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‘WE NEED TO TALK’: CONFRONTING AS AN ADAPTIVE RESPONSE IN MENTORING[5]

Abstract

Mentoring as a professional practice is expected to be adaptive to mentee teacher learning. However, the knowledge base of activities for adaptive mentoring is underdeveloped. This descriptive study explores mentor teachers' practical knowledge of mentoring activities to adaptively respond to their mentee teachers' learning, through repertory-grid interviews. Mentors described 34 distinct mentoring activities for adaptive response to their mentee teachers’ learning, oriented toward emotional support, support for knowledge construction, creation of a learning context and changing mentee teacher behaviour. The mentoring activity that mentors mentioned most was confronting mentee teachers with problems, in order to generate mentee’s intention to change their behaviour. Mentors talk about enacting confronting as telling or developing the problem, depending on the underlying issue they try to address. Confronting can be considered a form of goal setting with mentees, which indicates that mentor teachers construct their practical knowledge of adaptive response in large part around goal setting with mentees.

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[5] This chapter was submitted in adapted form as:
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5.1 Introduction

This study explores mentor teachers' practical knowledge of mentoring activities for adaptively responding to their mentee teachers' learning. For novice teachers, mentoring relationships with more experienced teachers are crucial to help them survive their initial teaching experiences, develop their teaching competencies, and define their teaching lives (Fairbanks, Freedman, & Kahn, 2000; Marable & Raimondi, 2007). The match between mentor support and mentee teacher learning is vital for making this mentoring process work (Bullough, 2012; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). Mentoring novice teachers is therefore increasingly seen as a professional practice in which mentors need to "…draw from their strategic knowledge of teaching and learning to teach and their knowledge of their novice as a learner to create appropriate learning opportunities" (Schwille, 2008, p.155). Such a professional practice involves diagnosing performance levels of mentee teachers, structuring learning settings through goals and tasks, and scaffolding mentee teacher learning toward successful unassisted performance (Stanulis. Brondyk, Little, & Wibbens, 2014). This requires mentors to develop practical knowledge of novices as adult learners, as well as knowledge of a wide repertoire of mentoring activities to cater to individual differences in mentee teacher learning. This knowledge is a critical, but still underdeveloped element in the knowledge base of mentoring (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005; Jones & Straker, 2006). Drawing on practitioner knowledge can help to inform and develop the knowledge base of professional mentoring (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002; Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer, 2001). In this study, we aim to contribute to the knowledge base of mentoring as a professional practice by focussing on mentor teachers' own, practical knowledge of mentoring activities for adaptively responding to their mentee teachers' learning. We do so by exploring what mentoring activities mentors mention most in talking about their response to similarities and differences between their mentee teachers. Our central research question is: *What are dominant mentoring activities in mentor teachers' descriptions of their response to similarities and differences between their mentee teachers?* We assume that focussing on dominant mentoring activities in mentor teachers' descriptions may provide insight into common practices and problems of mentors in adapting mentoring to mentee teachers' learning.

5.1.1 Mentor teachers' practical knowledge of mentoring activities for adaptive response

Mentor teachers' knowledge, like teachers' knowledge, has been defined above all as practical knowledge: knowledge that derives from personal experiences with colleagues, teaching, learning to teach, and personal life experiences in general (Clarke, Killeavy, & Moloney, 2013; Zanting, Verloop, Vermunt, & Van Driel, 1998). It is embedded in their teaching practice and intimately tied up with their professional identities as teachers and mentors within their school culture (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010; Martin, 1997; Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). A key characteristic of mentors' practical knowledge is its function, which is "to guide their actions when they encounter the critical question, 'what should I do in this particular situation?'" (Gholami & Husu, 2010, p.1520). Mentor teachers' practical knowledge of mentoring activities is connected to the goals these mentoring activities serve (Van Ginkel, Oolbekkink, Meijer, & Verloop, 2016). In the study described in Chapter 3 of this thesis, mentors described their mentoring activities as oriented toward four broad mentoring goals: A) providing emotional and psycho-social support, B) supporting construction of personal practical knowledge of teaching, C) creating a favourable context for mentee teacher learning, and D) changing mentee teacher behaviour (see section 3.3.1 in Chapter 3). In this study, these four goals therefore provide the starting point for our analysis of mentoring activities.

Like teachers, mentors construct their practical knowledge for responding to particular learning situations through their implicit aggregation of experiences with individual learners over time. It aggregates through their day-to-day micro-adaptations as they simultaneously assess and respond to individual learner differences, performed in the ongoing course of mentoring itself (Corno, 2008). Through such aggregation, mentors develop personal and actionable heuristics that connect knowledge of salient differences between learners and learning situations to courses of action, to aid their informal decision-making on the fly (Randi & Corno, 2005). Like teachers, mentors are likely to construct these personal heuristics from atypical situations, as they tend to be more reflective around situations they perceive as non-routine (Lin, Schwartz, & Hatano, 2005). These personal heuristics are thus likely to be connected to the mentee teachers that mentors are able to remember well. In this study, we therefore elicit mentoring activities by starting out from mentor teachers' personal knowledge and experience of the mentee teachers of whom they had a vivid recollection.

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Participants

Participants were 11 mentor teachers, 6 males and 5 females. Participants were 26 to 59 years old and had 3 to 35 years of teaching experience. Their mentoring experience ranged from 3 to 26 years and from 6 to 60 mentee teachers mentored. Participants were selected using purposive sampling (Palys, 2008), to represent varied conceptions of mentoring. Previous studies have shown that the mentoring conceptions that mentors hold influence their mentoring approach and their focus for mentee teacher learning (Graham, 2006; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005; Van Ginkel, Verloop, & Denessen, 2016; Young, Bullough, Draper, Smith, & Erickson, 2005). We therefore selected participants based on their responses to a questionnaire which measured the degree to which they held a developmental mentoring conception versus an instrumental mentoring conception (see section 3.2.1 in Chapter 3). The final sample included five mentors scoring above average on both scales, two mentors scoring below average on both scales, two mentors scoring above average on the developmental scale and below average on the instrumental scale, and two mentors scoring the opposite combination. The intent of this purposive sampling was to maximize the chances of finding a variety of activities in a relatively small sample. All of the names of mentors and mentees in this paper are pseudonyms.

5.2.2 Repertory grid interview

Retrospective interviews were conducted with all mentors. The interviews followed the classical repertory-grid interview format (Tan & Hunter, 2002), based on Kelly's theory of personal constructs (Kelly, 1955). In this format, the respondents themselves identify both the elements (the mentee teachers) and the constructs (how the mentee teachers differed, and their response to these differences). The constructs are elicited in a triadic form, by asking the respondent to distinguish how two elements (mentee teachers) are similar, and a third is different from these two. First, mentors were asked to recall the names of six mentee teachers they had mentored. Second, they were given three of these names on cards, and were asked to identify how two mentees had been similar to each other in some way, and dissimilar to the third mentee. Finally, they were asked to describe how they had responded to these similarities and differences, and to provide examples of what they had done. This was repeated a total of eight times with different sets of names, so that each name was included in four different sets. To stimulate mentors to talk about what they perceived to be meaningful differences, they were allowed to 'skip' a card sorting, to contrast the set of three cards with the total card set, or to sort the same set of cards multiple times. As a result, some respondents made more than eight card sorts, resulting in a total of 97 card sorts for all eleven mentors. Interviews took between half an hour to one hour, and were transcribed verbatim from audio files.

5.2.3 Data analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed using content analysis (Kurasaki, 2000) in three subsequent steps by two researchers.

5.2.3.1 Step 1: developing the coding scheme.

To develop the coding scheme we first checked if we could meaningfully cover the data with the four categories of mentoring activities identified in the study described in Chapter 3 of this thesis. These were A) providing emotional and psycho-social support, B) supporting construction of personal practical knowledge of teaching, C) creating a favourable context for mentee learning, and D) changing mentee teacher behaviour (see section 3.3.1 in Chapter 3). Both coders each read half of the interviews, and developed in vivo codes: descriptions of the data in the wording of the respondents, to stay close to the data in the initial phase of exploring the data (King, 2008). These were printed and jointly sorted into piles representing different themes, and all in vivo codes could be meaningfully organized according to the four categories. From this sorting, one researcher then drafted a preliminary coding scheme. Next, this coding scheme was refined and adapted in three rounds, to obtain a limited set of codes (Popping, 1992). The unit of analysis was an interview fragment discussing one card sort.

In each round, both coders coded mentoring activities for fifteen units of analysis, and then compared and discussed their coding. For both agreements and disagreements on coding, they discussed code meanings and coding of activities until they reached consensus, and revised and refined the coding scheme accordingly (Kurasaki, 2000). The coding scheme is presented in Table 5.1, describing 34 distinct mentoring activities. For each mentoring activity, a verb indicates the core of the activity, and a more detailed description denotes the activity and its goal.

Table 5.1. Mentoring activities expressed as adaptive response by mentors in this study.

Mentoring activity	**Content of the mentoring activity**
A. Providing emotional and psycho-social support	
1. Affirm	affirming mentee teacher capability, being positive, indicating what he/she did or does well, to promote self-confidence and awareness of strengths/capabilities.
2. Attune	attuning the mentoring approach to what a mentee teacher can handle emotionally, to prevent withdrawal and enable the mentee teacher to open up.
3. Be there	being there and actively available for the mentee teacher, to lower the threshold for help seeking and involvement in mentoring.
4. Focus person	focussing existing mentoring time and talk on how the mentee teacher experiences learning to teach, to remove barriers to development as a teacher.
5. Focus emotions	as 4, but more specific on mentee teacher emotions in learning to teach, to prevent negative emotions from impeding learning.
6. Focus motives	as 4 but more specific on mentee teacher motives for and images of teaching as a career, to help make a conscious choice for teaching as a career.
7. Help cope	helping the mentee teacher to accept and actively cope with personal limitations, to avoid personal pitfalls and create room for manoeuvre.

Table 5.1. (continued).

Mentoring activity	**Content of the mentoring activity**
8. Incite	inciting mentee teachers to stretch beyond their comfort zone, to promote experimentation, risk-taking, initiative and perseverance.
9. Reassure	reassuring and consoling the mentee teacher, putting experiences in perspective, to take away anxiety and doubts about their capacity to succeed.
10. Solicit self-affirmation	asking the mentee teacher to name strengths, positive results and improvements, to promote awareness of strengths and capabilities.
B. Supporting construction of personal practical knowledge about teaching	
11. Explore self-questioning	exploring mentee teacher degree and kind of self-questioning, to gage capacity for self-directed learning and openings into learning.
12. Focus teaching	focussing mentoring time and talk on the teaching performance of the mentee teacher, to develop specific skills through reflection on practice.
13. Focus discipline	as 12, specific on classroom management and discipline.
14. Focus instruction	as 12, specific on learning and instruction of content.
15. Focus pupil contact	as 12, specific on making contact, connecting with pupils.
16. Use	using and building upon mentee teacher qualities and input, to acknowledge and develop these further, or to uses these to support the learning process.
17. Guide application	guiding application of new/existing knowledge, providing opportunities to practice skills and gradually and stepwise build new skills
18. Solicit	soliciting problem solving, by initiating topics, posing questions, waiting for/not giving answers, to promote reflection and ownership of solutions.

Table 5.1. (continued).

Mentoring activity	**Content of the mentoring activity**
C. Creating a favourable context for mentee teacher learning.	
19. Abbreviate	abbreviating mentoring and/or advancing independent teaching, to prevent provision of help where it is unnecessary, unproductive or unwanted.
20. Decrease	decreasing the frequency/intensity of mentoring, to prevent provision of help where it is unnecessary, unproductive or unwanted.
21. Defer	intentionally deferring attention for a specific topic, not focussing on it, to prevent provision of help where it is unnecessary, unproductive or unwanted.
22. Give status	giving mentee teachers 'teacher status' in the eyes of pupils.
23. Increase	increasing the frequency/intensity of mentoring to ensure sufficient progress on deficit competences.
24. Make responsible	making the mentee teacher responsible for an authentic product or task, to let them learn through risk-taking, doing or making in a real setting.
25. Shield	shielding the mentee teacher from negative effects of confrontations or conflicts with other actors in the partnership scheme (pupils, staff).
26. Prolong	prolonging the learning time under mentor guidance, to attend to mentee teacher needs or ensure a specific level of competence is achieved at a later moment.
27. Self-adjust	adjusting oneself to a mentoring relationship to prevent the emotions/ self-appraisals it evokes from impeding it's initiation and/or productive functioning.

Table 5.1. (continued).

Mentoring activity	**Content of the mentoring activity**
D. Changing mentee teacher behaviour.	
28. Confront	confronting mentee teachers with discrepancies between 1) current actions and their results, and 2) desired results and professional norms of conduct, to align their perception with reality, clarify expectations and professional norms, make them see the necessity of change and/or to develop the intention to change behaviour.
29. Curb behaviour	curbing mentee teacher behaviour, correcting/stopping specific habits or behaviours, to prevent negative consequences for the mentee teacher/pupils.
30. Dictate	dictating the mentee teacher to perform specific actions, to ensure skill acquisition and a sufficient level of task execution.
31. Model	modelling/showing ways of doing or being, or arranging access to models, to provide alternative courses of action and images of how to teach or be a teacher.
32. Monitor	monitoring mentee teacher progress on goals developed in mentoring, by observing/reading mentee teacher reflections, to ensure attempts at their realization.
33. Suggest	suggesting to the mentee teacher what to do and how to do it, to stimulate the mentee teacher to take a specific or different course of action.
34. Orchestrate crisis	orchestrating a moment of crisis for the mentee teacher, to create awareness of problems and a willingness to learn and change behaviour.

5.2.3.2 Step 2: calibrating coding consistency and scoring all interview fragments.

We calibrated consistency of coding between coders (Kurasaki, 2000) in three additional coding rounds. In each round, both coders separately coded a new set of fifteen units of analysis. Coders labelled units with numerical codes for the activities described in that card sort, allowing multiple codes to be attached to one unit of analysis. Coders discussed and resolved sources of disagreement before coding a subsequent round. We measured inter-coder reliability using proportional agreement[6] and Mezzich's proportional overlap κ statistic, which is tailored to situations where coders may assign multiple but unequal numbers of codes to units, as in our case (Eccleston, Werneke, Armon, Stepehenson, & MacFaul, 2000; Mezzich, Kreamer, Worthington, & Coffman, 1981). During the three calibration rounds, proportional agreement improved from 75% to 92%, and Mezzich's κ statistic improved from .60 to .85; a reliability level that is generally considered very good (Wongpakaran, Wongpakaran, Wedding, & Gwet, 2013). One researcher therefore scored the remaining units of analysis alone.

5.2.3.3 Step 3: selecting and representing mentor talk about dominant activities.

To identify dominant activities, we tallied for each mentoring activity how many mentors used it, and for how many mentees it was used across all card sorts. To select activities that mentors focus on most, we selected activities mentioned by approximately two thirds of mentors (seven at least) and for approximately one fourth of mentees (seventeen or more). To identify dominant activity patterns, we tallied how many times mentors combined each combination of two activities for the same mentee, by constructing a co-occurrence matrix indicating the frequency of each combination of two activities. To select activity combinations that mentors focus on most, we selected activity combinations mentioned by approximately half of mentors (six at least) and for one-tenth of mentees (seven or more). We retrieved all interview fragments referring to the mentees for which mentors mentioned the dominant activities and activity combinations. We inspected and compared the overall pattern of mentoring activities that the mentor teachers mentioned for these mentee teachers, and developed themes to summarize how mentors talk about enacting the dominant activities and activity combinations for these mentee teachers.

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[6] For example, if coder 1 assigns codes A, B and C to a unit, and coder 2 assigns codes B, C and D, then the proportional agreement is 0.50 because two actual agreements (B, C) were made out of four possible agreements (A,B,C,D).

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Dominant activities in mentor teachers' descriptions

The single most dominant mentoring activity is confronting (activity 28 in Table 5.1). Ten of the 11 mentors mention this activity, for 25 (38%) of all 66 mentee teachers (see Table 5.2). Confronting is oriented at changing mentee teacher behaviour. It involves confronting mentee teachers with discrepancies between current actions and results versus desired results and professional norms of conduct, or with problems for short. It is oriented toward aligning the mentee's perceptions with reality, clarifying expectations and professional norms, making mentees see the necessity of change and developing the intent to change behaviour.

The single most dominant activity combination in mentor teachers' descriptions is confronting with guiding application (activity 17). Six mentors mention this combination, for seven mentees. Guiding application refers to the mentor's activity of trying to build skill or knowledge in a gradual, incremental or stepwise manner by providing direct guidance in mentoring conversations or by providing opportunities to practice skills. Other activities often mentioned in combination with confronting are a) attuning to mentee teachers' emotions, b) using mentees' qualities and c) curbing mentee teacher behaviour (activities 2, 16, and 29).

Table 5.2. Mentoring activities according to number of mentors that mention them and number of mentees the activity is mentioned for.

Mentoring activity	**Number of mentors that mention the activity**	**Number of mentees the activity is mentioned for**
A. Providing emotional and psycho-social support		
1. Affirm	3	7
2. Attune	5	8
3. Be there	2	5
4. Focus person	3	5
5. Focus emotions	3	4
6. Focus motives	2	2
7. Help cope	2	4
8. Incite	6	12
9. Reassure	6	10
10. Solicit self-affirmation	2	4
B. Supporting construction of personal practical knowledge about teaching		
11. Explore self- questioning	1	2
12. Focus teaching	3	6
13. Focus discipline	4	6
14. Focus instruction	4	7
15. Focus pupil contact	5	7
16. Use	6	18
17. Guide application	8	12
18. Solicit	3	5
C. Creating a favourable context for mentee teacher learning.		
19. Abbreviate	1	1
20. Decrease	2	2
21. Defer	3	5
22. Give status	1	1
23. Increase	4	7
24. Make responsible	3	5
25. Shield	3	5
26. Prolong	1	1
27. Self-adjust	3	7
D. Changing mentee teacher behaviour.		
28. Confront	10	25
29. Curb behaviour	7	14
30. Dictate	3	4
31. Model	2	2
32. Monitor	3	5
33. Suggest	4	5
34. Orchestrate crisis	2	4

Note: Letters and numbers refer to letters and numbers in Table 5.1.

5.3.2 How mentors talk about enacting dominant activities

Three interrelated themes summarize how mentors describe that they enact the dominant activity of confronting, and the dominant activity combination of confronting with guiding application. The main theme, *telling the problem versus developing the problem,* represents a gradient of how mentors enact confronting. Telling the problem refers to mentors confronting by directly telling the mentee about the discrepancy between current and desired actions, to develop the intention of change. Developing the problem refers to mentors confronting by getting the mentee to see or experience a discrepancy and the importance of the related change in behaviour, without directly telling it to them. The remaining two themes relate to this main theme. The theme *telling or developing the problem depends on the issue* indicates that telling versus developing the problem tends to differ according to the nature of the underlying problem that the mentor tries to address through confronting the mentee. The theme *crafting the response* represents how mentors mentor combine confronting with guiding application in a manner that remains responsive to the mentee teachers' learning, through *taking the mentee perspective, timing confrontation, monitoring mentee reactions*, and *self-monitoring.* This theme also connects to the main theme, as these aspects of crafting the response tend to be present mostly when mentors confront by developing the problem.

In the following two sections, we illustrate *telling or developing the problem depends on the issue* and *crafting the response* with interview examples at different positions along the main gradient of telling versus developing the problem. In the interviews, the mentors often shifted into performance (Baynham, 2011) to re-enact what they and/or their mentee teacher had said, and to indicate their inner speech in thinking about how to respond to their mentee teachers. In the interview examples, we indicate these instances of shifting into performance in bold italics (***mentor speech***) or italics (*mentee speech*).

5.3.2.1 Telling or developing the problem depends on the issue

Telling or developing the problem tends to differ according to the nature of the underlying problem that the mentor tries to address. Mentors tend to describe telling the problem for more observable issues of mentee teaching, such as conforming to professional standards of being organized, planning well for teaching, dressing appropriately and performing specific teaching activities. Mentors tend to describe developing the problem for less observable issues of mentee learning to teach, such as mentee teachers' openness to experience, self-confidence and issues with regard to reflecting on and thinking about teaching. The following two examples of mentor Nina illustrate how telling or developing the problem depends on the issue Nina tries to address. Nina's description of her response to Josie is an example of telling the problem. Nina tries to address the issue of Josie shirking a teachers' responsibility of addressing pupil truancy, an issue that is directly observable in Josie's teaching behaviour. Nina re-enacts how she directly tells Josie the problem:

> *Well if they don't want to do that, then that's their choice, if they skip school then that's their choice.* **Yes, that's not an option Josie, you have a responsibility there as well.** *Yes but I am not the educator, that's the parents.* (...) **Yes, that's not possible, A, it's not, because it's school policy that pupils must be present in class, and B, you are responsible for the learning process, and that also includes confronting them when they don't do it. So you can't escape from it.**

Nina's description of her response to Eve and Sophie is an example of developing the problem. Nina tries to address the issue of Eve and Sophie being too perfectionist and trying too hard, an issue that relates mostly to how they reflect on their teaching:

> These women had to let go, constantly let go, let go of the idea that you can control everything, that you can prevent everything, or that everything is your fault.

Nina describes her more indirect response, and shows how she times the creation of a moment of crisis for Eve and Sophie and takes their perspective:

> Well, they are perfectionist people, you first have to completely let them do their thing and especially praise them, until it really, until

> they fall into a really deep hole. Then you can start rebuilding (...). So I'll say ***fantastic what a great lesson, how well thought out***, (..) and ***well too bad that the class didn't really cooperate but I'm sure that they'll come around***. It is actually really mean, but I do enjoy that, waiting for the axe to fall, and then look at ***well how is this possible, and you're really trying so hard*** (...). You can't say to someone, you're trying too hard and you have to loosen up. No, you have to experience that.

Mentors also recognize that telling the problem is not appropriate for less observable issues of learning to teach. The following example of mentor Sandy illustrates how Sandy retrospectively identifies that she should have developed the problem for an issue of mentee learning to teach. For two mentee teachers, Sandy tries to address the issue that they attribute teaching problems to cultural differences in teaching, rather than to their own actions. Sandy shows how she retrospectively monitors mentee reactions and takes the mentee perspective:

> These both looked outside themselves. They both came from a different country; they had a completely different idea of how it should be in school than how it is in the Netherlands. As a result, if something went wrong, *'yes but it is the culture'*. (...) With them I am, oddly actually, much harder on them. I expect more from them, because of which I actually get less. Because it was not their fault to begin with, and when I told them that it actually was their fault, it was immediately like (…). I would do it differently now. I would not give my own judgements as much, and let them do the talking. ***OK, explain to me, how do you know*** (…) like ***well then show me that it actually is like that, show me what you tried in order to change it.*** Now it was more, ***you should have done this****,* or ***did you already do that***, and ***it is not like that****,* and you know, but it did not have any effect. (...) Their ideas were so ingrained; there is no way you can break through that. That is something they will have to discover for themselves, hoping that indeed eventually they will see that it is not just only that.

5.3.2.2 Crafting the response

In this section we present four examples of confronting with guiding application. These four examples function in conjunction to illustrate how the theme of crafting the response becomes more visibly present going along the gradient from telling to developing the problem, and as the issues that the mentor tries to address shift from mentee teaching behaviour to issues of mentee learning to teach. We first describe the four examples, after which we discuss the overall pattern across the four examples.

George and Rianne. Mentor George describes Rianne as agreeable, sociable and always ready to take over lessons. George tries to address the issue that her lessons are characterized by a sometimes appalling superficiality, and that Rianne fails to achieve adequate learning results with pupils. George re-enacts his initial response to overcome this discrepancy by guiding Rianne in planning lesson content, to prevent adverse effects for pupils:

> ***Remember, examine that well, make sure you're well aware that, for each of those terms*** (...) ***you have a good one-liner, so if a pupil asks 'yes but what's that', that you're able with one term to***... Those kind of pointers, and ***Make sure your board is a good reflection of how, what the reasoning is***, (...) ***make sure that it is on there in a way that they get what it is about at the end.*** So here, I have been really strongly guiding the content.

George describes how he subsequently focusses mentoring time on issues of instruction, and becomes more and more direct with Rianne. He first incites her to take on different instructional strategies, and finally suggests and dictates teaching behaviours, to ensure a minimal level of quality of instruction for pupils. George re-enacts his dictating:

> I've often been pushing Rianne on that, like ***Now I really want, we've already spent three lessons on this subject, and I feel like we've made zero progress. Now I really want you to make that next step in the next lesson, and now they really have to make the transition to the more abstract, so, the next lesson you need to train them in***

> ***abstracting*** (...) ***be much more aware of What do I want to achieve?, other than that they're busy.***

John and Mary. Mentor John tries to address the issue of Mary's insecurity and of how she is too quickly daunted by relatively small problems:

> …all of a sudden something happens in class, a trifle, and wham you get a note in your mailbox, saying (..) *'I'm so insecure; I really can't do it anymore'.* …it turns out that of the fifty minutes maybe forty minutes just went great, and ten minutes didn't go well. But then in her eyes the whole lesson is spoiled.

John describes his response, showing how he times the moment of a more direct confrontation and how he notices his own readiness to confront Mary and Mary's reactions to his actions:

> That is quite a process of finding the right angle to tackle that (...). But now that she has been around here longer I am starting to confront (…). In the beginning I wasn't up to that confrontation, but now I notice it's doing her good. It just had to be said.

Jack and Anne. Mentor Jack tries to address the issue of Anne's views of teaching and learning to teach. Jack describes how Anne views teaching history as telling stories, wants to copy his story-telling approach to teaching history, and is reluctant to accept the idea that she also needs to try out other approaches to teaching:

> She though it wonderful, she also had stories, so it had to be that way. I said ***well we're also going to try out different things this year***. Yes, no, but first she wanted to tell stories, because it was about the Renaissance, and that was her subject. (...)

Jack describes how he seizes a moment of crisis for Anne to time a confrontation. In this moment of crisis, Jack first shields Anne from a potential escalation of a lesson gone wrong:

> She had prepared and prepared herself, and she was full of stories, she said *one lesson won't be enough, I need three lessons*, and she was, after almost five minutes it was silent, it was over, it was finished. It was even so bad that I just sent the class away.

Jack describes how he subsequently confronts Anne directly with the fact that copying his story-telling approach will not work for her, which Anne accepts:

> I told her ***we need to talk.*** I just said, ***Anne, you're not going to make it if you go on like this***. She saw that herself too, and then she started to search.

Jack describes that he increases the intensity of mentoring and guides Anne's exploration of teaching approaches, with success, and shows how he monitors her reactions in the process and sees her insecurity in what to do:

> …then you get into a terrain where she initially doesn't feel at home, and then you have to talk a lot and also guide. Like what kind of tasks did you come up with this time, because she came to me every time asking *is this OK, is that OK*, and then you look at that. …once she had found that form of working with larger tasks, that pupils could work on for three, four, five lessons, you just saw her blossoming.

Jack describes how they subsequently focused mentoring conversations much more on Anne's teaching performance.

Kay and Deke. Kay describes Deke as a mentee with a highly unsure presence in class and not capable of connecting with pupils and their worldviews. Kay sees Deke as still too immature, unexperienced and busy finding himself, due to his growing up in a protected circle of a religious congregation. Kay describes how he tries to address Deke's inability to reflect on his unsure presence, and re-enacts how he asks questions to help Deke reflect on his behaviour. Kay shows how he monitors Deke's failure to respond, his own frustration at Deke's failure, and how he adapts his questioning to craft a more fitting response:

> You ask a question, ***How would you do that?*** I once looked at my watch, ten minutes of silence, pfff. And then you reach a certain point like, ***I'm not discussing the lesson the same day but I just give a few questions on paper, and you just think about them at home and then in three days we'll discuss the lesson***, because I would just go crazy.

Kay describes how he further adapts his questioning by adding video recordings of lessons to confront Deke with his body language and unsure presence. Kay shows how he monitors Deke's reactions as he re-enacts different ways of questioning Deke and tries to guide application for Deke through role-play:

> Body language, taped it on video so he can see it too. So I say ***find three situations that you think, how am I responding here?*** So that he would explore himself. (..) I say ***What is your body communicating here?*** *Yeah, nothing*. ***So the pupil doesn't stop.*** *Well what should I do then?* I said ***Well here in this room there's no pupil, I'm telling you right now you're a big asshole, just be mad, practice on me, and we'll put on the video so you can see straight away, play it back, watch it, and again, you know just practice three, four times. Now do the same at home for yourself, just give a roar, or just be mad (…) just practice.*** Then, in class, well, nothing, nope.

Kay describes how he further changes his approach by trying to address the underlying problem of Deke's inability to cope with the demands of teaching and learning to teach. Kay solicits self-affirmations from Deke to support his self-confidence and incites Deke to broaden his perspective by visiting colleagues and lessons in a different school, but again with little result. Finally, Kay focuses mentoring on Deke's personal experience of learning. Kay indicates how he tries to take Deke's perspective of how he experiences learning, again monitoring Deke's reaction and monitoring how this in turn affects Kay himself:

> …once in a mentoring conversation he said *Kay, I have never had a setback in my life, this is the first time I'm having adversity, and I*

> *just don't know how to cope with that.* That just hit me like, I thought, ***that's just not possible, (...) it doesn't matter how smart you are because you are just going to have a setback in your life.*** I did talk this through with him, but I could not really get through to it either.

The issues that the four mentors try to address in the above examples range from more observable issues in teaching at the one end (the superficial lessons of Rianne), to complex and problematic issues of learning to teach at the other (Deke's unsure presence, immaturity, inability to reflect and cope with setbacks). In between lie less observable but solvable issues of learning to teach (Mary's insecurity and Anne's limited views of teaching and learning to teach). Table 5.3 presents the activity patterns for these four examples. At the 'telling' end of the gradient, mentor George mentions relatively more activities oriented toward directly mentee Rianne's behaviour. Halfway the gradient, mentors John and Jack mention relatively more activities oriented at creating a favourable context for mentee learning for mentees Mary and Anne. At the 'developing' end of the gradient, mentor Kay mentions relatively more activities to provide emotional support and to soliciting answers from mentee Deke. All aspects of the theme of crafting the response are visible in Kay's example at the 'developing' end of the gradient: *taking the mentee perspective, timing confrontation, monitoring mentee reactions*, and *self-monitoring.* None of these aspects are visible in mentor George's example at the 'telling' end of the gradient. In between, several aspects of crafting the response are visible in the examples by John and Jack, but not as elaborate as in mentor Kay's response.

Table 5.3. Activity patterns for presented examples of confronting with guiding application.

	Activity pattern			
Mentor & Mentee	A. Providing emotional and psycho-social support	B. Supporting construction of personal practical knowledge about teaching	C. Creating a favourable context for mentee teacher learning	D. Changing mentee teacher behaviour
George & Rianne	8. Incite	14. Focus instruction 17. Guide application		28. Confront 30. Dictate 33. Suggest
John & Mary	9. Reassure	15. Focus pupil contact 17. Guide application	23. Increase 25. Shield	28. Confront 33. Suggest
Jack & Anne		14. Focus instruction 17. Guide application	23. Increase 25. Shield	28. Confront
Kay & Deke	1. Affirm 4. Focus person 8. Incite 10. Solicit self-affirmation	18. Solicit 17. Guide application		28. Confront

Note: Letters and numbers refer to letters and numbers in Table 5.1.

5.4 Discussion

The focus of this study was on dominant mentoring activities in mentor teachers' practical knowledge of adaptive response to their mentee teachers' learning. The dominant mentoring activity that mentors describe is confronting mentees with problems, which mentors predominantly combine with guiding application of new knowledge.

Mentors confront in different ways: they tell the problem or develop the problem. Mentors tend to directly tell the problem when they address observable issues of teaching. When they address less observable issues of learning to teach, they tend to develop the problem and craft their adaptive response through self-monitoring, timing confrontation, taking the perspective of the mentee and monitoring mentee reactions. These less observable issues included perfectionism, external attribution, mentee insecurity, limited views of teaching and learning to teach, reflective capacity and ability to deal with setbacks. Research on tensions in novice teachers’ learning shows that such issues can be difficult to deal with, generate a sense of discontinuity in development as a teacher, and undermine commitment to being a teacher (Van Rijswijk, Bronkhorst, Akkerman, & Van Tartwijk, 2018). Hobson (2016) indicates that mentors can exacerbate this process when they fail to recognize novice teachers as vulnerable learners and engage in ‘judgementoring’ (Hobson, 2016, p.90). The examples presented in this study indicate how mentors confront adaptively to support mentees to engage with these issues. The example of Kay and Deke indicates that these issues may nevertheless remain unresolvable within the mentoring setting, even with considerable effort by the mentor to adapt the mentoring approach.

Mentors described confronting as creating a discrepancy for the mentee between current and desired behaviour or performance, and as creating the concomitant intention to resolve this discrepancy through changing behaviour. This notion of confronting is highly similar to the concept of goal setting in goal setting theory (Locke & Latham 2002). Goals initiate action, direct learners’ attention, increase effort and persistence, and lead to arousal and development of task relevant knowledge and strategies (Locke & Latham 2002). When mentors combine confronting with guiding application, they support this latter aspect of developing task-relevant knowledge and strategies. For learners, goals function as ‘regulatory agents’ that guide self-regulatory activity (Sitzman & Ely 2001). Through confronting, mentors assigns goals for mentees. For such assigned goals to function as regulatory agents and affect performance and learning, mentees need to identify and commit to assigned goals as personal goals that are important and achievable for them (Locke & Latham 2002). When mentor and mentee agree on the goal for learning, adaptive response may focus on mentee construction of practical knowledge and on management of emotions that may result in the process (Ralp & Walker 2013). The examples of developing the problem however, such as the examples of Sandy, John and especially Kay, show that getting mentees to accept a goal may be difficult to achieve and sometimes frustrating for mentors.

Conceptually, an interesting result is mentor’s descriptions of self-monitoring in trying to ensure that confronting remains adaptive to the mentee teacher. Mentors John and Kay describe their awareness of how their own thoughts and feelings influence their response. This supports Schunk and Mullen's (2013) suggestion that research efforts on mentoring should conceptually integrate with research on self-regulated learning. They propose a process model of mentoring interactions with attention for the self-regulatory cognitions and affects of both the mentor and the mentee, and how these shape the subsequent actions of each.

In line with Hudson & Hudson (2016), we propose that mentor preparation should include goal setting through confronting as a mentoring role, skill and practice. This involves how mentors can help mentee teachers to accept goals, especially when addressing less observable and complex issues of mentee learning to teach. This should also include attention for the possible emotions and frustrations that may arise for the mentor, and for how mentors may self-monitor to prevent impediments to adaptively responding to their mentee teachers' learning.

5.4.1 Limitations and applications

A limitation of this study is the reliance on a retrospective method. However, there were many instances of shifting into performed direct speech, by directly performing speech as a mentor, mentee teacher or pupil (Baynham, 2011). This suggests that rather than socially desirable answers, the mentors provided information on their connected thinking and acting during their adaptive response to their mentee teachers' learning.

Practical applications of this study lie in using the results and methods for mentor professional development. The list of mentoring activities in Table 5.1 can serve as a bank of activities to assist mentors to expand their repertoire and consider a differentiated mentoring approach adapted to the individual needs of mentees (Hudson, 2013). The examples can help evoke connected thinking on the issues to address and on ways to do so. The sorting task used in this study can serve as a structured way for more experienced mentors to reflect on their response to differences in their mentee teacher learning.

5.5 Conclusion

This study explored dominant mentoring activities in mentor teachers' descriptions of adaptively responding to their mentee teachers' learning. The dominant activity that mentors mentioned is confronting mentees with problems, which is a form of goal setting with mentees. We therefore conclude that mentor teachers construct their practical knowledge of adaptive response in large part around goal setting with mentees.