Have you read a book or article that has helped you to make sense of personal tutoring? Anything that you would recommend to a colleague who's looking for ideas and information? If so, please share the details here. Just to start you off, here are some books that IAD has come across recently.

Contact essproj@exseed.ed.ac.uk with your own reviews.


- Sensible.
- Clear distinctions between coaching, mentoring, supervising and personal tutoring
- Good introduction to personal tutoring (ch 3)
- Helpful reflective questions eg p109 on supervising students whose first language is not English
- Attention paid to online and distance learning (ch8)

Review by Daphne Loads, IAD


The book is premised on Morgan’s Student Experience Practitioner Model, which aims to give practical form to the process of understanding what students need to support them at each stage of their academic journey and how to engage staff and services across the institution to provide this. After a couple of introductory chapters, the book is divided into two sections, one with chapters focusing on the student journey, from first contact to outduction; the other dealing with core activities, such as academic student support and development; student evaluation and feedback. Chapters in these sections are individually authored and each contains several short, practical case studies outlining initiatives and good practice in a range of institutions, both within the UK and beyond.

Review by Chris Doye, IAD


- Includes students' and tutors' experiences
- Some rich and thought provoking case studies: would work well in group discussion, perhaps less useful for individual reader
- Only brief mention of online/distance learners

Review by Daphne Loads, IAD


Review by Kay Williams, IAD

Strengths

- The use of material drawn from the experiences of tutors and students.
- Good overview for new members of staff, particularly on referral.
- The toolkit suggested could potentially be the basis for an institutional one.

Potential drawbacks

- The (short) overview of the literature is now rather dated.
- The chapter on the legislative framework surrounding equality and diversity is out of date, although the issues-based material in it is helpful.
- Some of the advice is rather generalised and might appear rather obvious to experienced members of staff.
- Doesn't really seem to acknowledge role of other support staff at local level in a formal team-based approach.

Overview

Offers an insight into HE personal tutoring using case studies drawing on staff and student experiences of the day-to-day work. (However, for ethical reasons the case study material appears in disguised forms.)

"The book aims to explore where the personal tutor's work ends and that of other support services begins. It highlights the key issues in personal tutoring and identifies ways of working within a suggested model of best practice.” (Neville, 2007, p. 5)

Organised in four parts: Background; Personal experiences; Student support services; Theory into practice.

Most chapters have a short outline at the beginning and offer practical suggestions towards the end along with suggestions for further reading.

Although the named author is given as Lindsey Neville, there are in fact contributed chapters and most of these authors work in a student services and/or counselling context. A notable exception is Richard Price the course director for the graduate entry to Medicine course at Newcastle who contributed a chapter on personal tutoring for postgraduate students much of which is also relevant for those working with mature students.

Personal experiences
Part 2 of the book consists of two chapters giving a concentrated dose of case study material which comes across as realistic and provides issues to reflect on. A lot of the 'insight' quotations reflected negative aspects of personal tutoring and put together in this way seemed a bit overwhelming read at one sitting, especially coupled with the expectations of the students. Over a third of the members of staff in their sample had some sort of counselling skills qualification which is surely far from typical. The value of CPD opportunities and departmentally-based mutual (informal) support systems are highlighted.

Personal tutoring model of care

Neville suggests a 'three Rs of care' model: Regard, Reliability and Resilience (2007, pp. 127-142). A reliable system ensures students get the support they need when they need it. Regard refers to the quality of interactions (particularly the approachability of the tutor). Resilience is a concept borrowed from counselling and involves tutors recognising their own limitations and knowing when to refer a student on to professional services. The skills required by personal tutors seem to be allied to counselling but key is knowing when to refer the student to a professional.

Toolkit

Following hard on the heels of this model is a chapter described as a toolkit (Neville, 2007, pp. 143-161). This includes a lot of sensible and practical suggestions although the idea of using emoticons to soften a message made me wince (Neville, 2007, p. 148). A toolkit like this is something which might be made more useful by being specific to an institution and by being in a format that can be updated annually.

Bullock, K. and Wikeley, F. Whose learning? The role of the personal tutor, Maidenhead: Open University Press

Tries to address both high school and university tutoring in one volume
Some theoretical material at quite a general level
Very few practical suggestions

Review by Daphne Loads, IAD

***** I'd recommend this. Likely to be very helpful to many of our Personal Tutors
**** Likely to be very helpful to some Personal Tutors
*** May be helpful to some Personal Tutors
** Worth having a look
* Don't bother!