Apprentice Mentoring: A return to relationship in learning
Being an apprentice
Pre- 20th Century apprenticeship

- knowledge and skills tacit
- usually a young man or boy
- likely to live where he worked
- familiar with the business and local employer
- not always paid, often fed and clothed
- relationship had strong personal element through connection to the local community
20th Century apprenticeship

- Apprenticeship Act 1923: part of apprentice training at technical schools (later polytechnics)
- Apprenticeship Act 1948: national exams, fixed wages
- 1950s NZ: safe international markets, full employment social development towards social equity
- 1960s NZ: secondary school attendance longer, more university education
- 1970s NZ: aspirations rose for the working class
- 1980s NZ: increased access to HE, growing stigma re trades
- 1990s NZ: apprentices numbers declined dramatically, causing a crisis of skilled labour
From welfare to workfare

- 1970s: downward trends in employment from loss of British markets, the oil crisis and inflation
- 1987 government: economic restructuring, market ideology in education
- Apprentices had to meet national training requirements
- Apprentices low priority for employers - more reluctant to take on apprentices, and to offer learning support
Industry Training Organisations (ITOs)

- Apprenticeship training - competency-based (rather than time-based) and modular.
- 2002 Apprenticeship Co-ordinators to reduce dropout rate.
- Co-ordinators to facilitate placement and mentor apprentices and employers (conflicting responsibilities).
The Workplace Literacy Solution

• 2001, MOE *More than Words: the New Zealand adult literacy strategy*

• The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), teacher resources, vocational teacher training, and initial literacy assessment.

• New apprentices are required to undertake decontextualised literacy and numeracy tests that focus on functional deficits.
Social Dimension of learning

- Workplace culture, politics and hierarchies affect apprentices
- Status, ethnicity, and gender impact on workplace relationships
- Low job security and low wages reduce apprentice ability to negotiate
- Cultural differences between home and workplace cause friction for the apprentice
- Emotional toll of all impacts on learning
Cognitive, social, emotional

Workplace culture and practice

Workplace community and relationships

Work identity

Personal development and learning

Social Context

Workplace production and organisational goals

Cognitive/technical

Emotional
Relational Apprentice Mentoring

- Strengthening emotional bonds
- Trust-based
- Confidential
- Recognises social dimension of learning
- Non-authoritarian
- Includes frequent contact
- Aims at personal growth, development, enrichment for mentors and proteges
- In line with indigenous collectivist approaches
Traditional strategic approaches

• Authority model
• Hierarchical
• Cognitive, focus on instrumental competence
• Non-confidential
• Concerned with individual learning deficits
• Aimed at socialisation re organisation goals
• Infrequent contact
The importance of being Trustworthy

High trust = high emotional safety = disclosure = ability to provide meaningful support

Mentors need to show:

• care (commitment, empathy)
• competence (in mentoring)
• confidentiality (in terms of matters discussed)
The mentored apprentice

Assigned a mentor for the first year.

Helped to:
• better understand the expectations of the course
• manage time more efficiently
• make sense of unclear learning material
• put together assessment portfolios
• manage difficult workplace relationships
• talk with the course tutor

Offered opportunity to train as a mentor