Unpacking the Terminology:
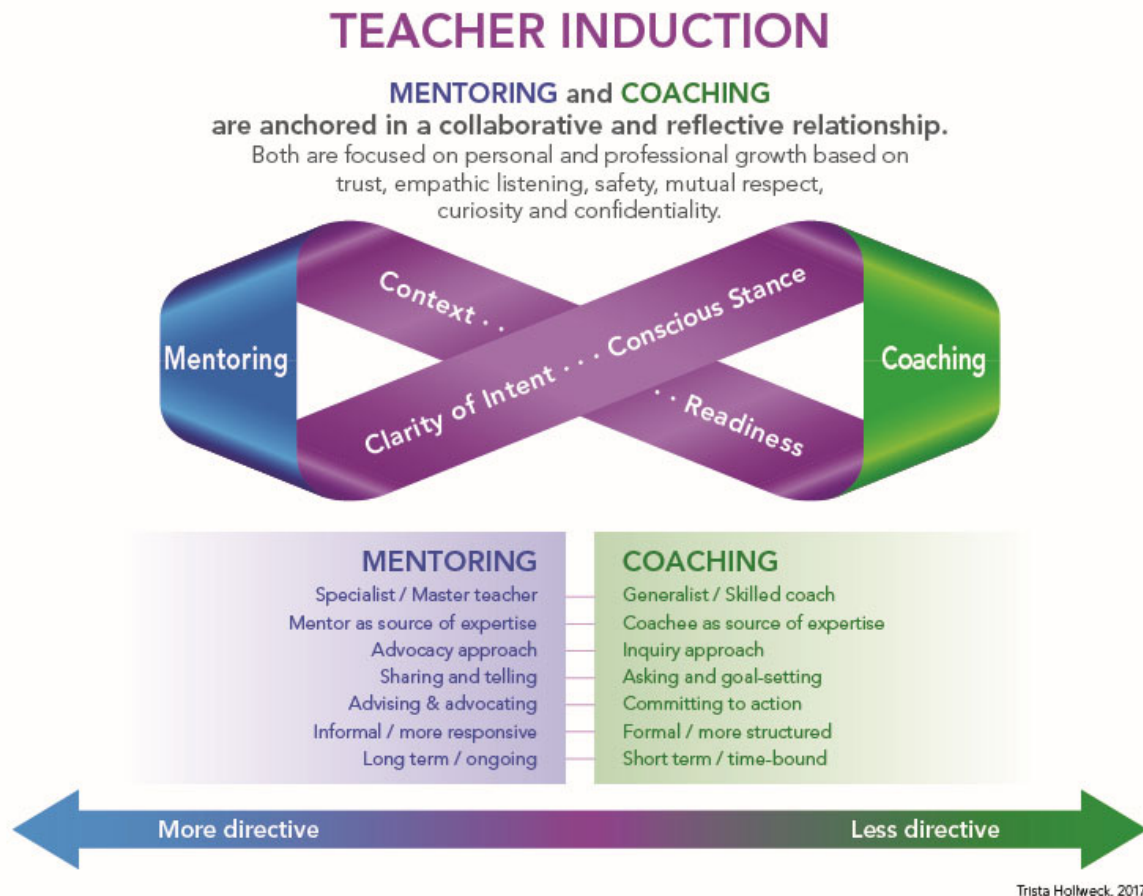# What is the difference between mentoring and coaching?

The terms mentoring and coaching have conflicting interpretations and usage within the educational research literature (CUREE, 2005; Fletcher & Mullen, 2012; Knight, 2007; Moir & Bloom, 2003; Sharpe & Nishmura, 2017; van Nieuwerburgh & Barr, 2016). The discussion around clarifying the terms has been popular on social media (the topic of this twitter chat and many blog posts- Chris Munro's work is quite helpful) and in policy documents (the CUREE framework is outstanding). Both terms are difficult to define and the practice can be multifaceted, ambiguous, and contextually driven. To complicate matters further, each term can even be understood differently by people working within the same context and program. When it comes to mentoring and coaching in education, often the terms are used interchangeably, or coaching is described as a component of mentoring or vice versa. Certainly, there are many similarities between the two terms as they share key principles: both are primarily one-to-one collaborative relationships anchored in trust, empathic listening, non-judgement and they aim to support professional and/or personal growth. However, differences also exist and lack of clarity around the terms is a significant challenge in the mentoring and coaching field.

Historically, mentoring has always been an important part of learning, but there was a marked trend in educational reform in the 1980's toward the professionalization of the role, which included systematic training and increased regulation and accreditation, especially in the UK and USA (Moir & Bloom, 2003; Mullen, 2012). Coaching, on the other hand, has long been established in business and sports, but is a relatively recent initiative in the field of education but rapidly gaining traction in the new millenium (Fletcher, 2012; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012).

Defining the terms within a teacher induction context has been a large part of my research interest. Induction is defined as the support and guidance provided to (usually novice) teachers and school administrators in the early stages of their careers. Induction encompasses orientation to the workplace, socialization, guidance. Mentoring figures heavily in the teacher induction literature, with coaching often referred to as a part of mentoring or an 'approach' within the mentoring construct. I am interested in whether these two terms can be defined as distinct, but complementary approaches that together form a critical part of teacher induction (Hollweck, 2017).

For a more detailed understanding, please see my video (found here), where I share my conceptualization of mentoring and coaching as a mobius strip. This is not a new idea- I was introduced to the mobius strip in the work of Bob & Megan Tschannen-Moran (Evocative coaching) and Gary Bloom, Claire Castangna, Ellen Moir & Betsy Warren (Blended Coaching). The mobius strip is named after the German mathematician and theoretical astronomer August Ferdinand Mobius (1790-1868), but the design dates back to early alchemists of ancient Alexandria, Egypt. As the Tschannen-Morans (2017) note, the mobius strip "reflects the human quest for continuity and infinity within the bounds of space and time" (p.42). The beauty of the mobius strip for me is that mentoring and coaching can be represented as fluid and dynamic processes- they are not static on a continuum. When working in teacher induction, Mentor-Coaches can often find themselves moving between the two concepts in response to their

specific context and relationship needs. I am particularly interested in CUREE's (2005) assertion that "learning to be a coach or mentor is one of the most effective ways of enabling teachers and leaders to become good and excellent practitioners". For me this is a double win- not only are the teachers new to a district supported and growing their professional practice, but by learning to mentor and coach, veteran teachers also experience professional growth. Here is the visual that was introduced in the video for your reference:

TEACHER INDUCTION

MENTORING and COACHING
are anchored in a collaborative and reflective relationship.
Both are focused on personal and professional growth based on trust, empathic listening, safety, mutual respect, curiosity and confidentiality.

Mentoring   Context . . .   Clarity of Intent . . . Conscious Stance   . . Readiness   Coaching

MENTORING	COACHING
Specialist / Master teacher	Generalist / Skilled coach
Mentor as source of expertise	Coachee as source of expertise
Advocacy approach	Inquiry approach
Sharing and telling	Asking and goal-setting
Advising & advocating	Committing to action
Informal / more responsive	Formal / more structured
Long term / ongoing	Short term / time-bound

More directive   Less directive

Trista Hollweck, 2017

So....this is how I see mentoring and coaching within teacher induction. How do you define the terms in your professional and/or personal context?

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