
Guest editorial: Mentoring and coaching preparation and training in professional contexts

The aim of this special issue of the *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education* is to increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of how mentoring and coaching preparation and training programmes can prepare those working in educational contexts to mentor and coach more effectively. Mentoring has been advocated as a key strategy to support a variety of groups in settings that include teaching and teacher education (see, for example, [Crosswell and Beutel, 2012](#); [Shanks et al., 2020](#); [Ulvik et al., 2009](#)), as well as other educational contexts (see, for example, [Brace et al., 2018](#); [Jones and Smith, 2021](#); [Matheson et al., 2020](#)). While mentoring has been found to benefit mentees, a body of research has identified benefits for mentors that include increased self-reflection on practice, increased collaboration and mutual learning ([Dooley-Kennedy, 2020](#)), improved relationships with teaching colleagues and with students ([Ghosh, 2013](#); [Hobson et al., 2009](#)), personal growth ([Garcia-Molsosa et al., 2021](#)) and opportunities to learn new skills ([Olin, 2016](#)) and to develop leadership capacity ([Thornton, 2014](#)).

Researchers such as [Hobson et al. \(2009\)](#) and [Ulvik and Sunde \(2013\)](#) have identified that educational expertise alone is insufficient to become an effective mentor, and there is recognition that mentors require training and support in their roles so that they have sufficient expertise and knowledge, not just in their profession but also in mentoring ([Aspfors and Fransson, 2015](#); [Thompson, 2016](#)). While [Hobson et al. \(2020\)](#) highlight the importance of mentor training programmes for mentors, they suggest that there is “relatively little evidence relating to the nature and impact of such provision” (p. 50). This special issue therefore adds to our current understandings of mentor training programme elements and contextual features that facilitate or hinder effective mentoring and mentor preparation in educational contexts.

By exploring mentor preparation programmes and the critical elements within these programmes that lead to effective mentoring, this special issue provides a better understanding of how mentors and coaches are prepared for their roles. It also provides greater insight into the necessity for the formal preparation and training of coaches and mentors across a range of educational contexts. Two of the six articles in this special issue provide overviews of effective mentoring programme characteristics, while the other four articles explore approaches used in specific programmes and contexts. The articles cover a range of countries and contexts, including higher education, executive development and initial teacher education.

In the first article, Bronwen Maxwell, Kinga Káplár-Kodácsy, Andrew J. Hobson and Eleanor Hotham present a synthesis of international research on effective mentor training, education and development (MTED). They use an adaptive theory methodology ([Layder, 1998](#)), combining deductive and inductive methods, in their qualitative meta-synthesis of thematic findings generated from three studies, including a systematic review of literature, a secondary analysis of studies and interviews with leaders of large-scale MTED programmes that provided evidence of impact. Findings from this synthesis include that effective MTED is evidence-based, refined through ongoing research, tailored to both individual needs and context and receives sustained support. This study contributes ideas for key design principles, pedagogical approaches and resources, and suggestions for programme content for effective MTED programmes.



The second article, authored by Kate Thornton, takes the form of a narrative literature review focussing on the importance and characteristics of effective mentor practice and preparation across a range of educational contexts. Thornton highlights the lack of adequate mentoring preparation revealed in previous research and emphasises the benefits of mentors, moving from a mentor as expert approach to a more collaborative relationship in line with educative mentoring through engaging in preparation programmes. Three essential mentoring capabilities – relationship building, working collaboratively and encouraging critical reflection – are discussed and characteristics of effective mentoring preparation programmes suggested. These include providing time for mentors to reflect on their personal capabilities and attitudes, strengthening their knowledge about mentoring and learning a range of approaches and tools. Implications for mentor preparation include consideration of curricula that focus on the nature of effective mentoring relationships, provision of effective observation-based feedback and the facilitation of critical reflection.

The context for the next article by Hilda Cecilia Contreras Aguirre is a “femtoring” programme for minoritised and underrepresented students and faculty in higher education who do not always feel welcomed, included and valued at higher education institutions. This research offers insight into the value of mentoring and using femtoring as an inclusive approach, through a qualitative inquiry design involving focus groups, interviews and participant testimonios. Testimonio and platica (dialogue) techniques were employed to allow participants to describe their journeys in college and as members of the femtoring/mentoring programme. The benefits of this programme included undergraduate students finding a place and space to develop meaningful and positive relationships with other students and Latinx faculty, and faculty and graduate students perceiving their relationships with students as enriching and energising, practising values like transparency, honesty and care. The value of training sessions for graduate students and faculty in leadership and mentoring was highlighted and was seen as significant in fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Next, Rana Salman Anwar’s article focuses on understanding the relationships between mentoring roles, career calling and the transmission of tacit knowledge in the setting of executive development centres in Pakistan. The purpose of this research was to determine whether there is a link between mentoring roles and the transmission of tacit knowledge and, if so, to what extent mentoring structure and culture moderate this link. The study used a quantitative strategy based on partial least squares structural equation modelling to examine data gathered from workers at four executive development centres. Results showed links between mentoring roles and vocational interest and found that tacit knowledge was more likely to be shared when it was directly related to one’s chosen profession. The study emphasised the significance of well-structured mentoring programmes in supporting employees’ motivation and commitment that aligned with their professional goals.

The fifth article, by Tatiana Ciff, reports on the outcomes of a survey that aimed to investigate how aware and capable coaches in higher vocational Dutch education perceived themselves to be in assisting students who displayed mental health and well-being issues, including those related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The data revealed that overall, coaches claimed to be very aware of students’ mental health and well-being-related issues; however, there were some differences related to gender and coaching experience. Training that equipped coaches with the necessary knowledge, tools and mental health and well-being topics was requested. This study contributes empirical knowledge regarding higher education coaches’ perceptions of their awareness, willingness, capability and ability to assist students who display mental health and well-being issues. Furthermore, insights regarding higher education coaches’ perceptions on the frequency and form of the help offered, topics to be tackled and manner in which the help should be offered were gathered.

The final article, authored by Mary Clare Relihan and Richard O'Donovan, is a conceptual paper that explores the area of in-service mentor development in initial teacher education (ITE) in Australia. In particular, it focuses on the emotionality of mentoring, drawing on concepts of emotional labour and emotional intelligence to develop a framework of effective mentoring that helps explain the essence of a mentor's role in supporting preservice teachers. This article draws together mentor-support practice wisdom and research literature from several areas including constructive developmental theories and complex stage theory to explore the nature of mentor learning and development. A framework of mentoring as emotional labour (MEL) is provided to better understand the nature of mentoring within ITE and as a tool for developing more effective support for mentors.

While the research reported in these studies is from a variety of contexts, there are some clear similarities between the elements of effective mentoring preparation and training identified in the different papers. These include the importance of mentors clarifying their understandings of the purpose of the mentoring process, an aspect referred to by Ciff and also mentioned by Maxwell *et al.* and Thornton. A focus on mentor training regarding the collaborative and reciprocal nature of effective mentoring relationships is also seen as important in the research in this special issue, particularly in the Aguirre, Relihan and O'Donovan and Thornton studies. The importance of fostering trust between mentor and mentee and paying attention to the well-being of mentees is also a common thread in all the articles. The development of a range of skills and capabilities in mentors including opportunities for them to view and reflect on good practice is a focus of Relihan and O'Donovan's article as well as the two review papers (Maxwell *et al.* and Thornton). The Maxwell *et al.* and Thornton articles also highlight the importance of organisational leaders supporting and resourcing mentoring programmes, including providing time and recognising the contribution of mentors.

Issues related to equity and diversity are raised in several of the articles (see, for example, Aguirre; Anwar; Maxwell *et al.*; and Relihan and O'Donovan) and have been suggested as worthy of further study. This future research could include how mentors are prepared to mentor in a range of diverse contexts and how cultural and organisational differences are considered. The collective findings from the articles in this special issue provide useful guidance for those considering how to strengthen effective mentoring practices through the thoughtful and sustained preparation of mentors, based on principles of adult learning.

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