DProf thesis

Supporting early career teacher mentors in primary and secondary education: developing a context specific coaching training programme

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Supporting Early Career Teacher Mentors in Primary and Secondary Education: Developing a Context Specific Coaching Training Programme

A research project submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctorate in Professional Studies

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Abstract

Statutory induction for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) was introduced in England in 1999 (DfEE, 1999) as a bridge from initial teacher training to a professional career in teaching. In 2021, the statutory Early Career Framework (ECF) superseded the NQT induction programme which represents a two-year government-funded professional development programme for Early Career Teachers (ECTs). In this practitioner research project, I identify and explore major issues of concern to key stakeholders, in relation to the inconsistency and variability in ECT mentor support for Early Career Teachers (ECTs). This resulted in the development of a context specific professional development programme to support coaching practice for ECT mentors. The programme can be accessed and adapted to a variety of other contexts. This training programme has the potential to be used and embedded in the current statutory two-year ECT induction programme across the UK. In developing the coaching programme for ECT mentors, I engaged in several action research cycles and adopted a multi-methods approach using surveys, semi-structured interviews, and observations to gather data and inform the programme. The ECT mentor participants comprised teachers and senior leaders, including headteachers, deputy and assistant headteachers, and special educational needs teachers. My findings indicate that a record number of ECT mentors left the ECT induction programme in 2022. On a wider scale, these findings are echoed in a rise in ECTs leaving the profession within two years of qualifying, owing to increased workloads, stress-related issues, the greater demands of the revised early career induction programme, and variability and inconsistency in ECT mentor support across the UK.

My results have important implications for identifying some of the key indicators impacting the retention of ECTs and reducing the variable nature of ECT mentor support across the UK. The results have the potential to influence policymakers and ensure that ECT mentors have the coaching skills, knowledge, and tools necessary to guide and support ECTs on their journeys to becoming experienced teachers.

This research project consists of two parts: first, the practitioner research project, which outlines the significance of the research within the field of coaching, my research methodology, activity, and findings; and second, the Introduction to Coaching training programme (artefact) which offers professional practice and knowledge for ECT mentors in the primary and secondary education sector.

Keywords/Subject areas: Coaching, Mentoring, Early Career Teacher (ECT). Early Career Teacher (ECT) Mentor, Early Career Framework (ECF), Professional Development, Coaching and Mentoring in Education, Teacher recruitment and retention.

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Abbreviations

BPS	British Psychological Society
CIP	Core induction programme
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Enterprise
ECF	Early Career Framework
ECT	Early Career Teacher
EMCC	European Mentoring and Coaching Council
FIP	Full Induction Programme
ICF	International Coaching Federation
ILM	Institute of Leadership and Management
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PPA	Planning, Preparation, and Administration
SIP	School-based Induction Programme
TSH	Teaching School Hubs

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the background and context of the research project. I explain my reasons for exploring the world of the early career teacher (ECT) mentor and the importance of the role for successful completion of statutory ECT induction. Within this section, I outline the definition of the ECT mentor role, set out within the early career framework (ECF). I also explain the relationship between mentoring and coaching within the context of teaching and education. I introduce myself and my professional background and explain the difficulties of fulfilling the challenging role of insider researcher. The statutory ECF is presented at three levels: macro (central government), meso (local authorities) and micro (schools, key stakeholders, ECTs, ECT mentors). I also present the purpose and aims of the research project, the research questions, and stakeholder issues and concerns, and explain the importance of this research project and contribution to knowledge and practice. The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of this practitioner research project.

Background

This action research project is grounded in my values and beliefs about the importance of education and my professional concerns which arose from researching professional development opportunities for ECT mentors. A specific concern was disparities and variability in the mentoring and coaching provision provided by local authorities, schools and ECT mentors. Whilst researching, training, coaching and mentoring ECTs and ECT mentors, I was intrigued by the extent to which ECTs' professional development and practice had been negatively impacted by variability and inconsistency in ECT mentor support. This prompted me to embark on this research practitioner project.

Researcher's professional profile

I am a qualified leadership coach, accredited leadership and management training director, NLP practitioner and DISC behavioural consultant, with over 20 years' experience of delivering professional leadership coaching, mentoring and accredited leadership and management programmes through my organisation, Inspire Global Leadership Training and Coaching Consultancy. I have coached and mentored senior leaders and senior leadership teams in the private and public sectors across the UK,

and internationally in the finance and banking sector in Bahrain, UAE. My leadership coaching work in schools and local authorities helps headteachers, senior leaders and senior and middle leadership teams to achieve their strategic goals and professional objectives. I use established coaching and mentoring concepts, models, and strategies in conjunction with an intuitive coaching approach to ensure that clients are fully supported and challenged to explore, reflect and take appropriate action to achieve sustainable professional and organizational goals within a safe, non-judgmental, mindful space (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007).

The non-directive nature of the collaborative coachee/coach relationship (Stober & Grant, 2006; O'Broin & Palmer, 2008) resonates with the essence of my coaching approach, which is to follow the client's lead (Brodley, 2005; Joseph, 2003). Drawing on humanistic psychology (Stober & Grant, 2006), my strong view is that every client is whole and unique, and can find their own solutions. The coach's role focuses on facilitating the coaching intervention process to support the client's growth. Initially developed by Carl Rogers in the 1940s, the person-centred approach is aligned with humanistic psychology. According to Rogers (1980, p.115), 'Individuals have vast resources for self-understanding and altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes, and self-directed behaviour; these resources can be tapped if a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided.' As every interaction begins with a conversation, I incorporate Clutterbuck's 'seven conversations' model (Lancer et al., 2016, p.266) into every coaching interaction. The 'seven conversations' model enables the coach and coachee to reflect on coaching conversations that may take place before, during and after each coaching and mentoring intervention. Using Clutterbuck's model has enhanced my practice provoking deeper, more meaningful coaching conversations.

One of my clients, a CEO in education, describes my coaching approach as intuitive and non-judgemental, very challenging on every occasion, with brave conversations and important steps to change how he thinks and how he approaches situations. This has allowed him to move forward as a person and a professional. Another client, a headteacher, articulates that coaching enabled her to voice what was in her head, and that saying it out loud to another person made clear what she needed to do and how she needed to progress. Coaching gave her courage, confidence to take action, and the words and know-how to progress on her own.

Over the past 20 years, I have undertaken the role of senior leadership coach in the education sector, working with schools and local authorities across the UK on several professional development initiatives. These have included headteacher professional partnerships, diversity in leadership programmes, school business manager coaching initiatives and ECT induction mentoring programmes. People are my passion, and every coaching interaction inspires me to continually strive to improve my coaching practice.

1.2 Being the Insider Researcher

In this research project, I positioned myself in the dual role of insider researcher and consultant, working collaboratively with key stakeholders (local authority consultants, ECT mentors, senior education leaders) and research participants. I was aware that conducting researcher in an environment in which I am an established 'expert' leadership coach/consultant engaged by local authorities to deliver coaching training for ECT mentors presented some inherent challenges regarding my motives and intentions. My presence at the initial conference and workshops was viewed by some of the attendees with suspicion as they tried to ascertain, through direct questioning and comments, whether I was acting on behalf the local authority to obtain information to monitor their activities. I was therefore conscious that to gain the trust of the attendees and participants, I needed to explain my presence and intentions at the beginning of every interaction. In this regard, from the outset, I clarified my role as an insider researcher (Coghlan, 2007) and relegated my role as a consultant working on behalf of the local authorities. I also reassured the research participants that at every stage of the research project, I would work 'with' them not 'on' them.

Through collaboration, the research participants were encouraged to explore critical issues and offer practical solutions relating to professional development opportunities for ECT mentors. For example, I explored the insider-researcher/consultant role through action research by reflecting on my practice and asking questions such as 'what am I doing?', 'what do I need to improve?' and 'how do I improve it?' This enabled me to produce accounts of practice to show how I could improve what I was doing, how this would help me to give meaning to my work, and how I could influence others to do the same (McNiff, 2017).

My coaching philosophy reflects a person-centred approach. I subscribe to Stober and Grant's (2006) humanistic view that every client is whole and unique, and that the role of the coach/mentor is to direct the process, not the content, of the coaching intervention. The coach is a facilitator of the client's growth. According to Rogers (1989), the person-centred approach enables positive interventions where an environment of trust and respect is established.

Negotiating the dual roles of consultant and researcher was a key challenge, as it proved difficult to maintain a balance between the consultant, colleague, and insider researcher roles. I am an expert, professional practitioner in the consultant role. I am responsible for designing and delivering professional leadership and management, coaching and mentoring, and professional development programmes across various London boroughs. I initially regarded myself as a novice insider researcher. At the beginning of this practitioner research project, I took a more detached approach in this role because listening and observation were essential for the initial inquiry. This position proved to be very difficult, as colleagues perceived me as someone who takes the lead in most situations. Through my collaborative interactions with the ECT mentors, I sensed a feeling of relief that their views and voices would be heard, respected and listened to throughout the practitioner research project. My relationships with the key stakeholders, built over many years, helped me to initiate and develop collaborative interventions while maintaining credibility. Research within an organisation of which I was regarded as a 'complete member' (Adler & Adler, 1987) proved highly challenging. Although I am an external consultant, I have worked with the participating local authorities for over 15 years and have developed many relationships that provide invaluable knowledge and expertise relating to the organisational culture, people, processes and practices. The insider role enabled me to seize the opportunity to embrace this knowledge and expertise to convey the participants' lived experiences throughout the research process (Riemer, 1977).

1.3 Early Career Teacher (ECT) Statutory Induction

Prior to September 2021, to gain qualified teacher status, candidates were required to complete a one-year induction programme (three academic school terms). In September 2021, the revised Early Career Framework (ECF) superseded the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) induction programme. NQTs are now referred to as Early

Career Teachers (ECTs), and NQT mentors are referred to as Early Career Teacher (ECT) mentors.

The revised ECT induction programme is disseminated to schools across England through local authorities who act as 'appropriate bodies' responsible for carrying out independent quality assurance of statutory induction to ensure that ECTs receive the correct statutory entitlements of the early carer framework (ECF). Schools throughout England have three options for delivery of the ECF. The full induction programme (FIP) is delivered by a designated lead provider. In the core induction programme (CIP), schools deliver the programme using Department for Education (DfE) materials and resources. In the school-based induction programme (SIP), schools design and deliver their own materials and resources.

A key component of the revised ECF is a government-funded, structured, two-year professional development support package. This covers five core areas: pedagogy, assessments, curriculum, professional behaviours and behaviour management. ECT entitlements include weekly ECT mentor meetings, professional progress reviews, curricular training materials, funded training for ECTs and ECT mentors, and assessment. ECTs are also entitled to a reduced timetable, which equates to 10% off the timetable in the first year and 5% in the second year. There is currently no statutory preparation, planning and administration (PPA) time allocated for ECT mentors.

1.4 Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy

The four pillars of the teacher recruitment and retention strategy aim to:

1. Create the right climate for headteachers and other school leaders to establish supportive school cultures.
2. Transform support for early career teachers, introducing the revised 2-year fully funded programme of training and support.
3. Build on the foundation of the Early Career Framework to support teacher/leadership career progression through the development of specialist/leadership qualifications and flexible working practices.
4. Introduce new digital systems designed to simplify the teacher application process.

The Early Career Framework (ECF) is a critical element of the government's teacher recruitment and retention strategy. According to figures from the DfE (2018), over 20% of new teachers leave the profession within their first two years of teaching, and 33%

leave within five years. During the academic years 2021 – 2022, one in ten teachers 943,997) left the profession. Contributory factors include teacher recruitment not keeping pace with pupil numbers, which are projected to increase by 19% between 2017 and 2026. Increased teacher workload, pay levels and progression for leaders and experienced teachers, changes in government initiatives and policies, strict performance measures and inspections imposed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), are also significant issues that need to be addressed. The Education Policy Institute argues that longer working hours and low starting pay create a risk of burnout and limited take-up of professional development opportunities, especially in the early stages of careers. In an attempt to stem the number of teachers leaving the profession and improve teacher retention, the DfE has employed a number of retention initiatives which include financial incentives, the reintroduction of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) bursaries, fully funded routes into teaching and flexible working practices.

1.5 Key Stakeholder Issues and Concerns

This research project and training programme (artefact) seeks to address the concerns, and gaps identified in discussions with the key stakeholders (local authority consultants, headteachers, senior leaders, ECT mentors, ECTs), which include the issues around the recruitment and retention of ECTs and ECT mentors; variability and inconsistencies in ECT mentor support for ECTs; the additional workload imposed by the early career framework (ECF); dissatisfaction with the revised ECF training programme and lack of specialist materials provided by the external providers and the perceived overlap between initial teacher training (ITT) and the early career framework (ECF).

One of the main aims of the statutory induction policy and the Early Career Framework (ECF) is to address inconsistencies and variability in induction provision, relating to how the policy is disseminated and implemented by local authorities and individual schools. Bleach (1999, p.2) argues that responsibility for implementing the induction programme is left to the ‘professional integrity of heads, teachers and local authority advisors to sustain and encourage good practice’. Tickle (2000, p.3) concurs that systemic failures in the provision and dissemination of the ECT induction programme in local authorities and schools have contributed significantly to variability in ECT mentor support.

The Department for Education and Enterprise (DfEE) fully endorses mentoring and coaching to enhance teachers' professional development and performance (DfEE, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Harrison, 2001). It suggests that coaching and feedback may lead to long-term, sustained, positive changes in teachers' professional practice at any stage of their careers (DfEE, 2001a), and states that:

> *'We will continue to emphasise the value that can come from teachers learning from each other – through observing lessons, feedback, coaching, and mentoring – which many teachers find the most effective way to improve their practice.'*

As part of a national continuing professional development (CPD) capacity-building strategy, the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE, 2005) researched the impact of effective mentoring and coaching on teaching and learning. Its objectives were to promote mentoring and coaching to improve education and learning in schools, and to develop an understanding of the core principles and characteristics of effective mentoring and coaching to identify how schools might utilize these as tools for professional development. The identified benefits included opportunities for collaboration with peers and experts, as well as observation, feedback and shared interpretation of classroom experiences and processes to encourage dialogue and professional reflection. These build on the core elements of the ECT/ECT mentor training programme introduced in the Early Career Framework (ECF).

One of the main successful outcomes of my practitioner research project has been the inclusion of the 'Introduction to Coaching for ECT mentors' training programme as part of participating local authorities' annual induction training programme provision. A by-product of this programme has been that individual schools within participating local authorities have requested adaptations to facilitate coaching training to enable senior leadership teams to provide support for teaching and support staff. These requests highlight the adaptability and flexibility of the coaching programme. The aim is for the 'Introduction to Coaching Training Programme' to be expanded initially to London schools and ultimately to schools across England.

1.6 Purpose and Aims of the Research Project

The purpose of this research project is to contribute to the coaching professional practice of ECT mentors in the education sector. Specifically, the aim is to enhance

the professional development training opportunities available to ECT mentors to enable them to support ECTs consistently and effectively during the early career induction programme.

This practitioner research project addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the key issues of concern for stakeholders, including ECT mentors, headteachers, local authority consultants and central government relating to the inconsistencies and variability in ECT mentor support?
2. How can ECT mentors' professional knowledge and practice be enhanced to provide effective support for ECTs during the ECT induction programme?
3. How can I contribute to the professionalism, knowledge and standards of coaching practice in primary and secondary schools across England?

The practitioner research project has three key objectives:

1. To identify and address the key areas of concern, in terms of the inconsistencies and variability in ECT mentor support for ECTs.
2. To identify the gaps in ECT mentor coaching knowledge and to create a professional coaching training programme for ECT mentors based on the statutory Early Career Framework.
3. To create a professional coaching training programme based on the industry standards set by professional bodies including the European Mentoring Coaching Council (EMCC), ICF and the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM).

1.7 Importance of this Practitioner Research Project

This research project is important for several reasons. First, under the current statutory guidelines, the ECT mentor's role has been criticised for a lack of consistency and variability in mentoring and coaching practice. The lack of any statutory provision for planning, preparation and administration (PPA) time has been highlighted by local authorities and school leaders across England as a significant contributory factor in the inconsistencies and variability of ECT mentor support. As no statutory time is allocated, the ECT mentor's role is integrated into the mentor's primary professional duties. Under the new framework, ECT mentors are required to engage in weekly interactions with ECTs to facilitate their learning and professional development through an instructional coaching model, familiarise themselves with online self-directed study materials and monitor ECTs' completion of weekly online study content. Disparities in support are exacerbated by the fact that ECT mentors come from diverse educational backgrounds, with no formal training in coaching skills, behaviours, qualifications or experience for coaching ECTs. This impacts directly on ECTs professional career development and retention.

Second, my professional interactions through coaching and listening to the views of ECTs and ECT mentors over several years have highlighted and confirmed issues surrounding the variability in mentoring and coaching practice. Third, one of the main components of the induction policy in question is the ECT mentor's role. Although the role is recognised as significant in supporting the professional development of ECTs, educationists advocate that key elements of the role should be reviewed at a macro level by central government, and that statutory time should be granted, similar to the 5–10% (DfE, 2021) off timetable allocation afforded to ECTs, to raise the professional standards of ECT mentor practice and provision.

Under the revised ECF, ECTs still have only one opportunity to complete the induction programme, however, the timeframe has been increased from one to two years (six academic school terms). ECT mentors play an important role, as failure to complete the statutory ECT induction programme permanently prohibits ECTs from teaching in any state-maintained (primary or secondary) school in England. In my practitioner research project, I identify that although the new ECF has extended the induction period from one to two years and provides a comprehensive induction programme for ECTs and ECT mentors, it has introduced the ONSIDE (offline, non-evaluative,

supportive, developmental, and empowering) mentoring model and instructional coaching model, which focus on the process, including self-study, modelling behaviours, observation, and feedback. The Introduction to Coaching programme complements this by focusing on 'how' coaching interactions can be effectively conducted using the latest coaching models, tools, and techniques.

1.8 Structure of the Practitioner Research Project

In chapter 2, I provide insights into the knowledge landscape of mentoring and coaching in education in the context of ECT mentors. The concepts of mentoring and coaching existed in ancient Greece and are now used extensively in a wide variety of contexts, including sports, business, and education sectors. I explore debates concerning fundamental differences between mentoring and coaching, their interchangeable nature, and their application through to newly emerging hybrid versions of coaching and mentoring practice. I compare the role of the mentor with the role of the ECT mentor. I also discuss the action research cycles undertaken. I discuss the importance of positioning the ECT mentor as adult learners is explored through adult learning theory. Finally, I explain how the literature review informed my research questions and objectives.

Chapter 3 sets out my research approach and the rationale for the overarching interpretivist paradigm. I also explore my ontological commitments and my epistemological values and justify my choice of action research as a methodology. Through first, second, and third-person inquiry, I explain my values, beliefs, and reasons for adopting a multi-method approach to data collection and analysis. I detail the research activities undertaken throughout the research project, highlighting collaborative interactions with key stakeholders and research participants through two action research cycles. I explain my ethical considerations to ensure that my research was conducted with moral integrity in line with Middlesex University's ethical practice guidelines.

Chapter 4 explores the rationale for designing an 'Introduction to Coaching Training Programme for ECT mentors' as an artefact. I describe how this programme was developed and packaged using an accessible online platform and a user-friendly website. I explain the reasons for exploring the process of preparing for the first training session through a reflective lens using Clutterbuck's (2007) 'seven conversations', and

reflect on what I learned about myself, personally and professionally. I delineate my contributions to the field of coaching practice in education through the design and development of the artefact. Finally, I explain how the artefact has been successfully adapted for publication in the 2023/24 annual CPD programme for senior leadership, teaching, and support staff across all schools in one of the participating local authorities.

In Chapter 5, I discuss my initial findings relating to the interim research commissioned by the DfE, published in May 2022, which covered the first year of the revised ECF two-year training programme from the perspectives of ECTs and ECT mentors. The effectiveness of the revised ECT framework is also discussed.

In Chapter 6, I summarise my research, reflect on what I have learned through my research journey and highlight potential areas for future research.

Chapter 7 provides a reflective account of my personal and professional journey through the professional doctorate programme, using the Kübler-Ross (1970) change curve to articulate my journey. I explain my decision to undertake a professional doctorate and conclude with thoughts on the next steps in developing my professional leadership coaching practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature on mentoring and coaching in education in the context of ECT mentors. I explore mentoring and coaching from its origins in ancient Greece to its modern-day transition into the sports, business, and education sectors. I also investigate various definitions of mentoring and coaching by educationalists, researchers, academics, and professional bodies, and position my research within emerging hybrid versions of coaching and mentoring practice (Stelter, 2019; Stokes et al., 2021). I review a selection of mentoring and coaching frameworks from philosophical and theoretical perspectives. The interchangeable nature and application of mentoring and coaching are explored in an educational context, in relation to the role of mentors generally, and the role of ECT mentors specifically. I review the literature related to stakeholder concerns surrounding the revised early career framework (ECF) at statutory, local authority and school level. I explore the importance of positioning ECT mentors as adult learners through adult learning theory. Identifying learning styles relating to coaching provides further insights into the learning and development process. Finally, I explain how the literature review informed my research questions and objectives.

I began my literature review by selecting specific search terms. Using a funnel approach, the inclusion criteria included: origins/roots, models, theories and definitions of coaching and mentoring; applications of coaching in sport, business, and education; adult learning theory; the role of mentors in education; and teacher mentors for ECTs. Using search engines such as Summons and Google Scholar, my search produced over 300 journal abstracts and articles published between the 1950s and 2023. Specifically, Carl Rogers' (1959) work piqued my interest in humanistic psychology/self-determination theory, which aligns with my views on the person-centred approach to coaching. I reviewed approximately 250 of the 300 articles, published in journals including *The International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching and Mentoring*, *International Journal of Coaching and Mentoring*, *International Journal of Mentoring in Education*, *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, *Professional Psychology, Research and Practice*, *British Journal of In-Service Education*, *Journal of Management Development* and *Journal of In-Service Education.* I reviewed handbooks/textbooks by Fletcher and Mullen (2012), Clutterbuck et al. (2017), Garvey

et al. (2021), Lancer et al. (2016), Clutterbuck (2001), Cox (2012), Passmore et al. (2013), Whitmore (1992), Kline (1999) and Cox et al. (2014). I also reviewed literature and journals published by professional bodies, including the International Coaching Federation (ICF), the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), the Institute of Coaching (IOF) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

The overall aim of my literature review was to ensure that I carried out a thorough desk-based research investigation to inform and underpin my practitioner research project. Thus, enabling me to share my knowledge and practice contribution in the educational context, specifically the practice of ECT mentors in Education.

2.2 Origins of Mentoring and Coaching

'If I have seen further, it is because I stood on the shoulders of a giant.'

Sir Isaac Newton

The literature encompasses many discussions of the origins of coaching and mentoring. De Haan (2008a, 2008b) asserts that 'it is important to realise here that inspiring coaching conversations have been passed down from classical times'. The word 'mentor' translated as 'of the mind', comes directly from ancient Greece. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the goddess Athena assumed the role of trusted tutor and mentor to teach, protect and guide Telemachus, son of Odysseus, through his educational travels. Many writers have drawn on Homer's *Odyssey* to illustrate their interpretations of 'mentoring'. Anderson and Shannon (1988, 1995) explore the intentional, supportive nature of mentoring, and Tickle (1993) focuses on the mentor as an advisor and role model. Garvey (1994) highlights the challenging and supportive nature of mentor/mentee relationships, while Higgins and Kram (2001) espouse the notion of mentoring as a network of developmental relationships.

However, other scholars suggest that the concept of 'mentoring' originated in eighteenth-century France (Clarke, 1984), based on the work of Fénelon (1835/1994). Lee (2010) supports the narrative that Fénelon created the term 'mentor' to refer to a supportive, challenging, educational relationship between mentor and mentee. In the US, Levinson et al. (1978) also describe mentoring as a developmental relationship based on trust. Kram (1985, 1988) introduced a theoretical and practical approach to developmental mentoring relationships in a corporate setting, however the mentoring functions were frequently associated with the role of the sponsor. We see the

emergence of sponsorship, perhaps not compatible with development mentoring from the role and functional perspective. We can say with confidence that mentoring – the advisor, role model - has existed in many, if not all contexts and cultures for hundreds, if not, thousands of years. For example, children may perceive relatives and friends to be trusted advisors and role models.

Coaching has practice roots in a wide range of disciplines. It is used in various contexts, including sports psychology, behavioural psychology, counselling, learning theory, organisational development, business development and education.

Building on the knowledge base of coaching, current literature and research shows that one way that coaching can be explored is through four dimensions described by Wilber (1996, 2000), who states that essential perspectives must be considered to fully understand any phenomenon that involves human beings (see Figure 1).

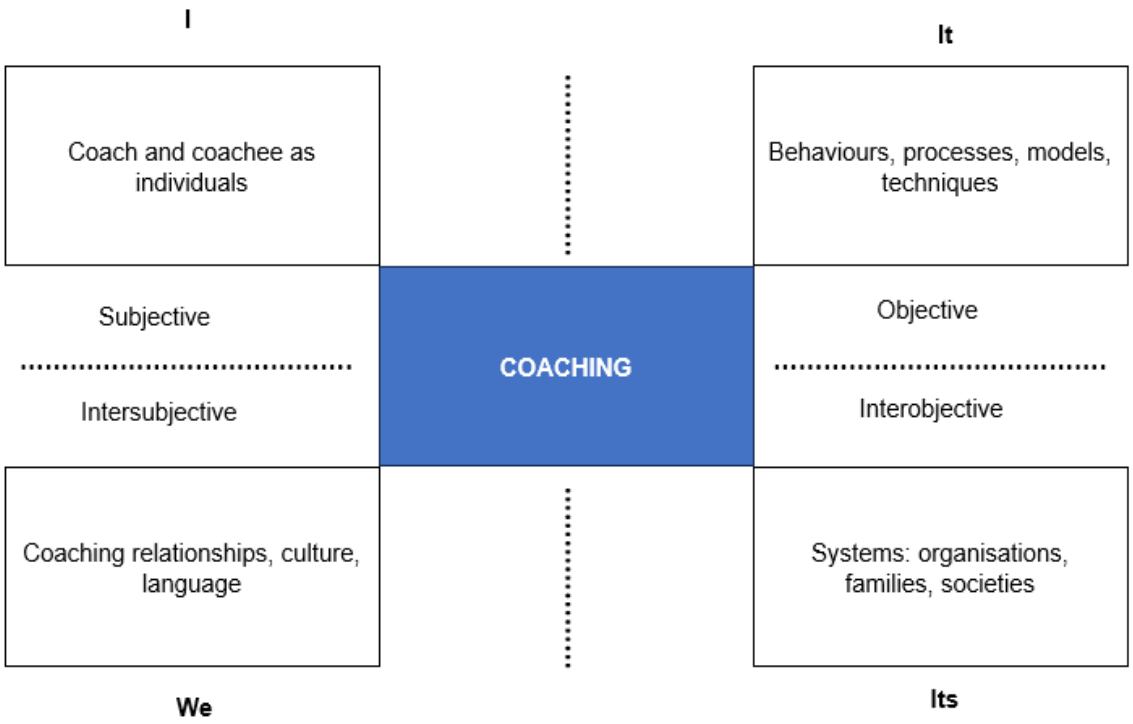


Figure 1: Four dimensions of Coaching

(Source: Wilber, 1996; 2000. p.6)

The four dimensions explore:

- ‘I’ – a first-person perspective describing the individual experiences of both coach and coachee.
- ‘We’ – a second-person perspective emphasizing the relationship between coach and coachee.
- ‘It’ – tangible elements of the coaching process observable by a third party.
- ‘Its’ – the systems involved in the coaching process.

From a professional practitioner perspective, the four dimensions of coaching provide an insightful tool that can be used to coach clients from the business, management, and education sectors.

Definitions of mentoring and coaching

The complex, interchangeable nature of coaching and mentoring practice, skills and processes contributes to the difficulty of agreeing on a clear definition. According to Ragins and Kram (2007), the term ‘mentoring’ has traditionally been defined as ‘a relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé’ to support the latter’s career development. The mentor is likely to work in the same sector or bring a deep understanding of the issues and challenges faced by the protégé’.

Historically, mentoring has involved training youths or adults in skills building and knowledge acquisition, both inside and outside education (Merriam, 1983; Mullen, 2005): ‘Mentoring is a long-term relationship between a senior, more experienced individual (the mentor), and a more junior, less experienced individual (the protégé)’ (Eby & Allen, 2002, p.456). These definitions echo the mentoring and coaching relationship between ECT mentors and ECTs in the statutory early career induction programme. Clutterbuck (1991, p.9) offers the following distinction between coaching and mentoring below:

‘Coaching in most applications 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.’

Gallucci et al. (2010) assert that providing clear definitions is difficult owing to the multifaceted, ambiguous, and contextually driven nature of coaching and mentoring

practice. Garvey (2014) argues that rather than focusing on lack of definition as a problem, the concept should be viewed through an alternative lens that explores the complexities of phenomena in their social contexts. Caruso (1992) offers descriptions of mentoring that use listening, questioning, challenging, and supporting skills central to 'the mentee's dream' to progress, learn, understand and achieve. The primary purpose is a relationship between two individuals focused on learning and development.

The diverse, multidisciplinary nature of coaching applications and similarities to mentoring, counselling, and training compound the difficulty and confusion in clearly defining coaching. Cox (2012, p.61) defines it as 'a facilitated dialogue, reflective learning process'. She comments that:

> *'Its popularity reflects a need in a society driven by complex situations and the individual nature of people's problems. But there is a problem with coaching: although we know how it works anecdotally, it is not clearly defined, and the research underpinning it is notably sparse.'*

In the management literature, traditional definitions of coaching focus on individual, team, and organisational performance (Fourines, 1987; Evered & Selman, 1989; Orth et al., 1987; Popper & Lipshitz, 1992). More recent definitions emphasise learning and development and supporting individuals and teams to reach their full potential (Grant, 2006; Peterson, 1996; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; ICF, 2007). However, there is a consensus that coaching is less established than mentoring, and that the literature on coaching remains in the early stages of development (Clegg et al., 2003, 2005; Anderson et al., 2009; Evered & Selman, 1989; Ives, 2008).

Coaching has no universal standard definition: theorists, academics and practitioners in the education, sports and business sectors have proposed many definitions. Stober and Grant (2006, p.2) define coaching as:

> *'a collaborative and egalitarian relationship between a coach, who is not necessarily a domain-specific specialist, and Client, which involves a systematic process that focuses on collaborative goal setting to construct solutions and employ goal attainment processes to foster the ongoing self-directed learning and personal growth of the Client.'*

Interestingly, Cox (2012) perceives the struggle to define coaching as the result of it being a victim of an identity crisis, while the challenge of 'creating a unique identity of coaching is still an unresolved problem' (Bachkirova et al., 2010, p.3). As previously mentioned, there are many proponents of a movement towards the hybridisation of coaching and mentoring, allowing both disciplines to draw on and adapt a range of skill sets according to the nature and context of interventions**.** Nadeem and Garvey (2020) refer to a 'repertoire' of skills based on the needs of the coachee. Stokes et al. (2021, p.10) argue that as coaching and mentoring share the same skill set, behaviours and processes, integrating the two disciplines is the way forward.

Definitions of mentoring and coaching: Professional bodies

The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) also highlights the interchangeable nature of coaching and mentoring (Hay, 2008). Wills (2005) reflects on the fact that coaches and mentors perform the same practices, skills, and processes. The EMCC extends the term 'mentoring' to 'developmental mentoring', in which mentors adopt a non-directive style to encourage mentees to develop their knowledge, reflect on their practice and develop thinking and learning solutions.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) defines mentoring as a learning relationship in which an experienced colleague shares knowledge to support the development of an inexperienced member. It states that both coaching and mentoring use the skills of questioning, listening, clarifying, and reframing.

The EMCC definition states that '*coaching is an art: that of helping a person or a group to develop and enhance their professional, relational and personal potential in the realisation of their projects and to take their rightful place in the relationship they have with themselves, others and their environment'.*

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching as *'partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential'.* The coaching process often unlocks untapped sources of imagination, productivity, and leadership. In contrast, the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) defines coaching through generally agreed organisational characteristics, for example as a non-directive form of development, focusing on improving and developing an individual's performance, and

assessing individual strengths and development areas. Coaching is defined in many ways in corporate, sports and education contexts. From a psychological perspective, the British Psychological Society (BPS) states that *'Coaching psychology is for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches'* (Palmer & Whybrow, 2006, p.8) From an educational perspective, Lofthouse et al.'s (2010, p.8) definition for the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) is:

> *'Coaching is usually focused on professional dialogue designed to aid the coachee in developing specific skills to enhance their teaching repertoire. For teachers, it often supports experimentation with new classroom strategies, and coaches are generally not in line management positions concerning their coachee. The focus of the coaching is usually selected by the coachee, and the process provides opportunities for reflection and problem solving for both coach and coachee.'*

In 2005, the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) implemented a national framework for mentoring and coaching for England as part of a CPD strategy for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This framework clearly distinguishes between 'mentoring' as a structured and sustained process of support through significant career transitions, 'specialist coaching' as structured support for developing specific skills or practices, and 'collaborative (co)coaching' as a process in which professionals support each other in embedding new knowledge and skills in their practice.

2.3 Approaches to Mentoring and Coaching

There are many different approaches to mentoring and coaching that have been developed over many years. Some are more recent than others and have drawn upon wider theories of adult learning, reflective practice, human psychology. Tables 1 and 2 set out the different approaches to mentoring and coaching that are most widely referred to in the literature.

Amongst Clutterbuck's (1991) various developmental mentoring models of mentoring relationships, practical mentoring models and processes, Figure 2 introduces the two dimensions of the helping model. On the directive–non-directive dimension, in directive mode, the mentor assumes authority and responsibility for managing the relationship, whereas the non-directive mode encourages the mentee to take

responsibility for setting the agenda to foster self-reliance and development. The second dimension focuses on the mentee being challenged and stretched at one end of the spectrum and nurtured (supported and encouraged) at the other. The dimensions of the helping model provide mentors with flexibility to offer personalised support that meets mentees' individual needs.

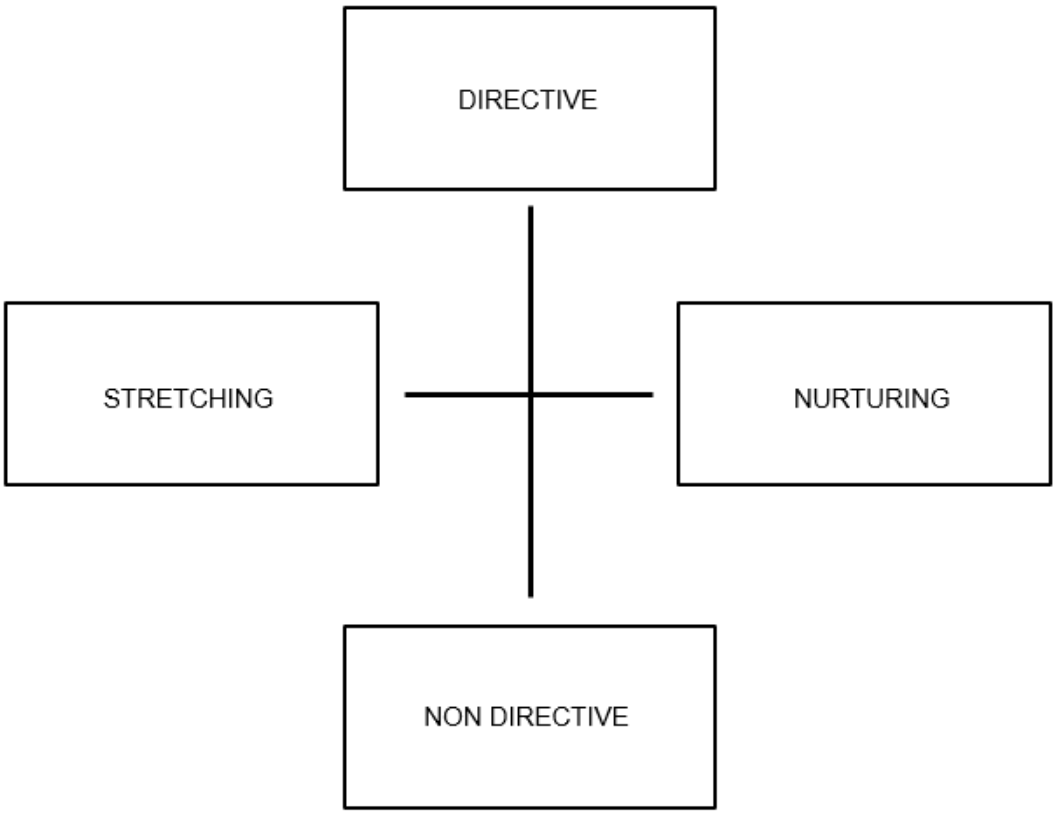
Table 1: Approaches to Mentoring

Approaches to mentoring	Definition	Reference
Sponsorship mentoring	Originated from the US. One-way, hierarchical process, where an experienced mentor, usually from the same field, acts as a sponsor for the mentee.	Kram, K.E. (1985). *Mentoring at work: Developing relationships in organisational life*. Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company.
Developmental mentoring	Originated from Europe. A two-way process focussed on mentor support for the mentee to develop their own thinking, learning and solutions.	Clutterbuck, D. and Megginson, D. (1995). *Mentoring in action*. London: Kogan Page.
Reciprocal mentoring	Can place participants on a level playing field where people with disparate expertise, backgrounds, and experience levels are placed in relationships acting as mentees and mentors; mentees and mentors may exchange roles.	Haddock-Millar, J., Stokes, P. and Dominguez, N. (Eds.). (2023). *Reciprocal Mentoring.* London: Routledge.
Reverse mentoring	Originally took place when the mentor is younger than the mentee; the older mentor learns and develops new insights. The nature of the mentoring focuses on the differences of experience and attitudes.	Marcinkus Murphy, W. (2012). Reverse mentoring at work: Fostering cross-generational learning and developing millennial leaders. *Human Resource Management*, *51*(4), pp.549-573.
Peer mentoring	Peer mentoring provides the opportunity for mutual relationships for both the mentee and mentor to give and receive support to each other. Often, participants occupy both roles and switch roles.	Kram, K.E. (1983). Phases of the mentor relationship. *Academy of Management Journal*, *26*(4), pp 608 - 625.

Table 2: Approaches to Coaching

Approaches to Coaching	Definition	Reference
Performance Coaching	Focused on supporting the coachee to set goals for performance improvements. related outcomes. Used in a variety of performance contexts including sports, leadership, and executive coaching.	Whitmore, J. (1996). *Coaching for performance*. N. Brealey Publications
Solution Focused coaching	Use of a non-pathological interpretive framework. Client-based expertise. Coaching focused on setting clear, specific personalised goals.	Greene, J. and Grant, A.M., (2003). *Solution-focused coaching: Managing people in a complex world*. London: Momentum.
Humanistic coaching	A non-directive relationship where the client takes the lead. The role of the coach is to understand the content and the process that the client is working through.	Rodgers, C.R. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships as developed in the client-centred framework.
Existential coaching	The exploration and clarification of what it is to be human, through an ethical, reflective lens. Focuses on meaning, identity and purpose.	Spinelli, E. (2005). The interpreted world: An introduction to phenomenological psychology. *The Interpreted World*, pp.1-256.
Gestalt coaching	Gestalt coaching focuses on the 'whole' self. The coach uses their own physical, mental and intuitive experiences ' in the moment' to support the coachee in understanding their issues.	Beisser, A. (1970). The paradoxical theory of change. *Gestalt therapy now*, *1*(1), pp.77-80.
Ontological coaching	Ontology is the study of being, specifically the investigation of the nature of human existence, coaching through the domains of language, moods/emotions and physiology.	Gadamer, H-G. (1994). Truth and method (2nd ed., Rev). New York: Continuum.
Transpersonal	Transpersonal ' beyond the person' coaching creates an environment whereby the coachee can explore their own inner wisdom and intuition using imagery, in a safe environment.	Hawkins, P. and Smith, N. (2010). Transformational coaching. *The complete handbook of coaching*, pp.231-244.

Figure 2: Two dimensions of helping

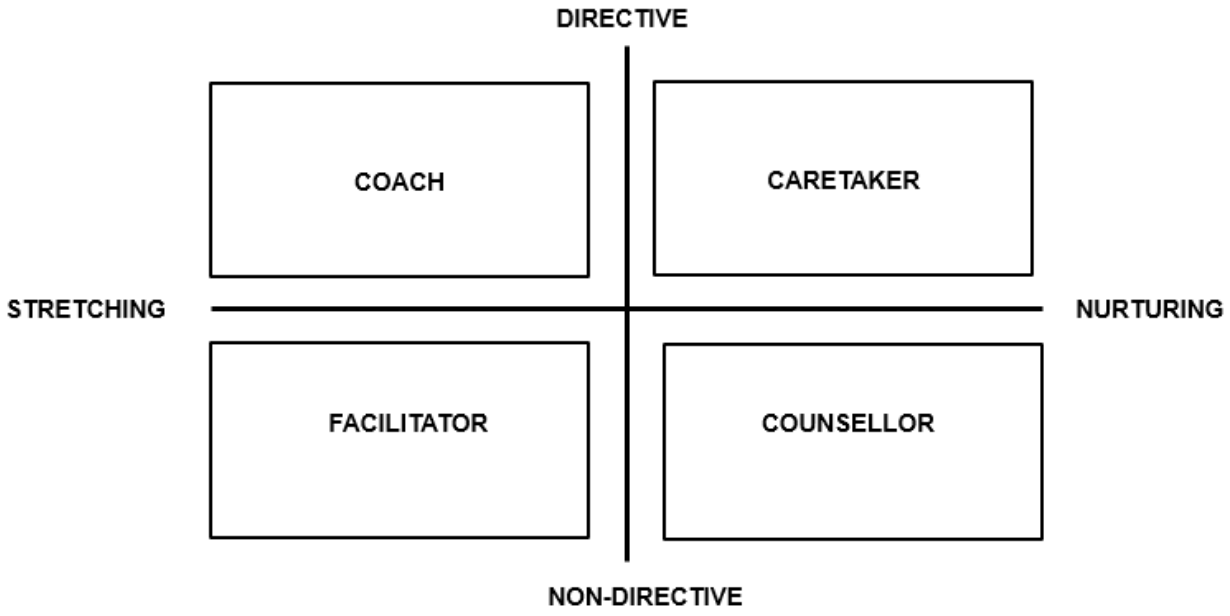


(Clutterbuck, 1991, p.18)

Clutterbuck (2001) later expanded the two dimensions of the helping model to reflect the various roles undertaken by the mentor (Figure 3). The functions identified are categorised into four primary 'helping to learn' styles. In directive mode, the mentor may coach the mentee in developing the required competencies. The mentor facilitates the agenda for meetings and observations and directs the process of coaching based on mentees' learning goals and objectives. In the role of caretaker, the mentor provides advice and guidance on mentee orientation and assimilation into the new environment. In the context of support and learning, the counsellor role enables the mentor to make non-directive interventions by facilitating, listening, questioning, and reflecting, and supports the mentee through personal and professional development issues and challenges. In the facilitator role, the mentor supports the mentee in navigating relevant systems, processes, and procedures to

develop the professional competencies required to complete the induction programme.

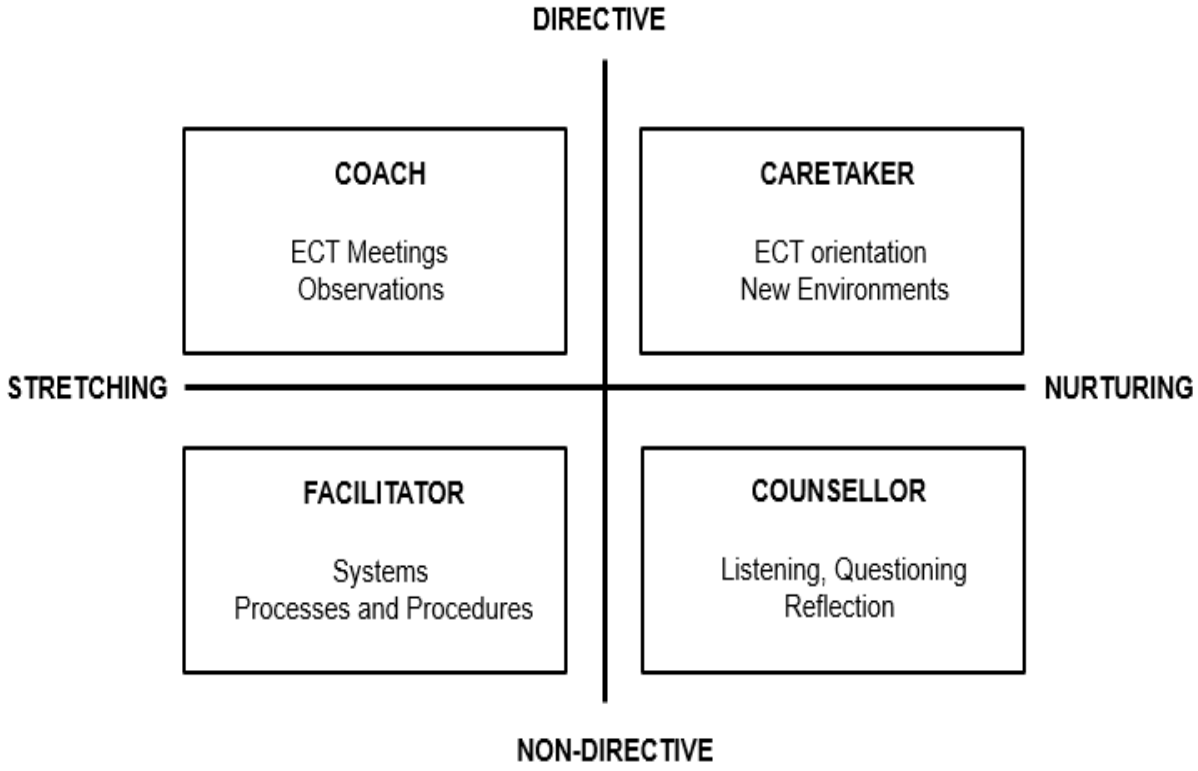
Figure 3: Expanded version of the two dimensions of helping (Clutterbuck, 2001, p.20)



In Figure 4, I have adapted Clutterbuck's two dimensions of helping to reflect the ECT mentor's role in supporting the ECT. In directive mode, the ECT mentor takes responsibility for providing direction, managing the relationship, and setting the agenda for coaching and mentoring the ECT. In non-directive mode, the ECT is encouraged to set the schedule regarding the frequency of meetings, the pace of learning, issues explored and outcomes. Here, the ECT mentor must utilise active listening and skilled questioning and provide reflective feedback. On the second dimension, stretching the ECT enables the mentor to assess and understand the ECT's intellectual needs in relation to professional practice and teaching and learning, and to agree challenging goals. In the nurturing role, the ECT mentor pays attention to the ECT's emotional needs through regular coaching interventions and orientation

to the new school environment, taking account of the fact that ECTs are adult learners with differing needs.

Figure 4: Four basic styles of helping in relation to the ECT mentor role (Adapted from Clutterbuck, 2001).



Maynard and Furlong (1993) identify three models of mentoring: apprenticeship, competency, and reflective practitioner. The apprenticeship model advocates collaborative teaching to assess teachers' professional knowledge and skills. The competency model involves identifying specific criteria for teaching effectiveness and training requirements. This model resonates with the ECT induction programme, which draws competencies from the statutory teacher standards that ECTs must achieve to complete the programme. The practitioner model focuses on critical evaluation, learning and developing professional knowledge. Hobson et al. (2009) argue that mentoring is more effective in environments where a holistic approach is taken to teacher induction and further professional development. According to Ashby et al. (2008), environments that foster inclusive, supportive environments impact positively

on teacher retention. Berry et al. (2008) and Parker et al. (2009) endorse collaborative mentoring during induction to foster commitment and ECT retention.

Research also confirms that various contextual factors influence the effectiveness of coaching and mentoring programmes. For example, failure to allocate PPA time to ECT mentors results in inconsistent support for ECTs. Thus, educationalists and local authorities advocate allocating statutory time to enable mentors to prepare for the mentoring role (Abell et al., 1995; Lee & Feng, 2007; Robinson & Robinson, 1999).

The ECF uses an instructional coaching model as a robust, reliable evidence base to improve teaching and pupil outcomes (Kraft et al., 2018; Sims, 2017). Instructional coaching is a core part of the statutory ECT induction programme. The instructional coaching model supports the ECT mentor through regular one-to-one coaching sessions and provides opportunities to apply the three key strands of the ECF: behaviour, instruction, and subject knowledge. Through instructional coaching, the ECT mentor identifies a precise target action for the ECT to practice, and then provides specific feedback during one-to-one ECT mentor meetings. Effective instructional coaching requires the mentor to focus ECTs on single, bite-sized improvement actions where they can make small, incremental changes that become embedded in their teaching, to give them model examples of how to perform these precise targets, to support them in analysing and reflecting on the model and how it differs from their current practice, and to support them in practising the precise target regularly before going 'live' in the classroom.

Table 3: ONSIDE mentoring framework

Mentoring should be..	
Offline	Separated from line management or supervision, non-hierarchical
Non-evaluative	And non-judgemental
Supportive	Of mentees' psychosocial needs and well-being
Individualized	Tailored to the specific, changing needs (emotional and developmental) of the mentee
Developmental	And growth-orientated – seeking to promote mentees' learning and provide them with appropriate degrees of challenge
Empowering	Progressively non-directive to support mentees to become more autonomous

ONSIDE mentoring is one of the approaches selected for inclusion in the ECT induction framework. The ONSIDE mentoring model (Table 3) is based on establishing a trusting, non-hierarchical relationship between mentor and mentee (Zachary, 2009), aimed at providing strategies to enable the ECT mentor to support and empower the ECT in achieving the learning, development and well-being goals set out in the ECF. In the context of coaching and mentoring ECTs, the ONSIDE ECT mentor adopts a scaffolding approach, whereby '(a) the degree of aid, or scaffolding, is adapted to the learner's current state; (b) the amount of scaffolding decreases as the skills of the learner increases; (c) for a learner at any one skill level, greater assistance is given if task difficulty increases, and vice versa' (Brown & Palincsar, 1989, p.38).

2.4 Mentoring and Coaching in Education

In educational contexts, leading authorities agree that mentoring is more established than coaching in teacher education theory and research (Clutterbuck, 1992; Kram, 1985; Malderez & Bodoczky,1999). Mentoring involves a wide range of activities, including nurturing, advising, advocating, and instructing, in which mentors adopt the roles of advocate, advisor and promoter (Kram, 1985, 1988; Schunk & Mullen, 2013).

The role of the mentor and coach

A wealth of literature explores the role of the mentor and coach. Clutterbuck (1991) suggests that:

> *'Mentors are experienced individuals willing to share their knowledge with someone less experienced in a relationship of mutual trust. A mixture of parent and peer, the mentor's primary function is to be a transitional figure in an individual's development. The Mentoring relationship includes coaching, facilitating, counselling, and networking.'*

According to Clutterbuck (2001), the context of the mentoring relationship (Figure 2.6) depends on many variables, including organisational culture and structure, and the purpose of the mentoring programme, as mentee and mentor enter a relationship with expectations based on roles, behaviours, processes and outcomes. Research on the coach/coachee or mentor/mentee relationship (Grant, 2014; De Haan et al., 2016) attests to successful applications of coaching to achieve goal-focused outcomes in sporting, business, and educational contexts.

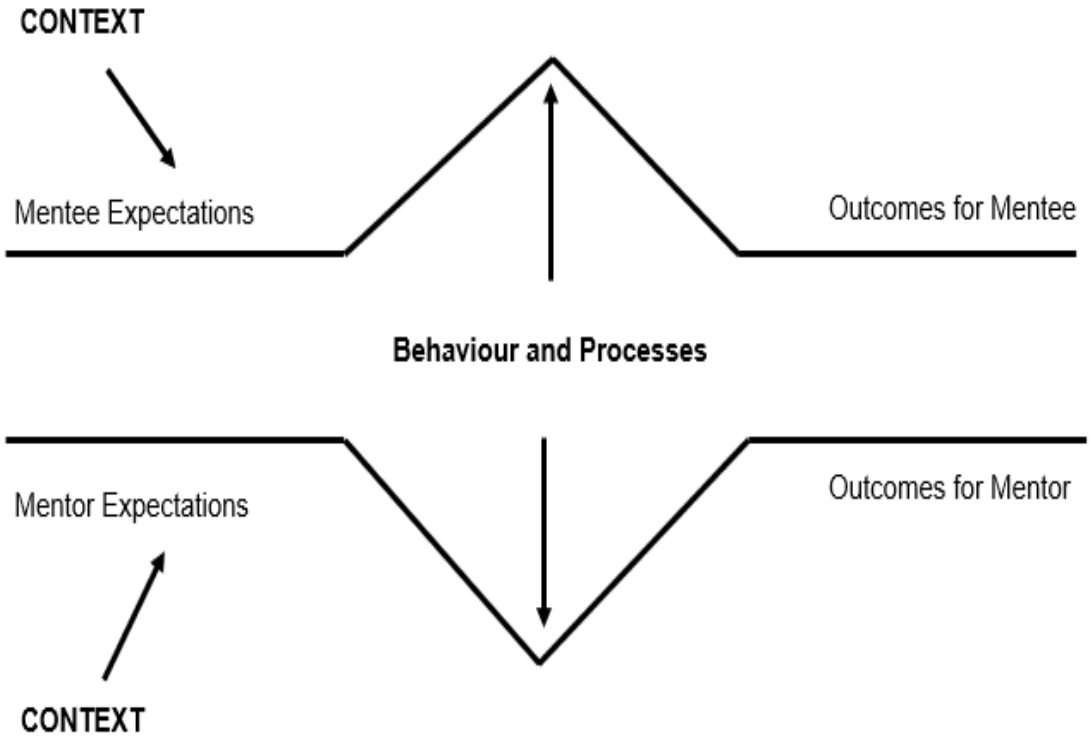
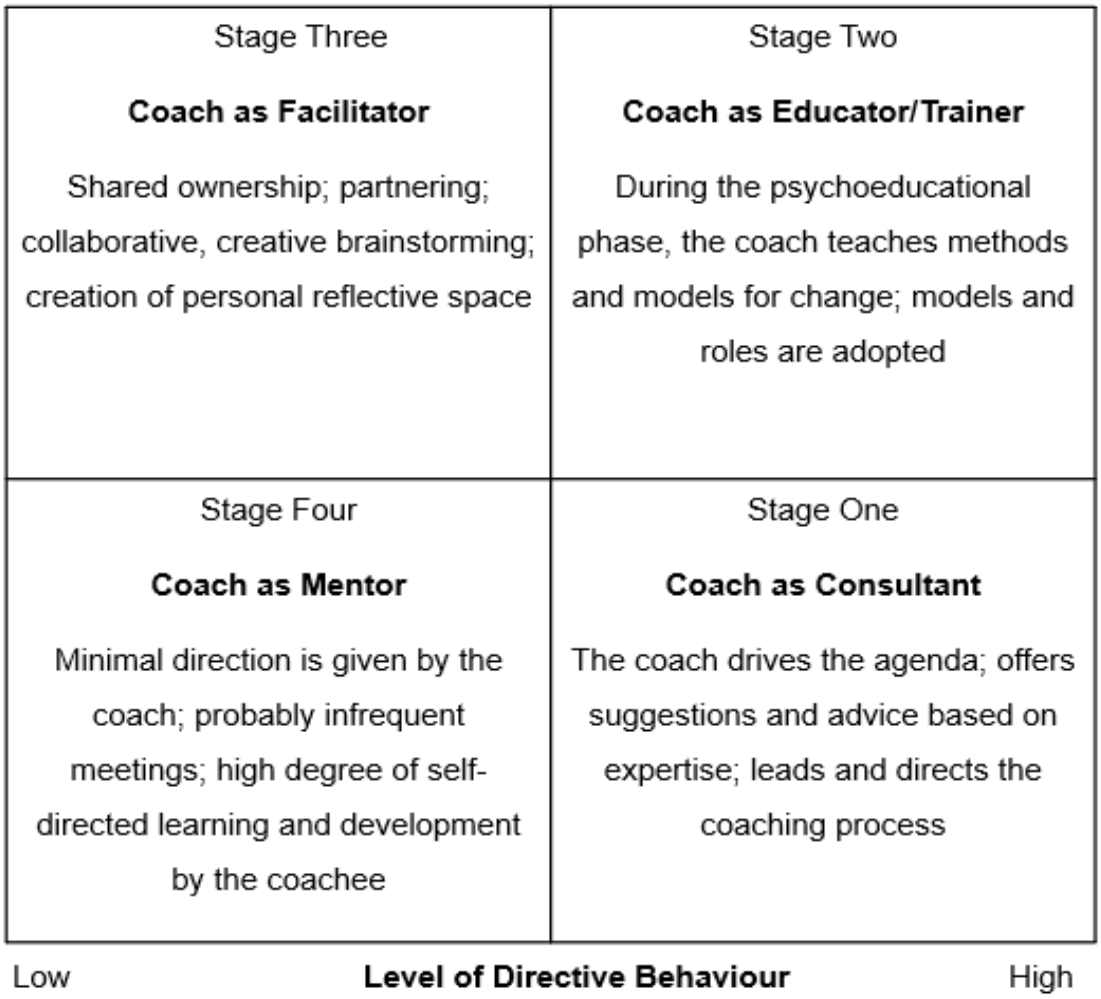


Figure 5: The context of mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2001, p.17)

Chapman et al. (2003) identify phases in the coaching relationship (see Figure 6) and the various roles (consultant, educator, facilitator and mentor) played by the coach at each stage.

Figure 6: Phases of the coaching relationship (Chapman et al. 2003, (p93 – p126)



This description resonates strongly with the aims and objectives of the ECT induction programme, in which the ECT mentor is required to undertake the interchangeable responsibilities of coach and mentor. The mentor role is necessary to provide effective support for the ECT's professional development, while the coach role focuses on required knowledge and skills. In the context of the ECT induction programme, the expectation on both sides is that with effective mentoring support, the ECT will engage in regular mentoring and coaching interactions in which exploration, learning and development take place, emerging from the early career two-year induction programme as a qualified teacher.

Jacobi (1991) suggests five factors that influence the effectiveness of the mentor relationship: age difference, duration of mentoring, gender and ethnicity, mentor style and mentor's motivation. In continuing debate around the role of mentors, Rowley (1999) proposes that a good mentor must be committed to the role of mentoring, accepting of the NQT, skilled at providing instructional support, effective in different interpersonal contexts, and a model of a continuous learner. Hobson et al. (2009, Section 2.3.2) reinforce these characteristics in advocating that:

> *'Mentors must be supportive, approachable, non-judgmental, and trustworthy, have a positive demeanor, possess good listening skills, the ability to emphasize, and the willingness and ability to take an interest in newly qualified teachers' work and lives. Mentors should also want to do the job and be committed to mentoring.'*

Mentoring provides psychological and emotional support, resulting in increased confidence, morale and job satisfaction (Bullough, 2005; Johnson et al., 2005; Lindgren, 2005; Marable & Raimondi, 2007), more effective behaviour management in the classroom and enhanced pupil learning (Lindgren, 2005; Malderez et al., 2007).

The role of the ECT mentor

The following definition of mentoring drawn from Malderez (2001), Hobson et al. (2009) and Hobson and Malderez (2013) reinforces the importance of the ECT mentor role:

> *'A one-to-one relationship between a relatively inexperienced teacher (the mentee) and an experienced teacher (mentor) aims to support the mentee's learning, development, well-being, and integration into the organization's cultures in which they are employed and the wider profession.'*

In relation to the ECT induction programme, mentoring and coaching are effective interventions supporting ECTs' professional development (Carter & Francis, 2001; Franke & Dahlgren, 1996; Marable & Raimondi, 2007; Su, 1992). In addition, coaching and mentoring support from the ECT mentor is essential for ECTs' socialization, 'helping them adapt to the norms, standards, and expectations associated with teaching' (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Edwards, 1998; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992; Wang & Odell, 2002).

The ECT mentor's role is to foster critically supportive, nurturing relationships that actively promote learning, socialisation and identity transformation within their work environments, organisations and professions (Johnson, 2006; Mullen, 2011a). Thus,

ECTs are mentored within a 'highly organised and comprehensive staff development process' (Wong, 2004, p.107). Foster (1999) suggests that mentors should be models of good practice who possess excellent subject knowledge (Abell et al., 1995). They should also be trustworthy, approachable, supportive, empathetic, positive, non-judgmental, and good listeners (Lindgren, 2005; Wildman et al., 1992). Mentoring is less effective if the mentor is the headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team, partly owing to the time constraints of the senior leadership schedule, but also because mentees may be less inclined to admit to any difficulties encountered (Hobson et al., 2007; Oberski et al., 1999). Some authors (Heilbronn et al., 2002; Hobson, 2009; Williams & Prestige, 2002) argue that separating professional development and assessment responsibilities enhances the success of the mentoring relationship.

Mentor training remains under-researched. Many studies conclude that mentors who undertake relevant training employ various effective mentoring strategies (Crasborn, 2008; Valenčič & Vogrinc, 2007), which should support individual ECTs' needs and learning styles. Building on the requirement for professional mentor training, Rippon and Martin (2006) emphasise the need for mentors to develop interpersonal skills (Lindgren, 2005; Valenčič & Vogrinc, 2007) and to encourage mentees to engage in reflective practice from the outset of their careers. Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992) attribute poor mentoring practice to lack of appropriate professional training.

The DfEE (2000) mandates that ECT mentors must be fully aware of the requirements of the induction period and have the necessary skills, expertise, and knowledge to work effectively. Within the ECF, headteachers and senior leadership teams of individual schools are responsible for selecting and matching ECTs with ECT mentors. The current statutory guidelines make no provision for PPA time as part of the ECT mentor role, so any time is allocated at the discretion of the senior leadership team. In contrast, ECTs receive 10% statutory PPA time in their first year. The ECF identifies ECT mentors as the primary source of support for ECTs' professional development**.** In addition, mentors must make rigorous and fair judgments about ECTs' performance concerning the requirement for satisfactory completion of the induction period and must provide or coordinate guidance and effective support for ECTs' professional development (DfEE, 2000, para. 26). Although the ECF makes provision for statutory professional training and support for ECT mentors through the instructional coaching

and ONSIDE mentoring models, my proposed artefact provides complementary professional mentor training, focusing on the essential skills and behaviours required to mentor ECTs effectively.

2.5 The revised 2-year Early Career Framework (ECF)

During 2019-20 the Centre for Teachers and Teaching Research at UCL Institute of Education conducted an independent evaluation (Hardman et al. 2020) of the revised 2-year Early Career Framework (ECF) (DfE 2019).

One of the key areas highlighted by the evaluation was the fact that the revised ECF underpins a significant increase in workload for both ECTs and ETC mentors.

ECT Mentors need time for coaching/mentoring, “what I would really like is an actual hour on my timetable that’s protected” (ECT mentor). Protected time for coaching conversations and observations of ECTs’ teaching was universally recognised as essential by the mentors and ECTs. Where schools had not made sufficient time available, this had a seriously detrimental impact on mentors’ workload and capacity to fulfil the ECT induction programme aims. Mentors who experienced this were more reluctant to consider taking on mentoring responsibilities in the future. Careful consideration is required to understand how the early career induction programme aligns with whole-school development priorities and the culture of learning and teaching within a school environment. The evaluation identified that ECT mentors required approximately one-and-a-half to two hours per week to complete the work involved in supporting an ECT. Protected time for mentoring meetings, mentor observation and mentor development need to be factored into the school timetable. Until 2020, no statutory time was allocated for the ECT mentor role. However, the Treasury has now promised funding to support Mentor time (HMT, 2020).

The ECT induction programme states that the role of the ECT mentor, is to support the ECT through their 2-year induction by ensuring that the ECT receives a high-quality induction; meet regularly with ECT to provide support and feedback; provide mentoring and coaching around specific phases and subject areas. These roles and responsibilities form the basis of the professional practice competencies which were further explored as part of the ‘Introduction to Coaching’ training programme.

At the macro level (statutory), and meso level (local authorities) the evaluation identified that, moving forward, more cohesive alignment, engagement and commitment between the various stakeholders (statutory policy makers, local authorities and school leaders), is required to ensure the future success of the ECF induction programme. Policy monitoring is also required to ensure that equitable time is provided across schools for mentoring support and mentor development.

At the micro (school) level, research shows that the values of school leaders influence how schools respond to the ECF policy reforms (Day and Gu, 2018) and that teacher development is influenced by school leaders, the context and daily experiences (Timperley et al., 2007).

A major benefit of the revised ECF programme was heightened awareness within schools of the importance of the ECT mentor. The ECF presented an opportunity to develop the role of the ECT mentor and coaching within schools as a specialised professional practice. The revised ECF induction programme has facilitated a change in school cultures recognising that the development of ECTs and their mentors ultimately leads to improved teaching, with potential benefits for job satisfaction and retention.

2.6 Coaching professional practice models and frameworks

The narrative around professional practice in coaching originated from academics including Warren Bennis, who stated 'I'm concerned about unlicenced people doing this' (Morris & Tarpley, 2000). During this time, references to the 'Wild West of coaching, gathered momentum, which led to calls for the professionalisation of coaching practice. As a result, many professional bodies such as the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) have introduced professional practice frameworks and standards.

Research conducted by Garvey et al. (2018), confirms that there are many advantages to the professionalisation of coaching practice. Coaching frameworks provide regulation of the 'Wild West' concept; based on coaching practice rather than research, provide insight into what coaching practitioners do, provide a framework for comparison and a template for training (Garvey et al. 2018). However, there are also many disadvantages. Bachkirova and Lawton Smith (2015) assert that competency based coaching frameworks simplify the complexity of the coaching process to a

series of tasks rather than involving critical thinking. Hawkins (2008) views competencies as self-serving tools for professional bodies. Ferrar (2004) states that coaching competency frameworks are more relevant as ethical guidelines and promoting professional behaviours.

The demand for evidence-based coaching is also growing. Griffith and Campbell (2008) state that coaching cannot evolve into a recognised profession unless competency frameworks are evidence based. Grant (2016) offers a definition of evidence-based coaching that is “Intelligent and conscious use of relevant and best current knowledge integrated with professional practitioner expertise in making decisions about how to deliver coaching to coaching clients and in designing and delivering coach training programmes”. Stober et al (2006) also support Grant’s (2016) argument that evidence-based practice integrates scientific knowledge, practitioner’s expertise and they add the coachee’s context. This integrative approach also provides a comprehensive and practical framework for coaching and serves as basis for an evaluation of any competency frameworks.

In 2024, EMCC Global published a professional framework that moved away from competency frameworks to a more inclusive approach that recognises knowledge, understanding, skills, behaviours and experience. This is a more inclusive approach to recognising mentoring, coaching and leadership in a variety of context specific roles.

2.7 Importance of Adult Learning Theories and Learning Styles in the Mentoring and Coaching Process

Learning styles encompass various techniques and teaching methods that learners can use to process information in a learning environment. Within the ECT mentoring relationship, identifying mentee and mentor learning styles results in a deeper understanding of their needs as adult learners, engaging in and benefiting from learning, relearning and unlearning in changing educational contexts (Allen & Eby, 2007).

The ECF incorporates an educative mentoring model that positions the teacher as an adult learner and the classroom as a site of enquiry (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). In addition, knowledge creation involves the cooperative principles of teaching and learning (Daly & Milton, 2017). Educative mentoring (Feiman-Nemser, 1998, 2001) encourages mentors to explore ECT experiences that provide opportunities to

develop perspectives, beliefs and knowledge about teaching and learning (Schwille, 2008). Collarbone (2000) identifies that effective coaching interventions must recognise that adults learn for specific purposes and must be motivated to want to know. From a mentoring perspective, Daloz (1998) draws attention to potential problems, such as mentors' misuse of power, control, and differing values and ethics that may damage the mentor–mentee learning relationship.

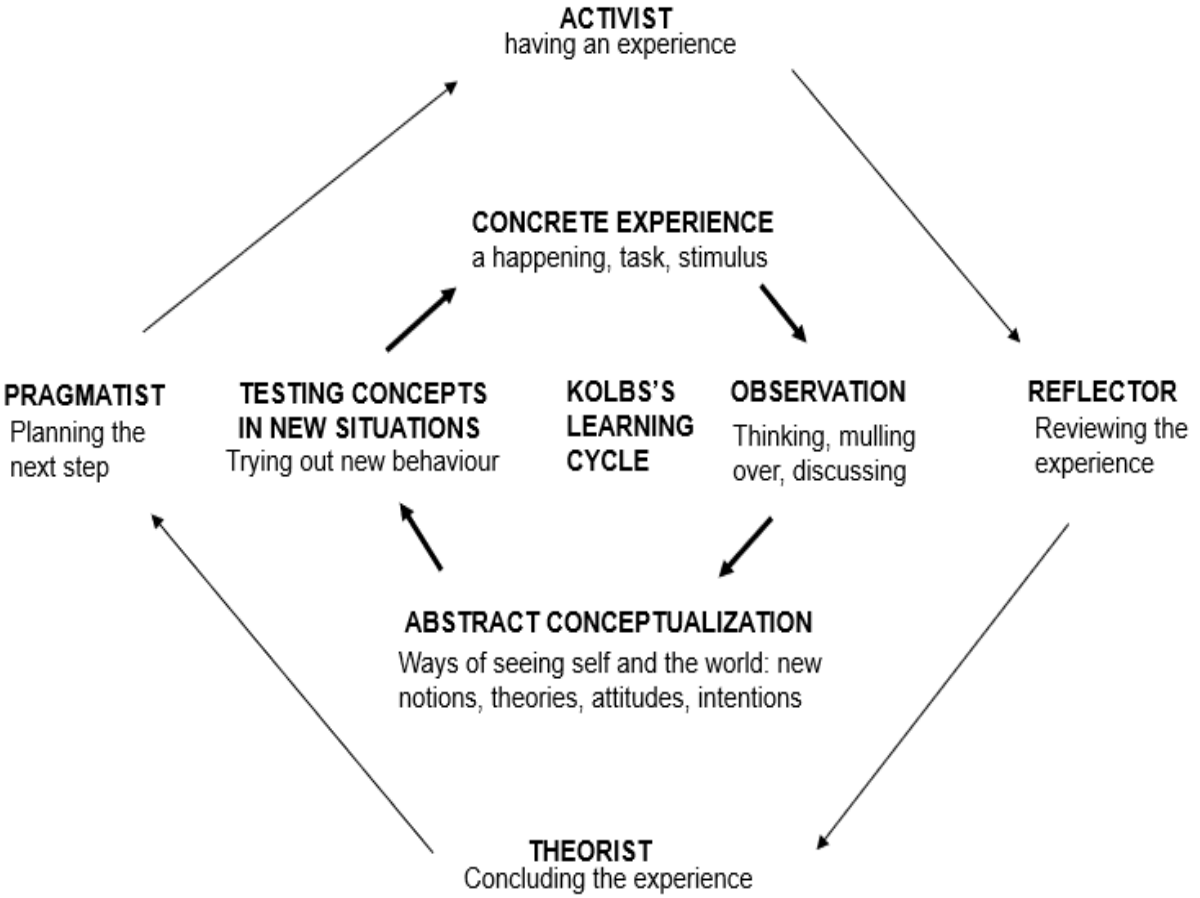
The wide range of adult learning theories includes andragogy, neuroscience, experiential learning, self-directed learning, and transformational learning. In this section, I explore three theories: andragogy, experiential learning, and transformative learning. These underpin the nature of coaching practice (Bachkirova et al., 2010), and enhance understanding of the learning process experienced during mentoring relationships (Allen et al., 2003; Clutterbuck, 1998; Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Zachary & Daloz, 2000).

Andragogy recognises the inherent characteristics of adult learners. Knowles et al. (2011) identify six main principles and factors that impact on adult learners' approach to learning. These principles can be applied to ECT mentors' role in supporting ECTs through their induction process. According to Knowles et al. (2011), adults need to know what they will be learning, are self-directed, have a wealth of prior experience, learn when they need to learn, and are relevancy-oriented and internally motivated.

Transformative learning is 'the process of effecting change in a frame of reference' (Mezirow, 1997, p.5). According to Mezirow (1997), transformative learning occurs when adults are encouraged to critically explore their assumptions and habits by undertaking task-orientated problem solving (objective reframing) or self-reflection to assess their behaviours and beliefs (subjective reframing), which in turn leads to change, growth, and transformation. In mentoring relationships, transformation occurs naturally through dialogue and critical reflection (Clutterbuck & Lane, 2004; Daloz, 1999; Mullen & Noe, 1999). Critical reflection enables suspension of judgment about the truth or falsity of ideas until a better determination can be made (Mezirow et al., 2000, p.13).

Experiential learning, initially based on the philosophy of John Dewey (1920), was operationalised by Kolb (1984, p.24), who asserts that it should be viewed in terms of

a process rather than outcomes, as ‘ideas are not fixed and immutable elements of thought but are formed and re-formed through experience’.



In Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (see Figure 7), learning is a four-stage cyclical process encompassing learning from concrete experiences (feeling), learning from reflective observation (watching), learning from abstract conceptualisation (thinking) and learning from active experimentation (doing). Knowledge is ‘created through the transformation of experience’ (Kolb, 1984, p.38), and learners can enter the Kolb cycle at any stage and follow it sequentially. It has subsequently been adapted to incorporate Honey and Mumford’s (1986) four learning styles (Dearden et al., 1999) of activist, theorist, pragmatist, and reflector. Activists learn by doing and participating; reflectors learn by observing and thinking about what happened; theorists need to understand the theory behind actions and think things through; and pragmatists like to seek and try out new things they have learned and put them into practice.

Figure 7: Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984, p.38)

2.8 Importance of Learning Style assessments in the Learning Process

As an educational tool, learning styles assessments encompass various techniques and teaching methods that learners can use to process information in a learning environment. Learning styles which include the Visual, Auditory or Kinesthetic 'VAK' classification (Geake, 2008); Kolb, Felder and Honey and Mumford (Coffield et al., 2004), have been widely used in the education sector to classify individual learning preferences. According to Allen & Eby (2007), within the ECT mentoring relationship, identifying mentee and mentor learning styles results in a deeper understanding of their needs as adult learners, engaging in and benefiting from learning, relearning and unlearning in changing educational contexts.

Although Duff and Duffy (2002) express concerns about the psychometric quality of the learning styles questionnaire, these assessments can be helpful as a starting point for adult learners' self-awareness and self-reflection. I also encourage ECT mentors to complete the learning styles questionnaire with their ECTs, to gain an understanding of the ECTs' preferred learning styles, and to raise ECTs' awareness of their learning styles to support them in developing new skills, knowledge and experience throughout the ECT induction programme

A multitude of models exist for assessing learning styles; understanding how individuals absorb and retain information (Cassidy & Eachus, 2000; Dunn, 1983; Harrison et al., 2003), most of the models are deemed unreliable (Coffield, Moseley, Hall, & Ecclestone, 2004). A survey of 92 learning styles researchers highlighted that problems of reliability and validity of learning styles assessments and the impact on improving learning outcomes were among their chief concerns with progress in their field (Peterson et al., 2009).

Furey, (2020), asserts that systematic research reviews examining the validity of the application of learning styles in education conclude that empirical evidence that learning styles are a valid form of assessment, further suggesting that the fields of cognitive psychology and neuroscience consider learning styles a "neuromyth" and 'ineffective, in improving learning/educational outcomes.

2.9 Practitioner Reflections

Reflecting on the definitions presented by the professional bodies, I concur with Garvey et al.'s (2009) view that since coaching is derived from mentoring, the meanings surrounding the terms 'coaching' and 'mentoring' should focus on the social contexts in which they are used, rather than on their definition. In the early stages of my career in coaching and mentoring, I was introduced to the work of Tim Gallwey, former tennis coach and author of the 'inner game' series of books, which include *The Inner Game of Tennis* (1986) and *The Inner Game of Work* (1999). This series introduced sports psychology and coaching methods and techniques to increase focus, foster relaxed concentration and overcome doubt and fear. This improved coachees learning, enabling them to improve their performance, self-awareness, and reduce self-interference. Gallwey's methods successfully enabled his tennis coachees to tap into their natural abilities and consistently raise the standards of their game. Through collaboration with Sir John Whitmore (1992), pioneer of coaching and leadership performance in organisations such as AT&T, Rolls Royce, and Apple, the 'inner game' methods and techniques were transferred from the sporting arena into corporate landscape.

Through the methodologies created in the pioneering work of Whitmore et al. (2016),

The GROW model framework for coaching conversations was created to facilitate the requirement to set goals during the coaching process and is widely used when seeking definitions of the coaching process (Grant & Stober, 2006; Passmore, 2013; Kilburg, 2000). I specifically included the GROW model (Goal, Reality, options, Will; Whitmore, 1996), in the 'Introduction to Coaching' training programme to support ECT mentors to structure and facilitate goal/action orientated, developmental conversations. I also recognise that as the ECT mentors mature and develop their confidence and coaching practice, they will invariably grow out of the GROW model. Although my experience of using the GROW model has had a positive impact on the coaching development of the ECT mentors, I respect the fact that evidence-based research conducted on the GROW model contradicts the general view that goal-focused models constitute best

practice at the beginning the coaching engagement (Kilburg, 2006). Pemberton (2000) shares the view that the establishment of meaningful goals are more effective later in the coaching engagement.

Setting goals in relation to improving performance, has been a central feature in workplace coaching since the 1950s (Drucker, 1954; Grant, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002: Ordonez et al., 2009).

The subject of setting goals is also a central feature in coaching literature and practice (Clutterbuck & David, 2016; Cowan, 2013). Prominent goal concepts in coaching encompass goal setting theory, whereby, (Locke &Latham, 1990, 2002), argue that to improve performance, goals should be specific and challenging. According to David et al., (2014), the positive aspects of goal setting are due to focused attention, effort, persistence and the knowledge and resources of the individual. In coaching practice, SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound goals (Clutterbuck & Spence, 2017; Grant, 2012), are widely used when setting goals within organisations across many industry sectors. The GROW model (Whitmore, 1992) focuses on the short- or long-term goal, reality of the current situation, options and the way forward (i.e. the actions to be taken, when and by whom). Grant (2006, 2012) presented an integrated goal-focused model of coaching focused on the concept of self-regulation whereby the coach supports the coachee through a cycle of setting a goal, developing an action plan, taking action, monitoring performance and adapting their actions to achieve the goal.

Although there are positive effects of setting goals, dissonate views continue to emerge from the research about the pitfalls and downsides of goal setting in organisations (Ordonez et al., 2009) and coaching practice (Grant, 2012, 2018). The view that setting specific goals at the beginning of the coaching engagement may focus on the wrong objectives (David et al., 2016) and possibly minimise the complexity of goals that may emerge over the course of the coaching engagement (Clutterbuck & Spence, 2017).

Initial research from quantitative studies regarding the impact of goal setting and successful coaching outcomes, depend on a number of factors, including, the characteristics of the coachee, the content of the coaching and the context of the coaching engagement. Initial findings suggest that goal activities, such as goal setting, appear neither beneficial or harmful to the coaching outcomes. Clutterbuck and Spence (2017) assert that rather than arguing for or against specific ways of setting goals in coaching, more nuanced perspectives could be adopted by coaches taking into account different approaches, contextual factors, as well as the personal characteristics of the coachee.

Overall findings suggest that although goal setting may play an important role in improving coaching outcomes, the lack of empirical research cannot presently substantiate this claim.

Transformational coaching utilizes the CLEAR (Hawkins, 2010) model as a tool for coaches support coachees to who feel ‘stuck’ to make transformational shifts in their

perspective by challenging the coachees assumptions, values and beliefs at each stage of the CLEAR (Contracting, Listening, Exploring, Actions, Review) process. During each session the coach supports the coachee to focus on what they specifically want to have changed by the end of each session.

Clutterbuck, and Megginson (2004) explore the merits of using frameworks and techniques in mentoring and coaching. These might be viewed as contrary to the humanistic, person-centred approach (Rogers, 1959). However, a conceptual framework that helps to guide the novice coach and mentor a starting point for elevating the professional practice of the individual coach/mentor (Gray et al., 2016).

2.10 Summary

This review of the literature and knowledge landscape provided invaluable research that informed my research questions and research objectives.

The exploration of the origins, definitions, models and competency frameworks of mentoring and coaching, from Greek mythology through to the emergence of modern-day hybrid contexts. Approaches to the interchangeable nature of mentoring and coaching have been examined in relation to mentee–mentor and coachee–coach relationships, in the fields of sport, business, and education; specifically in the context of the early career framework (ECF), the role of the ECT mentorand the issues and concerns surrounding the role of the ECT mentor; provided an in-depth explanation of the context for the research study.

Adult learning theory has been explored from the perspectives of three learning theories that underpin coaching practice. In the context of my research project, existing literature reinforces the view that the struggle to unravel the multifaceted, interchangeable nature of coaching and mentoring has led to the emergence of new hybrid versions of coaching and mentoring practice (Stelter, 2019; Stokes et al., 2021). Professional development training is highlighted as an essential element required to equip coaches and mentors with the repertoire of knowledge and skills necessary to improve standards and professional practice to effectively support coachees/mentees across all sectors. The review of the literature and professional journals published by academics and professional bodies provided invaluable evidence-based research and industry knowledge that informed my research questions and research objectives in

terms of the professional coaching landscape and the professional standards required to create a professional coaching training programme complimentary to the early career framework (ECF), specifically aimed at ECT mentors across the education sector.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain my positionality in relation to my practitioner research project. I will explain and evaluate my chosen research methodology, and why I worked within the interpretivist paradigm in this research project. I also clarify my ontological views and justify my choice of action research. My research is explored through first-, second-, and third-person inquiry through which I explain my values and beliefs. I will explain why I adopted multi-methods approach to data collection and analysis. I detail the activities undertaken throughout the different phases of the research project, highlighting my collaborative interactions with key stakeholders and research participants through two action research cycles. I explain the process for choosing the research methods, how the methods relate to each other. I also state how the research methods relate to the research questions. I explain the ethical considerations taken to ensure that the project was conducted with moral integrity and in line with accepted ethical practice. Finally, I draw on the literature on qualitative research to discuss the notions that apply to this practitioner research project in terms of creditability, trustworthiness and auditability.

3.2 Research Approach

In this research project, I worked within the interpretivist paradigm, which regards knowledge as being produced by exploring and understanding the social world of the people being studied, focusing on their meanings and interpretation (Bryman, 1988; Holloway & Wheeler, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Willis, 2007). I subscribe to the interpretivist view that people actively create their worlds to understand respondents' subjective reality, motives, actions, and intentions (Cox, 2012). Thus, I aimed to 'understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.19). I also recognised that my perceptions of reality and knowledge acquisition might impact how I interpreted knowledge of the studied phenomena.

Critics of interpretivism argue that as social reality is viewed and interpreted from the differing perspectives of many different people, the reliability and validity of interpretivist research are questionable. My personal and professional values are that every ECT seeking professional support and development has the right to expect

professionally trained mentors with professional coaching knowledge and skills. My desire to enhance professional development opportunities and formal ECT mentor and coaching training has awakened a sleeping giant within me, which dates back to my childhood and the importance I attribute to education and learning. In my view, mentors should be held accountable and adhere to recognised mentoring and coaching standards and codes of ethics (Lynch-Edghill, 2016). I acknowledge that my role as a researcher has developed and evolved through my previous and current research. I strive to identify and address issues of concern; effect change and co-create actionable knowledge relating to ECT mentors and practitioners in the broader field of mentoring and coaching in education. By sharing their experiences, the research participants contributed to knowledge of professional development opportunities for ECT mentors. I also respect and value the ontological commitments underpinning action research, which is morally committed, inclusive, democratic, and relational (McNiff, 2017, p.39).

This research project enabled me to examine my epistemology regarding my knowledge acquisition, which is structured, disciplined and process driven. My epistemological views resonate with McNiff (2017) assertions that knowledge is uncertain, knowledge creation is a collaborative process, and all practitioners are agents, not recipients or onlookers. Throughout the research process, knowledge was created through dialogue and negotiated in collaborative interactions with key stakeholders and other interested parties. Reason and Torbert (2001) maintain that action researchers work under the epistemological assumption that academic research and discourse aim to describe, understand, and explain the world, and to change it.

Action research has a solid foundation in many philosophical approaches, including pragmatic philosophy (Greenwood & Levin, 2007), phenomenology (Ladkin, 2005) and critical theory (Kemmis et al., 2015). However, a growing movement critiques references to action research as ‘scientific’. Cassell and Johnson (2008, p.806) claim that ‘there is no incontestable scheme of ontological and epistemological standards which may be deployed to govern action research’. According to Gibbons et al. (1994), action research is a new research model that produces new transdisciplinary, accountable and reflexive knowledge. Guerci et al. (2018) state that academics and practitioners’ research driven by practical issues and collaborative efforts may be

viewed through a different research mode. Coghlan (2016) argues that the action research paradigm should not be defined according to positivist or interpretivist science rules, and Susman and Evered (1978, p.601) concur that action research is a 'kind of science with a different epistemology that produces a different type of knowledge'. Argyris et al. (1985, p.4) refer to it as a 'science of practice', and Torbert (1991, p.220) suggests that it is 'a kind of scientific inquiry conducted in everyday life'.

These views encapsulate my reasons for adopting action research as my chosen methodology. In this research, I also considered a critical epistemological issue regarding how the relationship between researcher and research participants might influence the connection between facts and values. My relationship with the research participants was characterised by 'empathetic neutrality'. I fully acknowledged that in working within the interpretivist paradigm, I might sometimes be influenced by my beliefs and values. However, I tried to avoid bias and ensure transparency throughout the research process.

3.3 Research Strategy: Action Research

Action research, as a methodology, supported my aim as a researcher to build collaborative relationships with key stakeholders in participating local authorities to address critical issues of concern and generate actionable knowledge. Saunders et al., (2000, p.92) assert that when selecting a research strategy, 'what matters most is not the label attached to a particular strategy, but whether it is appropriate for your particular research'. Thus, I employed appropriate strategies and methods to address the phenomena in question (Sayer, 2002) and answer the research questions (Robson, 2002).

My reasons for choosing action research align with Bradbury's (2015, p.1) view that:

> *'Action research is a democratic and participatory orientation to knowledge creation. It brings together action and reflection, theory, and practice to pursue practical solutions to issues of pressing concern. Action research is a pragmatic co-creation of knowledge with, not about, people.'*

Action research encompasses a philosophy of practical knowing extracted through first-, second- and third-person inquiry (Reason & Torbert, 2001; Bradbury, 2015). The research activities relate to first-, second- and third-person action research in the following ways. Through first-person inquiry, I took my research 'upstream' to explore my values and beliefs around education, personal and professional development. and

‘downstream’ to explore my behaviours when interacting with key stakeholders and research participants.

First person action research enabled me to engage in self-enquiry to improve my practice as a reflexive researcher in action and interpretation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Critical reflection paved the way for me to answer the question “to what purpose?” (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). This question enabled me to fully engage in self-enquiry as to why this research project was important for me to answer the research questions and achieve the stated aims and objectives. From the outset of the research project, challenging questioning (Torbert, 1991; Marshall, 2001)**,** from the research participants further enabled me to reflect on my intentions, my choices in research questions, methods and outcomes.

Second-person inquiry enabled co-creation of a collaborative, democratic group who discussed issues of concern, created shared values, generated actionable knowledge relating to the research project and took joint action to move issues forward**.** Second person action research involved meetings with the key stakeholders to inquire into the issues of concern. In my role as initiating researcher, I facilitated collaborative discussions which enabled all involved to participate in the decision-making process in relation to the outcomes of the research (Heron,1996; Heron and Reason, 2008) and the content for the artefact

Third-person inquiry enabled collaborative groups interested in the research project to engage in formal and informal inquiry (Gustavsen, 2001) with the wider community of stakeholders within the participating schools and local authorities.

Through first, second-, and third-person research, this research project produced practical, reflective knowledge in action, which promoted participation and democracy (Reason and Bradbury, 2008a) amongst the research participants and key stakeholders.

Lewin’s (2012) visual representation of action research shows the face of Janus, with the head looking in two directions simultaneously, addressing issues and problems while taking a rigorous and reflective view on how the issues are investigated and addressed. This visual representation provides an engaging, thought-provoking picture of how my action research group collaborated in discussing, negotiating, and addressing issues of practical concern, generating knowledge, and acting. Ultimately, we sought to contribute to knowledge relating to enhancing ECT mentors’ expertise

and professional practice. In this action research project, I explored and understood the world of the participating ECT mentors and heard their voices, which resulted in the introduction to coaching training programme. This practitioner research project enabled the 'practitioners who have something to say from which others can learn with a vehicle in which to say it' (McNiff, 2017, p.12).

3.4 Research Activity

With all practitioner research projects of this type, there are numerous phases and activities involved. For ease, I outline the key phases, activities, and timeline below.

Phase 1: June 2018 – Initial engagement with key stakeholders

Attending the initial ECT mentor conference in June 2018 as a guest speaker and workshop facilitator enabled me to engage with key stakeholders, both new and experienced ECT mentors, local authority workforce consultants, headteachers, and senior leaders from local authorities in the London boroughs of Ealing, Kensington & Chelsea, and the City of Westminster. Throughout the research project, I immersed myself in attending key ECT mentor activities, including ECT mentor conferences, mentor training days, network meetings, and attendance at mentor forums. During these interactions I requested that the ECT mentors keep a coaching journal or diary to record their reflections on their professional practice as mentors and the support required by ECTs, they were also asked to explore professional development opportunities.

Phase 2: January 2019 – Engagement of research participants

After the initial interactions, I asked 60 participants to register an interest as to whether they would be interested in taking part in the practitioner research project. During phase 2, I sent follow-up emails and follow-up calls to those who had expressed an interest in working together as a collaborative group to develop initial ideas for enhancing ECT mentor professional development training opportunities. The group also discussed the type of information that would be most appropriate to elicit from the research participants and the most appropriate methods for data collection.

Phase 3: February 2019 – The process and reasons for choosing the research methods

I gathered data through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observations. Survey data was chosen as the data collected provided an opportunity to understand and appreciate the professional backgrounds of ECT mentors; their perceptions of the role; issues and concerns; and their opinions on the types of professional development training opportunities that would support them in their roles as ECT mentors. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the interviews facilitated focused, structured discussions while allowing interviewees to discuss core issues in depth. The inclusion of observation data enabled the exploration of ECT mentors practice and direct interactions with ECTs. I recorded each observation in my research notebook which I later used as a reference for the verbal and non-verbal interactions that I had witnessed. Triangulation of the research methods enabled me to collect data that addressed the research questions, informed the purpose, aims and objectives, explored emerging themes which ultimately contributed to the development of the training programme.

Phase 4: June 2019 – Programme Development

Collaborative meetings enabled the action research group to discuss various aspects of the pilot ECT mentor professional development programme, including the content, design, marketing, costs for delivery, and facilitation.

Phase 5: February 2020 – Programme Delivery

I delivered the pilot programme entitled 'Coaching for Effective ECT Induction'. Session 1 took place on 26 February 2020, and Session 2 on 10 March 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Sessions 3 and 4 were delayed and delivered online on 19 January and 10 February 2021, respectively.

Phase 6: March 2021 – Programme Evaluation

The pilot programme was evaluated between March and June 2021. Analysis of the evaluation forms provided valuable data, resulting in modification of the pilot programme content. This included changing the title from 'Coaching for Effective ECT Induction' to 'An Introduction to Coaching for Early Career Teacher (ECT) Mentors'. Evaluation of the feedback from the pilot session proved to be very positive, this

resulted in further discussions regarding rolling the programme out to all school staff from the participating local authorities who expressed an interest in coaching practice.

Phase 7: June 2022 – Development and design of the training programme online platform

The decision to develop an online platform came about as a result of the success of the pilot training programme. Exploratory meetings with the participating workforce consultants focussed on options that would enable participating and potential local authorities and schools to access coaching training for ECT mentors wishing to access face-to-face, online or a blended style of learning as part of the local authorities CPD provision.

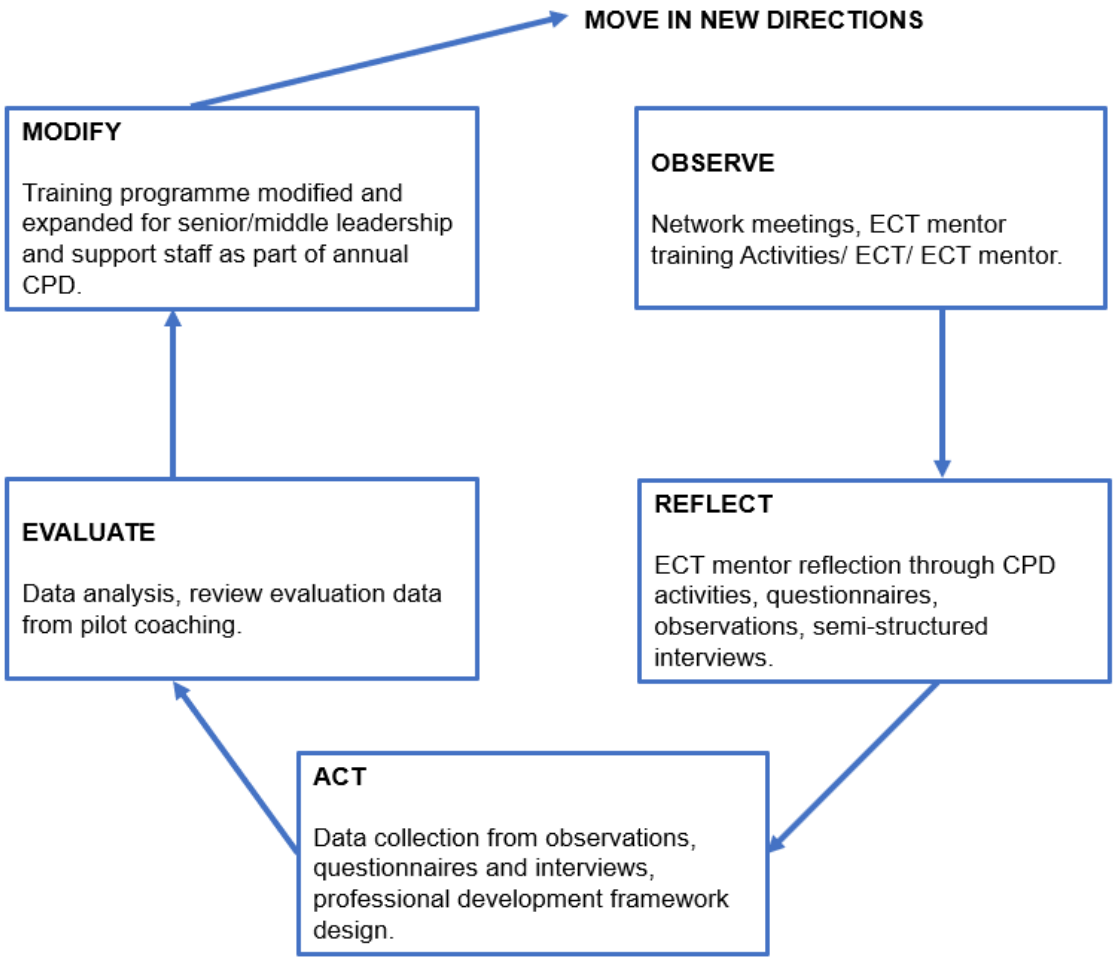
Phase 8: October 2023 – Programme rollout to schools in participating local authorities.

The success of the Introduction to Coaching programme for ECT Mentors within the 3 participating local authorities has resulted in the creation of an Introduction to Coaching programme for all staff members across the education spectrum from senior/middle leadership, teaching, and support staff as part of the participating local authority's continuous professional development (CPD) programmes.

Action Research Cycle 1

In action research cycle 1 (Figure 8), I observed ECT mentors' activities while attending and facilitating ECT mentor annual conferences, network meetings, and forums. In addition, I used the action–reflection cycle to work through two action research cycles (see Figures 8 and 9) to 'observe – reflect – act – evaluate – modify – move in new directions' (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p.9).

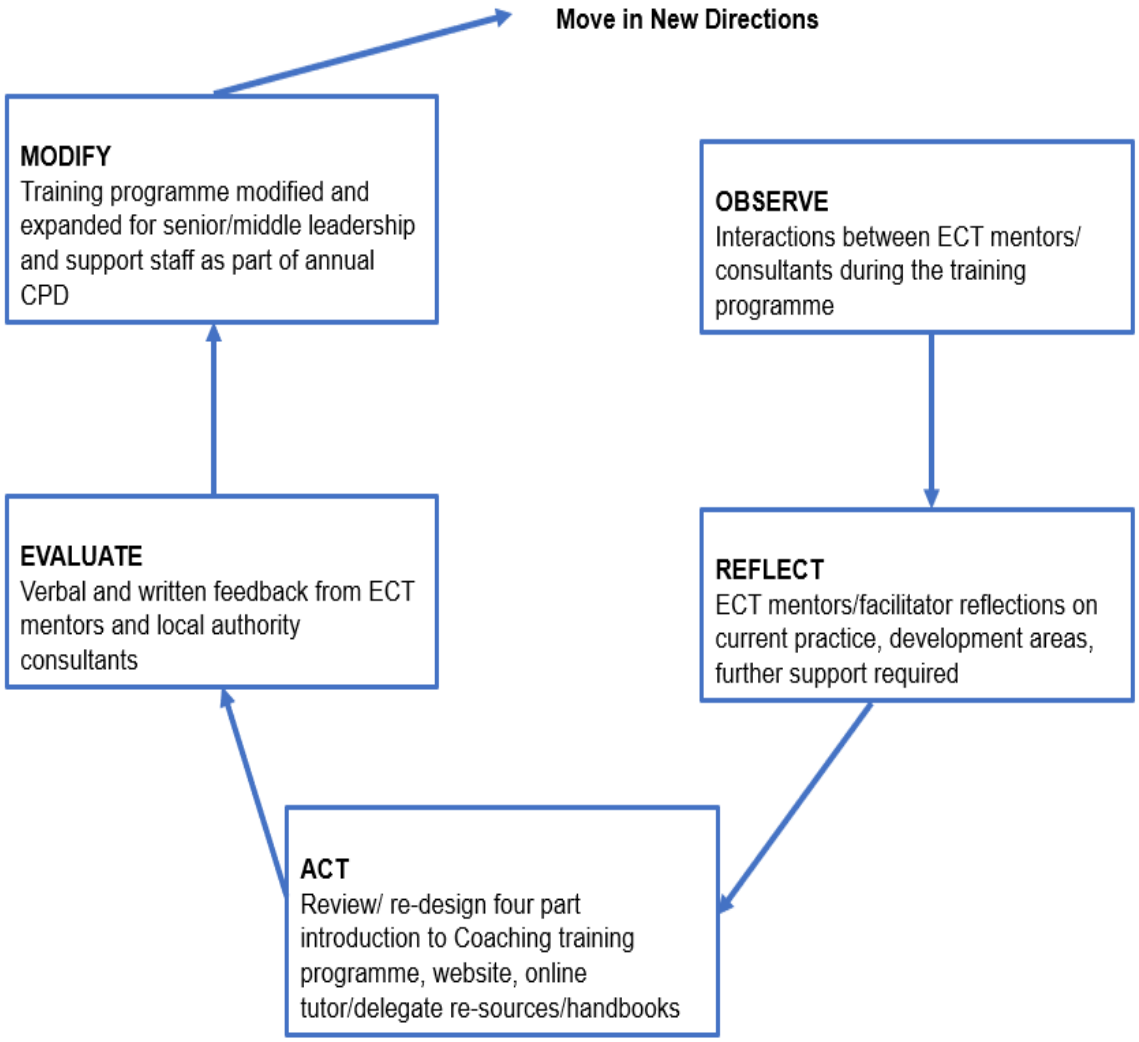
Figure 8: Action Research Cycle 1. (Adapted from Whitehead and McNiff's, 2006, p.9)



Action Research Cycle 2

In action, research cycle 2 (Figure 9), feedback from the pilot programme provided valuable insights and an opportunity to review and reflect on changes required to plan the programme for the next cohort. Elements of the programme, including the website and online resources for tutors and delegates, were redesigned, and updated to incorporate industry-standard coaching and mentoring models, tools, and techniques.

Figure 9: Action research cycle 2 (Adapted from Whitehead and McNiff's, 2006, p.9)



The 'Introduction to Coaching' programme is now published throughout the school year. As a result of the positive feedback, the programme has been modified and expanded as part of the participating local authorities' CPD provision for senior and middle leaders and support staff.

Kemmis (2009, p.463) asserts that 'action research changes people's practices, their understanding of their practice, and the conditions under which they practice'. This

action research project impacted profoundly on my practice as a professional senior leadership coach, mentor, and training consultant. In my consultancy practice, I generally work in relative isolation with minimal input from others, listening, understanding clients' concerns, and supporting them in finding solutions. The collaborative aspect of action research opened up a fascinating world of ideas and knowledge generation, which enabled me to harness the views of many contributors from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Through this research project, I was able to bring together action and reflection, theory, and practice in collaboration with others, to pursue practical solutions to issues of pressing concern (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p.1). This relates to Schön's (1983, p.132) assertion that 'reflection-in-action is a process through which the unique and uncertain situation comes to be understood through the attempt to change it and changed through the effort to understand it'.

Action research was the most appropriate approach for this project because it enabled me to work with the research participants to understand and address critical research questions. The approach supported my exploration of professional development opportunities for ECT mentors, reflection on my practice, and investigation and evaluation of my work as a research practitioner (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). It also allowed me to explore the notion that knowledge generation is a collaborative process in which 'each participant's diverse experiences and skills are critical to the outcome of the work' (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011, p.387).

In addition to action research as the primary research method, I chose to incorporate intuitive inquiry through transpersonal research, which is viewed as a 'fourth force' in 20th-century psychology. As my coaching practice has developed, many of my clients increasingly comment on the intuitive nature of my questioning during our coaching sessions. Further investigation has made me aware that elements of my coaching practice transcend coaching methods, models and techniques and sit comfortably within the realm of transpersonal psychology, which Walsh and Vaughan (1980) define as 'beyond the limits of ego and personality'. Transpersonal research has opened up a new avenue that has enabled me to continue to reflect on my practice and develop my intuitive personal and professional coaching practice.

3.5 Research Design and Data Collection Techniques

I adopted a multi-methods approach that provided a framework for robust data collection and analysis. The multi-methods approach differs from the mixed methods approach in emphasising the inclusion of multiple methods, such as questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observations, but not the use of statistical methods of analysis. The process of triangulation involved a funnel approach which consisted of 30 questionnaires which enabled me to collect rich data relating to ECT mentor profiles, areas of concern and professional development opportunities. The next stage of the process involved conducting semi structured interviews with 15 of the participants who completed the initial questionnaires, which enabled more detailed conversations which added to the richness of enquiry. Observations of 6 coaching interventions between ECT mentor and ECT first hand in real time provided a valuable snapshot of the variable and inconsistent nature of each coaching intervention.

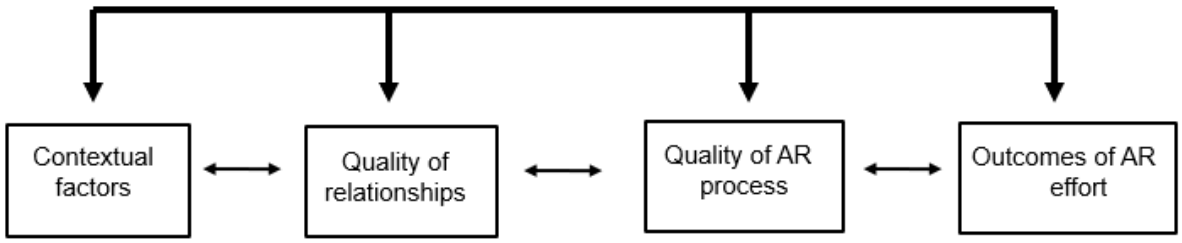
The triangulation of these different data points provided a basis for my narrative and created a rich understanding of the research participants' perspectives and views, which I positioned at the heart of the research project. I used data from local and central government reports, to inform my understanding of the demographic composition, gender balance and geographical distribution of the broader ECT mentor population. Qualitative and quantitative data were suited to answering different aspects of the research questions from different perspectives. Qualitative research addressed questions relating to stakeholders' issues and current professional development opportunities for ECT mentors, which helped inform the design of the training programme.

Mason (2006) confirms that a multi-methods approach adds breadth (from quantitative research) and depth (from qualitative data) to the analysis. According to Bryman (2006), a multi-methods system enables triangulation or greater validity, as qualitative and quantitative research are effectively combined to verify the findings. He also suggests that employing both methods may strengthen the credibility of the results.

I acknowledge the objections of critics such as Smith and Heshusius (1986, p.8), who claim that integrating research strategies fails to take account of the assumptions underlying different research methodologies, with epistemological and ontological implications for a multi-methods approach. However, I subscribe to the view that a

multi-methods approach is beneficial in uncovering 'the different dimensions of a phenomenon' and improving 'understandings of the multi-faceted nature of the social world' (Gilbert, 2008, p.128). Referencing the action research process framework devised by Shani and Pasmore (2010) and Shani and Coghlan (2018), I focused on four key factors (Figure 3.3).

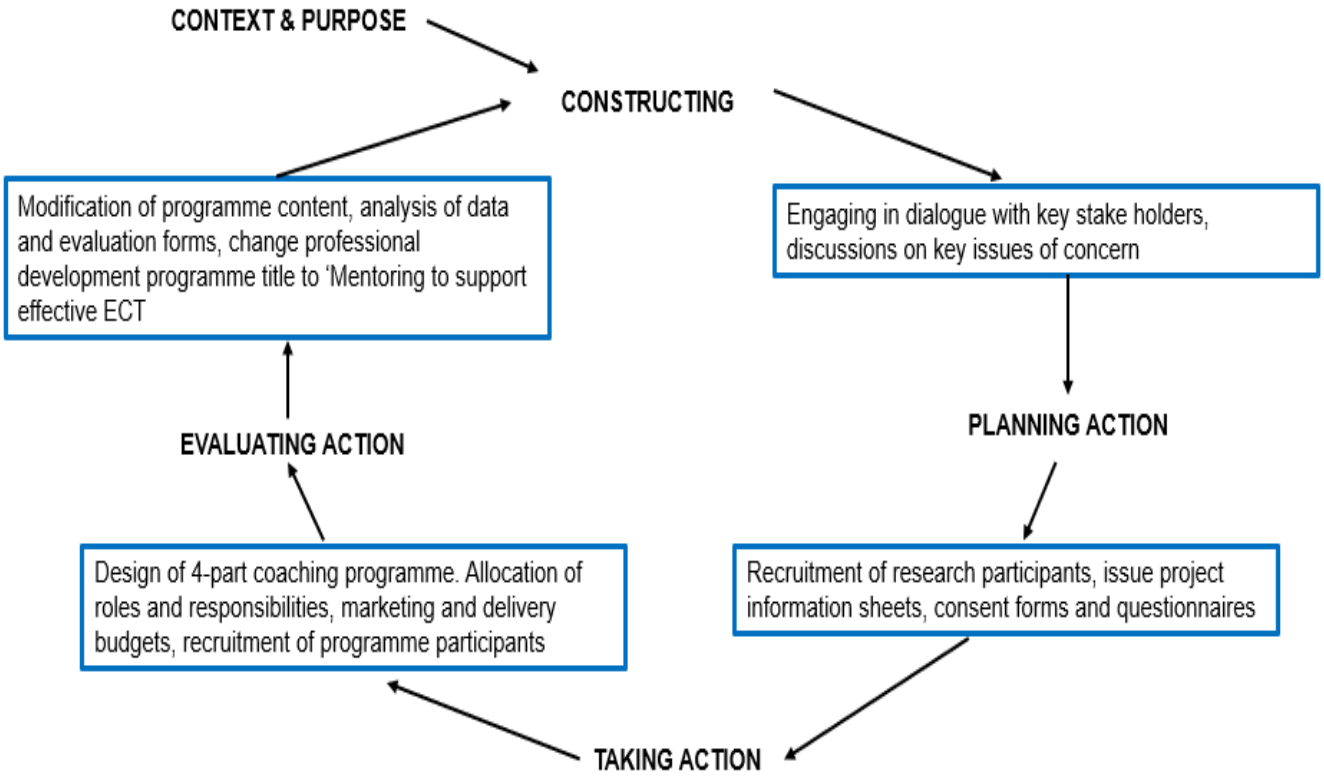
Figure 10. Complete theory of action research (Shani & Pasmore, 2010, p.253)



1. Context: This action research project took place in an educational setting focused on exploring professional development opportunities for ECT mentors. The project initially involved ECT mentors only from the London borough of Ealing. However, as a result of the collaborative nature of the ECT mentor networks, the scope expanded to the boroughs of Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea. External environmental factors affecting the project included COVID-19 and the DfE's changes to the statutory guidelines for NQTs, which were superseded by the ECT framework implemented in September 2021. Internal factors included the willingness of participants, including local authority consultants, headteachers and ECT mentors, to engage and provide access to human and physical resources.
2. Quality of relationships: The project focused on co-creating collaborative partnerships through which action research was conducted 'with' not 'on' the intended participants. The quality of these relationships was based on building rapport through trust, integrity and shared goals and objectives.
3. Quality of the action research process: The project focused on inquiry, collaborative working, artefact design and implementation of the process.

4. Outcomes: The project generated new knowledge and practice and resulted in a new professional development training programme for ECT mentors.

This action research project followed an iterative, cyclical process comprising four steps: constructing the project, planning action, taking action and evaluating action, as



shown in Figure11 (Lewin, 1997, p.146).

Figure 11: The action research cycle (Adapted from Lewin, 1997, p.146)

The action research cycle

In relation to the **context and purpose** of the project, before September 2021, mentoring for NQTs was included in the statutory induction programme introduced in all schools across England in 1999. Gaining qualified teacher status required

candidates to complete a year-long induction programme (three school terms). NQTs could participate in only one induction period, and failure to complete the programme would permanently prohibit them from teaching in any state-maintained primary or secondary school in England. The NQT mentor's role in providing effective mentoring support to meet NQTs' professional development needs was a critical determinant of the NQTs' success or failure during the induction period.

This research project was vital for several reasons. Under the 1999 statutory induction guidelines, the NQT mentor's role was criticised for lack of consistency in mentoring practice, variability of support and lack of statutorily allocated time to carry out the role effectively. Over several years, my professional interactions with NQTs and NQT mentors had highlighted issues surrounding the variability in mentoring practice. The NQT induction programme implemented in 1999 was superseded by the ECF in September 2021, and NQTs are now referred to as ECTs.

The **constructing stage** involved engaging in dialogue with local authority consultants, ECT mentors, senior leaders and headteachers through a series of ECT mentor network meetings (3) and conferences (3) to explore and understand the key issues surrounding professional development opportunities for ECT mentors. Lack of such opportunities created inconsistency in professional mentoring practice. In addition, the absence of statutory PPA time was restrictive. The quality of and time allocated to professional development interactions for each ECT and ECT mentor were central themes that emerged from various discussions and interactions.

Initial action planning involved identifying potential research participants, who were invited to express an interest in participating at the initial ECT mentor conference. Those who did so (30) were issued participant information sheets and consent forms. Questionnaires (15) were also administered. Some participants who agreed to complete the questionnaires were later selected and invited to participate in semi-structured recorded interviews. Analysis of the questionnaires (30 participants) and semi-structured interviews (15 participants) revealed that participants' views were congruent with those explored during the previous ECT mentor meetings.

Taking action: A further 3 meetings took place with local authority consultants from the London boroughs of Ealing, Westminster, and Kensington & Chelsea to explore the design and delivery of the proposed training programme. The discussions focused

on the content of the professional development programme, timeframes, duration, location and the number of ECT mentor participants. At a follow-up meeting two weeks after the initial meeting, discussion focused on allocating roles and responsibilities for the design and resources, including marketing, flyers, budgets and delivery costs. Materials were distributed to primary school headteachers within the participating local authorities. I delivered a pilot programme entitled 'Coaching for Effective ECT Induction'. Session 1 took place on 26 February 2020, and Session 2 on 10 March 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Sessions 3 and 4 were delayed and delivered online on 19 January and 10 February 2021, respectively.

Evaluating actions: The pilot programme was evaluated between March and June 2021. Analysis of the evaluation forms provided valuable data, resulting in the modification of the pilot programme content. This included changing the title from 'Coaching for Effective ECT Induction' to 'An Introduction to Coaching for Early Career Teacher (ECT) Mentors'.

Data was collected using a structured approach to ensure adequate representation of the research project's specific aims and objectives. Material on key stakeholders' various perspectives was gathered using a range of methods, including questionnaires, participant observations, and semi-structured recorded interviews. In addition, I drew on secondary survey data from the participating local authorities (Ealing, Westminster, and Kensington & Chelsea) and central government statutory reports to provide context to the broader ECT induction programme and the ECF.

Research Participants

The research project was introduced to the ECT mentors at the annual ECT mentor conference in September 2019, attended by approximately 60 ECT mentors. The research project information pack was issued to all attendees. In addition, the various data collection methods were explained, as research participants were invited to participate in various data collection processes. Over the course of the project, 30 ECT mentors completed the initial questionnaires, and 15 of them agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews.

Figure 12 summarises the research participant categories, number and data collection techniques.

Figure 12: Research participants and data collection techniques

Research participants	Number	Data collection technique
ECT mentors	30	Questionnaires
ECT mentors	15	Semi-structured interviews
ECT/ECT mentor meetings	6	Observations
ECT mentors, local authority consultants, headteachers	60	Conference day workshops and CPD activities
ECT mentors Local authority consultants	7 3	Pilot professional development training programme (artefact)

Survey questionnaires

ECT mentors who expressed an interest in participating were given participant information sheets, consent forms, and questionnaires, which they were asked to complete and return. The survey questionnaires were administered to provide a rich initial source of data relating to the ECT mentor role. Participants were asked to provide information relating to mentor profile, professional development opportunities, areas of concern, the mentor/mentee matching process, mentoring evaluation tools, mentoring programme effectiveness, mentor/mentee relationships, and the overall impact of the programme.

Participant observations

Flick (2009, p.222) comments that a 'claim made for observations is that it enables the researcher to find out how something factually works or occurs'. Compared with interviews and questionnaires, structured observation 'provides (a) more reliable information about events; (b) greater precision regarding their timing, duration, and frequency; (c) greater accuracy in the time ordering of variables; (d) more accurate

and economic reconstruction of large-scale social episodes' (McCall, 1984, p.277). These advantages were confirmed by my own experience.

Throughout the ECT induction year, I observed six ECT/ECT mentor meetings with the designated local authority consultant. These provided me with opportunities to view the observation process first-hand. Each observation lasted approximately 30 minutes. Owing to COVID restrictions, the ECT/ECT mentor meetings took place in classroom settings, while the observations took place online. Philips and Pugh (2007, p.50) argue that there is 'no such thing as an unbiased observation'. Critics of the observation process view the 'inherent subjectivity of observation as a potential weakness, as documentation of the observed involves a reliance on the researcher's memory, personal discipline, and diligence' (Mack et al. 2005, p.25). While observing the ECT mentor meetings, as a researcher conducting observations within an interpretivist paradigm, I acknowledged that my presence during the observation process and the ensuing data interpretation involved some degree of subjectivity. Although I endeavoured not to introduce my prejudices and bias into the observation process, this is impossible within the interpretivist paradigm. Throughout the observations, I consciously focused on the skills, knowledge and practice displayed by the ECT mentors during each observation meeting, and on procedural, verbal and non-verbal aspects. The invaluable evidence gathered during the observations helped shape elements of the ECT mentor training programme.

Participant selection, observation location, who and what was observed and appropriate stages at which observations occurred were discussed and agreed upon with the ECT mentor, the ECT, and the local authority consultant. Decisions were ultimately based on voluntary participation and the availability of the ECT and ECT mentor within the project timeline.

Semi-structured interviews

Fifteen ECT mentors who attended the mentor conference in 2018 were selected through purposive sampling to participate in face-to-face semi-structured interviews at school locations where they were based. The interviews incorporated guided question-and-answer conversations to enable the 'interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest' (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Fontana and

Frey (2005) describe interviews as an ‘active process in which we come to know others and ourselves’.

Over 60 ECT mentors attended the ECT mentor conference in 2018, of whom 30 volunteered to take part in the research project, representing 16% of the overall population of 190 ECT mentors across the participating local authorities. Research participants were informed about the nature of the research through initial briefing meetings scheduled during mentor training days and network meetings. I introduced the research project’s purpose and data collection methods, provided updates, and secured participants’ formal consent to participate in the interview process. Participant information was explained, and consent forms were obtained at every step of the data collection process. In addition, any concerns and issues about research ethics and confidentiality were discussed and clarified.

I used a ‘responsive style’ of interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.36) which ‘emphasises the importance of building a relationship of trust between the interviewer and the interviewee that leads to more give-and-take in the conversation’. Research participants were informed that the interviews would be audio recorded and transcribed and were reassured that the information provided would be anonymized and treated with the strictest confidence. The main aim of conducting semi-structured interviews was to allow the participants to share their experiences while capturing data relevant to the research questions. All interviews were recorded, and subsequently transcribed, and key ideas and emerging themes were identified and explored in greater detail. Although the interview recordings were audible, recordings in schools presented challenges of background noise when teachers and children moved between classrooms.

The semi-structured interviews fulfilled the project’s main aims by providing a critical method for exploring the issues of concern and understanding and interpreting the research participants’ social worlds and experiences. Each interview represented a collaborative, reciprocal relationship between researcher and participant. Knowledge creation occurred through ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Webb & Webb, 1932, p.130) in each interaction. I concur with Miller and Glassner’s (2011, p.133) view that interviews may ‘provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds. While the interview is a symbolic interaction, it does not discount the possibility that knowledge of the social world beyond the interaction can be

obtained.' The interviews provided valuable insights into ECT mentors' worlds, enabling verbal communication to elevate the 'experiential as the authentic' (Silverman, 2011, p.179).

3.6 Thematic Analysis

I used inductive thematic analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as a method to organise, interrogate and interpret the data, as it is a robust, accessible, flexible method of qualitative data analysis. Specifically, I chose a reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2019) approach, which enabled me to critically reflect on my role as a researcher, my research practice, the knowledge that I would produce from this research project, and how I would produce it (Wilkinson, 1988). Berger's (2015, p.220) definition of reflexivity resonates with my thoughts on my positioning, values and practice within the research process:

> *'It means turning the researcher's lens back onto oneself to recognise and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected, and its interpretation. As such, the idea of reflexivity challenges the view of knowledge production as independent of the researcher producing it and of knowledge as objective.'*

Although reflexive TA encompasses an open organic approach, it has a strong foundation based on qualitative values (Grant & Giddings, 2002; Kidder & Fine, 1987; Madill & Gough, 2008). Reflexive TA acknowledges that 'the researcher becomes the instrument for analysis' (Nowell et al., 2017, p.2), and that researcher subjectivity is an important resource for conducting analysis (Gough & Madill, 2012).

3.7 The Process of Reflexive TA

I embarked on a six-phase approach to explore patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Terry et al., 2017). Phase 1 involved familiarising myself with the content of the datasets. The reflexive TA process enabled me to reflect on my inquiry and interpretation of the datasets. Although using qualitative surveys, semi-structured interviews and observations enabled me to carry out the inquiry in a structured way, throughout the process I gained new insights and interpretations by reading and re-reading the textual data actively and critically, listening to the audio-recordings at least twice and taking notes. Conducting the data analysis in various locations also enabled me to reflect on how the different environments impacted on my mindset. When

analysing data in school environments, I felt the need to adopt an insider-researcher mindset, consciously adopting a professional practitioner mode and being totally in tune with the ECT mentor's perspective at a micro level. When analysing data in more relaxed environments, such as at home, in my garden or in cafés, I felt able to step back and interpret the data at a macro level, from the perspectives of statutory obligations and central government policies. Given the structured nature of the inquiry, the initial data were generated over three to four months. However, the onset of COVID-19 impacted on my data collection and generation through school closures, changed working patterns and difficulties in connecting with key stakeholders and ECT mentor participants.

During Phase 2, I used an inductive coding framework that enabled me to systematically organise and analyse meaningful data relating to the research questions. Data captured from the questionnaire**,** interviews and observations were explored through a systematic coding process in which specific codes were applied to patterns of data. Throughout this process, the codes evolved as I engaged more deeply with the data to identify meaningful patterns. TA provided a systematic process for identifying key patterns and organizing essential themes, while supporting the multi-methods approach to data analysis.

Phase 3 involved further identification and analysis of themes and collation of relevant data extracts (Braun & Clarke, 2013). TA provided structure and flexibility in addressing these questions, enabling me to capture the meaning in the data and thereby address my research questions (Boyzatis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006, p.6) endorse the effectiveness of thematic analysis as 'a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data', and Ryan and Bernard (2003) argue that searching for 'repetitions' is one of the most effective ways of identifying themes. I sorted and indexed the data into sub-themes that emerged throughout the research project.

During Phase 4, I continued to review and revise the data. This involved recoding some of the data and generating the three overarching themes of statutory induction policy, early career framework, and teacher retention policy (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Terry et al., 2017).

My approach to data analysis was informed by Braun and Clarke's (2006, p.24) specific research questions to be addressed by researchers: 'What does this theme mean?', 'what are the assumptions underpinning it?', 'what are the implications of this theme?', 'what conditions have given rise to it?' and 'Why do people talk about this thing in this particular way?' These questions proved to be very helpful when reviewing the interview transcripts.

Each developing theme was reviewed and refined throughout Phases 5 and 6 to ensure that the data addressed key concepts relating to the research questions.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Fundamental ethical principles were adhered to at every stage of the research project. I advised all participants that their participation in the research project was voluntary, I obtained informed consent, and I respected participants' confidentiality and anonymity throughout the project (Bryman, 2012). The project was conducted with moral integrity, and ethical considerations based on human interdependency, co-generation of knowledge, and fairer power relations (Hilson, 2006) were integrated into the research project, adhering throughout the project to the ethical code for action research and Middlesex University's guidelines and institutional ethical approval. Processes for obtaining consent and ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality were incorporated into the various stages of planning, action and data collection.

The philosophical grounding of action research fully supported the ethical treatment of everyone involved in the research project, as participants were treated with empathy and trust in non-exploitative relationships (Eikeland, 2006). However, as Boser (2006, p.14) comments, 'democratic intentions do not remove the need for thoughtful examination of the research's ethical implications on individuals and other stakeholder groups'.

Through first-person processes, I acted authentically, placing my values and beliefs at the heart of the action research project. Second-person collaboration processes with others allowed exploration of shared values and ethics, generating shared and actionable knowledge which ultimately led to the creation of the training programme.

3.9 Credibility and Trustworthiness

As in every research, there are ethical and practical considerations one must consider ensuring quality standards of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) are met. Although credibility can be viewed as individual judgments constructed by the researcher, establishing the credibility of the qualitative research findings was a key consideration throughout this practitioner research project. As previously stated, I employed methodological strategies utilising triangulation of data collection methods including surveys, interviews, and observations to validate the findings and establish credibility. I also used member-checking to validate the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative research findings. Throughout the research project, I met with key stakeholders and research participants on many occasions to provide an opportunity for them to provide feedback, confirm the accuracy of their stories and the data, review transcripts, and validate the research findings. Incorporating member checking into the research process supported the transparency and transferability of the research findings. In terms of reflexivity (Stenfors et al. 2020), I actively engaged in critical self-reflection on my role as a researcher to check and regulate my own biases, preconceptions, and representation of the research participants on how these may have affected the research decisions and outcomes at all phases throughout the research process.

3.10 Summary

In this chapter, I explained my positionality in relation to the research project. I explored the research strategy, through first, second, and third person action research. I explained the rationale for selecting action research as my primary approach to the research project. The chosen multi-methods approach to data collection, data analysis, the process of triangulation was explored. I introduced the action research cycles through the introduction of the phases of the practitioner research project. The collaborative nature of the inquiry through two action research cycles brought together key stakeholders, with the aim of addressing issues, generating actionable knowledge, and finding solutions to issues surrounding variability and inconsistencies in the ECT mentor role.

The Exploration of transpersonal research enabled me to explore an emerging approach that supports the evolving, intuitive nature of my professional coaching and mentoring practice. I have also explored the challenges and positive ethical aspects that I experienced in my dual role as an action research insider-researcher and consultant. Ethical considerations of credibility and trustworthiness were taken into account throughout, to ensure that the research project was conducted with integrity and respect towards the research participants in line with accepted ethical practice and Middlesex University's guidelines

Chapter 4: Research Discussion and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research discussions, activities, strategy, data collection techniques and research findings. This chapter also includes a comparison of the findings from this practitioner research project and the findings from the Department for Education (DfE) interim report for the first year of the revised ECT induction programme commissioned in 2022. The research questions are discussed and addressed. A visual representation of my overall analysis is demonstrated through a thematic map detailing the themes identified at a macro, meso and micro level.

4.2 Discussion

Research Questions

As previously explained, my research questions were:

1. What are the key issues of concern for stakeholders, including ECT mentors, headteachers, local authority consultants and central government?
2. How can ECT mentors' professional knowledge and practice be improved to provide effective support for ECTs during the ECT induction programme?
3. How can I co-create a complementary professional development training programme (artefact) for ECT mentors based on the statutory ECF disseminated to local authorities by central government?

In answer to question 1, the key areas of concern were variability and inconsistencies in the ECT induction programme, the impact of teacher recruitment and retention on ECTs and ECT mentors, and gaps in professional training provision for ECT mentors. Question 2 and 3, relating to improving ECT mentor knowledge and practice, were addressed by providing mentor training through the revised two-year early career induction programme and the complementary 'Introduction to Coaching' training programme (artefact).

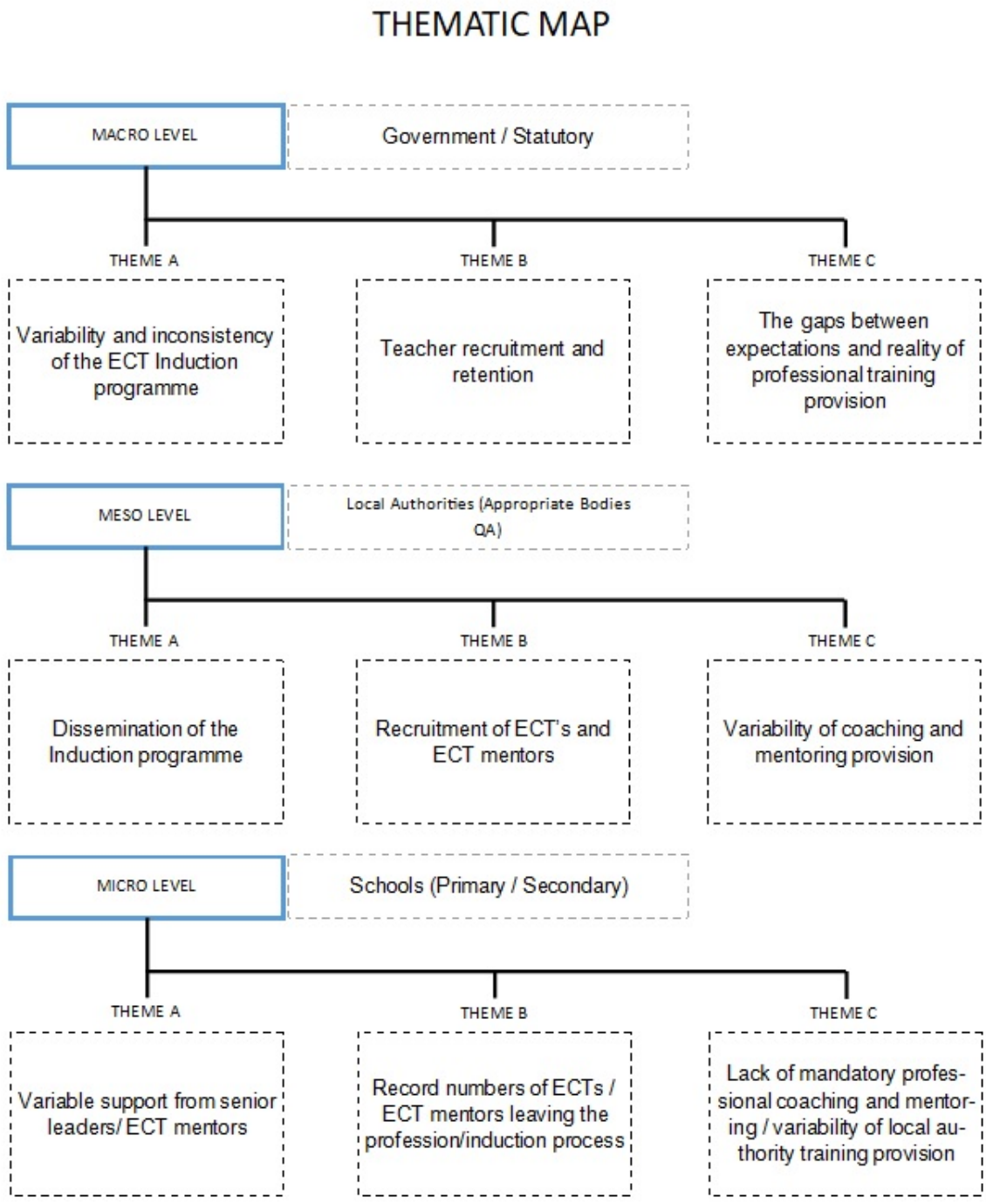


Figure 17: Thematic analysis

4.3 Thematic Mapping

The thematic map shown in Figure 17 provides a visual representation of my overall analysis of the individual themes.

At a macro level (government/statutory), the thematic map reflects the three overarching themes of variability and inconsistency in the ECT induction programme (theme A), issues relating to teacher retention and recruitment (theme B), and gaps between expectations and the reality of professional mentoring and coaching training provision (theme C).

Theme A: Variability and inconsistency in the ECT induction programme

As explained in Chapter 1, the statutory induction programme was implemented to address systemic failures in the provision and dissemination of the ECT induction programme, which Tickle (2000, p.3) suggests contributed significantly to the variability of ECT mentor support. According to Bleach (1999, p.2), entrusting the induction programme to the 'professional integrity of heads, teachers and local authority advisors to sustain and encourage good practice' had major implications for the variable nature of the induction programme and ECT mentors' practice.

Earley and Kinder (1994), Simco (1995, 2000) and Mahoney (1996) concur that throughout England, there were no systematic links between the induction and professional development of NQTs; the NQT induction policy did not adequately address the individual needs of NQTs; and induction provisions varied between schools and local authorities. The role of ECT mentor is arguably one of the most important relationships supporting ECTs in completing the statutory ECT induction programme. In this study, the issues identified within theme A were unsurprising. They confirmed the discourse relating to variability and inconsistency in disseminating the ECT induction programme from macro-level central government to meso-level local government, which translated into an inconsistent approach by ECT mentors within schools towards their allocated ECTs. At the micro level in schools, early patterns in the data gathered from the initial questionnaires issued to the research participants highlighted variability and inconsistency of ECT mentor provision in many areas.

With regard to ECT mentor selection, the participating mentors had between three and twenty-four years of professional teaching experience. Their professional backgrounds included senior leadership roles (assistant and deputy headteachers),

however, the majority of ECT mentors were class teachers. Training for the ECT mentor role consisted largely of attending workshops organised by local authorities through the statutory ECT induction programme, which was expanded in September 2021 to include specific self-directed training for ECT mentors. A wide variation in mentor training, skills and behaviours is captured in the ECT mentors' responses to questions about their perceptions of the training, skills and behaviours required to effectively support ECTs, the responses included good communication skills, empathy, listening, feedback, being helpful, positive, organized and fair, and having a passion for learning and pedagogy. When asked how ECT mentors could effectively support ECTs, the responses included coaching support, having a calming presence, guiding the ECT to achieve targets, having regular structured meetings, setting clear targets, coaching, allocating statutory PPA time, and giving constructive and positive advice and feedback. Interestingly, other than the local authority training workshops provided during annual ECT mentor conferences, no formal training provision was provided for ECT mentors until the statutory changes to the ECF in September 2021. However, the ECT mentor training programme does not include provisions for specific coaching training. The wide variation in knowledge and experience of coaching and mentoring practice was identified as a major contributor to the variability and inconsistency of ECT mentors' support for ECTs.

Theme B: Issues relating to recruitment and retention.

Central government has introduced incentives to improve recruitment and retention of new teachers, including phased bursaries and staggered retention payments to incentivise ECTs to remain in the teaching profession.

In the context of this research project, at the meso level, the themes identified revolve around how ECT mentors are currently recruited, the matching process, and the skills and behaviours that ECT mentors perceive as requirements for the role. The processes for recruiting ECT mentors are a mixture of voluntary and compulsory applications, internal promotions, and recommendations from headteachers, senior leadership teams and heads of departments in schools. No specific matching of subject area, professional background or years of service is currently in place. The lack of statutory allocation of planning, preparation and administration (PPA) time to perform the ECT mentor role is also highlighted as a cause for concern. At the micro level, in the first year of the revised induction programme, the number of ECTs and

ECT mentors leaving the programme experienced an unprecedented rise. One local authority participant commented:

> *'Last year [2022] we had an increased number of ECTs leaving in term one and term two and some of them went abroad because they did not want to continue teaching here. Some of them did not even give a reason why, and that tells me that probably the new ECT induction programme is not suitable.'*
>
> *(*Local authority consultant).

Further surveys and monitoring activities will be conducted by the participating local authorities (appropriate bodies) and the Department for Education (DfE) to analyse retention rates at the end of the two-year induction programme in 2023/24.

Theme C: Gaps between expectations and the reality of professional training provision for ECT mentors

The introduction of funded training for ECT mentors has received mixed responses from key stakeholders Although the prescriptive nature of the instructional mentoring model may go some way to address variability and inconsistency in ECT mentor support, the current training programme focuses on the statutory teacher standards and professional conduct. It does not include specific training to provide ECT mentors with appropriate coaching knowledge, skills and behaviours to effectively support the structure, professional dialogue and successful goal/action orientated interventions between ECTs and ECT mentors.

Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992) attribute poor mentoring practice to lack of appropriate professional training. Although the DfEE (2000, para. 26) mandates that ECT mentors must be fully aware of the requirements of the induction period and should have the necessary skills, expertise, and knowledge to work effectively, there is no statutory requirement for them to receive coaching skills training. In addition, they must make rigorous and fair judgments of ECTs' performance resulting in satisfactory completion of the induction period and provide or coordinate guidance and practical support for ECT professional development (DfEE, 2000, para. 26). In many respects, it can be argued that many ECT mentors are not currently equipped to fulfil the full remit of the ECT mentor role.

4.4 Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) Codes

Using reflexive TA, codes were identified from the data gathered from surveys and interviews with ECT mentors and key stakeholder research participants. Codes at the semantic level represent data that reflect ECT mentor participants' perspectives and meanings. The codes drawn from the interview transcripts enabled me to capture and interpret specific meanings which I used to develop themes relating to the research questions. Views on ECT mentor training and the mentor role focused on the main issue that mentor attendance at statutory and local authority training is not mandatory, as well as the fact that the instructional mentor training provided by the ECF induction programme is based on the statutory teacher standards. No provision is made for specific coaching training. ECT Mentors who had previously received coaching training stated that the training was outdated. One ECT mentor commented: 'I would revise my coaching training again. I still have the notes, I think it was, dare I say it, 1997 or something like that.'

The revised ECT induction programme received mixed reviews from key stakeholders in schools and local authorities. Key areas of concern included increased workloads:

> *'Many schools are not doing well. They have complained about the additional workload that the revised induction programme has imposed and the inflexibility of the study timetable. Also, our reports from mentors show that they don't get the time that they have, to do all the things that are required to do (*Local authority consultant).'

ECT mentors are required to teach specific modules to their designated ECTs within a predetermined timeframe, whilst undertaking self-study mentor training and fulfilling their contractual professional obligations. Early indications from the Department for Education (DfE) interim survey highlighted dissatisfaction amongst mentors who were unhappy with the prescribed instructional nature of the ECT and ECT mentor training programmes. These dictate how the training must be delivered, inhibiting mentors from using their initiative and experience to support their ECTs. At a macro level, the statutory induction programme had been revised to address the issues of teacher recruitment and retention. However, at a micro level, local authorities and schools were still experiencing high staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers. Under the revised induction programme, the general impact of teacher recruitment and retention has had a knock-on effect on the recruitment and retention of ECTs and ECT mentors. Both ECTs and ECT mentors cited increased workloads

and time commitments as reasons for leaving the ECT induction programme. A local authority consultant commented: *'We have been approached by ECT mentors who say that they no longer want to take on the role because of the increased workload.'*

Participants' perspectives on the coaching skills and behaviours required to fulfil the ECT mentor role ranged from interpersonal skills such as listening, a caring attitude and impartiality, to specific training on coaching practice and soft skills. When asked what aspects of the coaching programme (artefact) appealed to them, attendee responses included:

> *'Great ideas/refresh of how to structure coaching feedback meetings. Good to hear peer ideas and practice new models and techniques. Thank you.'*
>
> *'Valuable learning and discussions about coaching conversations. Useful coaching tools (GROW, OSCAR, CLEAR, STOP) for enabling purposeful conversations with ECTs.'*
>
> *'It was really useful to get practical knowledge about coaching models, talk things through with other teachers, reflect on my practice, and hear others' experiences with their ECTs. I found the sessions very interesting.'*
>
> *'The main thing I learned was to ensure we are having purposeful coaching meetings. To listen to the ECT first, let them talk, and have an 80/20 approach like you would have in the classroom. To use the STOP technique and work together to problem solve.'*

4.5 Coded Transcripts

Table 9: Summary of themes, transcript excerpts, and codes – Theme A

Transcript excerpts	Codes
Theme A: Variability and inconsistencies in the ECT induction programme	
ECT assessment starts with the school induction policy and the core teaching standards, such as behavior management	ECT induction programme assessment
…it doesn't help when a very senior member of staff is an ECT mentor, because they have a big job in mentoring that person's work as well as coaching them. Does that make sense?	Authoritative nature of the ECT induction programme Disparity in senior leadership dual role as mentor and assessor
I hear from the mentors that they're not happy with the ECT-prescribed programme because it tells them how to do things, and in a way it prevents them from using their initiative	ECT mentors' dissatisfaction with the prescriptive nature of the induction programme
We have been approached by ECT mentors who say that they no longer want to take on the role because of the increased workload	Increased workloads
I think the difficulty for some schools can be that they have a high number of ECTs, and sometimes not enough experienced teachers to be able to mentor them to the same extent as would happen in another school	Revised ECT induction programme challenges
The new induction programme doesn't allow you to choose your own topics because there is a different theme every week	Inflexibility of the ECT induction programme

Table 9: Summary of themes, transcript excerpts, and codes – Theme B and C

Theme B: Recruitment and retention issues	
...what can we encapsulate that will help our ECTs further? ... in the last two years, if you think about it, we have had nine ECTs	Issues relating to recruitment and retention of ECTs
...I think that's just the state of teaching at the moment because vacancies are not being filled – people are moving from one place to another	Attitudes to the teaching profession Issues with ECT recruitment and retention
The revised ECT programme was supposed to support the government teacher retention policy, but it has had the opposite effect	Teacher retention policy
Theme C: Gaps between expectations and the reality of professional training	
We have ECT meetings, and I do training every week with the ECTs	Frequency of ECT meetings
I would definitely revise my mentoring and coaching training again – I still have the notes; I think it was, dare I say it, '97 or something like that	Outdated coaching and mentoring training and practice
...I haven't been on much training	Lack of mentor training
On the coaching and mentoring side, more training would be useful. Are we doing things the right way? Are there better practices?	Lack of coaching and mentoring training provision
I think that the programme that's in place is probably more about providing training rather than coaching and mentoring	Focus on mentor teacher training, not coaching and mentoring

4.6 Comparison of Research Project Findings V Statutory Findings

Research project: Key findings

As of January 2023, data obtained from one participating local authority indicated that a total of 316 ECTs in participating schools had joined the revised statutory induction programme. In 2021/22, its second year, 125 ECTs joined the revised programme, and by the end of 2022, 40 had left. In contrast, 191 ECTs were enrolled in the 2022/23 cohort, and six left the programme during autumn 2022. Between October 2021 and July 2022, 28 ECTs withdrew during the first term of the revised programme. This period experienced the largest number of ECT leavers ever recorded by the participating local authorities. The reasons cited by ECTs for leaving the programme included relocating abroad, moving to neighbouring boroughs, taking up positions in the private sector, medical reasons and leaving the profession. Six provided no reason for leaving the ECT induction programme.

Table 10: Number of participants in the ECT induction programme

Cohorts	No. of ECTs	No. of ECT mentors	ECT retention
2021/2023	316	277	46 ECTs left the programme

Regarding participating schools, a total of 316 schools were involved in the ECF induction programme. Table 10 gives breakdowns of the participating schools by type and their choice of ECF induction programmes.

Table 11: Participating schools and their choices of ECT induction programme

Breakdown of schools (from participating local authorities)		**Choice of ECF induction programme**	
Primary	125	Designed and delivered independent ECF induction programmes	28
Secondary	180	University College London (UCL)	208
Nursery	3	Teach First	75
Special educational needs	7	Ambitions Institute	2
Independent	1	Best Practice/Capita	3
Total	**316**		**316**

The ECT mentor professional backgrounds included senior leadership positions, with five headteachers, 27 deputy heads, 30 assistant heads, 77 heads of year/phase leaders and two special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinators (SENDCOs), and 136 class teachers. Their length of teaching experience ranged from three to twenty-four years.

When asked how they had been recruited for the mentor role, the responses, mainly from class teachers, included ‘I was simply informed’, ‘I volunteered as part of my new role’, ‘I was approached by my headteacher’, ‘I was asked by my head of department’, ‘I was told to do the role’, ‘I requested the role’, ‘asked by the head of department’ and ‘through internal promotion’. The professional training opportunities currently offered to ECT mentors are directed through a series of workshops during the annual ECT mentor conference. As attendance at the annual ECT mentor conference is not compulsory, some respondents stated that they relied on the training that they had received during their PGCE studies and teaching and learning degrees. When asked about their thoughts on what skills and behaviours are required to be an effective ECT mentor, the key attributes mentioned by respondents were coaching, people skills, pedagogy and subject knowledge, empathy, being a good listener, professionalism, honesty, being organized and approachable, modelling ability, clearly high expectations, and a passion for lifelong learning. Questions about how ECT mentors

could best support ECTs elicited the following responses: having a calming presence, guiding ECTs to achieve targets, setting clear targets, giving feedback, coaching, having regular structured meetings, allocating PPA time, giving constructive advice and feedback on progress, and generating solutions to problems. When asked what professional development opportunities would enable ECT mentors to fulfil their role effectively, the respondents identified ongoing ECT mentor coaching training programmes, up-to-date research and networking, remuneration for undertaking a teaching leadership role, ECT mentor training and guidance, refresher training on educational theory, observation and feedback, and CPD on effective coaching.

4.7 Department for Education (DfE) Research Data

Key findings

Department for Education (DfE) data indicate that in 2021/22, 95% of all state-registered schools (11,445) participated in the revised ECF training programmes delivered by six lead providers commissioned by the DfE: UCL Institute of Education, Teach First, Best Practice Network, Capita, Education Development Trust and Ambition Institute.

Early Career Teachers

Data relating to ECTs are included to provide context to the ECT mentor role. As stated in Chapter 1, research by the DfE and the Education Policy Institute indicates that over 20% of new teachers left the profession within the first two years of teaching, and 33% left within five years. This was attributed to teacher recruitment not keeping pace with pupil numbers, increased teacher workloads, longer working hours and low starting pay, especially in the early stages of careers**.** These findings are echoed in this research project.

On entering the induction programme in 2021, ECTs reported that their main expectations were to improve their skills in the areas of teaching (72%), behaviour management (66%) and subject knowledge (66%). When asked what the single most important aspect was they hoped to gain from their induction, the majority of ECT respondents replied that they had hoped to receive constructive and non-judgmental guidance and support from their ECT mentors.

ECT Mentors

The importance of the mentor role in the induction process is echoed in the ECTs' responses. Overall, 86% of ECTs felt supported, and 95% confirmed their mentors' ability to listen and offer support when needed.

The majority of ECT mentors who responded to the government survey (66%) were aged between 30 and 50. ECT mentors in leadership roles (senior or middle leaders) accounted for 72% of the 2021/22 cohort. Responses to the national survey suggest that when ECT mentors were matched with a single ECT based on their specialisms, subject or phase (88%), the matching process was relatively straightforward. This process was more difficult when mentors were allocated more than one ECT. When asked why they had become mentors, 85% cited the importance of sharing their teaching experience and 54% expressed a desire to develop their coaching and mentoring skills.

Although the ECT induction programme provides a comprehensive professional training support package for ECTs and ECT mentors, there are areas of concern. One key stakeholder interviewed for this research project commented:

> *'We have signed up for the University of London (UCL) complete programme. It will be significantly more time-consuming for mentors and ECTs due to the self-guided study. I think the resources and content quality are very well chosen, but it will be hard to encourage staff to be mentors over the next few years because of the time demands.'* ECT mentor

Another commented:

> *'Although the new early careers framework provides a comprehensive training package of study material for ECT mentors, it does not provide/equip mentors with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to conduct effective coaching and mentoring interventions.'* Local authority consultant

These views represent the consensus amongst key stakeholders (educationalists, local authorities, and central government) and researchers (Earley & Kinder, 1994; Simco, 1995, 2000; Mahoney, 1996) who state that throughout England there were no systematic links between the induction and professional development of NQTs, the

NQT induction policy did not adequately address NQTs' individual needs, and induction provision varied between schools and local authorities.

4.8 Key findings: Challenges

Time commitment

Compared with previous induction programmes, both ECTs and ECT mentors cited increased workloads and greater time commitments when engaging in the revised induction training programme. ECT mentors found it difficult to fit in the additional time required to complete the mentor training programme (55%) and ECT meetings (25%) into their current work schedules. Over a period of four weeks, ECT mentors reported spending an average of 4.35 hours on mentor training and self-directed study, 4.71 hours on providing formal mentoring support, and 4.11 hours on providing informal support to their ECTs.

Increased workloads

The consensus amongst ECTs and ECT mentors was that their workloads had increased under the revised ECT induction programme. Key challenges faced by ECT mentors included difficulty in balancing ECT support and their teaching workloads (54%) and allocating time for mentor training (73%). In relation to the provider-led training programme, 24% of ECT respondents and 28% of ECT mentors perceived a lack of flexibility in training dates and times. Many felt that the scheduled dates and times set out by the training providers were not sufficiently flexible to fit in with the requirements of the schools involved. Difficulty was also identified in accessing the DfE's digital training platforms, which contributed to delays in participants starting and engaging with the ECT induction training programmes. The content of the training programmes for both ECTs (39%) and ECT mentors (38%) was also criticised for being too heavily based on theory and having very little applied content.

4.9 Summary

The findings of this research project echo the knowledge landscape, and the initial findings of the interim report commissioned by the DfE (2022). The overarching themes of variability and inconsistency in the ECT induction programme, issues surrounding teacher recruitment and retention, and gaps between expectations and

the reality of professional training provision for ECT mentors highlight the interconnected nature of systemic links between ECT induction and the professional development of ECTs and ECT mentors. The findings presented in this chapter also highlight a need for further investigation of the dissemination of the ECT induction programme by government (macro level), local authorities (meso level) and schools (micro level) to further address the areas of concern voiced by the key stakeholders. Further revision of the induction programme is required to address reducing the overall workload and time commitments placed on senior leaders and teachers across the teaching profession. Improved provision of continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities, specifically in coaching, is required to improve the standards and professional practice of ECT mentors.

Chapter 5: The process of the selection of the content, design and delivery of the Introduction to Coaching training programme (Artefact)

5.1 Introduction

The 'Introduction to Coaching' training programme (artefact - Appendix A) was one outcome of this research project. In this chapter, I explain the process of the selection of the content, delivery and design of the training programme. I explain how my findings informed elements of the training programme.

Finally, I relate the training programme to the purpose and aims of the research project to answer the research questions.

5.2 The process of selection of the content, design and delivery of the 'Introduction to Coaching' training programme

The process of selecting the content, design and delivery of the four-part training programme took place in stages. During the initial meetings held with the key stakeholders, we discussed the inclusion of content that would address the professional development needs of ECT mentors in terms of learning objectives, programme structure and learning outcomes. The chosen content included industry standard coaching models and evidence-based theories. Although there are dissonant voices in the academic world relating to the merits of the inclusion of the GROW model and learning styles in training programmes, my knowledge and experience of applying these models whilst teaching adult learners has been very successful when evaluating the progress of the ECT mentors at the end of the programme. I also felt that it was important to include the GROW model, and the Honey and Mumford learning styles questionnaire, as these models are accessible to adult learners who have knowledge of how we learn and the subject matter, coaching, combined with my knowledge and experience of designing professional accredited and non-accredited leadership and coaching training programmes. Due to the tight deadlines in the school CPD calendar the programme was scheduled to commence in the autumn term (September) each

year, to coincide with the start of the annual early career teacher (ECT) induction programme.

5.3 Learning objectives

The process for identifying the learning objectives for the 'Introduction to Coaching' training programme focused on addressing the gaps in coaching knowledge and practice identified from stakeholder discussions, and thematic analysis of the research participant responses to the survey questionnaires, interview responses and observations.

The specific areas highlighted for training included the requirement for frameworks and structures for conducting coaching conversations/interventions; how to contract with ECTs; setting clear goals and action orientated targets; coaching tools; coaching models; strategies and tools for enhancing interpersonal communication skills in terms of listening, questioning, giving constructive/non-judgemental feedback and reflective practice. At the end of each session, delegates were issued with a coaching diary/journal and instructed to record and document coaching interventions with their ECTs back in the school environment. The diary/journal also enabled the ECT mentors to maintain a reflective log on the progress, highlights and challenges of their coaching journey.

5.4 Programme structure

The structure of the 'Introduction to Coaching; training programme is aligned with existing coaching programmes and qualifications delivered by industry leaders. As an approved training centre that delivers accredited coaching and leadership and management training programmes for the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and City and Guilds, the structure and content of the programme adhere to the professional standards laid down by industry leaders. The 'Introduction to Coaching' programme contributes original knowledge, as I have designed a bespoke programme specifically aimed at providing ECT mentors with the skills, tools and practical knowledge required to coach ECTs through the statutory ECT induction programme (see Table X for programme outline).

5.5 Findings which informed elements of the coaching programme

The findings of the research project highlighted several factors that helped to inform the content and structure of the 'Introduction to Coaching' programme.

The variable nature of ECT mentor selection, informed me that a consistent approach was required to provide a basis for coaching knowledge. Addressing fundamental questions such as what is coaching, the differences between coaching and mentoring, how to structure coaching interventions and how to establish contracts with ECTs. The findings also highlighted the fact that the training opportunities offered to ECT mentors were largely out of date and non-compulsory. This informed my decision to ensure that the content included industry standard, evidence based coaching tools and models, the inclusion of content focussing on key interpersonal communication skills and behaviours such as listening, questioning and reflective feedback provided professional development opportunities that the delegates could practice back in the workplace. The inclusion of the GROW, OSCAR and CLEAR models provided a starting point for all delegates to gain an understanding of how to structure coaching interventions and how to contract with their ECTs. The inclusion of the EMCC competency framework and code of ethics provided industry standard guidelines by which the delegates could measure their progress and professional practice. The inclusion of coaching videos and session evaluation further supported the delegates in reinforcing their coaching knowledge, skills practise. Final evaluation at the end of the programme provided a measure of the journey that the delegates had undertaken throughout the four-part programme.

5.6 The process for designing the Website, Training Manuals and Resources

As previously stated, the decision to develop an online platform came about as a result of the success of the pilot training programme. Exploratory meetings with the participating workforce consultants focussed on options that would enable participating and potential local authorities and schools to access training for ECT mentors wishing to access face-to-face, online or a blended style of learning as part of ECT induction CPD provision.

Practical considerations when designing the online platform and briefing the web designer centred around providing a professional online programme that would be accessible and available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. This would provide the

delegates with a greater degree of flexibility than the current ECT induction providers. The training programme is designed in a way that delegates log in via a password-protected portal, and work through the session slide presentations (4 in total) supported by the accompanying voice-overs, provided for delegates who may have additional learning requirements. Once they are logged in, delegates can download the training manual and learning resources anytime and work through the manual and online presentations at their own pace in their own time. The design of the training programme coincided with the re-design of my organisation's website ensuring that the training programme was placed on a robust upgraded online platform that could withstand the heavy traffic from the accredited leadership and management training programmes delivered by my organisation in addition to the 'Introduction to Coaching' training programme. As the online platform is a stand-alone portal, I was provided with training from the web developer to enable me to take on the administrator role of updating the necessary software, user login requirements and updates as and when required. The work involved in developing, testing and designing the website took approximately 12 – 18 months.

Although the 'Introduction to Coaching' training programme uses established industry standard, best practice coaching models, tools and techniques, the programme is unique in the fact that there are no other training programmes currently available specifically aimed at providing ECT mentors with specific skills and knowledge in coaching in the education space.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I reflect on the overall purpose, aims and objectives of the practitioner research project and how they relate to the research questions. I assess the impact of the 'Introduction to Coaching for Early Career Teacher (ECT) Mentor professional training programme. I reflect on future developments of the ECT induction programme, and its implications with specific emphasis on the role of the ECT mentor. I offer my recommendations for enhancing the ECT induction programme and share the new developments and opportunities that have arisen as a result of this practitioner research project.

6.2 Conclusion

Research Questions

In conclusion, I return to my research questions and explain the relation between the research questions and the aims and objectives of the research project. The research questions were:

1 What are the key issues of concern for stakeholders, including ECT mentors, headteachers, local authority consultants and central government relating to the inconsistencies and variability in ECT mentor support?

2 How can ECT mentors' professional knowledge and practice be enhanced to provide effective support for ECTs during the ECT induction programme?

3 How can I contribute to the professionalism, knowledge and standards of coaching practice in primary and secondary schools across England?

The aims and objectives in answer to research question 1, were to identify and address the key areas of concern, in terms of the inconsistencies and variability in ECT mentor support for ECTs. In relation to research question 2, the objective was to identify the gaps in ECT mentor coaching knowledge and to create a professional coaching training programme for ECT mentors based on the statutory Early Career Framework. In relation to question 3, the objectives were to create a professional coaching training programme based on the industry standards set by professional bodies including the

European Mentoring Coaching Council (EMCC), ICF and the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM).

Although the role of the ECT mentor is viewed by the government as key to enabling ECTs to complete the induction programme, the lack of statutory provision of planning, preparation and administration (PPA) time to carry out the ECT mentor role continues to be viewed by local authorities and school leaders as a significant factor contributing to the variable support for ECTs. Under the new ECT induction framework, ECT mentors are expected to integrate the role into their primary professional responsibilities, including facilitating weekly meetings with ECTs, completing online self-directed study materials and monitoring ECTs' completion of weekly online study content. In contrast, ECTs are granted 10%-time off timetable (non-teaching time) for PPA duties (DfE, 2021), which equates to 2.5 hours per week. Further consultation between central government and local authorities are required to address the question of expectations from the government on how the ECT mentor role can be carried out effectively without time allocated for planning, preparation and administration (PPA) time.

This practitioner research project has also highlighted that although the training provision has been improved to include self-directed training packages for ECTs and ECT mentors, the ECT mentor training programmes are still viewed as focusing heavily on theory, rather than on the coaching practice, knowledge and skills required to structure and conduct ECT meetings and improve ECT mentor practice. This gap has been addressed by the 'Introduction to Coaching for ECT mentors' training programme.

6.3 Contribution to Coaching knowledge and practice

The overall purpose of this practitioner research project was to contribute to the coaching practice and knowledge of ECT mentors across the education sector. My contribution to the education sector is the successful design and delivery of a unique, industry standard, professional training programme specifically aimed at providing ECT mentors with the knowledge and skills required to coach ECTs to successful completion of the statutory ECT induction programme. Due to the positive feedback, the training programme has been endorsed by the participating local authorities which

has led to the publication of the 'Introduction to Coaching for Early Career Teacher (ECT) Mentor' training programme which is currently available as continuous professional development (CPD) training to staff members in over one hundred schools across London. The training programme has also addressed the key aims of the practitioner research project by enhancing the professional practice of existing and future ECT mentors within the participating local authorities, creating a training programme complimentary to the ECT induction programme.

6.4 Future Developments

Early Career Framework Reforms

From September 2024, reforms to the Early Career Framework (ECF) by the Department for Education (DfE) will see the early career induction programme undergo a proposed two-year phased transition. From September 2023, local authorities will no longer undertake the role of the 'appropriate body' for registering ECTs. This responsibility will be transferred to designated Teaching School Hubs (TSHs), which are regarded by central government as school-led centres of excellence responsible for leadership training and development. Currently, 54% of all schools have selected teaching hubs as their appropriate body, whilst 40% have retained their local authorities as the appropriate body.

Key stakeholders (local authority consultants, senior leaders, teachers, ECT mentors) from the participating local authorities have raised concerns about the move to TSHs in relation to quality assurance aspects of the early career induction process. Local authorities play a role in ensuring that ECTs receive their statutory entitlements and statutory guidance through quality assurance, support, and assessment. Under the current guidelines, local authorities make final decisions on whether ECTs have successfully met the teacher standards. Transferring this responsibility to self-regulating Teaching School Hubs (TSHs), funded by the Department of Education (DfE), potentially opens up questions about the transparency, validity and integrity of any data generated by the appointed appropriate bodies for future Early Career Teacher (ECT) induction programme.

6.5 Recommendations

The recommendations offered are informed by the stakeholder areas of concern, interviews with ECT mentors, survey results and the research findings. As new phases

of the revised 2-year ECT induction programme are rolled out, these recommendations could be viewed as positive enhancements for future developments:

- Mandatory Coaching training for ECT mentors as part of ongoing CPD.
- Statutory provision of PPA time for the ECT mentor role.
- Greater flexibility in the ECT induction programme training schedule for ECTs and ECT mentors to enable schools to schedule training around individual school timetables.
- An ongoing systematic review of ECT and ECT mentors workloads to reduce pressure at all levels.
- A review of senior leadership involvement as assessors and mentors of ECTs.
- Implementation of rigorous and transparent measures for monitoring the data generated by Teaching School Hubs ((TSHs).
- Further investigation of the dissemination of the ECT induction programme by government (macro level), local authorities (meso level) and schools (micro level) to further address the areas of concern voiced by the key stakeholders.
- Further revision of the induction programme is required to address reducing the overall workload and time commitments placed on senior leaders and teachers across the teaching profession.
- Improved provision of continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities, specifically in coaching, is required to improve the standards and professional practice of ECT mentors.

6.6 New Developments

As previously stated, the success of the Introduction to Coaching programme for ECT Mentors within the participating local authorities has resulted in the creation of an Introduction to Coaching programme for all staff members across the education spectrum from senior/middle leadership, teaching and support staff as part of the local authority's continuous professional development (CPD) programmes. As a direct result of the Introduction to Coaching programme, I have been approached by one of

the local authorities to create an accredited Coaching programme for September 2024 for staff members who wish to progress to the next level of professional coaching knowledge and practice.

6.7 Conclusion

In the wider context of education in schools in England, the issues surrounding recruitment, retention and increased workload has created a challenging climate across the education sector. This practitioner research project aimed to contribute a small piece of the puzzle to support the professional development and coaching practice of the ECT mentor in supporting ECTs to successfully progress in a career in education.

Chapter 7: Research Reflections

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I reflect on why I embarked on the professional doctorate at Middlesex University. I explore my personal and professional journey through the lens of the Kubler-Ross change curve. I also reflect on my academic and professional learning experience and my drive for excellence in my professional practice. I examine my motivation to build my credibility as a leadership coach practitioner and my ongoing contribution to improving professionalism and standards in the broader field of coaching practice in education.

7.2 Why a Professional Doctorate in Coaching and Mentoring Practice?

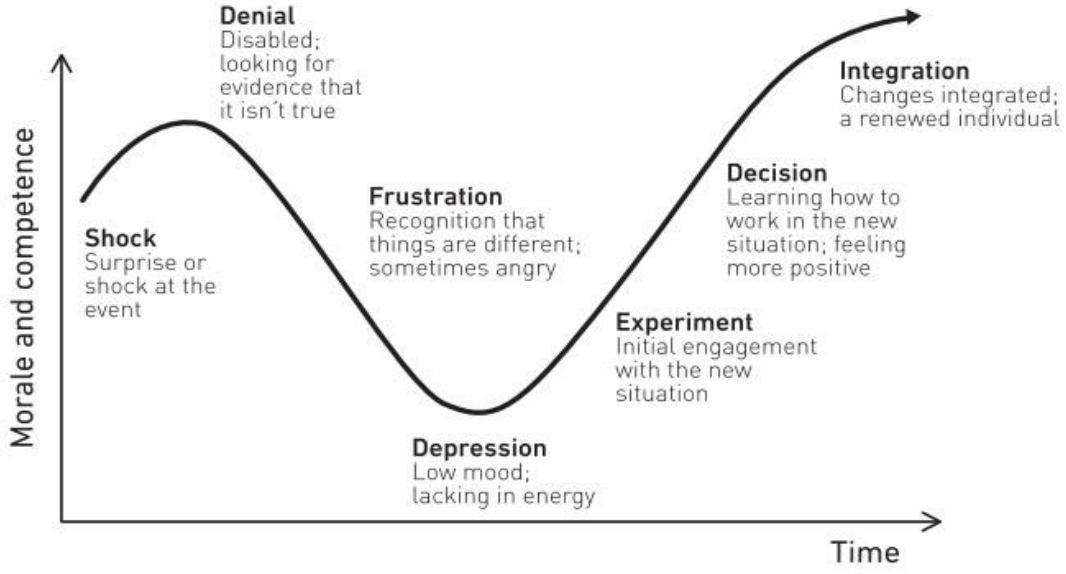
The professional doctorate allowed me to engage in a period of critical reflection about myself, my knowledge, experience and my professional practice. Embarking on the professional doctorate also provided me with opportunities, at various times during the practitioner research project, to reflect on my personal and professional integrity. The task of building my professional practice and academic knowledge seemed, at times, to be an insurmountable challenge. Although I have extensive professional experience of working at CEO, directorate and senior leadership level as a leadership coach, the professional doctorate helped me to consolidate my professional identity through 'the use of professional judgment and reasoning ... critical self-evaluation, and ... self-directed learning' (Paterson et al., 2002). Awareness of my professional identity has provided me with a lens through which to continually evaluate, learn and make sense of my practice (Trede et al., 2012, p.374). In addition, my professional identity as an experienced master practitioner in the field of coaching and mentoring practice has been further enhanced since becoming a master practitioner and global member of the European Coaching and Mentoring Council (EMCC UK/ EMCC GLOBAL), subscribing to the publication 'Coaching at Work' and consolidating my organisation's status as an approved centre with the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM.

7.3 My Personal and Professional Journey

I would describe my journey over the years of completing the professional doctorate as a rollercoaster ride. At the start of my journey, my focus was on achieving my ambitions for academic excellence and being recognised as an 'expert' in the field of

mentoring and coaching. As I progressed, I soon realised that the journey was about far more than attaining academic excellence. Undertaking the professional doctorate impacted on every area of my personal and professional life. Over the journey, I experienced health issues resulting in limited mobility, family illness and bereavement of family members, which affected my physical and mental health. The onset of COVID-19 created a new landscape that required a new mindset to navigate the way ahead. Before COVID, I had always achieved what I set out to do. My outlook was 'when' not 'if' I would achieve my goals. Post-COVID, cracks were revealed in my resilient nature, as I began to doubt whether I could complete the professional doctorate journey. The emotions and changes that I experienced resonate with the Kübler-Ross (1970) change curve (see Figure 18), which helped me to process these changes.

Figure 18: Kübler-Ross change curve (Kübler-Ross, 1970).



During 2020, the onset of COVID-19 left me feeling shocked and saddened about the devastating personal and global effects of the virus. In many respects, I still feel as though I am in a state of denial, which I use as a coping mechanism to mask the devastating impact of COVID-19. The period of lockdown gave rise to feelings of frustration, anger and isolation. Although I did not feel depressed, I experienced low

energy and low moods. During the lockdown, I experimented with moving my leadership coaching and training practice online, using Zoom and Teams to interact with my clients, local authority consultants and research participants. This new way of working proved to be very challenging at times but was also a very positive experience. Once the restrictions had been lifted, I re-emerged and re-engaged in my leadership coaching and training practice. I arranged meetings with the local authority consultants to discuss how we would navigate the new working landscape. By 2022, we decided that the way forward would be to integrate face-to-face and online delivery to ensure successful completion of the pilot programme (artefact).

7.4 An exploration of Movement

During Covid-19 I went through a phase where I was ‘stuck’ and unable to continue with my professional doctorate journey. During one insightful coaching session, my academic coach, asked ‘What does movement mean to you?’ I responded: ‘Movement, to me, represents freedom and independence, mentally, physically, and spiritually.’

Over the past five years, my mobility has gradually worsened to a point where I now walk with a crutch for stability. The experience of lockdown during COVID-19 reinforced a feeling of fear, seclusion and immobility. Each day, my children, husband, and I would go out to the back garden at different times for daily exercise. During that time, the back garden became our sanctuary. My son once made a joke, saying, ‘Mum, why do you never look up?’ Whilst cycling on my stationary bike in the garden one morning, I looked up at the sky and noticed the fascinating cloud formations. In that moment I felt a sense of hope and freedom. Reflecting on what movement meant to me, I realised that at a deeper level, movement has afforded me the clarity to think and write freely over the past few months. This revelation left me feeling very emotional. Later that day, I reflected on feeling ‘stuck’ throughout 2020–2021.

January 2022 heralded a feeling of moving forward. I signed up for a rehabilitation programme of hydrotherapy and Pilates at a local hospital. The rehabilitation programme was life-changing: I could move effortlessly in the warm hydrotherapy pool and achieve movements and exercises that were very painful on land. One day, my instructor asked, ‘Noella, when was the last time you were able to run and climb stairs without pain?’ I had to hold myself together as his words rang in my ears, because I

could not remember. As I progressed through the rehabilitation programme, I began to feel that being surrounded by other patients with chronic lower limb issues was very draining and focused on sickness. I felt a strong urge to change my environment and my mindset from sickness to wellness.

At the beginning of February 2023, I began to research gyms with swimming pools, and successfully located a gym with a pool and aqua aerobics lessons located in a beautiful local hotel. I joined the gym at the end of February 2023, and now regularly enjoy the feeling of wellness, well-being, movement, and independence.

7.5 Final Thoughts

Undertaking the professional doctorate practitioner research project enabled me to consolidate all my knowledge, skills, training, teaching and learning, leadership coaching and mentoring practice into this document and the artefact. I have now achieved all my academic ambitions. Achieving the professional practitioner doctorate qualification will add to my MSc in Operations Management and MA in Coaching and Mentoring Practice badges of ability, (Sennett, 1972). I have evolved in all areas of my life, personally and professionally. This experience, including the setbacks, has given me the confidence to believe that all things are possible once you focus your mind on the end goal.

Successful publication of the ‘Introduction to Coaching programme’ in the annual CPD programme for ECT mentors in participating local authorities; the adaptation and expansion of the programme to a wider audience in schools, ranging from senior/middle leadership teams, teaching staff and support staff members and the proposed accredited Coaching programme for all staff members has further fuelled my ambition to continue to work collaboratively to raise the standards and professionalism of coaching in the education sector, whilst continuing to develop my leadership coaching practice to ensure that I turn up to each coaching session as the best version of myself.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Professional Development Training Programme for ECT Mentors (Artefact)

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce my original contribution to knowledge and practice in the coaching space through my knowledge and practice framework. I identify the sector and programme drivers within the framework that informed the design and development of the 'Introduction to Coaching for Early Career Teacher (ECT) mentors' professional training programme (artefact). I will explain how I developed an online platform (website), training materials and training manual to facilitate the programme. I explore the preparation for the pilot training session through the reflective lens of Clutterbuck's 'seven conversations'. I conclude with the successful outcomes of the 'Introduction to Coaching' programme.

1.2 Rationale for Developing the Artefact

My professional concerns about aspects of coaching and mentoring in education have fuelled my academic endeavours. In 2016, I completed my MA in Coaching and Mentoring Practice at Oxford Brookes University, focusing on the impact of ECT mentors on the professional development of early career teachers. This research project, undertaken for the professional doctorate programme, enabled me to explore issues and concerns further through the lens of the ECT mentor, which resulted in the creation of the artefact.

As previously stated the early career framework induction programme incorporates instructional training provision for ECT mentors that focuses on 'what' topics need to be addressed with their ECTs.

Mentors have contextual knowledge and experience of the sector, the environment, and the role of the early career teacher. What is lacking in the system and often a challenge for ECT mentors, is the training around the knowledge and skills to provide coaching support, to enable non-directive coaching conversations and action/goal orientated approach to enable ECTs to successfully navigate the initial 2-year induction period and transition into a career in teaching. The programme also aims to provide a consistent approach to address variability and inconsistencies in ECT

mentor practice whilst contributing to improving the professional standards of coaching practice across the education sector.

1.3 Coaching and Mentoring Professional Practice

The DfEE (2000, para. 26) mandates that ECT mentors must be fully aware of the requirements of the induction period and must have the necessary skills, expertise and knowledge to work effectively. In addition, they must make rigorous and fair judgments of ECTs' performance for satisfactory completion of the induction period and provide or coordinate guidance and practical support for their professional development (DfEE, 2000, para. 26).

In designing the artefact, I incorporated the core mentoring and coaching skills of questioning and active listening skills (Bono et al., 2009; Moore & Tschannen-Moran, 2010) into the online platform and learning materials to ensure that ECT mentors would have the essential tools to support ECTs. Bluckert (2004) states that 'core coaching skills are foundational in building the coaching relationship', and Boreen et al. (2009, p.xi) argue that mentoring 'underpins a philosophy that advocates listening, questioning, and collaborating'. All learning materials and resources for the artefact were designed around the core skills required to build and maintain strong relationships between ECTs and their ECT mentors.

The statutory ECT mentor training programme does not include these core mentoring and coaching skills, reinforcing the need for the artefact. According to O'Connor and Lages (2007, p.164):

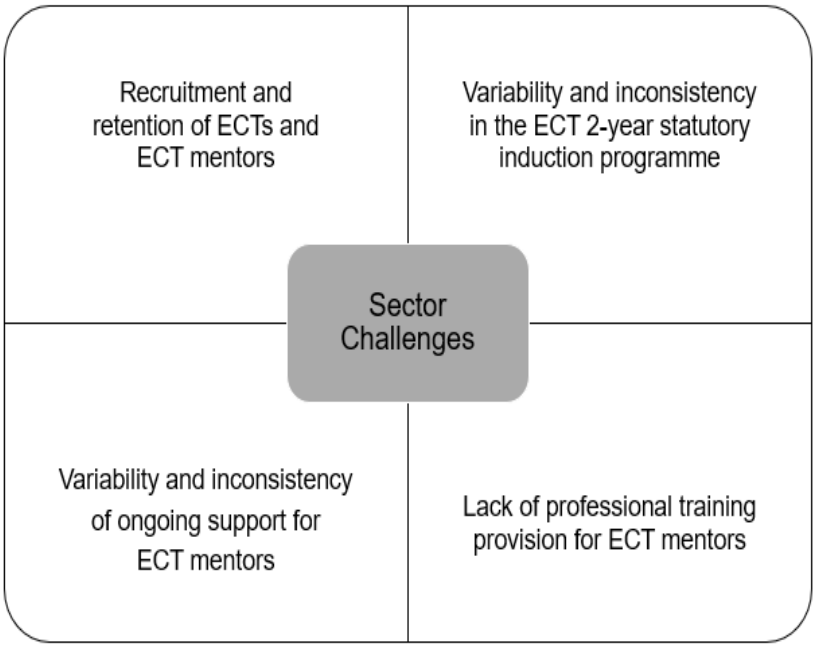
> *'Knowing how to ask questions is the first core skill of coaching … Questions guide* [the client's] *attention and test the coach's hypothesis about the situation. All models of coaching agree on this, and NLP coaching and ontological coaching deal with the linguistic aspect of questions in depth*.'

Throughout my coaching and mentoring practice working with ECT mentors, senior leaders and senior leadership teams in public- and private-sector organisations, I have made effective use of what, how and who questions (De Haan, 2008a, 2008b) to facilitate and elevate coaching and mentoring interventions. In the next section, I present my contribution to knowledge and practice.

1.4 Contribution to Knowledge and Practice

In terms of my original contribution to coaching knowledge and practice, through extensive consultation with key stakeholders, I identified the current sector challenges (Figure 1). The top left quadrant identifies the recruitment and retention of early career teachers (ECTs) which has been an issue across the teaching profession for several years. Since the implementation of the revised ECT induction programme in 2021, a record number of ECT mentors within one of the participating local authorities have relinquished the role citing the increased workload as a major contributory factor.

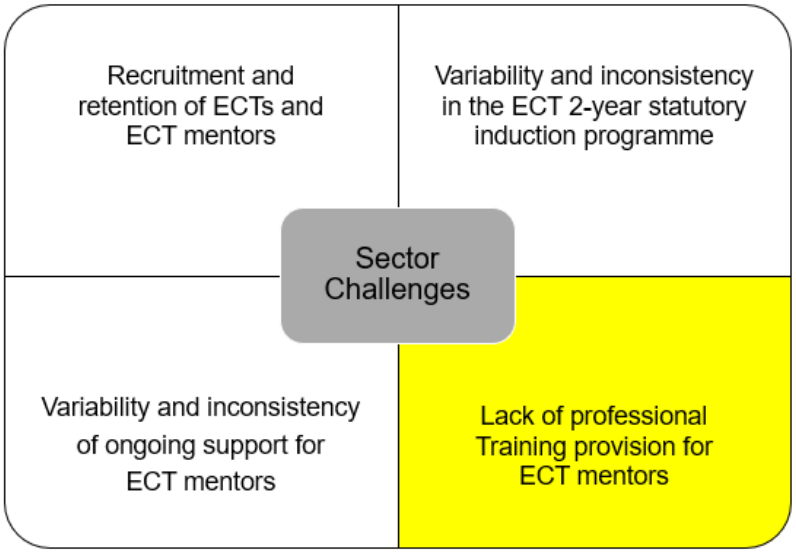
Figure 1: Sector Challenges



The top right quadrant addresses the variability and inconsistencies in the dissemination of the revised ECT induction programme between central government and the local authorities. The bottom left quadrant highlights the lack of statutory planning, preparation, and administration (PPA) time allocated to carry out the ECT mentor role. Through this research project, I chose to focus on the bottom right quadrant which highlights the lack of professional training provision for ECT mentors.

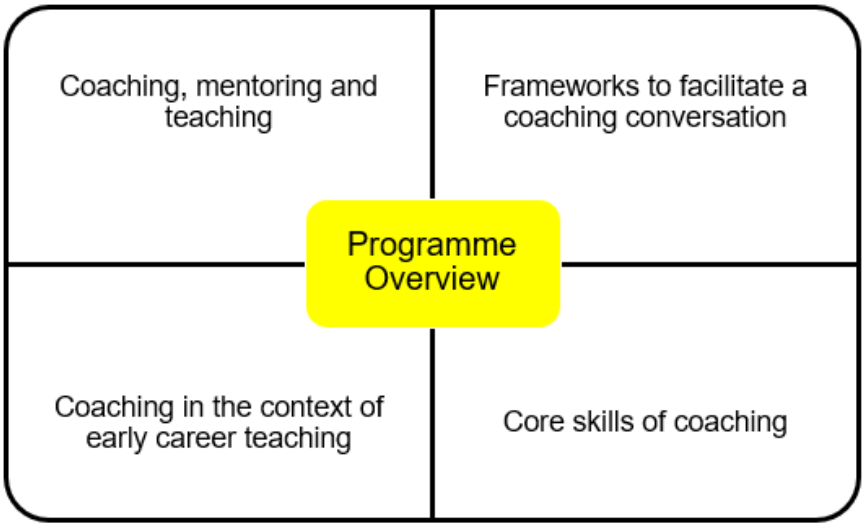
Through the 'Introduction to Coaching' programme, I provide an original contribution to address the challenge around the lack of professional training provision for ECT mentors (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Sector



Challenges – Lack of professional training provision for ECT mentors

To date, over fifty ECT mentors have attended the 'Introduction to Coaching' programme which now forms part of the CPD offering for one of the participating local



authorities.

1.5 Professional Development Training Programme for ECT Mentors

1.5.1 Programme overview

The programme overview for the 'Introduction to Coaching for early career teachers (ECTs)' programme was developed from the specific sector challenge of the lack of professional training for ECT mentors (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Introduction to Coaching Programme Overview

This is a four-part programme aimed at both new and experienced ECT mentors who wish to develop professional coaching skills and practical knowledge, in order to build relationships to support the professional development of early career teachers (ECTs).

1.5.2 Learning outcomes

The UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA, 2014) defines learning outcomes as:

"Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand outcomes and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a designated programme of study…"

The learning outcomes were identified through initial consultations with the commissioning workforce consultants and key stakeholders (senior/middle leaders and ECT mentors), where the specific aims and objectives of the programme were discussed and agreed. According to Myers and Nulty (2009) the most effective learning outcomes are developed by considering the programme design, the way in which the teaching and learning experience is planned.

My years of experience working with ECT mentors coupled with the consultants' objectives to support the ECT mentors' professional practice in coaching, provided a strong basis for meaningful learning outcomes that would contribute elevating the professional practice of the delegates.

The agreed learning outcomes of the training programme were to enable ECT mentors to:

- Develop a clear understanding of the differences between coaching and mentoring.
- Utilise coaching models and tools to support professional dialogue.
- Gain an understanding of coaching skills and behaviours.
- Plan and structure goal orientated coaching interventions.
- Build confidence in your ability to effectively coach early career teachers (ECTs).

1.5.3 Programme structure

The structure of the training programme is aligned with existing coaching programmes and qualifications delivered by industry leaders. As an approved centre that delivers accredited coaching and leadership and management training programmes for the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and City and Guilds, the structure and content of the programme adhere to the professional standards laid down by industry leaders. The 'Introduction to Coaching' programme contributes original knowledge, as I have designed a bespoke programme specifically aimed at providing ECT mentors with the skills, tools and practical knowledge required to support ECTs through the statutory ECT induction programme (see Table 4 for programme outline).

1.5.4 Session Overview and objectives

In terms of the session overview and objectives for each session the key stakeholders gave explicit instructions on the topics to be covered. Through various discussions pertaining to the objectives, for each session, the content, though not directly expressed, were implied. In terms of the content, I used my professional coaching knowledge and experience to create the 'Introduction to Coaching' programme.

Table 1: Structure and objectives of the 'Introduction to Coaching' programme

Session	Objectives
Session 1: Understanding Good Practice in Coaching	Introductions What is Coaching? The difference between Coaching and Mentoring The qualities of an effective Coach The Coaching contract The GROW Model Session review
Session 2: Understanding the Roles and Responsibilities of an Effective Coach/Mentor	Coaching Tools: Learning styles – STOP tool – SWOT analysis. Effective Communication Coaching (Learning) conversations OSCAR Coaching model Session review
Session 3: Coaching Practice using Coaching Models, Tools and Techniques	Coaching practice using appropriate models, tools and techniques. Coaching/Mentoring Diary – Plan and structure coaching sessions Reflective log – Reflect on your performance as a coach/mentor Feedback log – Feedback from coachee/ECT Session review
Session 4: Coaching Practice, Observation and Reflection	Explore the EMCC Coach/Mentor competency framework Coaching practice Coaching Observations using the Reflective log Reflect on your performance as a Coach/Mentor EMCC Code of Ethics for Coach/Mentors Programme review – Next Steps

The objectives for session 1 where structured around conversations with the workforce development consultants to orientate the ECT mentors with key terms, such as what is coaching? The difference between coaching and mentoring. The first session provided exemplars of the qualities of an effective coach (EMCC UK). The introduction of the CLEAR contracting model (Hawkins & Smith, 2010) enabled an exploration of the structure of a contract with an ECT in terms of contracting, listening, exploration,

the actions to be taken and the review at the end of each session. One of the key areas of concern from the ECT mentors was how to initiate, conduct and end constructive coaching sessions with ECTs. I introduced the GROW model (Whitmore, 1992) as a starting point for setting the scene and framing coaching conversations.

In Session 2, the structure and content for the exploration of coaching (learning) conversations was further developed. The content for session two included the introduction of coaching tools including learning styles, SWOT analysis and the STOP tool, as techniques for enabling ECT mentors to tap into the ECTs preferred learning styles, strengths and weaknesses (development areas) as well as the opportunities and threats (barriers) that the ECTs might face, to enhance effective communication and exploration. Effective communication skills were introduced to explore the techniques of active listening, effective questioning and reflective practice. The OSCAR framework was introduced as an alternative to the GROW model.

The main focus for session 3 was for the ECT mentors to undertake coaching practice where the course delegates worked in pairs to put into practice the models, tools and techniques learnt in sessions 1 and 2. The coaching diary, reflective log and (coachee) feedback log sourced from the institute of leadership and management (ILM) were used to structure the sessions using best practice tools to enable the ECT mentors to reflect on their coaching practice. Although the ECT mentors engaged in role play as coach and coachee, the scenarios that they bought the session were real situations that they had encountered with ECTs, which they were able to work through effectively.

Session 4 focussed on reinforcing the models, tools and techniques through further coaching practice which took the form of speed coaching sessions with the delegates working in groups of three, each group including a coach, coachee and observer. The role of the observer provided valuable feedback for the coach on their strengths during each interaction. Towards the end of the final session, I introduced the EMCC coach/mentor competency framework to provide the ECT mentors with an awareness of the competencies that they should be aiming for in their coaching practice. I also introduced the EMCC code of ethics to create an awareness of the ethical obligations and boundaries that the ECT mentors should be working within in relation to their coaching practice. Due to the positive feedback throughout the programme, were any of the delegates had requested information on next steps, I provided details of

organisations that provided further accredited ad non-accredited for further consideration. I also mentioned

At the end of each session, through coaching practice and role play as coach, coachee and observer, participants were encouraged to practise their new skills in a supportive environment and back in their school setting. The programme was scheduled over four half terms to fit in with the school calendar, delivered in four three-hour sessions.

1.6 An Introduction to Coaching training programme for Early Career Teacher (ECT) Mentors

1.6.1 Website, Training Manual and Resources

As previously stated, the decision to develop an online platform came about as a result of the success of the pilot training programme. Exploratory meetings with the participating workforce consultants focussed on options that would enable participating and potential local authorities and schools to access training for ECT mentors wishing to access face-to-face, online or a blended style of learning as part of ECT induction CPD provision.

Practical considerations when designing the online platform and briefing the web designer centred around providing a professional online programme that would be accessible and available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. This would provide the delegates with a greater degree of flexibility than the current ECT induction providers. The training programme is designed in a way that delegates log in via a password-protected portal, and work through the session slide presentations (4 in total) supported by the accompanying voice-overs, provided for delegates who may have additional learning requirements. Once they are logged in, delegates can download the training manual and learning resources anytime and work through the manual and online presentations at their own pace in their own time. The design of the training programme coincided with the re-design of my organisation's website ensuring that the training programme was placed on a robust upgraded online platform that could withstand the heavy traffic from the accredited leadership and management training programmes delivered by my organisation in addition to the ‘Introduction to Coaching’ training programme. As the online platform is a stand-alone portal, I was provided with training from the web developer to enable me to take on the administrator role of

updating the necessary software, user login requirements and updates as and when required. The work involved in developing, testing and designing the website took approximately 12 – 18 months.

Although the 'Introduction to Coaching' training programme uses established industry standard, best practice coaching models, tools and techniques, the programme is unique in the fact that there are no other training programmes currently available specifically aimed at providing ECT mentors with specific skills and knowledge in coaching in the education space.

1.7 Articulating the Pilot Training Programme through Clutterbuck's 'Seven Conversations'

Throughout my years of training and facilitation of professional development programmes, I have used many models and techniques. As a way of reflecting on my experience of developing the ECT mentor pilot programme, I decided to adopt the interesting approach of using Clutterbuck's (2007) 'seven conversations' model. This model provided me with an insightful tool and framework to reflect on the various conversations and inner dialogue that took place or might have taken place between the coach/mentor (me) and the clients (ECT mentors) before, during and after the first training session. The simplicity of Clutterbuck's (2007) 'seven conversations' model initially intrigued me. As I began to reflect on each of my conversations, I realised that this 'simple' model uncovered many different layers of reflections, thoughts and feelings, some of which revealed a vulnerable side to me that I had not anticipated. I soon appreciated that my previous use of this model had merely touched the surface. Through exploration of each conversation, I developed a deeper understanding of and respect for this model's impact on me, personally and professionally.

The following conversations combine my recollections, my thoughts about what the client's reflections might be, notes taken at the time, and clients' evaluations following the pilot coaching and mentoring programme.

1.7.1 My self-reflection and inner dialogue before the session

From the outset, I remember feeling immensely proud and honoured to have been commissioned by the workforce consultants from the participating local authorities to design and deliver the pilot professional training programme for ECT mentor coaching and mentoring. During the initial meeting, as we discussed the requirements, I asked

myself whether I was fully prepared to undertake the task at short notice. I wondered what impression I was making with my answers to the consultants' numerous questions: was I conveying my knowledge and professionalism in a way that would convince the consultants that I was the right person for the task? At one point I wondered why the local authorities had chosen to discount a larger organization that had also expressed an interest in undertaking the project.

As the meeting progressed, I felt a self-imposed weight of responsibility and unease. I questioned whether I was mentally and physically ready for the task. My thoughts darted between where to locate resources, how many schools would sign up, and whether the content and delivery would satisfy the clients' needs. At this time, I was experiencing mobility issues owing to progressive osteoarthritis in both knees. When we discussed the programme location and schedule (dates/times/duration), my thoughts immediately went to the travel arrangements and the location's accessibility. How would I travel there? Did the chosen building have stairs, lifts or escalators? How long would it take to get to the chosen location? At various stages of the conversation, I consciously invoked the STOP coaching tool (Gallwey, 1974), which enabled me to step back, think, review my options/organize my thoughts, and then proceed in a calmer state of mind.

1.7.2 Clients' self-reflection and inner conversation before the session

Although I did not know what the clients would be thinking before the session, I tried to put myself in their shoes and imagine a conversation from their perspective. I wondered what would motivate a mentor to sign up, knowing that would mean taking four sessions out of their busy school timetable and travelling to a new location. Would they see this as an inconvenience? What were they hoping to learn? What were their expectations of me, personally and professionally? I wondered whether they were thinking about how the programme would support their role as mentors.

1.7.3 My reflection-in-action/inner conversation during the session

When the clients began to arrive at the training venue, my thoughts shifted from checking the equipment and materials, to consciously trying to remain focused and present. As the participants filed into the training room, I could feel nerves and a little tension. I tried to build a mental picture of each person, seeking to interpret their body language and facial expressions. I also wondered what their perceptions were of me.

I reflected on Mehrabian's (1967) communication model, which highlights the role of non-verbal cues in effective communication, with body language accounting for 55% of our daily communications, the tonality of our voices 38%, and the words we use 7%. I told myself to stand up straight, adopt an open posture and a welcoming tone, smile at each person and maintain eye contact as they entered the training room. My role was to set everyone at ease from the outset to establish the tone for a positive session.

At the beginning of the session, I introduced the programme outline and session objectives. As I looked around the room, I noticed the clients' faces: a few people were smiling, and others seemed unsure. I introduced the icebreaker, in which I asked the clients to get into pairs with someone they did not know and introduce themselves to each other. At the end of the exercise, I asked each person, in turn, to introduce their partner to the rest of the group. As each person spoke, I could feel the tension in the room begin to dissipate. I noticed the body language and faces becoming more relaxed. Immediately after the introductions, I thought to myself that if I could keep everyone engaged through interaction until the afternoon break, the rest of the session would run smoothly.

I introduced Clutterbuck's 'seven conversations' as a part of a coaching conversations exercise during the pilot phase of the ECT mentor professional development training programme. The uncharted territory of inner and spoken dialogue before and during the interactions and reflection after the interactions challenged the ECT mentors' perspectives.

Relating to the content and outcomes of each coaching intervention from the ECTs' and ECT mentors' perspectives, the training programme's learning objectives were designed to incorporate instructional elements of Bloom's (2001) revised taxonomy. The inclusive nature of this hierarchical model resonates with my style of teaching. It supports the clients' learning by moving from the known, in terms of their current knowledge of coaching and mentoring, to the unknown, by incorporating new knowledge into their practice through understanding, remembering and applying coaching and mentoring. My confidence in the success of the first session grew as the clients actively engaged in the learning activities by asking and answering questions posed by myself and each other. They demonstrated a clear understanding of the learning objectives during the reflective review at the end of the session.

1.7.4 The spoken conversation between myself and the clients during the session

At the beginning of the session, I felt a need to stand up at the front and project my voice across the room in an authoritative manner. The introductions and conversations between myself and the clients and interactions between the clients were cordial. Once the introductions had been made through the icebreaker activity, the conversations started to flow. Through the introductions, we learned that all the ECT mentors were phase leaders and class teachers with similar experiences of mentoring ECTs. These similarities created a bond within the group that persisted throughout the session. After the introductions, I sat down at the front of the room facing the clients to create a relaxed atmosphere in which coaching/learning conversations could begin. The introduction to the programme structure, learning outcomes and session objectives started conversations around the room that engaged everyone, beginning with reflective reviews of their ECT mentor role. My questions about their motivations for becoming a mentor, current issues and challenges of the role, and key strengths and development needs enabled a deeper shared understanding of the positive impact that coaching and mentoring training might have on their professional development as coaching and mentoring practitioners.

1.7.5 The clients' reflection-in-action/inner conversation during the session

From the initial conversations, I sensed that the clients may have been unprepared for the reflective nature of some of the questions being asked. During quiet times when the clients were writing answers to the questions, I wondered whether they were thinking, 'wow, I hadn't thought about that', 'what answer shall I give to that question?' or 'I should have done some background reading beforehand'. Although the session was calm and engaging, I could almost see the cogs turning in their heads. Given the positive responses in discussions about the coaching and mentoring models and techniques, the clients may have thought that the coaching plan and the GROW and OSCAR models would be beneficial tools that would provide structure for future interactions with their ECTs.

1.7.6 The clients' self-reflection and inner conversation after the session

After the session, I wondered whether the clients would reflect on what they had learned, what aspects of the learning they might incorporate into their practice, and

what tools or techniques they might try out with their ECTs. I reflected on how I may have been perceived by each of the delegates, personally and professionally. As these thoughts swirled around in my head, it dawned on me that I present a growing list of multiple identities, with implicit and explicit role responsibilities (Hill, 1999) depending on the interaction: as Noella the person, professional leadership coach, trainer, consultant, director and NLP practitioner. Friedman and Lobel (2003, p.87) suggest that finding a balance between our personal and professional selves requires working consistently in alignment with our core values. This resonates with my reflections on my core values of working with integrity, transparency and authenticity.

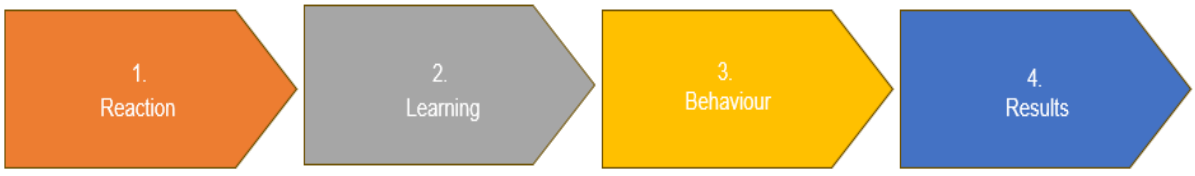
1.7.7 My self-reflection and inner conversation after the session

At the end of the session when the clients had departed, I sat down to take a breath and took time out for reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991). Looking back on the experience, I asked myself how I had supported the clients in their learning. What additional information might have been useful? I reflected on what had gone well and what had challenged me during the session. I reflected on what adjustments I might make to the resources and presentation materials to enhance the learning in the following three sessions. I also reflected on what I had learned about myself as an educator, and what elements of the learning I might incorporate into my evolving professional practice. At the end of the final session, I reflected on the feedback and evaluation forms completed by the participants

1.8 Evaluation of the Pilot Programme

Following the pilot coaching and mentoring programme, online evaluation forms were sent out to each delegate. The impact and outcomes were measured using Kirkpatrick's (2016) four levels of learning evaluation (Figure 16).

Figure 4: Four-level learning evaluation model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016, p.52)



1.8.1 Level 1: Reaction

The questions posed (see Table 6) sought to measure delegates' responses to the coaching and mentoring training programme. Overall, the feedback was very positive, indicating a high level of satisfaction. In response to Question 4, 'To what extent did the sessions provide opportunities for active learning?', delegates' rating was 10 out of 10 (see Table 7).

1.8.2 Level 2: Learning

In relation to learning, evaluation of new skills and knowledge acquisition, the pilot programme provided a starting point for further development. In response to Question 3, 'To what extent did the sessions meet your learning needs as a mentor to an ECT?', four out of 10 delegates responded, 'Quite a bit' and six replied 'A great deal'.

In response to Question 5, 'To what extent did the sessions provide opportunities for collaborative learning?', eight out of 10 delegates gave a rating of 'A great deal' and two responded 'Quite a bit'.

During the first session of the pilot programme, I posed questions to explore the role of the ECT mentor. The delegates' responses are summarised in Table 6.

Table 2: Delegates' responses to pilot programme questions

Research participants	**Number**	**Data collection technique**
ECT mentors	30	Questionnaires
ECT mentors	15	Semi-structured interviews
ECT/ECT mentor meetings	6	Observations
ECT mentors, local authority consultants, headteachers	60	Conference day workshops and CPD activities
ECT mentors Local authority consultants	7 3	Pilot professional development training programme (artefact)

Table 3: ECT mentor questionnaire responses

Questions	ECT mentor participant responses
Years of experience in current role	Between 3- and 24-years' experience in the teaching profession
Recruitment methods	'I was simply informed'; 'I volunteered as part of my new role'; 'I was told to do the role'; 'I was approached by my headteacher'; 'Internal promotion'; 'Asked by my head of department'; 'Recommended by the head of-department'
What types of training have you undertaken for the ECT mentor role?	ECT mentor conference and workshops; PGCE training; Teaching and learning MA degree; Mentor training
What mentor skills and behaviours do you currently possess?	People skills, pedagogy; Empathy, supportive; Listener, empathy, coach; Professional, honest and organized; Nice/helpful and organized; A passion for lifelong learning; Good listener, empathetic, positive; Organized, approachable, fair; Empathy, modelling, feedback; Clear/high expectations; Having a calming presence;
What type of support do you think is essential for your ECT?	Guiding the ECT to achieve targets; Setting clear targets, listening; Giving feedback, coaching guidance; Regular structured meetings; Planning, preparation and administration time; Give constructive advice to progress; Giving positive advice and feedback; Listen and advise; Make time for ECT meetings; Generating solutions to problems
What professional development opportunities would support you in your ECT mentor role?	Ongoing ECT mentor programmes; Up-to-date research on coaching and mentoring; Coaching training; ECT mentor training and guidance; Further coaching training; Coaching support; Refresher training on educational theory, observation and feedback; Opportunities to use my knowledge and expertise; CPD on effective coaching and mentoring

1.8.3 Level 3: Behaviour change

Assessment and measurement of changes in behaviour in the school environment were areas that required further exploration. During each session, various methods were used to evaluate the new skills, knowledge and learning, including triangulation through coaching practice, role play and observations by peers. At the end of the pilot programme, further strategies for measurement and assessment were discussed with the commissioning workforce consultants. These included interviews with delegates before the start of the next cohort, and follow-up interviews with each delegate. These might include 360-degree feedback interviews with ECTs and senior leaders in the respective schools to gain feedback on the delegates' application of their new skills, knowledge and professional practice. These discussions did not progress because the focus shifted to implementation of the revised ECT induction programme.

Table 3: Questions and delegate responses

Questions	**Delegate responses (total = 10)**
1. How would you rate this course overall?	'Good' – 6 'Excellent' – 4
2. To what extent did the sessions meet the aims proposed?	'A great deal' – 6 'Quite a bit' – 4
3. To what extent did the sessions meet your learning needs as a mentor to an ECT?	'Quite a bit' – 4 'A great deal' – 6
4. To what extent did the sessions provide opportunities for active learning?	'A great deal' – 10
5. To what extent did the sessions provide opportunities for collaborative learning?	'A great deal' – 8 'Quite a bit' – 2
6. To what extent did the sessions provide a sufficient pace of learning?	'Quite a bit' – 5 'A great deal' – 5
7. To what extent did the facilitator support my learning?	'A great deal' – 6 'Quite a bit' – 4

1.8.4 Level 4: Evaluation of the overall results of the pilot training programme

Table 4: Delegate responses

What aspect of the training was the most useful?	
Delegate 1	*Clarifying the difference between coaching and mentoring*
Delegate 2	*Great ideas/refreshers on how to hold structured coaching/mentoring feedback meetings*
Delegate 3	*Good to hear examples of peer ideas/practice. Planning structured meetings with tangible goals and outcomes. Thank you*
Delegate 4	*Discussion about wording and tone in coaching conversations.*
Delegate 5	*Useful tools for enabling not disabling conversations. Discussion about transference and difficult conversations.*
Delegate 6	*It was wally useful to talk things through with other teachers/mentors and reflect on my practice.*
Delegate 7	*Hearing others' experiences as well as getting practical advice from Noella. I found the session very interesting.*
Delegate 8	*To ensure we are having purposeful meetings and ongoing coaching and mentoring training.*
Delegate 9	*Listen to the ECT first, let them talk, and have an 80/20 approach like you would have in the classroom.*
Delegate 10	*To use the STEP technique and work together to problem solve. Useful for challenging conversations.*

In response to the question ‘How would you rate this course overall?’, six out of 10 delegates rated it ‘Good’ and four rated it ‘Excellent’.

In response to the question ‘To what extent did the sessions meet the aims proposed?’, six out of 10 delegates gave the rating ‘A great deal’ and four ‘Quite a bit’.

The primary goal of the pilot programme was to develop professional coaching and mentoring training provision to raise the standards of ECT mentors across schools in the participating local authorities. The inclusion of the programme as part of the annual CDP for ECT mentors, and its expansion to various staff members in schools can be viewed as a measure of success, as it may ultimately support the retention of ECT mentors and address the initial concerns of inconsistency and variability in support.

1.9 Summary

In this chapter, I introduced my original contribution to knowledge and practice in the coaching space. The sector and programme drivers within the framework informed the design and development of the ‘Introduction to Coaching for Early Career Teacher (ECT) mentors’ professional training programme (artefact). I explained how I developed an online platform (website), training materials and user handbook to facilitate the programme. My exploration of the process of preparing for the first pilot training session through the reflective lens of Clutterbuck’s ‘seven conversations’, enabled me to reflect on my personal and professional experiences. The artefact achieved many successful outcomes. At the request of one of the participating local authorities, the ‘Introduction to Coaching’ training programme has been adapted for publication annual CPD programme since 2021/2022 for senior leadership, teaching, and support staff across all schools in one of the participating local authorities. Due to the positive responses to the programme, I have been contracted to deliver Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) accredited level 3 and level 5 Coaching and Mentoring programmes commencing in September 2024.

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