

Digital Immigrants, Citizenship and Social Integration

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Declaration

I declare that the work described in this dissertation is, except where otherwise stated, entirely my own work and has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university.

Signed: _____

Nicola White, BSocSc (NUI)

14th May 2007

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14th May 2007

Dedication

To the memory of my Mother who fostered a life-long love for Learning and Education;
To my Father for his unending support throughout my studies

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Timothy Savage whose endless advice, wisdom, guidance and support were invaluable to me on this journey

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ABSTRACT

Case study research was conducted from January to April 2007 on two cohorts of novice Mentors taking part in an e-mentoring programme, one cohort consisted of undergraduate students from TCD while the other consisted of employees from Irish Life and Permanent Plc. Both cohorts were compared and contrasted.

Using Computer Mediated Communications tools an online community, using Moodle, was designed and implemented for each cohort of Mentors. This research is two-fold, it investigates how an online community can support novice Mentors, paying specific attention to their experiences within the community while simultaneously teaching the older Mentors how to use this digital technology.

The work of Marc Prensky formed the basis of this research project. The author examines utilisation of the online community and if the older Mentors (Digital Immigrants) can adopt the “language” and “culture” of their Mentees (Digital Natives), become active citizens of the online community, thus integrating themselves into this new digital “culture”, bridging the generational divide and enhancing the relationship they have with their mentee.

This research was carried out alongside an existing e-mentoring programme run by the Trinity Access programmes (TAP) in Trinity College. A bespoke communication tool was provided by a company in the UK to enable Mentors to communicate with their Mentees via secure e-mail. Mentees are a selection of transition year students from three TAP-linked schools in the Dublin area.

Data was gathered from the following data collection tools: the Artefact, the bespoke communication tool (not developed by the author), online questionnaires, memoing, monitoring e-mail communication and forum posts between the e-mentoring pairs and interviews.

1. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This research was carried out over a period of three months, between January and April 2007. It focused on two cohorts of novice Mentors taking part in an e-mentoring programme. One cohort consisted of undergraduate students from TCD while the other consisted of employees from Irish Life and Permanent Plc. Both cohorts were compared and contrasted with each other.

The Literature used to support this research comes from the works of John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, Malcolm Knowles, Marc Prensky, Albert Bandura, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. The main focus was on providing a constructivist environment, using Computer Mediated Communications tools to facilitate a social context where the Mentors could safely come to learn and share their mentoring experiences. The objective was to create an online community for each cohort of Mentors, encouraging active participation in their own learning and construction of new knowledge about the e-mentoring process while simultaneously learning how to use this new technology.

An online community was designed and implemented using Moodle, a Computer Mediated Communications tool. The aim was to provide support to these novice Mentors (digital immigrants) while simultaneously teaching them to use one channel of communication favoured by their Mentees (digital natives) - discussion forums. The main research questions focused on mentors' experiences of the online community and the impact using it had on them. It also examined if these Digital immigrants could loose their "accent" and learn the language of the digital natives, thus bridging the generational divide and leading to more enhanced and rewarding relationships between the pairs.

Using case study research, data was collected in the form of Artefact access logs, forum chats, online questionnaires, monitoring e-mail communication via the bespoke communication tool that was developed in the UK specifically for this programme, memos and interviews. All data was coded, themed and triangulated to help answer the main research questions.

ROADMAP TO THESIS

This research document is structured in the following way. The Abstract provides the overview of this research while the Introduction Chapter provides more detailed information on the aim of the research and how it was carried out.

The Literature Review Chapter examines topics such as Mentoring, E-mentoring, Andragogy, Social Constructivism, Online Communities, Situated Learning, Social Learning Theory and the main impact that the digital world has had on society, especially older members. Using the advice and suggestions from the available Literature, the Design Chapter concentrates on the design and implementation of the Artefact using Computer Mediated Communications tools. This provided Mentors with an online community in which to learn and collaborate with other Mentors using a system of forums.

The following chapter looks at the methodology used in order to capture data to help answer the research questions. It focuses on the case studies and the main data collection tools such as the Artefact (online community), access logs, forum postings, online questionnaires, interviews, memos and the e-mails and system reports from the bespoke online communication tool that was provided for the programme by a company in the UK.

The following chapter examines the data and findings that have come from the above-mentioned data collection tools. The data was coded, themed and triangulated in order that the author could make sense of the information and discuss the findings in such a way that the research questions were answered. Finally, the Conclusion Chapter concludes this research project and discusses recommendations for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring traditionally involved face-to-face meetings between an older more experienced person (Mentor) and a younger, less-experienced person (Mentee). E-mentoring is a further extension of mentoring, using telecommunications technology to connect Mentor and Mentee via e-mail.

Relationships are the essence of mentoring. While communications between generations have always been divided by the generation gap, our increasingly digital world has further exacerbated the problems facing mentoring pairs. Young people live immersed in a digital world of computers, Internet and mobile communications while many of the older generations still live in a non-digital world.

As the dynamics of mentoring change and society becomes increasingly digital, Mentors need support in improving their digital skills and in communicating with younger generations. In order to design an effective support environment for Mentors, the concept and principles of Andragogy, constructivism, online communities, situated learning and social learning theory will be examined.

The aim of this Literature review is to examine the available literature to help answer the following research questions:

- To what extent can an online community support novice Mentors taking part in an e-mentoring programme?
 - How does their experience of being a member of this new community impact on them?
- Using Computer Mediated Communications tools, can these “Digital Immigrants” overcome cultural boundaries and learn the *language* of the natives?
- Will this new language enhance Mentors experience of e-mentoring, help bridge the generational divide and lead to more satisfying relationships between the pairs?

MENTORING

Mentoring has been around for thousands of years, existing since early Greek times. The term *Mentor* was first used by Homer in his epic poem *The Odyssey*. Homer’s Mentor was a protective, guiding and supportive figure who was a wise and trusted counsellor to Telemachus, son of King Ulysses (Colley, 2001).

A modern-day Mentor is similar to Homers Mentor. The term *mentoring* describes “the support given by one (usually more experienced) person for the growth and learning of another, and for their integration into and acceptance by a specific community” (Hobson, 2002).

The popularity of mentoring schemes can be attributed to their practical appeal - young people need supportive relationships with adults in order to develop into well-rounded, confident adults. Mentoring schemes are based on a simple premise that young people will look up to and admire someone other than a family member, someone who is non-judgemental, empathetic and who will listen to them. Studies have shown that young people who have a significant adult or Mentor in their lives are more likely to achieve socially and academically (Hansford, 2002; McNamara, 2000; Tharp, 1988).

Mentoring is all about providing personal support in a safe environment in which both Mentors and Mentees can learn. Mentoring relationships can be very rewarding and a positive experience for both Mentor and Mentee. A Mentor can play a pivotal role in helping a young person deal with problems, receive support, raise their aspirations and remove barriers (such as academic underachievement, ethnic and socio-cultural) to effective learning and development. This relationship can help Mentees aspire to a better life (Quinn, 2002; Reid, 2002).

E-MENTORING

E-mentoring schemes work by connecting Mentors and Mentees via e-mail and telecommunications technologies. Integrating mentoring with technology makes it possible to overcome the constraints of time and distance to achieve successful and meaningful mentoring programmes (Kasprisin, 2003; Kealy, 2003; Sinclair, 2003; Witte, 2003).

Advances in Technology have made e-mentoring very accessible to many people. Its success is due to the asynchronous nature of e-mentoring, meaning that geographical constraints and scheduling face-to-face meetings with mentoring pairs is no longer an issue. As long as the Internet is available, e-mentoring can thrive (Kealy, 2003; Packard, 2003; Witte, 2003).

One might assume that merging mentoring with technology would not be successful as mentoring involves human nature, attributes and behaviours while technology involves computers, which do not understand human feelings or emotions. However, studies have

shown that technology can improve the effectiveness of mentoring without sacrificing the interpersonal dimension (Sinclair, 2003).

THE DIGITAL CHALLENGE

We live in an Information Society where knowledge and Information are vital resources and technology is essential in order to manage them. Within the context of this Information Society, one major social concern has arisen - the digital divide. While people have never been equal in society, new levels of social exclusion are taking place between the *haves* and the *have-nots*, which refers to the division between those connected to and familiar with the digital world and those not connected. This digital world has “created a new situation in history where young children possess skills much needed by adults” (Aphok, 2000). These young people are the new *haves* of society.

The term **Digital Divide** has been defined as “situations in which there is a marked gap in access to or use of ICT devices measured by, for example, the number of phone lines per inhabitant, or the number of Internet users, or of mobile telephones in the population” (Campbell, 2001).

The arrival of digital technology in last two decades has completely changed younger generations. They have grown up immersed in this digital world, fluent in the language of computers, mobile telecommunications, the Internet and video games. They are fully engaged by technology. As a result they think and process information very differently to their parents.

Marc Prensky refers to today’s youth as **Digital Natives** “ ...as a result of this ubiquitous environment and the sheer volume of their interaction with it, today’s students ... are native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. They are used to receiving information really fast. They prefer games to “serious work” (Prensky, 2001).

And the older generations, Prensky refers to as **Digital Immigrants**. They grew up in a non-digital world and are very new to many aspects of technology. Some have adopted technology but “they always retain, to some degree, their *accent*, that is, their foot in the past [like] turning to the Internet for information second rather than first” (Prensky, 2001).

CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivist theorists such as John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky claim that people learn best when they are actively involved in learning and constructing their own meaning and knowledge. Adult Learners are encouraged to bring their culture and experiences with them so they can create meaning from the events around them or test previously held values and attitudes against those of others. Constructivism emphasises the learning process, self-direction of learners and the social context in which learning takes place.

Constructivism allows learners to explore, experiment, research, reflect, share and question in order to construct knowledge. This encourages interactivity and motivation, fosters increased social skills and allows participants to play both the role of teacher and learner (Jonassen, 1991; Knowles, 1998; Peters, 1998; Rogers, 2002; Tam, 2000).

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Vygotsky argued that all cognitive functions come from social interactions. His theory of Social Constructivism emphasises the interaction of learners with others in supporting cognitive development. He believed that learning is directly related to social development, and that good instruction could be provided by knowing where learners are in their development and building on that in order to increase their cognitive development. His *zone of proximal development* differentiates between where learners are in their development now and where they are capable of going in collaboration with peers and more able teachers. (Daniels, 2001; Tharp, 1988)

Constructivist Learning Environments require students to become active participants in their own learning and in making meaningful connections between existing knowledge and new knowledge. Although the Learner is central to the learning process, collaboration is vital as it encourages the construction of a social context. This results in a sense of community where learners work together to apply their combined knowledge in solving a problem and continually assess and refine their understanding (Daniels, 2001; Tharp, 1988).

ONLINE COMMUNITIES

The twentieth century has been described as the *Century of the Individual* based on Piagets developmental theories where the learner is a lone seeker of knowledge. Vygotskys theory of social constructivism moves away from an individualistic focus, to a

collaborative one that recognises the contribution of others to the learning process. A movement from the 'Age of the Individual to the ***Era of Community***' (Kilpatrick, 2003).

Community has become the 'in-term' for almost any group of people who use Internet technologies to communicate with each other. Learning communities imply learning through participation in communities of *common purpose* and whose members interact via technology (Kilpatrick, 2003). Learning communities have the following common themes:

- Common or shared purpose
- Interests or geography
- Collaboration
- Partnership and learning
- Respecting diversity

The philosophy underpinning Learning Communities is attributed to Dewey and his recognition of the importance of the social nature of all human learning and has two major focuses:

1. The human element of communities: the synergies of individuals in common locations or with common interests as they work towards sharing understandings, skills and knowledge for shared purposes.
2. The curricular structures and the development of 'deeper' learning.
(Kilpatrick, 2003)

Online communities use networked technology (i.e. Internet) to connect people across time and space. They are designed communities and exist because of an idea or task. They are activity-based, formed as the need arises and are fluid with no formal boundaries. Individuals have greater control over group dynamics. Researchers have found that online communications exhibit strong characteristics such as camaraderie and support (Johnson, 2001; Palloff, 1999; Preece, 2005).

Knowledge construction is a social and active experience. An online learning community is a common place where people face the following concepts: abstract (real-life) problems, incorporating group activities, collaboration and teamwork where each member brings their skills and experience to help solve the problems. Learners try to solve problems beyond their capabilities thereby promoting collaboration in order to reach their zone of proximal development.

These principals support the work of Knowles and Vygotsky, adult learning is social and collaborative in nature, adults bring their experiences to education and they learn in order to deal with real-life situations.

Online communities have also been referred to as *Communities of Practice* and *Situated Learning*. These definitions however, are not synonymous. Communities of Practice have been described as “an evolutionary process for learning in groups in which they are ubiquitous and have always existed. They form out of necessity to accomplish tasks and provide learning avenues, and they exist within, between, and outside defined organizations” (Johnson, 2001). This definition is not relevant here as this community was created for the purpose of this research.

SITUATED LEARNING

Situated Learning also promotes the social nature of knowledge acquisition. It traces back to the work of Lev Vygotsky and Albert Bandura. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger introduced the concept of *Situated Learning* in 1991. They argued that most definitions of learning ignore the social nature of the learning process. They claimed that learning is a process of participation in Communities of Practice: beginning with peripheral participation, and then becoming increasingly central as knowledge is acquired. They recognise the social nature of learning and suggest that all learning is contextual, embedded in a social and physical environment. The focus is on learning by doing and on addressing real problems (Barab, 1998; Palloff, 1999; Preece, 2005).

Situated Learning is Constructivist. Brown, Collins & Duguid emphasise the idea of cognitive apprenticeship which "supports learning in a domain by enabling students to acquire, develop and use cognitive tools in authentic domain activity. Learning advances through collaborative social interaction and the social construction of knowledge" (Brown, 1989).

According to Lave and Wenger, situated learning encompasses collaboration in learning communities. Lave claims that learning is a function of the activity, context and culture in which it occurs (i.e. it is situated). Social interaction is a critical component of situated learning - learners become actively involved in their own knowledge acquisition and problem solving.

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Albert Banduras Social Learning Theory emphasises the importance of observing and copying the behaviours, attitudes and reactions of others in learning. "Learning would be exceedingly laborious, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned from observing others and one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, this coded information serves as a guide for action" (Bandura, 1977).

Social learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It infers that people learn from one another through collaboration, observation and imitation. Banduras theory also comes under the constructivist umbrella and supports the works of Dewey, Vygotsky and Lave and Wenger.

COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATIONS

Computer Mediated Communications tools are an excellent example of constructivist learning environments. By collaborating with others via discussions, e-mail or chat Learners can explore ideas and gain an understanding of other perspectives. Constructivism describes learning as a change in meaning constructed from experience. Constructivist learning theory maintains that knowledge is not received from the outside, but it is constructed internally. Tam cited " ...learners construct understanding. They do not simply mirror and reflect what they are told or what they read. Learners look for meaning and will try to find regularity and order in the events of the world even in the absence of full or complete information" (Tam, 2000).

A good Constructivist learning environment must facilitate the active construction of knowledge. Alessi and Trollip state that applying the following principles will accomplish that goal:

- Emphasise active learning
 - Use discovery or guided discovery approaches
 - Encourage learner construction of information
 - Use collaborative learning activities
 - Support learner reflection
 - Use authentic tasks and activities that are personally relevant to learners
- (Alessi, 2001).

Computer Mediated Communications tools help students construct knowledge, by facilitating engagement in active, self-directed learning.

CONCLUSION

The arrival of digital technology has meant that younger generations have grown up immersed in a digital world, fluent in the language of computers, the Internet and mobile telecommunications. These are the new *haves* of society while the older generations are the *have-nots* due to their preference for retaining their “accent” or their foot in the non-digital world they grew up in.

As the dynamics of mentoring change in this digital world, Mentors increasingly need support in communicating with younger generations and in developing digital skills. In order to design an effective support system for Mentors, an understanding of the principles of Andragogy, Social Constructivism, Online Communities, Situated Learning and Social Learning Theory must be clearly understood.

The adult learner constructs knowledge by collaborating and interacting with others, while drawing on their unique experiences, culture and beliefs to construct knowledge. Adult learners discuss their understandings with others and thus develop shared understandings.

In Constructivist Learning Environments Learners are encouraged to become active-learners through collaboration, promoting the construction of a social context and creating a sense of community where Learners work together applying their combined knowledge to the solution of the problem. The ideal constructivist learning environment is determined by the Learner who helps set the learning goals, strategies and methods for building on his or her base of knowledge and understanding. Computer Mediated Communications technology allows online learners to use technology to be more reflective, opinionated, discuss and question information.

3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTEFACT

INTRODUCTION

Following on from the literature, two constructivist learner-centered virtual environments were designed and implemented. Virtual Learning Environments encourage the development on an online community, promoting active learning and collaboration among learners, thus facilitating a supportive environment in which the construction of new knowledge and deeper meaning can be developed.

The Artefact was designed using Computer Mediated Communications tools (Moodle), to support the development of a *mentor community* where the main focus was on establishing and maintaining a good support system between Mentors. Mentors were provided with (meaningful) forum topics relating to their experience of the e-mentoring programme and asked to discuss and comment on their experience of e-mentoring with each other.

CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO DESIGN OF ARTEFACT

The literature favoured a constructivist approach in the design of the Artefact. These reasons are justified in the next section of this chapter. Alessi and Trollip believe skills, knowledge and complexity exist naturally in Constructivist Environments and procedures must be developed to allow goals evolve as learning progresses (Alessi, 2001).

A Constructivist Design Model may have the following characteristics:

- The design process is non-linear
- Planning occurs gradually and is reflective and collaborative
- Objectives emerge from design and development
- Instruction emphasises learning in meaningful contexts
- Subjective (meaningful) data is very valuable

Under a constructivist approach learning must be embedded into real and meaningful contexts where learners actively try and solve problems or make decisions. (Alessi, 2001; English, 1999; Sinclair, 2003; Tam, 2000). Thus, the author considered creating a system of forums for each Mentor cohort.

Recent growth in telecommunications have resulted in increased development of online communities and have necessitated building more supportive, collaborative and social learning environments using Computer Mediated Communications tools (Eaton, 2001;

Kasprisin, 2003; Packard, 2003; Tam, 2000). This enables online/distance learners to benefit from the shared experience of group work and measure their ideas against each other. Hence, computer-mediated communication facilitates collaborative learning.

BRIDGING THE GAP WITH THE ARTEFACT

Justification for the design of a constructivist approach and implementation of two Virtual Learning Environments using Computer Mediated Communications tools are as follows and can be seen in “Design Table” in Appendix I.

The main focus of Knowles’ work on Andragogy (Knowles, 1998) is that Adults are motivated by their need to know something, they bring their life experiences and culture with them and learn in order to deal with real-life situations. The author felt it was vital to design activities that were meaningful and encouraged collaboration among Mentors in the online community.

According to Dewey, Vygotsky, Bandura, Lave and Wenger, people learn best when they are actively involved in learning and constructing their own meaning and knowledge. Social Constructivism emphasises the learning process, self-direction of learners and the social context in which learning takes place. Bandura emphasised that people learn from one another through collaboration, observation and imitation. As a result, the author believed that forums would enhance the Mentors’ experience of e-mentoring, allowing them to support one another, seek and share information/advice on e-mentoring issues and thus learn from each other. (Bandura, 1977; Barab, 1998; Daniels, 2001; Palloff, 1999; Preece, 2005)

The work of Prensky (Prensky, 2001) also played a part in helping the author design the Artefact. Younger generations are fluent in the digital language of technology and online communities (e.g. Bebo, MySpace) while older people tend to be less so. Young people now possess the skills that adults need. The author wanted to help bridge this gap by providing Mentors with an online community of forums in order to help them understand the communication techniques of their Mentees.

The literature supports that Computer Mediated Communications tools are excellent constructivist learning environments. According to Vygotsky, Bandura, Lave & Wenger, collaborating with others via forums enables Learners to explore ideas and gain an understanding of others’ perspectives. The author believed that by providing these tools in

an online community would provide a safe place to seek and share information/ advice on e-mentoring issues. (Barab, 1998; Daniels, 2001; Palloff, 1999; Peters, 1998; Preece, 2005)

Lave & Wenger and Barab & Duffy (Barab, 1998; Palloff, 1999; Preece, 2005) claim that online learning communities are formed through the synergies of people with something in common, working towards sharing understandings, knowledge and skills in order to “learn” or form “deeper understandings” of a particular topic. They have the following common themes:

- Common/shared purpose
- Interests or geography
- Collaboration and learning
- Respecting diversity
- Exist because of an idea or task
- Fluid with no formal boundaries

The author wanted to create a supportive place for these novice Mentors to come and *chat* with each other and share their experiences of the process of e-mentoring. The author felt that forums would encourage Mentors to *post* questions and advice in the hope of sharing knowledge and developing deeper understandings of the e-mentoring process.

THE E-MENTORING PROGRAMME

The e-mentoring programme was developed by the Trinity Access Programmes in Trinity College Dublin and ran for the first time between January and May 2007. Mentees were a selection of Transition Year pupils from three TAP-linked schools in the Dublin area. Mentors consisted of employees from Irish Life & Permanent Plc and Trinity College undergraduates from various faculties.

The aim of the e-mentoring programme is to introduce young adults from disadvantaged schools to people in Industry and undergraduates, who will act as e-Mentors to them. E-mentoring pairs communicate via e-mail on all aspects of career development from building CV's, writing Cover Letters and applying for college courses while simultaneously fostering healthy rewarding relationships.

A bespoke system was created in the UK to enable the e-mentoring pairs to communicate with each other via e-mail. This system tracks and stores all communication that takes place between the pairs. See diagram below:

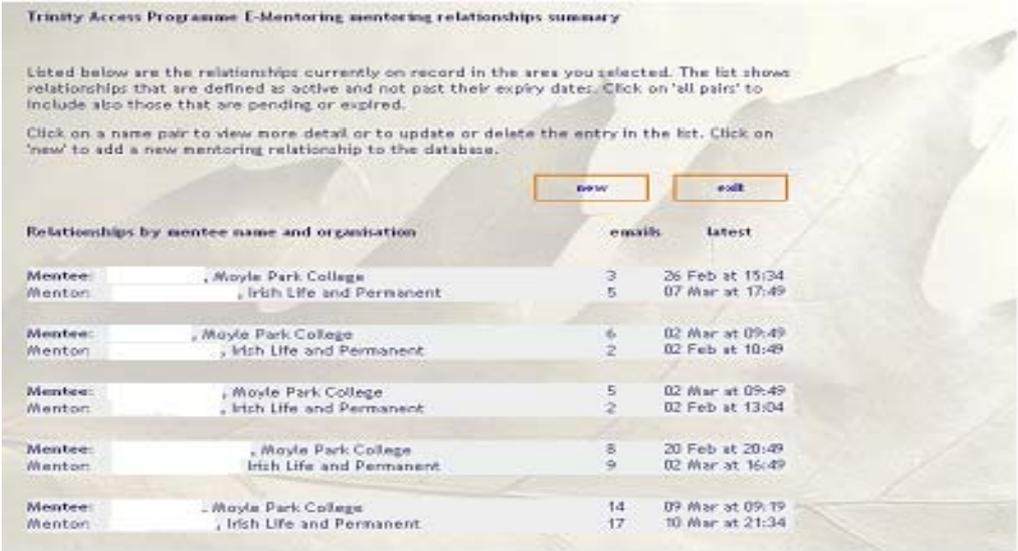


Figure 1 – Screen shot of bespoke communication system

The author wanted to design an online community running alongside this bespoke system as a “support” for Mentors to communicate with other Mentors as demonstrated in the data flow diagram below.

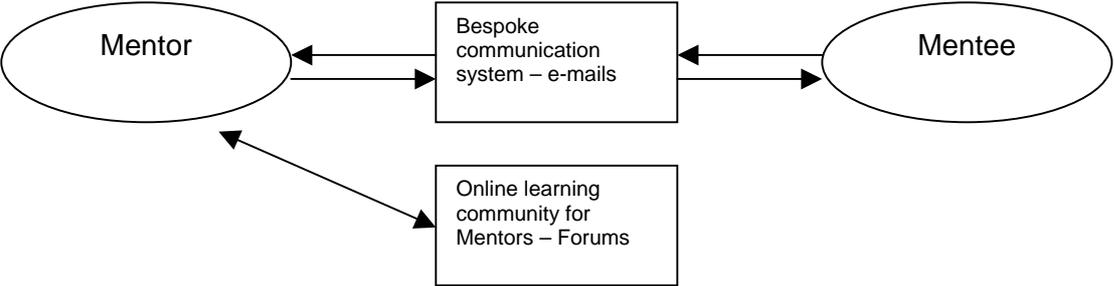


Figure 2 – Data flow diagram of the communication via technologies between Mentee and Mentor

PHYSICAL ARTEFACT

A Virtual Learning Environment was designed for each cohort of Mentors, one for Irish Life & Permanent Plc and one for the TCD undergraduates. They were identical in design but

aesthetically different so for the purpose of this chapter the author will concentrate on the Virtual Learning Environment created for Irish Life Mentors.

All Mentors received two training sessions on e-mentoring, one concentrated on e-mentoring theory and using the bespoke communication system while the other concentrated on the online community. Each month of the e-mentoring programme Mentees have to complete an activity (e.g. CV building etc) while the Mentors collaborate with them and ensure that it is completed to a good standard. The author designed the forums in line with helping the Mentors support Mentees in the completion of these tasks.

The design of the Artefact emerged gradually. The Artefact was piloted on two people who provided very valuable feedback on the general design, background colour, layout, navigation issues and clarity for users. All suggestions were taken on board. The Artefact initially had one Forum, thereby giving control over content and threads to Mentors but the Mentors did not use it. Having considered the implications from the Literature (see Table in Appendix I), the author decided to make the forums meaningful and in line with each monthly activity. This has proved a successful decision. Also, as the programme begun late in January the postings for January ran into February so author decided to merge the Forums of January & February.

IMPLEMENTATION

The two Virtual Learning Environments were implemented using Moodle. Moodle was chosen because it is underpinned by *social constructivist pedagogy* and is a good example of Computer Mediated Communications tools. Moodle is designed for rich interaction among participants. It is ideal for collaboration and enabling the social construction of knowledge. The author felt it was ideal to facilitate a learning community among the Mentors whereby they could support one another by sharing their experiences of the e-mentoring programme.

The Irish Life Mentor online community can be accessed at the following URL:

<http://blake.cs.tcd.ie/white/>

Username: admin

Password: white



Figure 3 – Home page of Mentors Virtual Learning Environment

THE USE OF FORUMS

Mentors were asked to post to the Forums in line with each monthly activity. All of the questions were meaningful and based on how they were getting on with their mentee and monthly activities.

Use of the forums encouraged collaboration and were designed to provide a sense of a safe community encouraging Mentors to open up and help support each other while simultaneously teaching them how to use the technology that their Mentees are fluent in using.

Online Community for Irish Life Mentors You are logged in as Mary Kelly (Log out)

Home Page » EM1

People

- Participants
- Edit profile *

Activities

- Assignments
- Forums
- Resources

Search

Search forums

Administration

- Grades...
- Change password...
- Unenrol me from EM1...

Topic outline

News forum

1

- January/ February Activity
 - Building CV's
 - Creating Cover letters
 - E-mail Introductions

2

- March Activity
 - Netiquette guide of Do's and Dont's for Mentors
 - Trinity Access programmes

3

- April Activity
 - The skooool website

Upcoming Events

There are no upcoming events

[Go to calendar...](#)
[New Event...](#)

Recent Activity

Activity since Saturday, 17 March 2007, 05:57 PM

[Full report of recent activity...](#)

Nothing new since your last login

Figure 4 – list of forums by monthly activity/task

1. Your initial views of your mentees & how the "Introductions" went

2. Your initial views on yourself as mentor - what areas do you think you could improve on

3. Any advice/ questions you may have in relation to communicating with your mentees

[Add a new discussion topic...](#)

Discussion	Started by	Replies	Last post
Re: February Activity	[User Name]	0	Fri, 2 Mar 2007, 12:31
February Activity	[User Name]	0	Thu, 1 Mar 2007, 09:25
reflection on january activity	[User Name]	2	Fri, 23 Feb 2007, 09:12
Activity One - CV building	[User Name]	8	Tue, 20 Feb 2007, 03:13
Mentee contact	[User Name]	1	Wed, 7 Feb 2007, 05:49
Introductions	[User Name]	4	Tue, 6 Feb 2007, 05:19
Problems sending/ receiving e-mails	[User Name]	1	Mon, 29 Jan 2007, 01:08
Logon to www.tapementorprogramme.org	[User Name]	2	Tue, 23 Jan 2007, 05:24

Figure 5 – postings to the January/February Forums

CONCLUSION

Supported by the Literature, the Artefact was developed using Computer Mediated Communications tools, which facilitated a social context in which sharing knowledge, perspectives and skills among Mentors in an online community was encouraged. Taking into account the monthly activities associated with the e-mentoring programme, the forums were designed around these and the issues that were arising, with an underlying emphasis on bridging the generational divide, relationship development and building a community of Mentors.

The main goal of this online community was to provide Mentors with a safe environment in which to collaborate with and share experiences and issues with other Mentors in the hope that they would learn and develop deeper understandings about themselves and the e-mentoring process.

4. METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Research is a “systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and wisdom” (Bassey, 1999). Research must be divided into smaller, systematic stages in order to gather, explore and analyse data. The previous chapter explored the need for good design and implementation of the Artefact to ensure the quality and richness of data gathered. This chapter examines the methods of enquiry used to collect data in order to help answer the main research question “to what extent can an e-mentoring online community support and enhance the experience of novice Mentors taking part in an e-mentoring programme”.

The research design for this study is a Case study methodology, involving two case studies of Mentor cohorts, TCD Mentors and Irish Life Mentors. These studies are compared and contrasted with each other.

CASE STUDY

Case study was chosen because it analyses Learners in real-life settings and produces a lot of raw data and data generated from this can be difficult to quantify. Yin identified the following sources of data collection in case studies:

- Documents
- Interviews
- Observation
- A Physical Artefact

(Yin, 1994)

Case study enables constructivist, active learning strategies to be implemented into learning. Bassey claims that case study is an empirical enquiry into interesting aspects of an educational activity...in such a way that sufficient data are collected for the researcher to be able to explore significant features of the case, create plausible interpretations of findings, test the trustworthiness of these interpretations, construct an argument/story, relate it to relevant literature and convey the story (Bassey, 1999).

Exploratory case study was used to answer the research questions, which Yin believes, observes a social phenomenon in its ‘raw’ form (Yin, 1994). Bassey, Knowles, Vygotsky, Bandura and Lave & Wenger agree that when Learners are actively involved in their own

learning, more effective learning takes place. (Bandura, 1977; Barab, 1998; Bassey, 1999; Daniels, 2001; Knowles, 1998)

Savin-Baden defines Case study as “Project based Learning” with the following characteristics:

- Mainly task orientated
 - Tutor supervises Learners, sets activities
 - Students are required to solve problems
 - Students are expected to draw upon existing knowledge and experience
- (Savin-Baden, 2003)

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Data was collected using a combination of the following instruments. It was then coded and themed according to recommendations by Creswell (Creswell, 2002). Triangulation was applied to the various data sets to follow up on themes and enable the author to answer the research questions.

ACCESS LOGS AND SYSTEM REPORTS

Valuable data was gathered from access logs and system reports of the Artefact. This data provided the author with information on Mentors and how they used the online community, which proved valuable in helping the author answer the research questions.

QUESTIONNAIRES

At the beginning of the e-mentoring programme Mentors and Mentees were asked to complete a profile form (See Appendix XI for example of Mentor profile form). The information provided enabled the matching of e-mentoring pairs. It was hoped that a common thread would provide a starting point to the development of a rewarding relationship.

Once e-mentoring pairs were matched, Mentors were provided with an online questionnaire constructed from PHP and SQL and accessible via the Artefact. It asked Mentors three questions – their fears, expectations and skills that they could bring to this e-mentoring programme. The data was stored in an online database, which was exported to excel for Coding and Theming (see Appendix II & III for copy of form, Codes and Themes).

In March, halfway through the programme mentors were provided with an online “Interim evaluation” form using PHP and SQL. Again, the results of this questionnaire were stored in an online database, which were exported to excel for Coding and Theming. Mentors were asked to comment on the development of the relationship with their Mentees, identify some challenges that they were still experiencing with the programme and discuss their experience of the online community (See Appendices IV and V for copy of form, Codes and Themes).

The information obtained from these questionnaires was used to construct Interview questions. All data sources used in the construction of the Interview questions can be seen in a diagram in the “Interviews” section later on.

MONITORING

The author monitored asynchronous communication between the pairs. Mentors and Mentees communicated through e-mail via the bespoke online communications tool, which captured and stored e-mails. Forum discussions between Mentors were captured in the Artefact and also monitored. This enabled the author to examine the development of the online community and assess Mentors usage.

PHYSICAL ARTEFACT

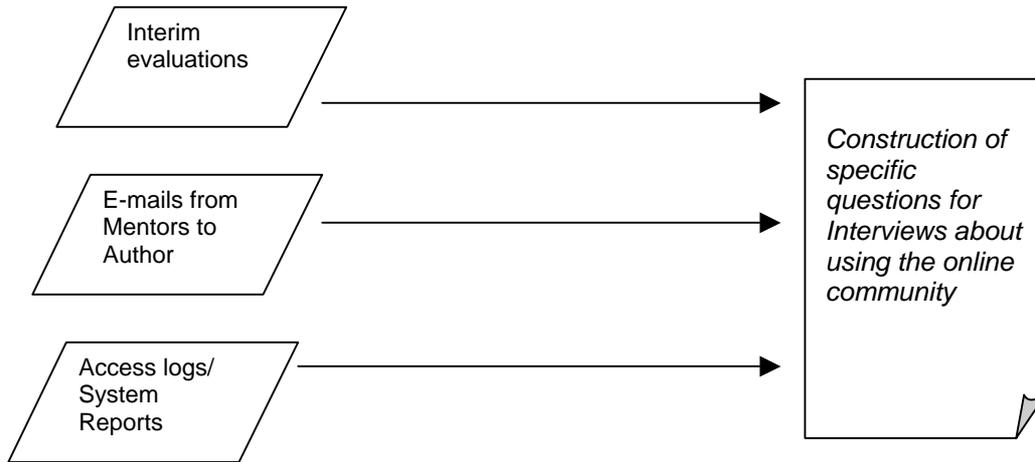
A Physical Artefact was created using Moodle. This provided an online community for Mentors to come and discuss e-mentoring issues via forums. Forums were divided into four sections, for each month of the programme – January to April. Each section contained information sheets on both Mentees’ and Mentors’ tasks so that Mentors would have a point of reference for completion of monthly activities, web resources and discussions pertaining to each monthly activity.

BESPOKE COMMUNICATION TOOL

A secure bespoke communication tool was developed by a company in the UK to enable Mentors and Mentees communicate with each other via e-mail. The author monitored e-mail communication and examined system reports to help answer the research questions.

INTERVIEWS

Information obtained from the Interim evaluation was used to construct interview questions. See diagram below for sources used to construct Interview questions:



SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

These were conducted with a sample of TCD and Irish Life Mentors in April, towards the end of the e-mentoring programme. Standardised, open-ended interview questions were constructed from completed Interim evaluation forms and access logs.

A total of seven Mentors were interviewed, three Irish Life Mentors and four TCD Mentors. Each interview lasted approximately twenty minutes. These interviews were taped on audacity software, transcribed by the author and later coded and themed (see Appendix X for sample codes and themes).

INTERVIEW ETHICS

Mentors were made aware that this research is being undertaken as part of the MSc IT in Education. The author informed them that they were invited for interview to clarify answers they provided in their Interim evaluations. The author thanked Mentors for taking the time out to be interviewed, permission was sought to record the interview while confidentiality and anonymity was assured. Participants were informed of the interview duration and told they could terminate it whenever they wished (see Appendix VII for Interview Protocol Sheet).

MEMOING

As data began to come in, the author kept a notebook that contained the research questions and used this to record ideas and thoughts on triangulating the data. This was extremely important in helping the author analyse the data and identify any missing links along the way. It also ensured that when it came to writing up the findings and conclusions,

the author had a clear list of what needed to be inserted in order to answer the research questions.

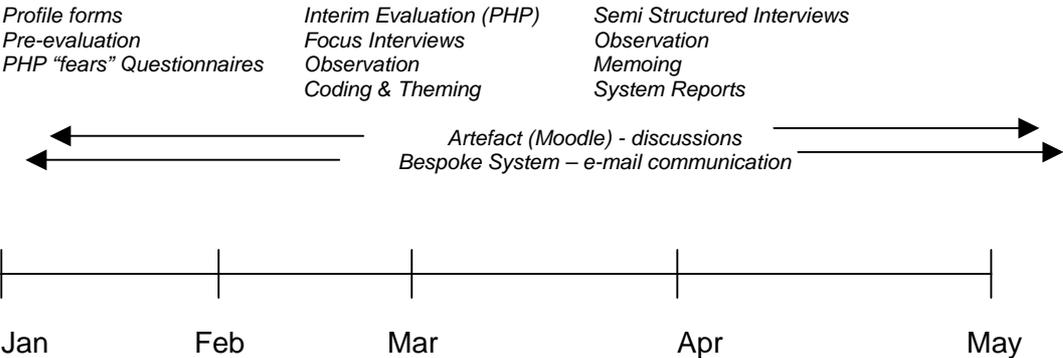
RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The author was aware that she could bring her own biases to the research. In order to minimise any bias the author presented data as it was received, unaltered and not manipulated in any way.

The author can vouch for the validity and reliability of the research carried out as it follows the simple principles of Lincoln and Guba (Bassey, 1999). There was prolonged engagement with the data sources, the author was immersed in the research and data for a period of six months and trusted the Mentors who provided the data. There was persistent observation of emerging issues and themes and Interviews were held in order to gain clarification of emerging trends.

Triangulation involved bringing together data from various sources, as identified above. The author is confident that she has provided an accurate account of the research and an adequate audit trail, proving that the findings are valid.

TIMEFRAME OF DATA COLLECTION



CONCLUSION

Case study was chosen because it analyses people in real-life settings, which was important for this research project. The main data collection tools used were an Artefact, a bespoke communication tool, questionnaires, monitoring e-mails and discussions, memoing, access logs and interviews.

Questionnaires gathered a substantial amount of data, these were a combination of hard copy and online questionnaires. They captured data such as Mentors fears, expectations, skills and their evaluation/usage of the online community.

As the author was the main administrator of the Artefact and bespoke communication system, monitoring of e-mails and discussions was possible. This provided valuable information on relationships, distinguishing the good from the bad.

Finally, interviews were carried out to enable the author gather richer information and seek clarification on points raised in the Interim evaluation. Mentors elaborated on their experiences of using the online community.

All data sources used in this research were trusted sources, the information contained in this report is a true and honest account of the research process and the author tried to reduce bias by maintaining an objective stance at all times during this project.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research was to investigate how an online community could support novice Mentors taking part in an e-mentoring programme, paying particular attention to their experiences of being a member in this community. It examined if Computer Mediated Communication tools could enable the (older Mentors) “Digital Immigrants” to overcome cultural boundaries and learn the new language of the Mentees, thus bridging the generational divide and providing more enhanced and rewarding relationships between the e-mentoring pairs.

Case study research was used to compare and contrast two cohorts of Mentors, from TCD and Irish Life. Data was gathered from the following data collection tools: the Artefact (online community), bespoke communication tool, monitoring discussions and e-mails, access logs and reports, questionnaires and interviews.

The author looked specifically at the physical and emotional aspects of being involved in an online community. The first aspect was community development, focusing on whether a community of e-Mentors actually formed. Interviews revealed the impact the community had on the Mentors and how they used it. Access logs provided information on how often Mentors participated/logged in to the community and they types of communication they had.

The author also explored the perceivable emotional benefits of being part of a community. Interviews revealed if the online community provided support to Mentors and how it helped build relationships. Interviews and questionnaires also revealed if being a member of the online community reduced their feelings of isolation and brought them all together with a common bond.

CODING AND THEMING

Data collection methods returned valuable data, which the author analysed as recommended by Creswell (Creswell, 2002). All questionnaires and interview transcripts were read a number of times in order to give the author a sense of the whole of the information, then coded and themed using concept mapping software. Seven interviews were conducted with Mentors, three with Irish Life and four with TCD Mentors. Memoing was carried out to enable the author jot down important themes and ideas. This helped

organise the data and enabled the author to see key concepts emerging. The author recorded interviews with audacity software and these were transcribed over a period of 4 days.

THEMES

FEARS & EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

The first data source was the Fears & Expectations online questionnaire. This was given to both cohorts of Mentors before they embarked on the e-mentoring programme in January 2007. This questionnaire had three questions, fears and expectations of the e-mentoring programme and skills Mentors could bring (see Appendix II for questionnaire & III for codes and themes).

The main themes that developed were around Relationship Building, Self-Confidence, the Generational Divide and Time (see Appendix III). Relationships were the main theme and all others fed into it. Mentors were fearful of not “clicking” with their Mentees, coming across as older or “condescending” while the younger Mentors were fearful of being too friendly. Their own (lack of) self-confidence could also potentially affect the relationship. Older Mentors expressed fears that their age may prevent them from having a good relationship with a 16 year old. However, when asked to complete the “skills” question these Mentors promoted their age and how their life skills and experience could benefit Mentees. All Mentors had the same fear - devoting enough time to this programme among work and study commitments.

INTERIM QUESTIONNAIRE

This online questionnaire was given to both cohorts of Mentors in March 2007, half way through the e-mentoring programme. The aim of this questionnaire was to gauge Mentors experiences of using the online community. The author used the answers to construct semi structured interview questions for interviews in April (see Appendix IV for Questionnaire & V for Codes and Themes).

The main themes developed around Relationships, Monthly Activities, Technology and Time. Mentors who completed this questionnaire stated they had a good relationship with their mentee because they were engaging regularly and developing trust. Monthly activities caused problems because Mentees were slow in completing them. Mentors found themselves playing the role of Teacher and Adult when discussing them and often felt they

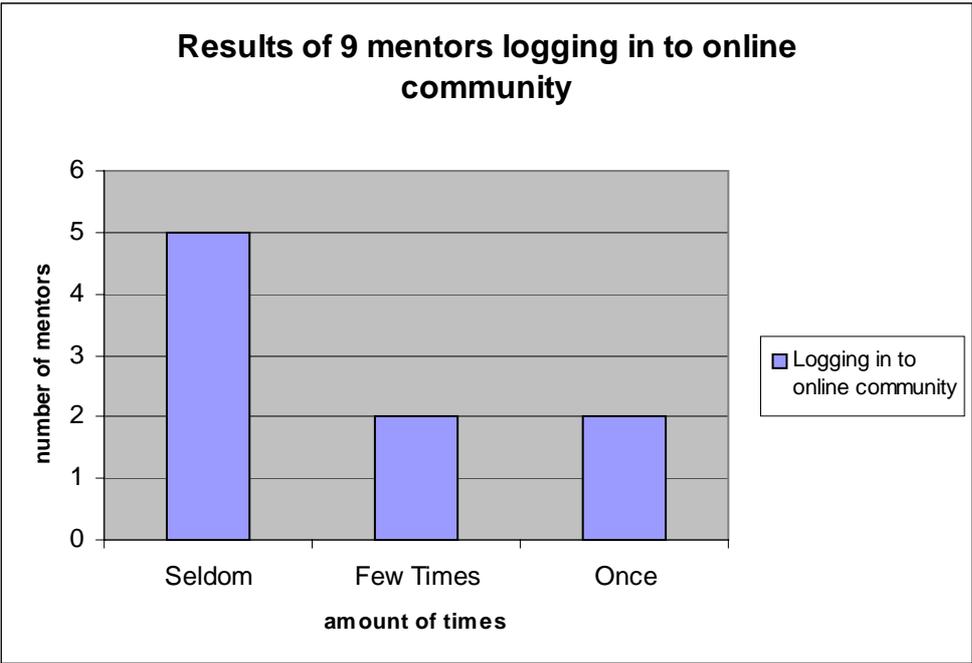
were “badgering” or “bullying” Mentees into completing them which exacerbated their original fear of the generational divide in the Fears Questionnaire.

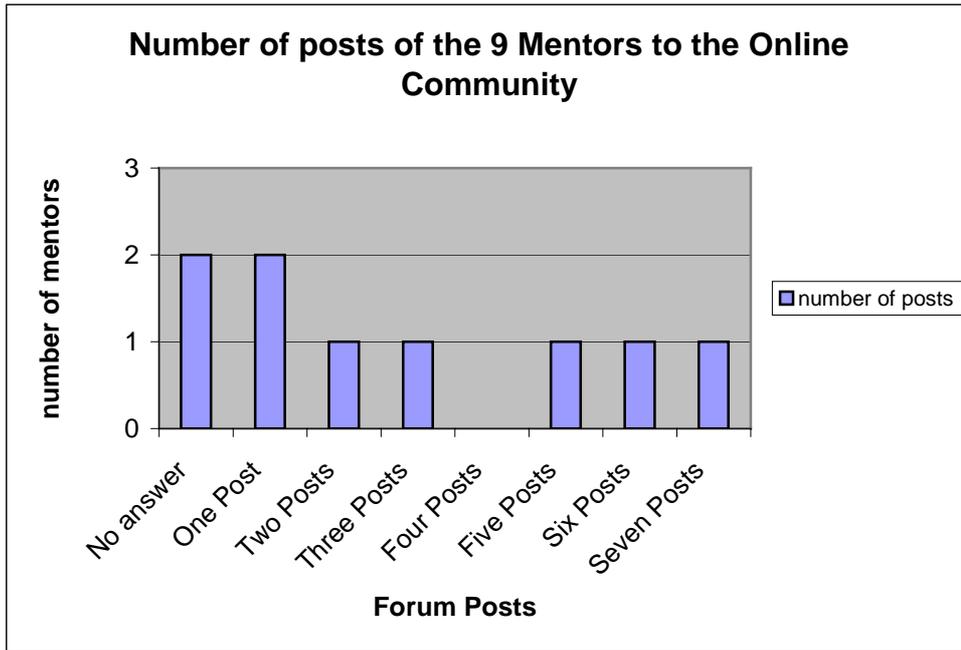
Access to Technology was a potential problem for some Mentees who only had Internet access in school, some Mentors encountered problems logging on to the online community. Again, Time was a common theme, some Mentors stated that the technology was convenient, enabling them to log on to the online community at their own convenience while others found the different systems a hindrance at times and increased the time spent on this programme.

USING THE ONLINE COMMUNITY

Of the nine Mentors (from both cohorts) who completed the Interim questionnaire, six said they did not use the online community. However, when asked why not, the majority said they logged in to it and read posts, downloaded documents and completed the online questionnaires but didn't post to the forums (which they considered “using” the online community). Access logs from the Artefact support this.

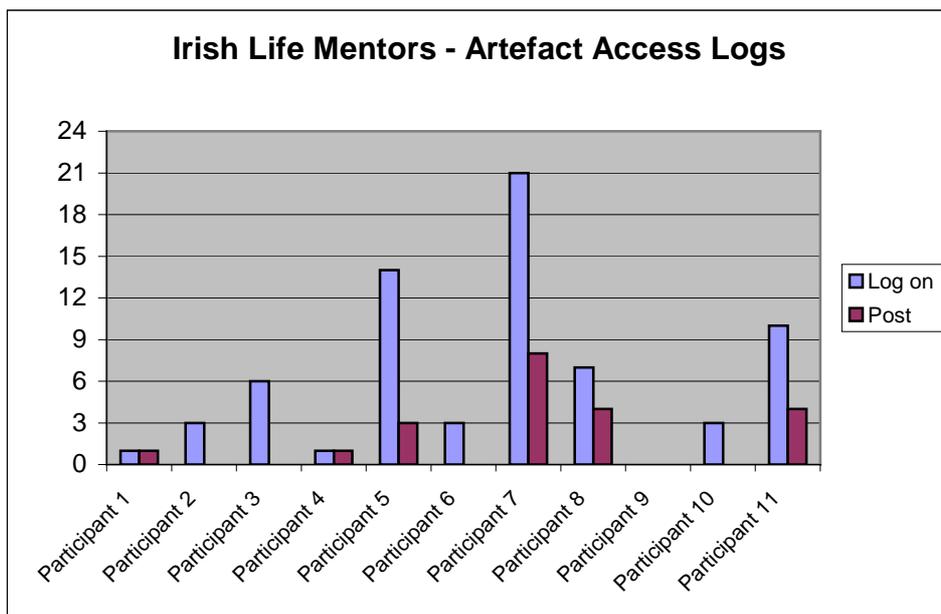
The three Mentors who said they used the online community stated they found it helpful to read the posts as they realised there were other Mentors facing the same problem and they were not alone. They also agreed that the advice on the forums was very helpful. When asked how often they logged in most Mentors stated seldom, posting between 1-4 posts. See chart below for Mentors usage of the online community



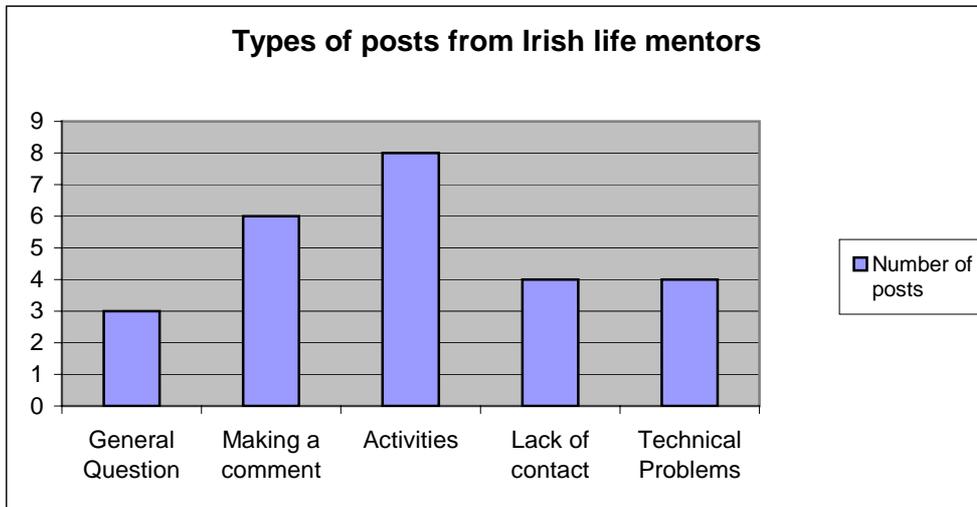


The main reasons for logging on were viewing discussions, obtaining information, posting questions/comments and observing how other Mentors were getting on. The Online Questionnaires did not show heavy usage of the online community so the author constructed semi structured interview questions to probe Mentors further in the Interviews.

ACCESS LOGS FROM THE ONLINE COMMUNITY
IRISH LIFE MENTORS



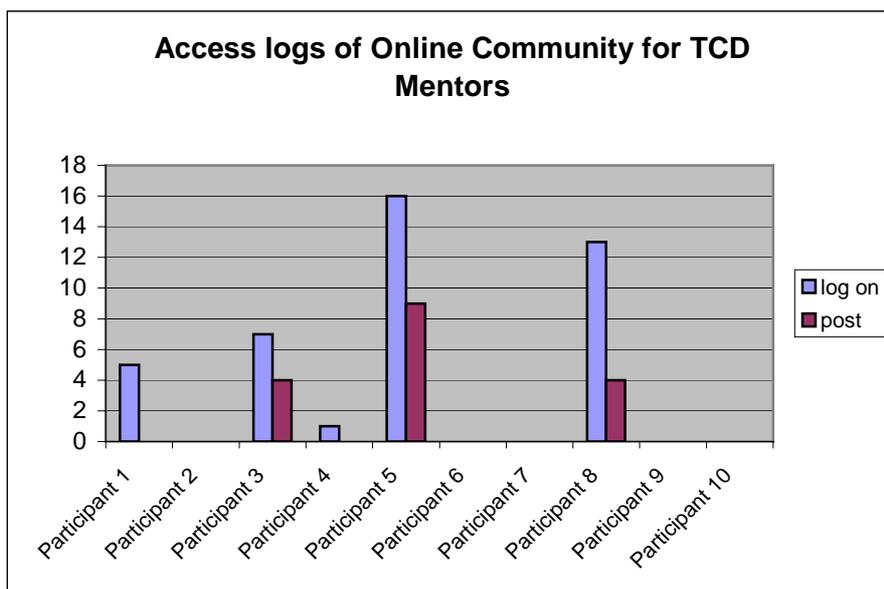
From the previous chart, it is obvious that there was good take-up of the online community. All but one Mentor read discussions, information sheets and consulted the online resources provided, while only some posted regularly. Interviews explore this further.



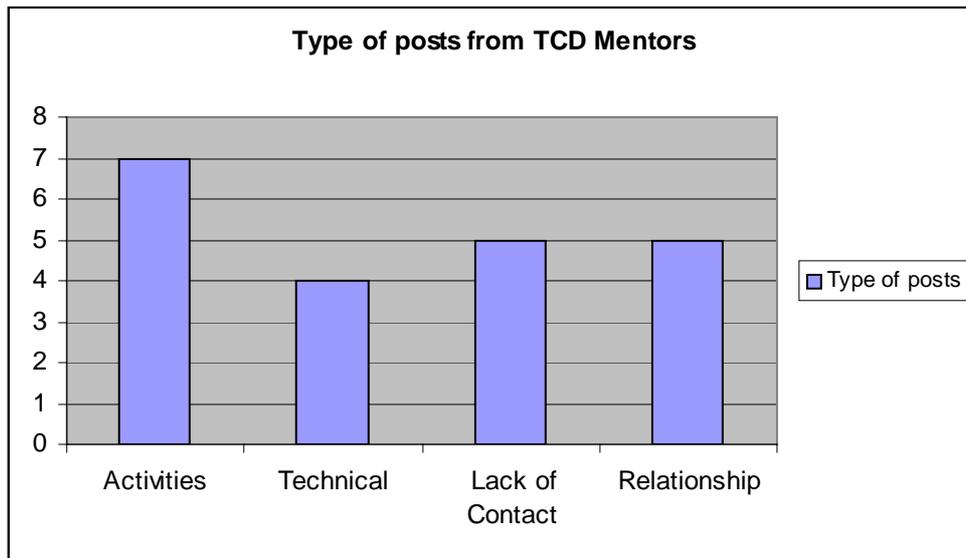
Monthly Activities caused Mentors stress and resulted in the highest number of “support” postings. This exacerbated their generational fears with one Mentor feeling like a “Teacher” and another feeling like a “Nag”, very negative generational connotations.

From the chart above, other postings consisted of general comments, technical problems and Mentees lack of contact. The postings were very supportive and encouraging and gave the author a strong sense of a community among Irish Life Mentors.

TCD MENTORS



In contrast to the Irish Life Mentors the TCD Mentors did not use the online community as well as the author had envisaged. Those who did not log in at all are the young undergraduates with Bebo, myspace or facebook websites and are familiar with forums and online chat. This supports Prenskys theory of *Digital Natives'* fluency with technology and may explain their lack of community interaction. The mature students made the most of the online community. Interviews illustrate main reasons.



In comparison to Irish Life Mentors, the highest postings for TCD Mentors were about monthly activities and lack of contact from Mentees.

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

These were conducted in April 2007 towards the end of the e-mentoring programme. The questions focused on the online community and Mentors experiences of it (see Appendix VI for Interview Questions & VII for Protocol Sheet). Mentors were randomly sampled depending on usage of the online community in order to provide the author with a comprehensive picture of their experiences.

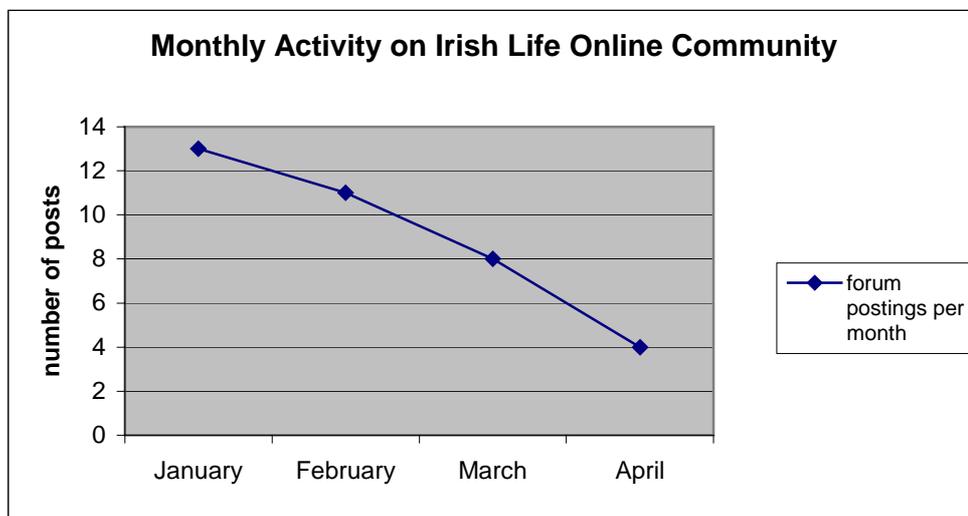
The main themes were around Relationships, Technology, Time and the Generational Divide, similar to the main themes of the questionnaires (see Appendix X for examples of codes and themes).

Information gathered from interviews, triangulated with information gathered from the above-mentioned data sources have enabled the author answer the research questions.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To what extent can the online community support novice Mentors taking part in an e-mentoring programme?

Initially Irish Life Mentors used the online community as a support and learning tool. At the beginning of the programme Mentors didn't know what to expect as demonstrated by the fears questionnaire. The sample of interviewees have said that the online community was used as a collaborative support tool, giving Mentors a sense of "we're all in this together", resulting in a high number of initial posts. This is demonstrated in the graph below.



As time went on Mentors used the online community to see how others were getting on, as an information/learning resource, to see if there were any problems or issues and to read/post discussions, keeping themselves in the loop. This supports Dewey's theory of "learning Communities" comprising the synergies of people with common bonds, working towards sharing understandings, knowledge and skills in order to learn and form deeper understandings.

This also supports Vygotsky's theory of Social Constructivism and Lave and Wenger's Situated Learning Theory whereby people learn best when they are actively involved in learning and constructing their own meaning and knowledge. According to Malcolm Knowles, Adult Learners bring their culture and experiences with them so they can create meaning from the events around them or test previously held values and attitudes against

those of others. Constructivism emphasises the learning process, self-direction of learners and the social context in which learning takes place.

One Mentor stated in her interview that she used the online community to enable her to follow other people's example and do what others were doing. This supports Banduras theory of Situated Learning. The community allowed members to follow each other's example and copy solutions to problems. This in turn integrated members further into the "community".

The Irish life Mentors agreed that the forums were a great way to begin the programme and even though they stopped posting regularly, everyone continued to log in to the online community. Mentors felt supported and comforted by the fact that posts demonstrated that they were all experiencing similar issues. The older Mentors were also excited to be exposed to this new technology

Interviews revealed that the number of posts fell is because Mentors are busy people and so, if there were urgent queries they would send the author an e-mail, preferring an instant reply to their queries. Interviews also revealed "shyness" among older Mentors in posting a question in the forums, preferring instead to seek verbal support from each other. This relates back to the major theme of self-confidence from the Fears Questionnaire. It also supports Prenskys theory of Digital Immigrants, whereby Mentors retain their old "accent", preferring to resort to their old (non-digital) methods of solving a problem.

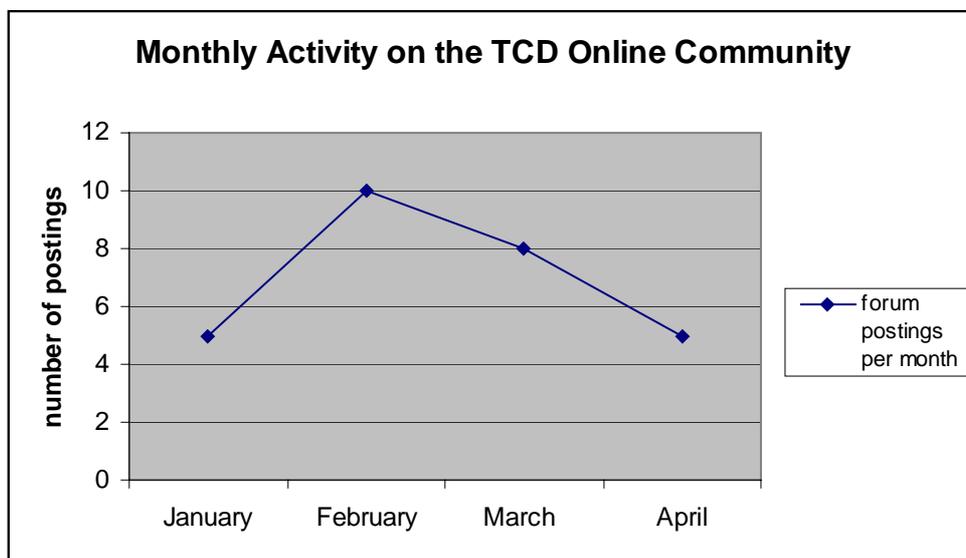
In comparison, TCD Mentors also felt that the forums within the online community were a great idea. However, this community was not as successful or as supportive as the Irish life one. The author believes that as the Artefact was not part of their initial e-mentoring training, TCD Mentors did not realise its relevance. Also, they seemed to have problems logging in to the site and tended to give up easily and not make this known to the author. Interviews support that *Time* was an issue for these Mentors due to study commitments.

TCD Mentors stated that only some of them used the online community regularly and found it beneficial for help, support and advice. If anyone had a question it was always answered on the forums, which comforted those Mentors who used it. However, interviewees stated that for it to work well it must be used by everyone and they were disappointed that not everyone used it. This supports Dewey, Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger who state that learning takes place when people are actively involved in constructing their own knowledge and understanding while sharing perspectives in a social context. As a

result TCD Mentors didn't gain a huge amount of support or learning from their "community". As TCD Mentors came from a selection of faculties around the college, they didn't have the same close bond as the Irish Life Mentors did and so probably needed the online community more.

It seems that TCD Mentors used the online community in a disjointed way. Another Mentor who didn't use the online community said that if he had an issue he would consult the handbook first and then call on the author. This Mentor is no stranger to technology or online chat, having a Bebo website himself. The main theme seems to be that TCD Mentors were busy with college assignments and as this programme ran into Trinity Term, this put an added strain on Mentors time and energy. One Mentor said he didn't want to seek out other Mentors because he didn't want to "hassle" them, preferring instead to seek out the author.

The graph below demonstrates usage of the online community for TCD Mentors. They were slow to begin using it and levels of usage peaked in February (after training) when the programme was in the early stages. Usage has declined since then.



One mature TCD Mentor said that she loved the technology aspect of the programme. She felt that this freed up her time to complete assignments and spend time with her family. She liked to sit down at night, log in to the online community to read discussions, and then the bespoke system to e-mail her mentee. The younger TCD Mentors seemed to find the technology a hindrance, stating in interviews that they would prefer if forums were part of the e-mail system. This supports Prenskys view of Digital Natives preferring fast access to

information and also supports the major theme of (lack of) *Time* from the online questionnaires.

All Mentors agreed that it was great to have the online community, it was great to know it was there even though they may not have posted. Mentors felt that it was a security net to fall back on if an issue should arise within the programme, they liked the idea of sharing information/knowledge with other Mentors, this reduced feelings of isolation and apprehension about taking part in the programme and facilitated learning (proving the theories of Social Constructivism and Situated Learning).

Interviews confirmed that Mentors developed confidence in their own Mentoring ability as time went on and established good relationships with their mentee(s). From data presented in interviews the initial increase in postings was due to Mentors' lack of self-confidence, which was a key theme in the fears questionnaire. Learning and collaboration with peers increased their self-confidence, they no longer felt the online community was an essential crutch and therefore didn't need to post.

Most Mentors interviewed said that they had a positive experience of using the online community. Those who didn't use it had logged in, read posts and then due to time constraints and no major issues/problems with the programme didn't feel the need to post. Mentors liked the public nature of chats taking place and liked the idea of joining in a conversation if they chose to.

Did a community of Mentors form and what impact did it have on its members?

The idea of forming a community of Mentors was interesting. The Irish Life Mentors had a high number of initial posts, then after a month usage waned. The author assumed that a community of Mentors did not form but the interviews proved otherwise. There was a very strong face-to-face community of Mentors in Irish Life so they didn't use the forums too much. They all work very close together, see each other every day and would chat about the e-mentoring programme. The impact of this was a "social network" of Mentors who enjoyed the programme, learned a lot about themselves and mentoring and would do it or something similar again. This supports the works of Dewey, Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger.

On the other hand, there was no real "community" among TCD Mentors. They didn't use the online community nor did they know one another like the Irish Life Mentors so there was no supportive face-to face community either. A lack of a "social context" in which to

discuss issues, ask questions, share perspectives and see how others were getting on only increased their feelings of isolation and prevented any real learning taking place. The younger TCD Mentors just “got on with it” while the older TCD Mentors used the technology more for learning and support which was very interesting. Once the older TCD Mentors overcame nerves they posted, shared perspectives and got great support from others, proving that Computer Mediated Communications tools are excellent constructivist learning environments.

The TCD Mentors were slow to use the online community. This could be due to the fact that it was not part of their e-mentoring training, as was the case with Irish Life. The impact was such that a cohesive community was not formed, which did not help reduce feelings of isolation among members. This has proven the theory of Social Constructivism whereby people learn best when they are actively involved in learning and constructing their own knowledge. The TCD Mentors did not gain as much from the programme as the Irish Life Mentors did, this is due to the fact that they didn’t adopt the “social context” for learning to take place.

Although an online community of TCD Mentors did not form they sent the highest number of e-mails to their Mentees. Their e-mail discussions were generally friendly, less formal and more conversation-based than the e-mails from the Irish Life Mentors (see Appendix IX for example). The majority of the TCD Mentors are only a few years older than their Mentees, they are in college which is not as formal as the workplace. The author monitored equal relationships taking place between them, they discussed personal relationships, problems, their social lives and colleges/ school. This may have facilitated more productive and easy-going conversations between the pairings. And as relationships were strong between Mentor and Mentee, Mentors didn’t feel the need for online support. The Interview of one non-user supports this.

Irish Life Mentors did not communicate with their Mentees as often as the TCD students did, the nature of the e-mails from these Mentors were also different. They were more serious about the programme, more formal, with clear roles taking place. Irish Life Mentors took on the role of Adult or Teacher. They encouraged Mentees to complete tasks and offered good advice and suggestions to Mentees when they submitted their CV's and cover letters (see Appendix VIII for example). This has probably contributed to the success of the TCD mentoring relationships in general.

On the whole Irish Life Mentors had good relationships with their Mentees. They used the online community as a support and learning tool, which reduced feelings of isolation because Mentors shared problems and supported each other in a “social context”, using both the community and face-to-face support. The result was contented, fulfilled Mentors who solved problems, learned a lot and would participate in a similar programme again.

On the other hand TCD Mentors didn't use the online community, neither did they have a face-to-face “social network” to share problems or issues which resulted in feelings of isolation among the Mentors. This resulted in stress among older Mentors when dealing with issues such as lack of contact from Mentees. However, they did form good relationships with their Mentees. The result was Mentors who didn't learn anything new or get any satisfaction from the e-mentoring experience and who probably won't do anything similar again.

This proves how important it is to foster a “social context” in which learning can take place and proves the works of Dewey, Vygotsky, Bandura, Lave and Wenger.

Using Computer Mediated Communications tools, Can these digital immigrants overcome cultural boundaries and learn the language of the natives?

This is an important question for the older Mentors, as these are the “Digital Immigrants”. The Interim questionnaire and the interviews both showed a good take-up of the technology and a positive evaluation of using the forums for support and learning.

Interviews revealed that it was the older Mentors, those less used to technology that learned a lot and were delighted to be exposed to the online community. They got the hang of the forums and how to post and reply; they felt it was an “excellent” support system. However, the one problem was that not everyone used it enough for all Mentors to benefit from it.

These Mentors were very quick to adopt the online community initially, they logged in frequently and posted and seemed to embrace it for the first 6 weeks of the e-mentoring programme, after which their enthusiasm waned. They got to know their Mentees and were no longer afraid their Mentees would not like them or they wouldn't connect. Their initial pre-evaluation forms demonstrated their main fears about embarking on this programme were not developing a good relationship with their mentee due to the generational divide, their mentee may not like them and having nothing in common. After

introductions had taken place and relationships had formed nicely, they felt they no longer needed the online community as much.

Data gathered from various sources reveal Computer Mediated Communications tools are excellent constructivist learning environments, enabling Mentors to share perspectives and knowledge with one another. Data also revealed that these digital immigrants can learn the “language” of the digital natives and integrate themselves quite well into an online community. However, for any real learning to take place and habits to change a three-month project is too short a timeframe. Learners need more exposure to technology for these new skills to be nurtured. So for now, although they were delighted with the exposure, they retain their “accent”, preferring the comfort of what they know and the social support of humans over technology.

CONCLUSION

Information was gathered through the following data collection tools in order to help the author answer the research questions: an Artefact, a bespoke communication tool, access logs and system reports, monitoring forum posts and e-mails, memoing, questionnaires and interviews.

The aim of this research was to investigate what extent the online community (Artefact) could support novice Mentors taking part in an e-mentoring programme, taking into consideration their experiences within this community. It examined if Computer Mediated Communication tools could enable the (older Mentors) “Digital Immigrants” to overcome cultural boundaries and learn the new language of the Mentees, thus bridging the generational divide and providing more enhanced and rewarding relationships between the e-mentoring pairs.

This research can conclude that the online community was a great support and learning tool to those that used it. Irish Life Mentors formed a more cohesive community, supporting each other in a “social context” via the online community and face-to-face (Dewey, Vygotsky, Lave & Wenger). The age gap between these Mentors and their Mentees was greater than that of the TCD pairings so they probably needed the security of a “community” more. The community was mainly used as a support, especially in the initial stages of the programme, an information/learning resource and to follow other Mentors’ example (Bandura).

Information gathered from data sources prove that Computer Mediated Communications tools are excellent examples of constructivist learning environments. Collaboration among Mentors via forums enabled them to explore ideas, gain deeper understanding of e-mentoring, share perspectives and imitate behaviour of other Mentors. This resulted in a shift in perspective and increased knowledge of themselves and the e-mentoring process. This supports the theories of Social Constructivism, Social Learning Theory and Situated Learning, which emphasise the social nature of learning and the active participation of Learners in constructing knowledge.

The older Mentors in both cohorts embraced this new technology and used it more than the younger Mentors, which was disappointing for them. They were delighted to experience it and liked the fact that technology enabled them to take part in the programme from the comfort of their own homes once their family was taken care of. They posted to the forums, asking questions and sharing experiences, which facilitated their cognitive development (Lave & Wenger).

It was wonderful to see the older Mentors embrace this new technology by engaging with their cohort in the online community. Prensky was proved correct, although these “Digital Immigrants” embraced the technology for the programme, they still retain their old “accent”, preferring to learn and construct knowledge in a social non-digital context over faceless technology.

6. CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This research was conducted from January to April 2007 and carried out alongside an existing e-mentoring programme run by the Trinity Access programmes (TAP) in Trinity College. Case study research was used to compare and contrast two cohorts of novice Mentors taking part in the programme, one cohort consisted of TCD undergraduates while the other consisted of employees from Irish Life and Permanent Plc.

Using Computer Mediated Communications tools an online community, using Moodle, was designed and implemented for each cohort of Mentors. This research investigated how an online community could support novice Mentors, paying specific attention to their experiences within the community while simultaneously teaching them how to use this new technology. It examined if the older Mentors (Digital Immigrants) could learn the “language” and “culture” of their Mentees (Digital Natives), become active citizens of the online community, thus integrating themselves into this new digital “culture”, bridging the generational divide and enhancing their relationship with their mentee.

Data was gathered from the following data collection tools: the Artefact, the bespoke communication tool (not developed by the author), online questionnaires, memoing, monitoring e-mail communication and forum posts between the e-mentoring pairs and interviews.

KEY THEMES

One of the key themes to develop is Computer Mediated Communications tools are excellent examples of constructivist learning environments. The online community provided a “social context” in which learning could take place through collaboration with peers. This was evident among the Irish life Mentors who formed a social support network, which resulted in increased cognitive development and reduced feelings of isolation.

Another theme to develop is how technology has made e-mentoring very accessible to many people. Technology has replaced the need to schedule face-to-face meetings, eliminating the logistics of distance and time. Older Mentors in particular appreciated this and stated that technology gave them more time to take part in the programme as they could engage with their Mentees from the comfort of their own home once other commitments were taken care of.

The Generational divide was another key theme. Older Mentors from both cohorts expressed fears for relationship development because of the age gap. Mentors were afraid of coming across “too mammy-ish” or “condescending”. Others expressed fears that their Mentees may not respect their advice because they were “old”. However, these fears were unfounded. Data from questionnaires and interviews illustrate that the support Mentors received from their peers alleviated these fears and led to increased self confidence which in turn resulted in rewarding relationships with Mentees.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

Results of interviews have shown that it may have been a good idea to have one online community for both cohorts of Mentors. More users may have encouraged Mentors to post and facilitated more of a social context for learning to take place.

The author also realises that there could have been better use of collaborative activities between the Mentors as stated by Vygotsky in his theory of Social Constructivism and Alessi & Trollip in their principles for Instructional Design. Mentors have supported this in the interviews. Collaborative activities among Mentors may have strengthened bonds, especially among the TCD Mentors and may have led to a more cohesive “community” and increased activity on the forums. The author feels that an “Introduction” task may have strengthened bonds between Mentors and got the discussions going initially. This will be borne in mind for future research

UNEXPECTED FINDINGS

One Mentor stated in his interview that he would have liked some training/activities around “communication”, especially learning how to communicate in text language with a teenager. He felt their initial styles of communication were very different, while his style was formal his Mentees was very relaxed and abbreviated. The author realises that “communication” activities from the meta-thesis would have been invaluable to the older Mentors. This could prove a very interesting topic to explore in greater detail in future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I - DESIGN TABLE

Key element from Lit	Implication	Implementation
Computer Mediated Communications tools are excellent constructivist learning environments	By collaborating with others via discussions, e-mail or chat Learners can explore ideas and gain an understanding of other perspectives.	Use of forums, online community to discuss issues/problems of mentoring or simply to share what's working for them
Mentoring - trustworthy adults providing support and guidance to younger less-experienced people	Mentoring is all about providing personal support in a safe environment in which both Mentors and Mentees can learn	Support the mentors as they have given up their time and sharing their skills and knowledge with the young people
E-mentoring - These schemes work by connecting Mentors and Mentees via e-mail & telecommunications technologies.	The asynchronous nature of e-mentoring means that geographical constraints and scheduling face-to-face meetings with mentoring pairs is no longer an issue. As long as the Internet is available, e-mentoring can thrive	An online support tool that facilitates the development of a virtual community using the Internet
Prenskys Digital natives and Digital Immigrants	Younger generations are fluent in the digital language of computes and technology while older people are less so. The digital divide is a big issue. Young people now possess the skills that adults need	An artefact to help adults (mentors) become familiar with some of the technology that the Mentees are fluent in (e.g. Bebo – forums)
Dewey, Vygotsky, Bandura & Lave – Social constructivism	People learn best when they are actively involved in learning and constructing their own meaning and knowledge. Constructivism emphasises the learning process, self-direction of learners and the social context in which learning takes place	Forums for mentors to discuss how they're getting on with the whole e-mentoring process, to share information and to learn from each other – to develop a sense of community via a shared experience
Malcolm Knowles - Andragogy	Adults are motivated by need to know something, they bring their experiences with them and learn	Using the forums in order to enhance their experience of e-mentoring, helping them cope

	things in order to deal with real-life situations while maintaining responsibility for their own decisions and lives	with their Mentees and in completing the monthly tasks/activities
Learning Communities Lave & Wenger Barab & Duffy	Synergies of people with something in common, working towards sharing understandings, knowledge & skills in order to “learn” or form “deeper understandings”	A cohort of people with e-mentoring as their shared experience. Each mentors 1 st experience of e-mentoring
Learning communities	They have the following common themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common/shared purpose ▪ Interests or geography ▪ Collaboration ▪ Partnership and learning ▪ Respecting diversity ▪ Exist because of an idea or task ▪ Fluid with no formal boundaries 	The whole experience of e-mentoring, Mentors want to help and pass on knowledge to a younger person
Barab, Brown, Collins & Duguid - Situated Learning is Constructivist.	Cognitive apprenticeship supports learning in a domain by enabling students to acquire, develop & use cognitive tools in authentic domain activity.	Using reflection and collaboration via forums in order to complete real-life tasks with Mentees & thus develop good relationships
Bandura- social learning theory	People learn from one another through collaboration, observation and imitation.	Asking questions of each other, sharing information on knowledge via forums

APPENDIX II - FEARS & EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE



PLEASE FILL OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE BELOW

Name

What are your main fears about taking part in this e-mentoring programme?

What are your expectations from this programme?

What can you bring (skills, qualifications etc) to this programme?

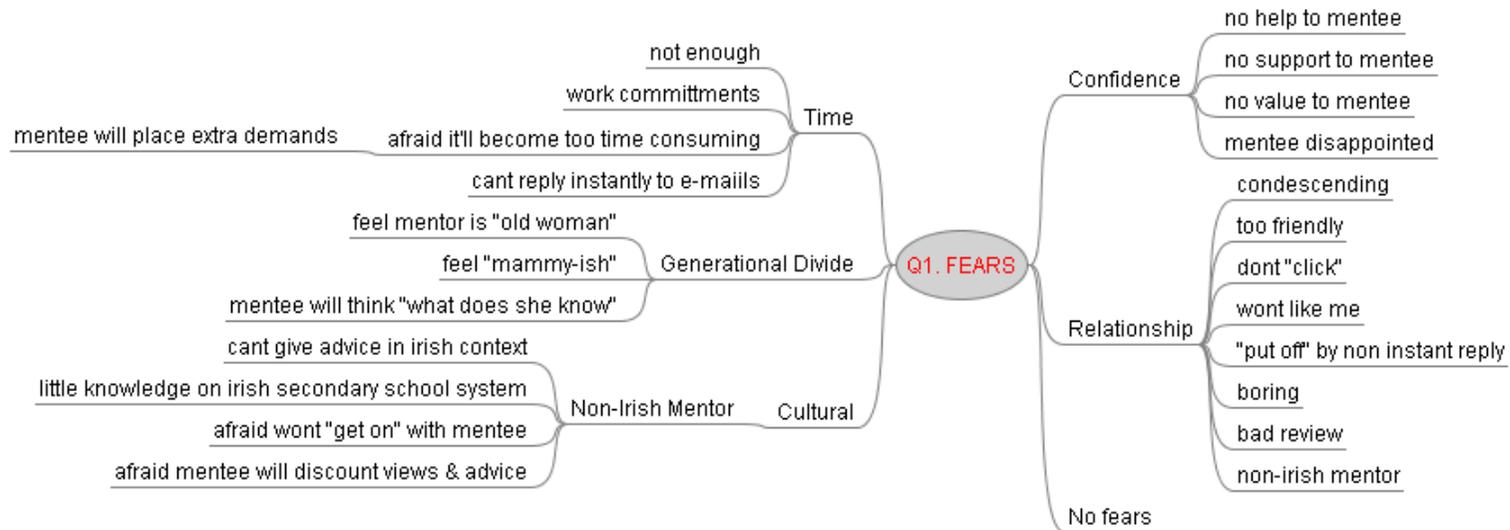
APPENDIX III – SAMPLE CODES & THEMES FROM FEARS & EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE (Creswell, 2002)

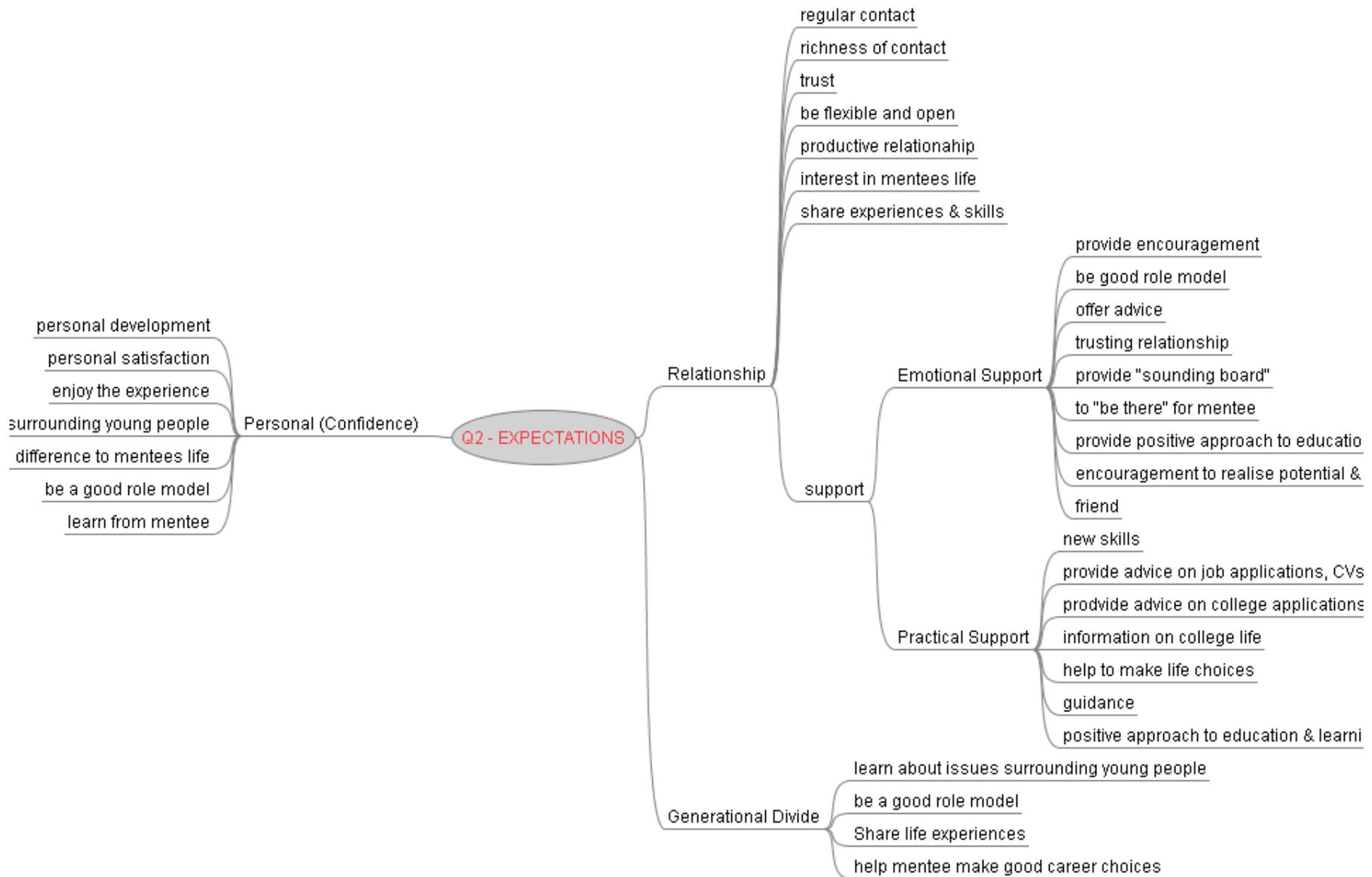
PARTICIPANT	Q1 - FEARS	CODES	POSSIBLE THEMES
1	Not being able to answer questions that are asked, but I know some of the other volunteers so I know that I can seek advice from both them and the Trinity unit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cant answer Mentees questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidence ▪ Relationship
2	That I will be of no help and support to the mentee That I wont always have the time to be there for them That they wont enjoy the process of having me as a mentor!!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No help to mentee ▪ No support to mentee ▪ No time for mentee ▪ Wont like me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidence ▪ Relationship ▪ Time
3	That the mentee finds my advice and assistance of no value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advice no value to mentee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidence ▪ Relationship
4	Not being able to reply as quickly as might be expected by the student, due to work commitments during the day. Essentially I may be away from e-mail for a whole day and unable to reply. So I hope the student is not put off by the fact that reply's will not be instantly returned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of quick responses to mentee ▪ Work commitments ▪ Hope mentee is not "put off" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time ▪ Relationship
5	I would hope that the mentee is willing to really get involved in this programme and get the most out of it as possible. I also hope that there will be, in time a good relationship between myself and the mentee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hope for a good relationship with mentee ▪ Unmotivated mentee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship
6	1. That I won't be able to offer the particular advice needed by the particular mentee 2. That I won't be able to motivate the mentee enough to complete the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cant offer advice to mentee ▪ Cant motivate mentee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidence ▪ Relationship
7	I really do not have fears as such, I think after the first email things will take off, both mentor and mentee understand what we have to do and I am looking forward to beginning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No fears ▪ Looking forward to communicating with mentee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No fears

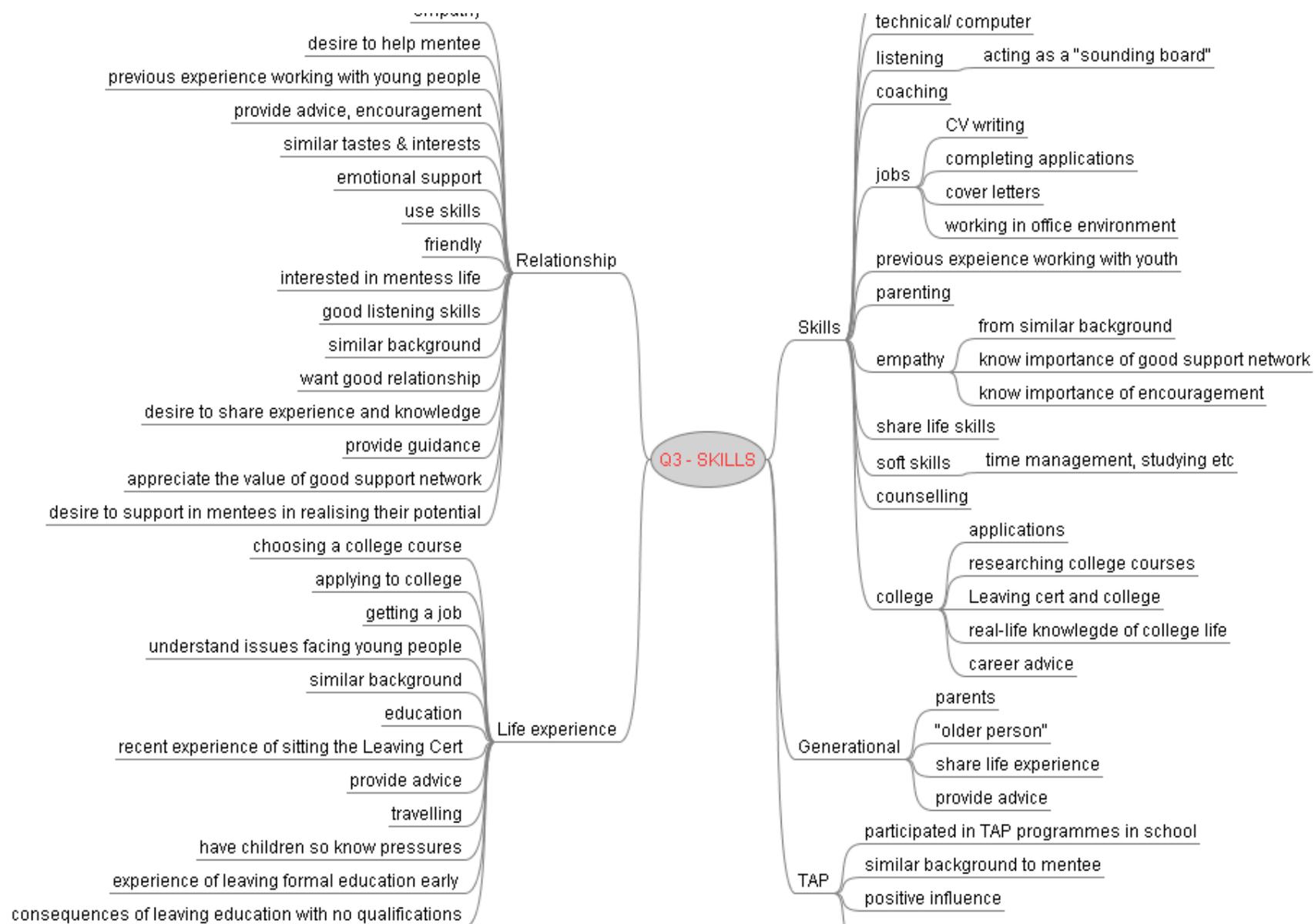
8	That the mentee will think I am a boring old woman who doesn't know what she is talking about!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boring "old woman" ▪ No respect for my opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generational divide ▪ Relationship
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That the student won't find it useful - Getting a bad review. - That someone would feel I was condescending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bad review ▪ Mentee wont like me ▪ Condescending ▪ Wont find my advice useful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidence ▪ Relationship ▪ Generational divide
10	That it becomes inappropriately personal or time-consuming. That I am not able to provide useful mentoring advice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time consuming ▪ Cant provide useful advice ▪ Relationship too personal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time ▪ Confidence ▪ Relationship
11	I don't really know, maybe that I would be too friendly and let something slip that I'm not supposed to like my email address or something but so far I've managed to stray away from too personal questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Become too friendly ▪ Give personal information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship
12	I worry that my mentee will be disappointed somehow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disappointed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidence ▪ Relationship
13	That I would not be able to understand the experience of being an Irish secondary school student, that we would have very different interests, that we would not get on at all!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wont get on ▪ Wont understand needs of mentee having not grown up in Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship ▪ Cultural divide
14	Coming across as being too 'mammy-ish'. Not giving the right advice. My mentee not 'clicking' with me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Too "mammy-ish" ▪ Not clicking with mentee ▪ Cant give right advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship ▪ Generational Divide ▪ Confidence
15	I am pretty confident about the e-mentoring programme but my main fear would be not successfully aiding my mentee or answering questions she might have.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not helping mentee ▪ Cant answer Mentees questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidence ▪ Relationship
16	I am afraid I do not have enough time at the moment to participate fully with the programme, although I stay in regular contact with my mentee, I am unsure whether I am fulfilling the requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not enough time ▪ Unsure if fulfilling programme requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time

CONCEPT MAPPING SOFTWARE

This was used to identify the main codes and themes that developed from the fears and expectations online questionnaire. Numerous codes and themes developed so the author created a concept map for each question because there was not enough space to fit everything on one page. These are illustrated over the next two pages.







MAIN THEMES FROM FEARS & EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. *Relationship with mentee*

One older Irish Life Mentor stated that she was fearful of coming across to her mentee as “too condescending” while a few of the younger TCD Mentors were afraid that they might be too friendly and share too much personal information. Other fears were “not clicking”, getting a bad review or that a non-instant response to e-mail might be seen by Mentees as lack of interest. One interesting theme was from a US Mentor who is now studying in TCD. She was worried that her lack of knowledge about the Irish education and secondary school system would affect her relationship with her mentee. The Relationship with Mentees was the main theme running through the questionnaire. All others fed into it.

In terms of Expectations, most mentors stated that they hoped to have a regular, productive relationship with their Mentees. Mentors stated that the key ingredients to a successful relationship were trust, being interested in Mentees, providing support and being flexible and open to the programme.

2. *Their own confidence in their abilities as a Mentor*

Main fears consisted of not providing enough help or support resulting in disappointed Mentees, which would affect the e-mentoring relationship.

In terms of Expectations, mentors self-confidence would increase if they understood Mentees issues, acted as a role model and felt that they are making a difference to their Mentees lives. This in turn would provide mentors with a sense of personal satisfaction and result in Mentors participating fully in the programme.

3. *The Generational Divide*

Older Mentors from both cohorts expressed fears for relationship development because of the age gap. One mentor was afraid of coming across “too mammy-ish” while another didn’t want to be seen as an “old woman”. Both these and other older mentors expressed fears that their Mentees may not listen to them because they were older, fearing an attitude “what does he/she know about the life of a teenager”. Again, these fears fed into the relationship theme.

Mentors all stated that they hoped to bridge this generational divide by learning about Mentees lives and listening to them. Mentors felt that by sharing their experiences of life

and college that they could find common ground, forgetting about the generational divide and thus, having a rewarding relationship with their mentee.

4. Time

Both cohorts of mentors are busy people with many commitments so its not surprising that this was a major theme. Some felt finding time would be a problem while others were worried that it might take up too much of their time, especially if their mentee was to place extra demands on them.

5. Skills

This was an interesting part of the questionnaire. Where previously mentors stated that the generational divide could be a problem for relationship development, they were now promoting their age and how this gave them the benefit of skills and experience to pass on to their Mentees. This question gathered a wealth of skills and experience.

One interesting theme to emerge was that one Irish Life mentor had attended a TAP-linked secondary school and had taken part in TAP activities and programmes. He could empathise with his mentee and be a positive role model.

APPENDIX IV – INTERIM QUESTIONNAIRE



PLEASE FILL OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE BELOW

Name

1. How do you feel the e-mentoring programme is going for you so far?

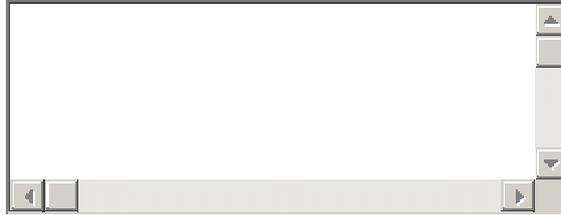
2. What challenges/ concerns do you still have in relation to this programme?

3. Do you feel that you've developed a good relationship with your mentee? Why?

4. Have you been using the (support) online community provided?

Yes No

Please state why?



5. How often do you log into the online community?

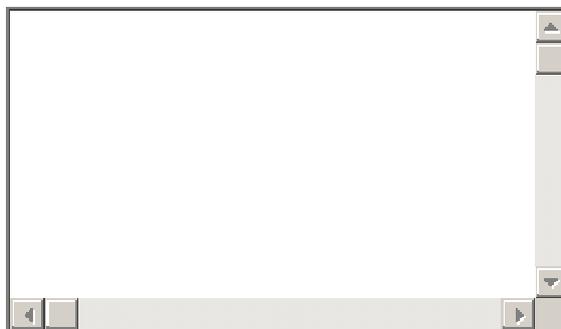
Once a week Few times a week Seldom

6. What are your main reasons for using it?



7. Approximately, how many posts have you created/ responded to since January?

8. Please add any further comments that you feel are relevant

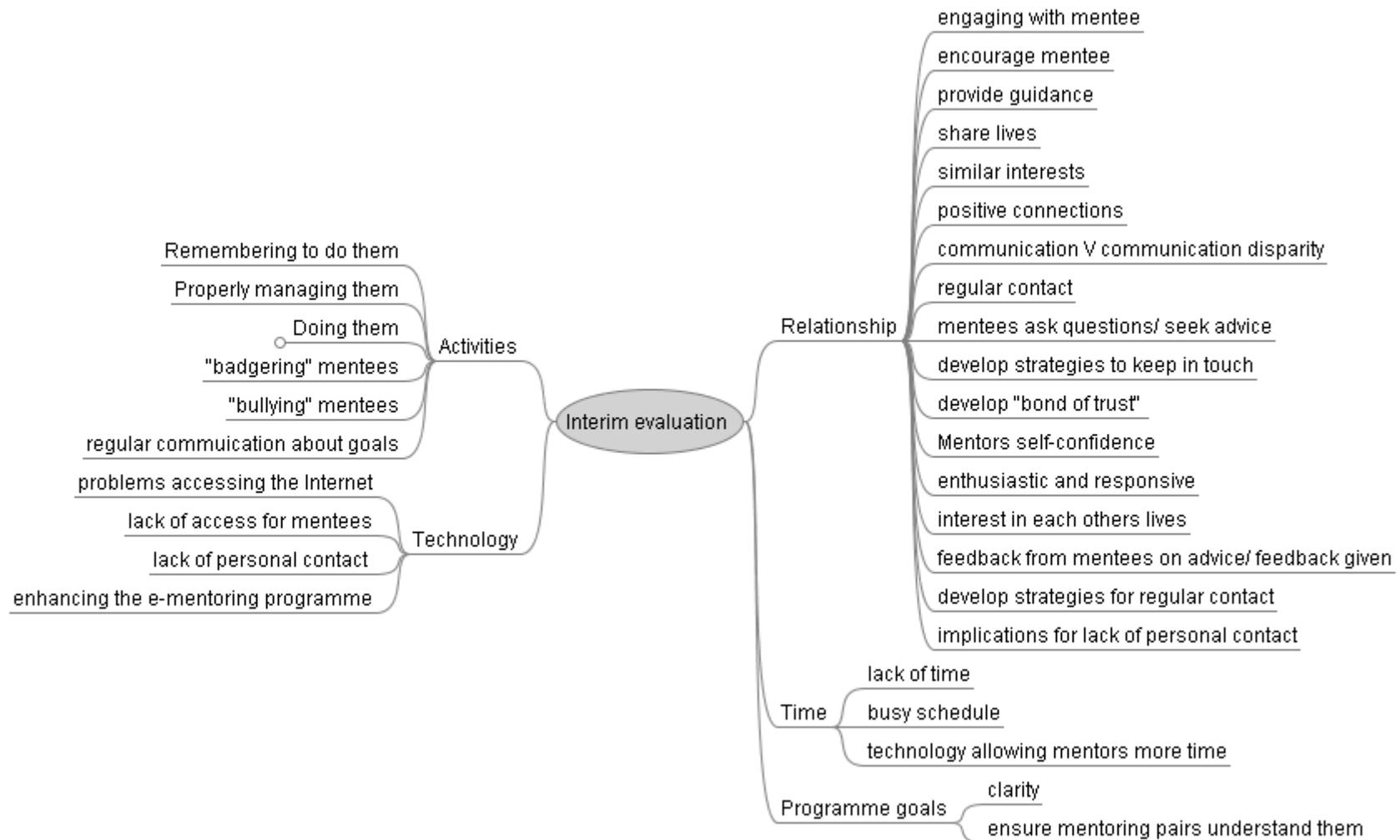


APPENDIX V – SAMPLE CODES AND THEMES OF INTERIM QUESTIONNAIRE (Creswell, 2002)

PARTICIPANT	Q1 –GETTING ON WITH E-MENTORING PROGRAMME	CODES	POSSIBLE THEMES
1	<p>It is going well for me so far. My two Mentees are so different from each other, I have resist the urge to compare them, as one of the girls is very enthusiastic while the other needs a little more encouragement I think.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Getting on well ▪ One mentee engages ▪ One mentee needs more “encouragement” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship
2	<p>It’s going well, we are getting on great. But keeping up with the activities has been a little difficult. We are behind but I have told them both and we are working on them now, to catch up.</p> <p>But it’s going very well, they are both very interesting in college and hearing what I have to say and have been good about listening and starting conversations too.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Going well ▪ Difficult managing activities ▪ Mentees interested in college ▪ Mentees engaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship ▪ Activities
3	<p>Good. Because this mentoring programme in based online, it makes it far easier to find the time during the day to get in contact with my Mentees. Finding the time is the main problem with one on one mentoring, so this service is great.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good ▪ Loves the online nature of the programme, easier to find time to contact mentee ▪ Finding time is a problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship ▪ Time ▪ Technology
4	<p>Not great - the main reason for this is that I have not devoted enough energy to the programme. Also I don’t think my student is fully clear on how the programme works either which has led to confusion and inactivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not great ▪ Time is a problem ▪ Unclear communication and programme goals ▪ No activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship ▪ Time ▪ Activities

5	Slow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Slow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship
6	I am enjoying it; we got off to a flying start then slowed right down. The lads seem to be busy with other stuff in school and out of school; I have been in touch today to see if I can get back on track with them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enjoying it ▪ Started great and then communication slowed ▪ Mentees busy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship ▪ Time ▪ Activities
7	Generally quite well. Interaction with the Mentees has been slow at times mainly due to restricted access to the internet but both Mentees appear to be making an effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good ▪ Internet access problems ▪ Mentees engaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship ▪ Technology
8	Very good. My mentee seems very mature and is very responsive to my emails .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good ▪ Mentee is responsive and enthusiastic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship
9	To be honest I haven't been the best mentor this year. It's not going too bad, just difficult to keep in touch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not too bad ▪ Difficult to keep in touch ▪ Doesn't feel she is a good mentor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship

CONCEPT MAPPING SOFTWARE - Used to identify main Codes and Themes that developed from Interim Evaluation Questionnaire



MAIN THEMES FROM INTERIM EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Relationships

Most mentors who answered this questionnaire stated that they had a good e-mentoring relationship because they were engaging regularly with their mentee, sharing experiences and building trust. Mentors were giving advice, which was alleviating their fears of being no value/support to their mentee.

Those who felt that they were not developing a good relationship with their mentee agreed contact was sparse and neither had engaged or committed fully to the programme.

2. Monthly Activities

These proved problematic for Mentors as Mentees were slow in completing them. A lot of mentors felt that they “badgered” and “bullied” their Mentees into completing tasks and stated in Interviews that they felt like teachers or parents, which they didn’t like. This further exacerbated the original fears of the generational divide from the Fears Questionnaire. It also had implications for the e-mentoring relationships as some Mentees disappeared for periods of time at the mention of activities. This proved potentially destructive for relationship development and overall, probably had a negative effect on the e-mentoring relationships.

3. Technology

There were a few problems with technology, access to the Internet was sometimes problematic for Mentees, some of them didn’t have a computer at home and so had to rely on the scheduled computer classes to contact their mentors, which wasn’t always regular. At other times mentors found it hard to access the online community and had a tendency to give up trying. Lack of technology was a potential disaster for mentoring relationships as this programme relied heavily on technology to survive.

4. Time

Some mentors found technology convenient because they could log on to the forums and post or e-mail their mentee in the evening once other commitments were taken care of. Others found technology a problem because they had multiple systems to log on to and they felt this took up too much of their time.

APPENDIX VI – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Had you used forums before? Was this your first time?
2. Did you feel comfortable with this form of communication?
3. Did you find the site easy to navigate?
4. Did you like the idea of publicly sharing with others?
5. How did you use the online community?
6. If you didn't use it, did you log in at all? Why?
7. How did the online community help you during the initial stages of the e-mentoring programme?
8. Did you learn anything from it?
9. Do you think that a community of mentors formed? Why?
10. Did you feel part of a community of Mentors?
11. Why do you think that usage waned as time went by? (Factors contributing)
12. Did you feel that having the online community running alongside e-mail was helpful or a hindrance? Explain
13. Did you prefer to ask someone if there was an issue, rather than post to the forums?
14. Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

APPENDIX VII – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL SHEET

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place: Goldsmith Hall, Trinity College/ Irish Life, Abbey Street

Interviewer: Nicola White

Interviewee:

The purpose of this interview is to gather data on your experiences of using the online community that was designed to run alongside the e-mentoring programme for research as part of my Masters degree and evaluation purposes for TAP.

You have already completed online questionnaires and the main reason for this interview is to clarify some information that you provided.

You were randomly selected from the group. This interview should only last approx 15 minutes. Your answers will be used in the research document but your identity will be confidential. Have you any questions before we start?

APPENDIX VIII – SAMPLE E-MAILS FROM AN IRISH LIFE MENTOR GIVING ADVICE TO MENTEE ON AN ACTIVITY

Subject: Cover Letter
From: IRISH LIFE MENTOR
To: MENTEE
Date: Thu, 15 Feb 2007 21:04:01

Hi [REDACTED],

I just got your mail about mid-term break starting so I hope you get to see this before you break up. Very lucky! I'd love to get a mid term from work.

I've just read you cover letter. It's very good. Well done. I mean that. It's very professional for a transition year student.

There was a few errors, very minor though. Please don't think that I am picking at things. It's always good to read over something a few times before you send it off. Also I know this isn't a real situation but it's also very helpful to have someone else take a second look before you submit anything. So, I do hope that you find this programme useful.

- ' the potential ' should be ' their potential (you see minor!)

- you've said the club is about getting secondary school students to help primary school students. The club is actually for 1st year students, not primary school.

Overall, this is a really good letter. You have said that you are enthusiastic and eager. You come across as very interested in the position and it would make the employer want to look at your CV.

Well done!!

Are you doing anything nice during the mid term? Do you get lots of projects from school that you have to work on? Anyway, if I don't hear from you, enjoy the time off,

[REDACTED]

Subject: task 1
From: MENTEE
To: IRISH LIFE MENTOR
Date: Wed, 14 Feb 2007 12:19:10

Thanks it helped a lot this is the last time I will be able to use the computer in school because we are getting our mid terms now if I can I will send you an e-mail

Subject: task 1
From: IRISH LIFE MENTOR
To: MENTEE
Date: Tue, 13 Feb 2007 12:49:05

Hi [REDACTED],

thanks for sending this over. Don't worry that's it late. At least it's finished now. Really well done on the observations.

I'll just bring you through the mistakes that I noticed when I was reading Nancy's CV. You have noted most of them anyway. Please don't be put off by the length of this. I hope it'll help you in some way when you are doing your CV.

Firstly in every section the formatting is off. The tabs are off. Sometimes Nancy has mixed used capital but doesn't follow through with the style. Examples : address, name had capitals but mobile and telephone didn't. In the education section, some subjects were capitalised and some weren't. This is really the same in every section so I won't keep saying it.

** you should decide on what style you are going to use and stick to it through out your CV**

Personal details

- DOB spelled incorrectly ' birt' I wouldn't actually include your DOB on the CV. Your employer will choose you because of your overall profile.
- The e-mail address is 'mad yoke'. Although this is funny and perfect to use with your mates, an employer might be put off by it. It might give them the wrong impression. You should only use a mail address as a means of contact if it's appropriate on a professional level.

Education

- Nancy hasn't said at what level the subjects were taken at, ie Higher or Ordinary level. - I would mention the e-mentor programme here too and give a description of it. It would really look good to an employer to see that you got involved with professional people while in school and tried to develop your skills. I think it might look a bit nicer here if the subjects were in 2 columns. It would shorten the CV too
- Always put your best results first too!!

Work Experience

- Nancy hasn't given the dates of her work experience.
- Assisting was spelt wrong. ' asisting'
- Responsibilities. You don't really need to say that. maybe you could use ' position held '
- Although it looks good that Nancy has said she was in meetings and contributed there's not much detail. This is a section you could shine in. It would be good if Nancy gave exact details of her ideas, what she set up, and exact duties. Really try to impress here.

Skills & Other Information

- The font has changed here again. Nancy should really be keeping with the same style & size throughout.
- Nancy should expand here on her different points. For example, while she teamwork skills, she could go into what she was involved in that helped her gain those skills. It might be the basketball team or debate team. She has said 'I love talking' . This might come across in the wrong way. She could have used ' likes communicating with others'

Interests and Achievements

- Nancy could expand here too. Example : I swim twice a week to maintain fitness, I enjoy reading. My favourite author is Dan Brown. I am a member of the Moyle Park Football Club and play 3 times per week.
- ** put in here if you are involved in any clubs in school or if you've won any prizes**

Referees

- Nancy hasn't said what position her referee held in the company. She also didn't give any phone number for them. Most employers will always prefer to speak to the referee.

It would be good here to use a set format. Maybe

Name:

Title:

Address:

Email:

Phone No:

Lastly ... The CV is a bit too long. For someone in secondary school it should really fit on one page. Nobody expects you to have a long list of work experience at this stage in your life.

You can see from my mail above the CV was a bit all over the place. It's really good to try to use the same format and letter style throughout your CV. Always go through it again and check for any spelling mistakes.

Hopefully you can see from my mail too that I've tried to keep to the same style and tabs throughout to make it look a bit neater.

I know that you'll be doing your own CV to send on to me. Maybe you'll get a few pointers from this. If you have any questions or your unsure about anything, just send me a quick mail before you finalise it.

What do you think?
Is it any use to you?
Was it too much?

Speak to you soon



APPENDIX IX - SAMPLE E-MAILS FROM A TCD MENTOR GIVING ADVICE TO MENTEE ON AN ACTIVITY

Date: Thu, 15 Feb 2007 19:36:16 +0000
Subject: Re: Just to say hello!
From: TCD MENTOR
To: MENTEE

can you use a memory key or disc? :)

sorry it took a while to get back to you, Internet went down again. how's things going?

■x

On 14/02/07, MENTEE wrote:

lol Im the same! cant spell for my life! lol! aww... Aaron came up and made me breakfast in bed! lol! I have it on the other computer but that has no Internet I just have to move it! x

From: TCD MENTOR
To: MENTEE
Subject: Re: Just to say hello!
Date: Tue, 13 Feb 2007 20:34:04 +0000

I'd be going mad!!! lol Aaron give up now :) how's the CV:) the three marks is the least of my worries right now, I had to email him and Tell him that it was proof read, its FULL of mistakes! stress! lol I can't wait to be tested and just know what is going on that I can spell nothing! (ha not even with spell check)

■x

On 13/02/07, MENTEE wrote:

lol I love Harry potter! :) I cant think of her name ill find out for you and let you know! lol Aaron's behind me trying to teach my dog to sit! ha so funny! ah its only 3marks! not to much! lol I know! I'm the same with the ear hand thing! its so mad! we didn't find out yet! they never called! :(boo hoo! lol

From: TCD MENTOR
To: MENTEE
subject: Re: Just to say hello!
Date: Tue, 13 Feb 2007 09:19:16 +0000

I was in denial about the 6th book, my friend wrecked it, someone dies in the last 20pages! it was like 60 pages!!! I was going nuts, I was in denial, no, no he comes back he has to come back! I was in Galway and we stayed up and got the book at midnight, it was gas! but I was so mad at her (but I never told her) my mum comes with us to see the movies, I'm gonna try make Gary come, but my little cousins aren't the nicest to him, it's like he's taking me from them :) That sounds like a really interesting book, who is the author? I'm doing alright my boyfriend wants me to stay in bed til I'm well, well, but I've an exam this week and well don't tell everyone but I missed a deadline from being sick and with no doctor's note, cause of no money or time to see the doctor I'll probably lose like 3 marks, which isn't much, but I'm still annoyed at myself for being sick and not getting it in sooner :(you'd think I'd give myself a break cause of being sick :) probably should :) I've never heard that hand and ear thing, I'll be looking at my hands now every period to see if they have changed, and my ears! ha if its true I can say ha, my ears are retaining water so stop looking at them! lol how'd the acting thing go???

■x

APPENDIX X – SAMPLE CODES & THEMES IN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT OF TCD MENTOR

<i>Participant 1– Goldsmith Hall, Thursday 26th April 2007</i>		
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	CODES	THEMES
<p>N: Did you use forums before? Was this your first time to use forums? M: Yes it was</p>	Use forums	Technology
<p>N: And how did you feel about that? M: I thought they were a very good idea but at the beginning I found it very hard to log on to the forum page. You send an e-mail with the link to the forums and when I clicked on the link I was able to get to the forums no problem. I deleted your e-mail and had written down the link but when I typed it in the URL it just didn't work for me. Now, I did solve that problem</p>	Liked forums Difficulty logging on to online community	Technology
<p>N: How did you solve that? M: when I logged on to one of the forums, you sent me the link again, then talking to the other people on the forums they showed me how to do a shortcut so I now have a shortcut on my desktop.</p>	Support – social (Vygotsky) Imitate others (Bandura)	Relationships Community
<p>N: Did you like the idea of forums? M: Yes, I did like the idea but I found that people weren't using it. As far as I could see there were only two or three people using it. Now maybe I want in the right place but there were only 2-3 of us using it. Now I felt that for a forum to work it has to be like a discussion board where everybody is throwing in their tuppence worth and because there were so few using it I stopped using it instead.</p>	Liked forums People didn't use them Need people to use them - Social context (Vygotsky, Dewey, Lave & Wenger))	Technology Relationships
<p>N: Why do you think that people didn't use it? M: maybe people had the same problem as me at the beginning getting on to the forum, if its not easy then you just leave it there, I thought it was great</p>	Problems logging on Walked away	Technology
<p>N: What were your main reasons for using it M: To contact other mentors, the mentee that I got at the beginning was fantastic but it might take her a while to get back to me. I thought initially it was our age difference, because I'm 48 and she's 15 or 16</p>	Contact others Age difference	Relationships Generational Divide Community
<p>N: Did you tell her your age? M: Oh I did, I said you have an aul one for a mentor, we had a banter about it and had good fun but afterwards I thought about it and felt that people my age shouldn't be e-mentoring to teenagers because although we had science and career prospects in common, we didn't really</p>	Old mentor Too old to mentor Nothing in common	Generational Divide Relationships

<p>have much else in common. I know about her family, how many brothers and sisters she has, her mother and father, going off on holidays to Barcelona in may but then it dried up because I don't know about modern bands. I personally feel that I haven't had a bad experience with the e-mentoring, I just feel that the age gap might be a problem, not in a bad way but in way that you just have nothing in common with her</p>	Big age gap	
<p>N: Are you glad you did it? M: I am, I haven't heard anything from her recently. I've sent her two e-mails, I even said to her "will you do the [scavenger] hunt and she hasn't done the hunt at all. I even hinted at her that "I have the answers" without actually saying that, you know I'm here and if you're having trouble I can help you, I really hinted hard that I could give the answers. I don't think people got a good response from the activities</p>	Lack of contact Problems with activities	Relationships Activities
<p>N: Yes, the activities seemed to be a bit of a problem M: as a student myself, this time of year is busy with exams, so I don't know what her workload is. Maybe the tap e-mentor programme is something she doesn't feel she has to do</p>	Busy Study commitments	Time Relationships
<p>N: It seemed to go downhill after Easter M: The problem was we were a month apart, the way it happened for holidays</p>	Lack of contact	Time Relationships
<p>N: How did you find the site to navigate? M: I found it ok, clear, by month, saw the replies</p>	Clear navigation Good site layout	Technology
<p>N: did you ever consult the documents on the site? M: No, I used my handbook. I think mentors should also get a copy of Mentees activities so they know what the young people have to do</p>	Used handbook not technology (Prensky)	Technology
<p>N; did you like the idea of publicly sharing ideas M: Yes because you get to join in conversations and see what's happening for example one girl posted a shortcut in the forums and I replied and said thanks for that and then 3 of us involved</p>	See conversations Join in conversations Advice/ solve problem	Technology
<p>N; what were your main reasons for logging on initially? M: to contact other mentors to see if they were having the same experience as me, for help, just to see what others were saying. One mentor had 2 Mentees, one was fantastic and the other wasn't great. When I saw she was having problems it made me realise that maybe it's not the age thing</p>	Contact others Similar experiences For help Read posts/comments Age difference	Technology Generational Divide Community
<p>N how many times do you think u logged on? M: about 10-15 times in the whole programme</p>	Regular log in	Technology

APPENDIX XI – MENTOR PROFILE FORM



E-Mentoring Mentor Profile Form

**This form will help us to match you to a suitable mentee
PLEASE WRITE YOUR ANSWERS CLEARLY IN CAPITALS**

First Name:	Surname:
Business Name:	
Position in Company:	
Gender:	Age:
Email address:	
Mobile Phone:	
Work Contact Number:	

1. In which of these areas would you like to help out your mentee? Please tick the box.

School

Planning my time better	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homework	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Studying for exams	<input type="checkbox"/>

Outside School

Self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting new people	<input type="checkbox"/>

Preparation for Life after exams

Interview techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looking at different colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talking to people in different types of employment	<input type="checkbox"/>
CV Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Subjects I studied in School:

1.	5.
2.	6.
3.	7.
4.	8.

3. What I did in College:

--

4. Could you tell us a little about yourself by completing the following sentences:

My hobbies and interests outside of work are:

My favourite T.V. programmes are:

My favourite music is:

How would you describe yourself when you are with people you do not know that well?

Shy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outgoing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loud	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-conscious	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quiet	<input type="checkbox"/>

How would you describe yourself when you are with your friends?

Shy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outgoing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loud	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-conscious	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quiet	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Any other comments?
