

## **Educative mentoring within an 'expansive' learning environment**

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*Extract adapted from Palombo, M. & Daly, C. (2021 in press) in 'Mentoring Geography Teachers in the Secondary School: A Practical Guide', (edited by G. Healey et al.), Routledge.*

Educative mentoring contrasts with an 'expert-novice' relationship, which may influence the beginning teacher to simply reproduce existing practice embodied by the mentor, rather than developing a thoughtful vision of teaching that is developmental. This developmental approach is compatible with the mentor modelling effective practices for beginning teachers and demonstrating a range of established approaches to teaching and learning. However, such modelling is accompanied by critical reasoning by both parties. This is based on discussion about the purposes of teaching an aspect of the curriculum and the needs of specific pupils in particular classrooms, frequently linked to reading research. Beginning teachers need to locate the mentor's style of teaching and common features of established practices within wider debates about effective teaching within a subject/phase. Therefore, post-lesson dialogue, and the ability of the mentor to be able to articulate the thinking and reasoning behind pedagogical and curriculum decisions is important. It opens discussion about the principles and beliefs underpinning the choices made. This works both ways. Through mentor dialogue, the beginning teacher learns to articulate their reasoning for curriculum and pedagogical decisions and the changing understanding on which they are based.

### **Mentoring within an expansive learning environment**

Clearly, the educative mentoring relationship described here is based on cultural norms being present in a school, supporting a habit of open questioning, building curiosity about how pupils learn and encouraging risk-taking as a joint endeavour among staff. Hodkinson's (2009) research in secondary schools identified features of 'expansive' and 'restrictive' environments for teachers' development, adapted from Fuller and Unwin's study of workplace learning (2003) (see Table).

Expansive	Restrictive
Close collaborative working	Isolated, individualist working
Colleagues mutually supportive of learning	Colleagues obstruct or do not support each other's learning
An explicit focus on learning as a dimension of normal working practices	No explicit focus on teacher learning, except to meet crises or imposed initiatives
Supported opportunities for personal development that goes beyond school or government priorities	Teacher learning mainly strategic compliance with government or school agendas
Out of school educational opportunities including time to stand back, reflect and think differently	Few out of school educational opportunities, only narrow, short training programmes
Opportunities to integrate off-site learning into everyday practice	No opportunity to integrate off-the-job learning
Opportunity to extend professional identity through boundary crossing into other departments, school activities, schools and beyond	Work restricted to home departmental team within one school. Opportunities for boundary crossing only come with a job changes
Support for local variation in ways of working and learning for teachers and work groups	Standardised approaches to teacher learning are prescribed and imposed
Teachers use a wide range of learning opportunities	Teachers use a narrow range of learning approaches

**Table Expansive-restrictive learning environments for teachers, Hodkinson, 2009, p. 165.**

Expansive environments are those which support the learning of all practitioners, recognising that collaboration is key. For mentors to be able to initiate and maintain educative mentoring relationships, the features of an expansive school workplace environment are essential. These affect the mentor's self-perception of what it means to be a learner as an experienced teacher and their openness to enquiry approaches that may question existing beliefs about how something is taught and how pupils are experiencing it. In other words, educative mentoring can be unsettling. Indeed it should be, because it supports the possibility of transformational professional learning, by which individual beliefs can shift and inform continually evolving practice. *Adaptive expertise* is identified as an advanced professional attribute among educative mentors (Langdon, 2017), which they apply to their own teaching as well as the ways in which they respond to mentees' needs. Such expertise is supported by a school environment in which it is safe to question existing routines and to seek new ways of working, based on rich evidence generated with the beginning teacher in the classroom, as well as found in external sources. It is clear that school leadership plays a vital role in creating the conditions that support educative mentoring. Educative mentoring can thrive in schools that function as effective learning communities, in which enquiry into practice is the norm and adaptive expertise is recognised as a key to effective teaching.