assurance, assessment, session and
35 programme design as well as offering feedback on emerging practice (Parson et al.,
36 2012). Studies of these programmes have identified common features including
37 theoretical underpinnings (Kahn *et al.*, 2008), intended outcomes (Bamber 2008) and
38 participants' experiences (Warhurst, 2006). These studies have demonstrated the role
39 of these courses in supporting new lecturers to adapt to the role of being a university
40 lecturer, as in addition to introducing theory and practice, they induct them into the
41 practice of teaching and supporting student learning in their new institutional context,
42 and integrate them into a community that works to support teaching and learning
43 (Smith, 2010; Warhusrt, 2006).

44

45 One aspect of these programmes that has received limited attention has been the role
46 of teaching mentors. These represent a named individual often located in the
47 department or school in which a new lecturer is based who provides guidance around
48 issues related to teaching. Mentors can contextualise the generic or theoretical
49 aspects of teaching preparation programmes to the perspectives of participants'
50 discipline (Gosling, 2009; Knight & Trowler, 1999). They can also be a source of
51 advice around daily practices and procedures, as well as offering feedback on
52 teaching and other issues that may arise (Adcroft & Taylor, 2009). For new lecturers,
53 having a named person to guide them is seen as an invaluable source of support as
54 they adapt to a challenging and demanding role (Barkham, 2005). Therefore, in
55 relation to the volume of research relating to teaching preparation programmes, it is
56 perhaps surprising to note the limited attention teaching mentors have received.
57 Contemporary research tends to concentrate on the perspectives of either the mentor
58 or mentee (e.g. Adcroft and Taylor, 2009; Barkham, 2005; Donnelly and McSweeney,
59 2010) and they are often conducted with limited consideration of the wider support
60 (e.g. colleagues, course peers) new lecturers may draw upon to frame their emerging
61 practice.

62

63 In this paper we draw on data gathered as part of a study that followed 13 new
64 lecturers, and their mentors, through their first year of university teaching. We
65 provide insights into the role the mentor plays in supporting new lecturers. We also
66 reflect on the importance of the mentor's experience in undertaking this role, and
67 highlight important issues regarding the support, preparation and recognition that
68 mentors receive.

69

70 **Professionalising university teaching in England**

71 Enhancing the practice of university teaching and supporting student learning is an
72 established feature of the landscape of higher education (HE). In the UK
73 organisations such as the Staff and Educational Development Association and the
74 Association of University Teachers championed the importance of professional
75 development for those involved in teaching and supporting students (Wisdom et al.,
76 2013). These organisations provided staff development, guidance and an accreditation
77 framework for those engaged in training courses to prepare for university teaching.
78 They were also instrumental in creating the UK Professional Standards Framework
79 (HEA, 2011) which is used to guide the practice of university teaching (Wisdom et al.,
80 2013).

81

82 Whilst driving forward a clear agenda to professionalise the practice of university
83 teaching, engagement with teaching preparation courses and staff development was
84 variable, depending often on the focus of institutions (i.e. the extent to which they
85 placed an emphasis on teaching and / or research) (Parson et al., 2012). Due to
86 significant changes in the funding of HE, diversification of the student populations
87 and increasing government intervention, teaching and learning has become highly
88 politicised (Gibbs, 2010). Through mechanisms such as the National Students Survey
89 students can publicly comment on the perceived quality of their university experience,
90 in particularly rating their experiences of teaching, learning and assessment; the
91 results of this survey are perceived by some as instrumental in the decisions students
92 make in selecting their choice of university (Kovacs et al., 2010). Following the
93 Browne Review (2010) a focus was also placed upon the training providing to

94 university staff, with a requirement for universities to report on the number of staff
95 possessing a teaching qualification that has prepared them for university teaching.
96 This has resulted in a change in attitudes toward teaching preparation for new
97 lecturers, with growing expectations for new lecturers to participate in some form of
98 training as part of their probationary commitment (Gosling, 2010; Parsons et al.,
99 2012).

100

101 Implicit in this drive is the assumption that by training new lecturers, and aligning
102 their knowledge of teaching and learning to the UKPSF, will enhance the quality of
103 teaching and learning, a concern of policymakers for a number of years (Turner et al.,
104 2013; Gosling, 2009). This is not an assumption we will directly consider here,
105 however, with respect to the wider framing of this study we feel it is an important
106 position to acknowledge, as many of the participants on teaching preparation courses,
107 as well as those working to promote university teaching, are aware of the contentious
108 nature of this assumption and the implications it has on the expectations for university
109 teaching (Gibbs, 2010; Quinn 2012). However, England is not alone in pushing
110 forward an agenda for enhancing university teaching, similar moves towards
111 providing training for new lecturers, professional development for established lectures
112 and examining student feedback have taken place across Europe, North America,
113 New Zealand and Australia (Kandlbinder and Peseta 2009; Parson et al., 2012).

114

115 **Professional learning in the workplace**

116 Entry into a new workplace stimulates a period of professional learning, which can
117 take place through a series of formal and informal interactions (Eraut, 2004; 2007;
118 Knight et al. 2006). Formal learning entails pre-determined outcomes and taught
119 sessions; by contrast, informal learning is a hidden process that results from
120 unstructured or opportunistic interactions and experiences, and is associated with tacit
121 knowledge (Eraut, 2004; Knight *et al.*, 2006). This aligns with the idea of the
122 distributed apprenticeship element of professional learning, whereby a range of
123 individuals (e.g. colleagues, peers, trainers) stimulate professional learning, through
124 deliberative, reactive and implicit actions (Eraut, 2004). Much professional learning

125 is informal and occurs as a consequence of an individual performing their role and
126 interacting with colleagues (Eraut, 2004). Therefore in many instances newcomers
127 are not explicitly aware of learning about their role, rather they express a sense of
128 feeling more comfortable in what they are doing or of growing in confidence (Eraut,
129 2004; Knight et al., 2006). This demonstrates the situated nature of professional
130 learning, where activities such as conversations make significant contributions to
131 newcomers' understandings of the workplace (Haigh, 2005). In many instances such
132 learning is unplanned and *ad hoc*, and the quality of professional learning that takes
133 place is highly variable.

134

135 In relation to these informal mechanisms of professional learning, mentoring blurs the
136 boundaries of formal and informal learning (Eraut, 2007). Mentoring is widely used
137 to familiarise newcomers to the workplace and support them in developing technical,
138 interpersonal and political skills and competences essential to their role (Hudson,
139 2013; Ehrich *et al.*, 2004; Ragins and Cotton, 1999). Researchers (e.g. Kram, 1983;
140 Hobson *et al.*, 2009; Noe, 1988) have identified mentors as having specific career
141 development and psychosocial functions, as explored through Kram's (1983) Mentor
142 Role Theory. These career development functions involve actions such as
143 sponsorship, advocacy, coaching, protection, providing challenging assignments and
144 offering exposure (Kram, 1983). As a newcomer's position in an organisation
145 changes, and they realise their potential, the requirements on a mentor changes (Kram,
146 1983; Gehrke, 1988). An assumption underpinning the role of a mentor is that they
147 themselves are in a role that allows them to perform these functions, and also have the
148 knowledge, skills and experience on which to draw to support a junior colleague
149 (Kram, 1983).

150

151 Mentoring may involve a structured programme of support through which goals are
152 set, shaping interactions and monitoring progress, usually through a series of regular
153 meetings (Donnelly and McSweeney 2010). In these instances the mentor usually
154 gains recognition for the support they offer. Informal mentoring relationships are less
155 structured with limited recognition of the process and outcomes (Ehrich *et al.*, 2004;
156 Ewing *et al.*, 2008). Regardless of the approach, mentoring is recognised as having a

157 number of benefits for both the newcomer and the mentor (Ragins and Cotton, 1999).
158 For the mentee, it can create a sense of collegiality and belonging that promotes
159 understanding of a new workplace (Donnelly and McSweeney 2010). Studies of
160 mentors' experiences note that mentoring creates situations for reciprocal learning
161 since, by supporting a new colleague, mentors can engage with self-reflection,
162 stimulating their own professional learning (Barkham, 2005; Kamvounias *et al.*,
163 2008). Overall, effective mentoring relationships have been identified as increasing
164 staff retention, job satisfaction and career progression (Ehrich *et al.*, 2004; Ragins and
165 Cotton, 1999).

166

167 Research into professional learning and mentoring has led to the idea of 'relationship
168 constellations' (e.g. Higgins and Kram, 2001: 264); these represent the range of
169 individuals who may provide developmental support through an individual's career,
170 in addition to that traditionally provided by a mentor. This reflects the portfolio
171 nature of individual careers and the shift in focus to development taking place on an
172 on-going basis throughout an individual's professional life (Higgins and Kram, 2001).
173 Nowadays 'mentoring' may be provided through formal, e.g. organisational structures
174 associated with induction or progression through the workplace, or informally,
175 through support offered by colleagues to one-another. **In these instances individuals
176 stimulate or promote the professional learning of colleagues with a view to supporting
177 their establishment, and or progression, in the workplace.**

178

179 A portfolio career typifies the early career trajectory of academics, who usually gain a
180 lecturing position after completing a period of research training and post doctoral
181 work, therefore they commonly bring with them an established network of researchers
182 and former colleagues (Archer, 2008). Through a teaching qualification they may be
183 introduced to a new community of peers, as documented in studies by researchers
184 such as Smith (2010) and Warhurst (2006), as well as provided with a teaching
185 mentor. With respect to teaching qualifications for new lecturers, teaching mentors
186 have an important role to play in contextualising the general, theoretical and practice-
187 based principles of these programmes. Knight and Trowler (1999) highlighted the
188 importance of mentors in providing an individualised experience, particularly when

189 they are located in the environment in which professional learning will occur (i.e.)
190 new lecturers' home departments. Mentors assist in decoding the systems and
191 structures that underpin new lecturers' roles (Adcroft and Taylor, 2009). From this
192 perspective, mentoring assists in the management of the multiple demands placed on
193 new lecturers and, therefore, it is reasonable to envisage mentors as integral in
194 supporting them to adapt to their role.

195

196 The contribution that mentoring is perceived to make to taught programmes for new
197 lecturers is less well documented. In relation to the highly organised nature of these
198 programmes (Bamber, 2008), mentoring relationships appear to be less formalised
199 and new lecturers' experiences of mentoring are reported as variable (Kamvounias *et*
200 *al.*, 2008; Remmik *et al.*, 2011). Combinations of formal and informal approaches are
201 used, with a tendency for the informal approach to prevail. Whilst a mentor may be
202 committed to supporting a new lecturer, they may receive limited recognition or time
203 to do so; in such situations there is a danger that mentoring can be an additional
204 burden, threatening to undermine the potential development that could be achieved.

205

206 **Methodology**

207 ***Research aims***

208 Teaching is recognised as a context-specific profession (Trigwell and Prosser, 1996)
209 shaped by the experiences and values a lecturer possesses; however, these are rarely
210 acknowledged in the preparation that new lecturers receive on commencing their role.
211 Nor does this preparation readily acknowledge the diverse professional and cultural
212 profiles of the academic workforce. The research we report here is part of a wider
213 study (Turner *et al.*, 2012) that examined how lecturers negotiated their existing
214 knowledge and experiences of teaching and learning / university life with those they
215 were introduced to through the postgraduate teaching qualification and the wider
216 University's values and ethos around teaching and learning. Existing research on
217 both professional learning (e.g. Eraut, 2004; Knight *et al.*, 2006) and postgraduate
218 teaching qualifications (e.g. Boud and Brew, 2012; Reintes and Kichin, 2014;
219 Warhurst, 2006) identify the importance of mentors, departmental colleagues and

220 peers from established / new networks in supporting newcomers to develop the
221 professional knowledge and confidence required to perform their role. Therefore, to
222 examine how new lecturers reconciled or integrated their existing knowledge and
223 experience with the requirements of their new role and workplace, we recognised the
224 importance of considering the networks, both those initiated through the teaching
225 qualification (e.g. mentors and tutors) and those drawn upon by the new lecturers (e.g.
226 course peers, new colleagues and established networks) to support them in their first
227 year of teaching. Here we present this aspect of the study, however, full details of the
228 research methods are given in order to contextualise the work that was undertaken.

229

230 *The research setting*

231 The research was based in a so-called ‘new’ (post-1992) university in the UK.
232 Completion of a postgraduate certificate in teaching and learning is tied to
233 probationary requirements; lecturers with less than three years full-time teaching
234 experience are required to complete the programme. As noted above, compulsory
235 professional development for new lecturers is increasingly commonplace, giving
236 lecturers little opportunity to shape or direct the initial training they receive to prepare
237 them for lecturing (Parsons et al., 2012). The course begins by providing a general
238 introduction to the practices of teaching, supporting and assessing students. A series
239 of elective modules provides space for greater consideration of agendas relevant to
240 contemporary HE e.g. employability. The programme can be completed within 12
241 months, and following this lecturers are recognised as Fellows of the HEA.

242

243 During the programme lecturers are allocated a tutor from the course team, required
244 to identify a mentor and encouraged to discuss their experiences with colleagues and
245 peers. Course tutors and mentors have clearly defined roles; tutors observe the new
246 lecturers and provide feedback, assess their written work and offer ‘generic’ advice on
247 teaching, learning and supporting students. Teaching mentors are integral in
248 supporting lecturers in contextualising pedagogic theory and practice to the
249 disciplinary communities in which they operate. Therefore mentors can be drawn

250 from across the University. The mentor also undertakes a teaching review and offers
251 local support on teaching related issues.

252

253 New lecturers select their mentor independently, although the course team
254 recommend they choose someone who has either recently completed the programme
255 or an advocate for teaching in their school. Mentors received guidance on their role
256 which includes; meetings to discuss progress on the programme, sharing ideas and
257 acting as a critical friend, undertaking a teaching observation, promoting participation
258 in developmental events and integrating their mentee into their school. The teaching
259 team allow the mentor and mentee to develop their own ways of working and, in this
260 respect the model of mentoring promoted would be classed as informal (Donnelly and
261 McSweeney, 2010). Although the teaching team advocate the importance of these
262 mentoring relationships they are not in a position to offer recognition or reward to
263 mentors. Based on the literature used to examine the role of mentoring in
264 professional learning, there are potential limitations to newcomers selecting their
265 mentor and taking an informal approach to the mentoring relationship (Adcroft and
266 Taylor, 2009). The ability of a mentor to performing functions such as advocacy and
267 protection, and ensuring time is dedicated to ensure a productive mentoring
268 relationship develop is not explicitly considered in this approach. Indeed these are all
269 issues pertinent to the outcomes of this work.

270

271 ***Recruitment***

272 A purposeful sample of 13 participants was selected from those starting the
273 programme in September 2011. Previous studies (e.g. Boyd and Harris, 2010; Green
274 and Maytt, 2011) acknowledged the diverse professional profiles of new lecturers. As
275 a result, the knowledge, experience and expectations they bring to university teaching
276 can be varied. Participants were selected to encompass this diversity, with invitations
277 made based on participants' country of origin and professional / research backgrounds,
278 and more widely to be representative of the cohort as a whole with respect to gender
279 and disciplinary areas (see Table 1). In order to gain an insight into the context (e.g.
280 department and disciplines) in which the new lecturers were working and also support

281 they received, their teaching mentors were invited to participate; nine agreed to
282 contribute with others declining due to commitments during the scheduled period of
283 data collection. Details of mentors are presented in Table 2.

284

285 [Place Table 1 here]

286 [Place Table 2 here]

287

288 *Data collection*

289 Qualitative data were collected using a combination of methods over the duration of
290 the whole research project, including the data reported here. Data from new lecturers
291 were collected at two points in the academic year; firstly following the induction
292 period of the taught programme then at the end of the teaching year. The initial phase
293 of data collection was split into a one-hour teaching observation, completed using a
294 semi-structured observation protocol, and an in-depth interview. This approach
295 captured espoused reflections on practice and actions taken in practice. The
296 observation protocol was informed by Kreber's (1999) Scholarship of Teaching
297 model. Kreber (1999) states that in learning about teaching, individuals engage in
298 content, process and premise reflections in the three domains of teaching knowledge,
299 which are instructional, pedagogical and curricular. The protocol was designed to
300 capture actions which may be indicative of these domains of knowledge and forms of
301 reflection, as well as general information regarding the teaching session (e.g. format
302 of the teaching session, class size). A provisional analysis of the observation
303 protocols was used as the basis of a stimulated-recall interview (Calderhead, 1981).

304

305 At stage two the new lecturers were asked to bring a critical incident from the
306 reflective logs kept as part of the programme to be discussed during the second
307 interview. The use of critical incidents in this way was informed by Tripp (1993) and,
308 once again, sought to examine their knowledge of teaching. Following discussion of
309 the critical incident, questions were asked regarding their practice, support they

310 received, with prompts from stage one to stimulate reflections on how this had
311 changed and developed.

312

313 Data were gathered from the mentors half way through the academic year. This
314 timeframe was selected as it followed submission of the first assignment and was
315 rationalised as to have been a time when mentors may have been called upon to
316 support new lecturers in reaching this deadline. Through a semi-structured interview
317 with mentors we gained further insights into the emerging practice of the new
318 lecturers, a background to the teaching practices of participant's schools, school
319 support for participants and their experiences of mentoring. It is this data, along with
320 the responses drawn from the new lecturers regarding the support they drew upon
321 over the academic year, which we report here. Provisional findings from the wider
322 study have been reported in Turner et al., (2012).

323

324 *Data analysis*

325 All interview data were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Content analysis
326 was employed to “mak[e] inferences by objectively and systematically identifying
327 specified characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1969:14). The analysis heeded the
328 research aims, however, in the context of support networks drawn upon and
329 interactions with mentors, we paid particularly attention to the interactions that took
330 place and how these evolved. We were also mindful of Kreber's (1999) categories,
331 specifically those relating to that ways in which individuals reflect on their teaching.
332 These were considered when analysing the accounts of conversations around teaching
333 and learning that took place between the mentors and mentees were examined (i.e.
334 were they focused on discussing the content, process or premise relating to their
335 practice). Following the analyses these themes emerged across both data sets:

- 336 • Mentor choice;
- 337 • Shaping expectations;
- 338 • Promoting professional learning through reflection;
- 339 • Pressures and tensions;

- 340 • Gifts of mentoring;
341 • Developing sustainable mentoring relationships.

342 In the next section, we will examine each of these themes in turn to uncover the
343 nature of the mentoring relationships, the support networks used and how these
344 changed over the year.

345

346 **Findings**

347 *Choosing a mentor*

348 The new lecturers had been University employees for varying timescales. A few had
349 arrived toward the end of the previous academic year; however, most had arrived
350 immediately prior to the start of the taught programme. Therefore, the extent to
351 which they *knew* their colleagues varied, with implications for their mentor choice.
352 This was also shaped by the new lecturers' intentions and aspirations for the
353 mentoring relationship. Given the explicit links between the mentor and the teaching
354 programme, most participants selected mentors in line with the role prescribed by the
355 teaching team (i.e. someone who had either completed the course recently or were
356 recognised as experienced teachers):

357 ‘[...] he was the most recent appointment in the department and quite familiar
358 with the process.’ Lecturer 3

359 ‘I chose my mentor due to her academic and lecturing experience’. Lecturer 6
360

361 Two new lecturers were allocated a mentor by someone else, which may imply that
362 the school recognised that they may need assistance in knowing from whom to seek
363 support.

364

365 Although these rationales appear reasonable, each had implications for the mentoring
366 relationships and patterns of interaction. Those who selected recent completers of
367 the teaching programme tended to approach them to primarily seek advice on the
368 module choice, assignments and programme-related concerns. In contrast those who

369 opted for established colleagues tended to engage in discussions around wider
370 teaching practices and school procedures beginning to engage with what Kreber (1999)
371 would identify as curricular knowledge (i.e. developing an awareness of how their
372 teaching connected to the wider curriculum):

373 ‘[...] my mentor has a lot of experience, so she’s got quite a good few
374 connections [...] for example I haven’t done a lot around marking assignments
375 so she’s set up a session where we can go and learn a bit about that and
376 observe some [names assessment format]’. Lecturer 6

377 Whilst these interactions addressed the concerns new lecturers experienced, the
378 relationships that developed varied, which **may be** attributable to the differing roles
379 the mentors performed. Recent completers perceived themselves familiar with the
380 challenges of being a new lecturer and the teaching programme. They were keen to
381 provide an empathic ear, but they were aware of their own limitations:

382 ‘I’m a year and a half into my post here and I very much had to learn by doing
383 and doing things wrong sometimes.’ Mentor 8

384 As this quotation suggests, the extent to which recent completers could socialise their
385 mentee into their school depended on the level to which they themselves were
386 integrated. But equally, as Eraut (2004) cautions, whilst established colleagues would
387 be integrated, their working practices might have become habitual so they may no
388 longer be aware of what a newcomer needed to know. This was evidenced by
389 established mentors’ responses to questioning during interviews regarding the
390 pedagogical theories and practice associated with their schools - many struggled to
391 initially name any. Yet this appeared not to be a significant concern of their mentees,
392 as they tended to use their mentors to inform their teaching practices more generally
393 rather than to address queries relating to the teaching programme or seeking to
394 stimulate reflections on their emerging practice that may connect to pedagogical or
395 instructional knowledge (Kreber, 1999).

396

397 *Shaping expectations*

398 Findings suggest that both parties accepted their role uncritically, with mentors'
399 actions largely informed by their position (i.e. recent completer or established
400 lecturer). It was not evident whether mentors and new lecturers discussed their role or
401 established goals to structure their relationship. Instead an informal approach was
402 adopted, in line with the recommendations of the teaching team, leading to variable
403 mentoring relationships developing. They ranged from mentors and mentees working
404 collaboratively in what *they* viewed as productive relationships, to those where the
405 mentor was removed from the process with the implicit expectation that the mentee
406 would be in touch if necessary:

407 'I've been lucky enough to monitor what he's been doing; I sat in and did a
408 teaching observation for him. I was very pleased to see how he was dealing
409 with his students – the kind of feedback he was giving, the kind of questions
410 he was raising – and his interaction with the students seemed to be very
411 positive.' Mentor 1

412 'Basically people are left to get on with it and I think intervention is taken if
413 things start to go wrong and I think what you have to do is let people get on
414 and do a good job.' Mentor 9

415 Given the multiple pressures lecturers face (Smith, 2010), being 'left to get on with it'
416 (Mentor 9), may not be unexpected, and indeed could be a consequence of the
417 perceived responsibility mentors attributed to the taught programme for supporting
418 new lecturers:

419 'Any teaching education/philosophy/practice will be got from the teaching
420 course; or perhaps any other articles they may have independently read. But
421 they are not coming from a top-down direction in the School; that's not how it
422 works at all.' Mentor 2

423 These perceptions could have implications for the quality of, and potential for,
424 professional learning, particularly when these interactions are considered in light of
425 the situated nature of academic development (Boud, 1999). For the new lecturer,
426 connections need to be made between the formal learning of the taught programme
427 and, more generally, through interactions with colleagues, students and the process of
428 doing their job. Mentors are integral to formulating these connections and

429 contextualising learning to new lecturers' disciplines and schools. However, the
430 perceived value of mentoring held by mentors could constrain the extent to which
431 meaningful learning occurs.

432

433 Comparing the established lecturers with the recent completers it appeared that
434 initially it was the experienced lecturers who appeared to struggle with being mentors,
435 tending to take a step back, perhaps concerned about the workload implications of
436 supporting a colleague. This contrasts the position of the recent completers who were
437 able to recall the extent to which they benefitted from the support of a mentor. As
438 Mentor 1 indicates, once engaged in the process, established lecturers began to
439 appreciate the benefits to the new lecturer and also began to consider how forums (e.g.
440 working groups/programme meetings) to discuss teaching could represent informal
441 learning opportunities for new lecturers:

442 ‘So I mean that I suppose in terms of pedagogy, we had a working party and
443 we spent a lot of time thinking about it so I would say about half the
444 department would be involved in it, so we did spend a lot of time thinking
445 about how we might improve that first year for our students and of course
446 [names mentee] been crucially involved in this process.’ Mentor 5

447 These examples provide an insight into the pedagogical workings of schools and
448 demonstrate how informal opportunities for professional learning emerge which
449 allows new lecturers to begin to integrate theoretical knowledge (instructional
450 knowledge) with disciplinary-specific perspectives (instructional or curricular
451 knowledge) (Trowler and Cooper, 2002). They also represent incidences where
452 reflections were stimulated that allowed the new lecturers to explore or develop their
453 pedagogical knowledge (Kreber, 1999). Such interactions have been noted by
454 researchers (e.g. Remmik et al. 2011; Warhurst 2008) as representing valuable
455 opportunities to share their own experiences and perspectives with their colleagues,
456 further promoting the integration of new lecturers into their school as they gain a
457 sense of making a contribution. As Mentor 5 indicates, these interactions were
458 common-place, and therefore mentors need to be made aware of the regularity at
459 which professional learning can occur as part of the preparation they are given prior
460 to taking on this role.

461

462 *Promoting professional learning through reflection*

463 Reflection is integral to the process of mentoring (Barkham, 2005; Gosling, 2009).
464 School-based studies of mentoring have identified both the critical examination of a
465 new teachers practice and their thinking about practice as essential in developing a
466 sense of being an accomplished teacher (Hagger and MacIntyre, 2006). Mentors, who
467 may be perceived as expert teachers, play a fundamental role in this process by
468 assisting a new teacher comprehend what ‘good’ teaching represents (Gosling, 2009;
469 Langdon, 2011). However, these studies have reported that mentors face challenges
470 in supporting new teachers in undergoing this development and engaging with
471 effective reflective practices (Langdon, 2011). If this is the situation in school-based
472 teacher development, then it is perhaps not surprising in this study that we found the
473 limited extent to which reflective practice underpinned mentoring interactions. With
474 respect to the development of university-based teachers, Trowler and Cooper (2002)
475 noted disciplinary differences in relation to an individual’s predisposition to reflection,
476 with those from the sciences in particular struggling with this activity. Given that
477 seven of our participants were drawn from these disciplines this could account for this
478 situation. The primary source of reflection was the teaching observation mentors
479 completed as part of the teaching programme. Commonly discussions between
480 mentors and the new lecturers tended to be functional, concentrating either on
481 effective practice (i.e. what works) or providing advice and information either deemed
482 essential by the mentor or in response to a mentees request:

483 ‘I was concerned about my accent, the local students would not be able to
484 understand my accent, the feedbacks that I got from [my] mentor, said it’s fine,
485 you can understand everything.’ Lecturer 4

486 ‘I suppose the most important one of all is kind of informal discussions that
487 we would have about our own practice and things that went wrong or things
488 that worked well and so on, so I think that’s a big part that sometimes we
489 don’t acknowledge the importance of that enough.’ Mentor 7

490 Whilst it is important for the mentee to be able to access information central to their
491 practice, the emphasis from new lecturers requesting, and mentors providing,

492 functional information can lead to a focus on prescriptive rather than innovative
493 practice. This has been observed as a limitation in the use of reflection to support the
494 development of lecturers teaching practice (e.g. Gosling, 2009; Hammersley-Fletcher
495 and Orsmond, 2005). Such interactions are described as indicating a ‘reductive’
496 approach to mentoring resulting from its narrow conceptualisation (e.g. Achinstein
497 and Athanases, 2006). In the context of our study, this approach may have also
498 emerged due to the patterns of interactions between the new lecturer and the mentor,
499 and a perceived lack of time in the department that lecturers can dedicate to reflection:

500 ‘There’s not an awful lot of time for reflection [...]. We build meetings into
501 the system – on Wednesday afternoons we’ll have this meeting, that meeting.
502 I think it would be more useful if there was some more sort of structured
503 reflection for teaching activities.’ Mentor 2

504 ‘I can remember in the past when we decided to make changes in the
505 programmes and spent a year talking about what the changes would be,
506 everybody was involved in those discussions, everybody was passionate about
507 carrying those changes forward. And I don’t know where that debate happens
508 any longer, because there just isn’t the time for it.’ Mentor 1

509

510 As these mentors acknowledge, time is pressured. The new lecturers’ primary
511 concerns were with doing a good job, completing the teaching programme, and
512 surviving the year. They demonstrated limited capacity for reflecting on practice and
513 therefore this is a role mentors should encourage, particularly in the early stages of the
514 mentoring relationship when lecturers may be overwhelmed with the demands placed
515 upon them. As advocated by Gosling (2009), mentors could request mentees bring
516 ‘critical incidents’ or examples from their practice that could provide a stimulus for
517 further discussion and reflection in their meetings. This may also serve to move the
518 mentee beyond focusing solely on practical challenges or immediate concerns by
519 encouraging a wider appreciation of the contribution that reflection can make to
520 enhancing teaching practice.

521

522 *Pressures and tensions*

523 The first few years of lecturing are challenging and, although this is well-documented
524 (e.g. Smith 2010), we feel it is important to reframe these challenges in relation to
525 mentoring. The new lecturers documented the challenges they experienced (e.g.
526 concerns with workload; designing modules; balancing research, teaching and
527 institutional ways of working) and whilst these may have been the source of
528 considerable personal frustration and pressure, they do represent the challenges
529 experienced by *all* new lecturers (Smith, 2010; Warhurst, 2006). Mentors were
530 acutely aware of, and empathised with, the challenges faced:

531 'A fair teaching load, in order to settle into teaching do [names course], start
532 establishing yourself as research active [...] there's just a lot and everything is
533 urgent.' Mentor 10

534 'I think the main point I got from her was that she felt she was being pulled in
535 lots of directions she wanted to continue her research and she had to think
536 about her teaching.' Mentor 8

537 However, there was a sense of powerlessness from mentors around the extent to
538 which they could assist their mentees in resolving their challenges. This could partly
539 be related to the role the mentors adopted, in that most saw themselves as primarily
540 offering guidance relating to teaching and felt that it was beyond their remit to
541 address wider concerns:

542 'And I just thought new members of staff needed more support than that, but I
543 wasn't in a position to be able to say that shouldn't happen because ultimately,
544 the Head of School decides workloads.' Mentor 2

545 This sense of powerlessness could also depend on the extent to which mentors were
546 familiar with the working practices of their school and also their role power.
547 Interestingly, two new lecturers selected mentors from outside their school. Whilst
548 this may provide greater opportunities for networking, as with the recent completers,
549 these mentors might have not have been in a position to respond to functional
550 questions regarding procedures in their mentees' school. Thus, proximity may also be
551 a factor in mentor choice. Similarly, a mentor who is a recent completer or from
552 another school may not be in a position to act as an advocate or support their mentee
553 in reconciling challenges.

554

555 Either one, or a combination, of these positions could lead to the mentor experiencing
556 a sense of powerlessness in relation to the support they could provide, with wider
557 implications for how the role of a mentor is perceived. Mentors are required to
558 possess skills such as the ability to be an advocate and act as a role model,
559 demonstrating confidence and efficacy as a professional (Donnelly and McSweeney,
560 2010; Kram, 1983). However, if the mentor does not feel they can support their
561 mentee through challenging times, or address practical concerns, it could undermine
562 their relationship. If this happens at the formative stages of their relationship it may
563 hinder potential for professional learning through mentoring, which would require
564 new lecturers to seek alternative sources of support.

565

566 *Gifts of mentoring*

567 The mentors who developed a wider appreciation of issues relating to teaching and
568 learning through the interactions with their mentees recognised what Kamvounias *et*
569 *al.*, (2008) referred to as the “gifts” of mentoring, indicating the mutually beneficial
570 nature of mentoring relationships:

571 ‘I’ve found it to be a really valuable experience too as a mentor, I’ve really
572 enjoyed it and it’s nice to be able to help somebody in the way that you may or
573 may not have been helped in the past. So that I think is quite useful.’ Mentor
574 5

575 There was a sense that such benefits were unanticipated, perhaps indicating a limited
576 perception of mentoring as uni-directional, only of benefit to the newcomer (Donnelly
577 and McSweeney, 2010). It could also imply the perception held by the mentor,
578 mentee or both, that the mentoring aspect of the taught programme was an additional
579 burden. Indeed, this was a position noted by a recent completer:

580 “Yes, I think a lot of people were happy for me to knock on their door and ask
581 them very straightforward questions because I think they’d been there before,
582 but it’s a burden on them and it’s a waste of their time.” Mentor 8

583 This is perhaps an unspoken concern of mentors and could have resulted in the
584 tendency, whereby, if the new lecturer appeared to be coping, they were left to
585 develop their practice independently.

586 ‘Basically people are left to get on with it and I think intervention is taken if
587 things start to go wrong, and I’ve no evidence at all that that’s the case, so I
588 think it’s going fine and I think what you have to do is let people get on, if
589 they’re doing a good job you need to let them get on and do a good job.’

590 Mentor 9

591 ‘[Learning to teach] it’s immersive, it’s “Get in there,” it’s “Do it”, it’s
592 “Contact people who are doing things that...” If you want to try and develop a
593 new practical class, go and speak to this person who’s done something like
594 that.’ Mentor 2

595 Equally, mentees were concerned about giving the impression that they were not
596 coping or did not know what they were doing. These perspectives could limit the
597 potential for learning and development, arguably leading mentoring relationships to
598 stagnate or falter. However, the approaches suggested above by mentors to create
599 learning opportunities for new lecturers through everyday practices and interactions at
600 a school level could partly challenge this burdensome perception.

601

602 *Developing sustainable mentoring relationships*

603 Findings showed that mentoring relationships developed organically, due to factors
604 such as individuals’ experience, school support, and the perceived benefits of
605 mentoring. Given the connection between the taught programme and mentoring,
606 mentors perceived it as their remit to support new lecturers to develop their teaching.
607 Indeed, whilst one mentor recognised the importance of their role in respect of this
608 programme, they made a distinction between the perceived contributions they could
609 make to different aspects of a new lecturer’s role:

610 ‘Having a mentor is I think quite crucial, I think you do need somebody to do
611 some of the more sort of complex questions about approaches to teaching, you
612 know, those bigger discussions that you can have with somebody and research

613 as well because that's equally important. But also you do need a named
614 person to go to for all the really dull and boring details that you do actually
615 need to learn.' Mentor 5

616 This mentor perceived their role as functional, primarily assisting their mentee in
617 developing their teaching. This narrow conception meant that rather than supporting
618 the new lecturer to holistically reflect on and develop their role, they concentrated
619 solely on teaching. This is an interesting standpoint; it does not reflect the complexity
620 of the lecturing role that encompasses a growing remit of research, teaching and
621 administrative activities (Adcroft and Taylor, 2009; Smith, 2010). Instead it implies a
622 perceived fragmentation in the different aspects of the role of being a university
623 lecturer. Given that new lecturers are recognised as struggling to reconcile the
624 breadth of their responsibilities this is not a useful position for a mentor to adopt.

625

626 The teaching programme lasted one academic year, with a mentor expected to support
627 their mentee during this time. Explicit responsibilities were allocated to the mentor
628 with respect to the first module of the course. As this coincides with the busiest period
629 for most new lecturers in terms of adapting to their role, we observed the greatest
630 number of mentor-mentee interactions occurred then. Further analysis indicated that
631 interactions with mentors decreased over the academic year. This appeared to have
632 implications on the use of alternate networks of support the new lecturers drew upon
633 in their first year of teaching. Interactions with wider networks align with the idea of
634 the distributed apprenticeship element of professional learning, the quality of which
635 depends on the willingness of individuals to stimulate learning (Eraut, 2007; Knight *et*
636 *al.*, 2006). For instance, colleagues were seen as an essential network new lecturers
637 actively sought to integrate with. The regularity of use was related to physical
638 proximity (i.e. in the office next door) or perceptions that they possessed relevant
639 knowledge:

640 'There's a certain amount of things you need to know beforehand and you
641 actually learn it when you get to the point where you need to use it and when
642 you've got supportive colleagues around you, it's great because you realise
643 you're a bit stuck and out of your depth and you can ask them and then they
644 help you.' Lecturer 8

645 In addition, new lecturers discussed their practice with peers, former colleagues and
646 personal contacts. There was a sense in which discussing teaching with such
647 individuals ‘low risk’ as they were not exposing a lack of knowledge to a colleague or
648 mentor. These interactions were largely unplanned and, following Eraut (2007),
649 would be perceived as information sharing. There is a risk that the resulting
650 conversations (and the related advice) were accepted uncritically without examination
651 of underpinning assumptions or implications for their practice (Haigh, 2005). In
652 addition, there was often a sense that colleagues had limited time and, therefore,
653 interactions were restricted to ‘snatched conversations’ (Lecturer 13). This creates
654 the additional risk that new lecturers could spend considerable time trying to find
655 information from a number of colleagues as initially (at least) they may not know who
656 to contact for specific information (e.g. queries relating to timetabling, exams and
657 course administration).

658

659 Mentoring relationships are recognised as time-limited (Ehrich *et al.*, 2004) so it is
660 unsurprising that interactions reduced. However, a premature end or reduction in
661 mentor support could leave a mentee with either a false sense of professional
662 confidence, or more likely, struggling to address new challenges as they arise. This is
663 an important consideration with respect to the cycle through which university
664 teaching operates. Initially teaching and student support is the focus of lecturers’
665 attention, followed by a period of examination and quality assurance. The second half
666 of the teaching programme for new lecturers considers academic practice more widely.
667 Reduced interactions may mean they have limited opportunity to contextualise and
668 clarify this knowledge at the site at which it will be practiced. Although they may
669 continue to discuss their changing practice with colleagues, peers or personal contacts,
670 members of each of these groups can hold particular values, ideas or beliefs relating
671 to teaching and learning which, due to the informal nature of the interactions with
672 new lecturers, may not be examined in relation to the resulting advice and guidance
673 (Eraut, 2007; Haigh, 2005).

674

675 *Conclusions*

676 Teaching development programmes are central to the professionalisation of university
677 teaching, with mentors performing an essential role in assisting new lecturers to
678 contextualise their practice. Although we report on a small-scale study based in one
679 UK University, we provide insights into a relatively under-researched area within the
680 field of academic development. Our study problematized the contribution mentors
681 can make to the development of new lecturers and considered actions that may
682 support new lecturers emerging practice.

683

684 Factors such as the choice of a mentor and mentor's experience as a lecturer emerged
685 as impacting mentoring relationships and in turn professional learning. The
686 significance of mentor choice is somewhat underplayed, particularly with respect to
687 the guidance new lecturers received in selecting a mentor. As our data demonstrates,
688 **who becomes a mentor impacts the support received**, with factors such as the mentors
689 proximity, experience and knowledge of a schools' practice and procedures
690 determining the guidance they are able to provide. **We have to question whether a**
691 **recent completer of the teaching qualification would be able to fulfil actions such as**
692 **advocacy or protection to the same extent as a more established colleague. Equally,**
693 **an established lecturer from the same school in relation to one of similar experience**
694 **but from a different school to the one in which the mentee is based. Therefore at a**
695 **fundamental level the choice of mentor can have a clear impact on the success of a**
696 **relationship and the level of professional learning that may take place.**

697

698 Differing conceptions of mentoring were evident, with most mentors perceiving
699 mentoring as uni-directional, representing an additional role to be accommodated
700 alongside already busy workloads and needs of both mentor and mentee. These
701 factors lead to the emergence of situations whereby either mentees wanted to convey
702 a perception of coping or, alternatively, of mentors assuming that unless they had
703 evidence to the contrary their mentee was successfully performing their role. This
704 impacted on the quality of mentoring relationships, and could also lead to a reliance
705 on other forms of support. This situation may be alleviated through formal
706 recognition of the role the mentor is performing. Indeed, in studies where
707 institutional recognition is forthcoming (e.g. through time allocations or connections

708 with mechanisms for continuing professional development) (e.g. Barkham, 2005)
709 mentoring relationships were characterised by developmental milestones, regular
710 meetings, and benefits regularly been reported for both parties. These mentoring
711 relationships also appear to have lasted longer than those observed within this study,
712 progressing through a number of clear stages (e.g. initiation, cultivation, separation
713 and redefinition), with roles such as advocacy and protections performed, and
714 professional benefits experienced by both parties (Kram, 1983; Barkham, 2005).
715 Although such benefits were recorded, with mentoring cited as creating opportunities
716 for local discussions around teaching and learning, these were noted in only a
717 minority of cases. It is proposed that formal recognition both with respect to the
718 process of mentoring, and also within individuals' workloads, may result in more
719 productive and longer-lasting mentoring relationships. In order to achieve this,
720 support from university managers (e.g. head of schools / deans) would be essential,
721 particularly with respect to formalising mentoring relationships. Such moves may be
722 timely, given the moves within the UK through the UKPSF to further recognise and
723 accredit the teaching experiences of more established lecturers, and provide a career
724 trajectory for those with an explicit interest in teaching rather than disciplinary-based
725 research (HEA, 2011).

726

727 Recognising mentoring relationships would ensure dedicated time is allocated for
728 mentoring and situations for professional learning are fostered. It is not to say these
729 were not present in the study university, rather it would have ensured parity.
730 Interactions between the mentor and new lecturer also need to encourage critical
731 interrogation and reflection on the practice of both parties to enhance individuals'
732 awareness of the values, beliefs and concepts that underpin practice (Kreber, 1999;
733 Trowler and Cooper, 2002). These were actions that were observed to be challenging,
734 with the tendency for functional or practical discussions to prevail. This is where the
735 integration of critical incidents or raising awareness of Haigh's (2005) idea of
736 'learningful conversations' may prove advantageous, as both could be used to support
737 new lecturers to understand how actions taken in practice promote student learning.

738

739 Although wider support networks have an important role to play, the contribution
740 made to professional learning needs to be framed in relation to the nature of the
741 interactions that are taking place. They provide a valuable source of informal advice
742 and guidance. Regular interactions within these wider networks also assist new
743 lecturers to develop a sense of belonging (Warhurst, 2008). We need to enhance new
744 lecturers awareness of using this wider networks to stimulate professional learning
745 and provide mechanisms for meaningful engagement with them. To date, this is an
746 area that although of growing prominence (e.g. Boud and Brew, 2012; Reintes and
747 Kichin, 2014) has not been fully explored with respect to promoting academic
748 development, which is an area worthy of further consideration to identify how they
749 can be used to promote professional learning.

750

751 In this study, we have captured data on interactions between new lecturers, their
752 mentors, and wider support networks over one academic year. Within the context of
753 this study the majority of the mentoring relationships were coming to an end toward
754 the end of the academic year. As we have noted, in business, schools and other
755 settings where mentoring is a feature of professional development, mentoring
756 relationships may be sustained until a natural end is reached (Kram, 1983; Ragins and
757 Cotton, 1999). We recommend further research into mentoring relationships for those
758 new to lecturing which examines more specifically the instigation, development and
759 termination of these relationships. Such research also needs to consider more
760 explicitly interactions with wider support networks, particularly with respect to the
761 learning they promote. Likewise, it would need to heed the context in which many
762 new lecturers are working, in that as well as undertaking a teaching qualification they
763 will be balancing their research commitments and potentially other administrative
764 roles. As mentoring may be specifically tied to the teaching qualification, the
765 mechanisms of support for the wider aspects of a new lecturer's role could provide
766 valuable insights into how mentoring could be integrated more holistically into the
767 professional development for new academics over the longer term.

768

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773

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