Chapter Twelve

Invoking the Power of the Mentor

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Introduction and background

For the vast majority of university students in the South African context, the road to higher education is one fraught with difficulties and challenges. Against the backdrop of a disparate educational system and considered one of the most unequal countries in the world, where rural areas have the highest poverty concentration (The World Bank 2018) and more than 50 per cent of university students suffer food insecurity (Wegerif and Adeniyi 2019), our students are constantly 'fighting against the tide'. Today one of the biggest challenges facing the South African public higher education system is the historical approach of academic Darwinism – survival of the fittest; that is students who do not pass are considered not 'fit enough' (Lewin and Mawoyo 2014; Van Zyl 2013). It is estimated that as many as 55 per cent of students who enrol at university will never graduate, while a quarter of them will leave in their first year of study (Council on Higher Education [CHE] 2013). Van Zyl (2013) argues that although higher education institutions in South Africa have made considerable strides in providing equity of access to higher education, there is still a considerable difference in the success levels of the various groups of students. These differences have been highlighted by a number of researchers as originating from the transition between school and university, the phenomenon of first-generation university entrants, the linguistic diversity of the South African landscape, the financial aspect linked to university studies and life experiences, amongst others. These are the serious and complex problems that have shaped the unique students who are enrolling in institutions of higher learning and thus require institutions to continuously adapt in response to their needs in order to cultivate success. As a result, Tinto (2012) and Thomas (2012) advocate for interventions that are contextualised to students' needs and goals, accommodating of their diversity and not constructed on perceptions, expectations or past experiences.

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It is in this context that one large-scale institution in the country approaches the ever-potent issue of the language proficiency of the diverse groups of students that it services each year. To widen participation and access and as part of its curricula support, a range of academic literacy modules aimed at developing the academic literacy abilities of undergraduate and postgraduate students are offered. Our main mandate, however, is the development of the academic literacy and academic ability of our first-year students across a number of faculties. This has been motivated by twelve years of poor schooling for the majority, an undifferentiated post-school system and the yet-to-be established predictive validity of the new National Senior Certificate examination for university study (Ogude, Kilfoil and Du Plessis 2012). Thus, to further support this cohort, non-curricular support is provided through the services of a writing centre. This approach (curricular and non-curricular support) advertently encourages an experience of university which can be equated to the hero's journey – the concept of travelling into a foreign land, facing challenges with the assistance of helpers and returning wiser and more self-confident (O'Shea and Stone 2014). Like Campbell's metaphoric journey, the heroes in our narrative too traverse a number of steps and stages, encountering trials, tribulations and helpers in their quest to complete their higher education journey and emerge victorious.

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This research will thus aptly invoke Campbell's hero's journey metaphor as a theoretical lens through which we can view this journey. As opposed to focussing specifically on the student as hero, this study draws on *the role of the mentor* as expanded on by Vogler (2007) and attempts to draw parallels between metaphorical mentors and the real-life writing centre tutors that students encounter on their educational journeys. The tutor's role as mentor can best be identified and analysed by investigating the talk that takes place between tutors and students during writing centre consultations. Such a study, with implications for tutor training, as discussed later, may make a valuable contribution to supporting the diverse cohorts of students at South African public universities. For the majority of our students, already vastly disadvantaged on multiple fronts and part of a mass education setting, the time spent with a writing centre tutor may very well be the only time in the 'school' day that that students receives individualised one-on-one support. Writing tutors should be effectively trained to adopt the multiple roles to suit the needs of each individual student. This research will attempt to make a small contribution in that regard and perhaps open up opportunity for further contextualised research on such role adoption in the South African writing centre.

The study of tutor talk

The study of talk between writing tutor and student in the context of a writing centre has been the focus of a number of studies. These studies can be clustered around a few core themes: the directive/non-directive debate and/or tutor/student-centered conferences and/or tutor roles (Ashton-Jones 1988; Carino 2003; Truesdell 2007; Corbett 2015); scaffolded learning (Benko 2012; Thompson and Mackiewicz 2014); writing centre tutor training (North 1982; Santa 2009; Appleby-Ostroff 2017); collaboration (Clark 1988; Behm 1989; Harris 1992) and tutoring [1]NNS/[2]ESL speakers in writing centres (Harris and Silva 1993; Thonus 2014; Winder, Kathpalia and Koo 2016). The main focus has, however, been largely on the directive and non-directive debate with traditional experts advocating for a student-centred, as opposed to a teacher-centred, approach. While writing centre lore suggested that such tutoring was and should be Socratic, minimalist and non-directive, research evidence alludes to something quite the opposite. As experts questioned the then current practices, the need to critically evaluate our practices by looking closely at the talk that takes place during such interactions led writing centre practitioners to study this talk in interaction. The analysis revealed that contrary to writing centre lore, such tutoring was more directive than non-directive, that tutors adopted a largely 'teacherly' role as opposed to that of peer and that the institutional nature of writing centres led inevitably to a hierarchy of sorts during such interactions. Rambiritch and Carstens (2022) maintain that this power dynamic is inevitable, especially because the tutor may be seen as a representative of the institution, appointed to their position because of their excellent writing ability. Managing roles during a writing centre consultation is thus crucial for the success of the session.

Emerging views thus appealed for more flexible approaches to writing centre tutoring, encouraging those involved in writing centres to train their tutors to adopt a range of roles during interactions to accommodate the varying needs of a diverse student body, by moving smoothly through a continuum of tutor roles. This research will present a brief analysis of tutor-talk that takes place during writing centre consultations with a view to investigate the extent to which tutors adopt specific roles akin to the metaphorical mentor in Campbell's hero journey. The study of such talk and accompanying role adoption is important to better understand the contradictory role of peer-tutor (Trimbur 1987; Thonus 2001; Blau and Hall 2002; Carino 2003) and provide insight into

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1   Non-native speakers

2   English second language

whether tutors do indeed adopt different roles during consultations and whether they are able to balance these in relation to students' individual writing needs (Blau, Hall and Strauss 1988; Clark and Healy 1996; Thonus 2003; Morrison 2008; Appleby-Ostroff 2017). Secondly, the postgraduate students who generally staff writing centres are not always equipped with the skills and training to offer support effectively. We therefore argue that if tutors are to fulfil the role of mentor and guide the hero on their writing journey, they need to be aware of the roles and purpose of the metaphorical mentor, reflect on its relevance and application to consultations in the writing centre context and be able to balance or shift between roles to accommodate the individual needs of the student-hero. The aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which tutors assume Vogler's mentor roles during consultations to inform future tutor training practices. The next section of this paper will provide an overview of Campbell's hero's journey metaphor, followed by a review of the existing literature on tutor roles in writing centres.

Campbell's Hero's Journey

Widely considered 'one of the most influential books of the 20th century' (Vogler, 2007), Campbell's hero's journey metaphor has been applied across disciplines and narratives. For Vogler (2007), the theme of the hero myth is universal and occurs in every culture. At its most basic, the journey is one of separation-initiation-return (Randles 2012: 11; Robertson and Lawrence 2015: 267) but is best understood as a series of twelve steps or stages that the mythical hero with a thousand faces must undertake and overcome.

Figure 1: 12 steps of Campbell's Hero's Journey
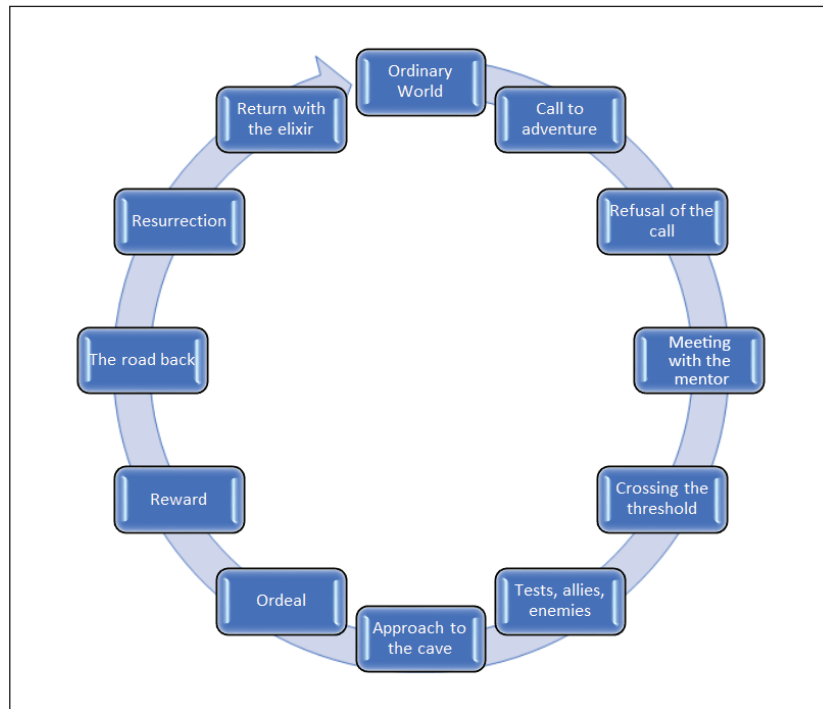
As depicted in Figure 1, the hero's journey begins in the Ordinary World from where they are called to adventure. The hero could refuse but will most likely heed the call to adventure and victory. As part of the journey the hero will meet mentors, helpers or protectors who can connect them with the resources needed to continue their journey (Robertson and Lawrence 2015: 268); supernatural aids who appear in times of great need (Lawson 2005: 136); a positive figure who aids and trains the hero (Vogler 2007: 39). Importantly, while the mentor can go far with the hero, the hero must inevitably face the unknown himself (Vogler 2007: 3). When our hero crosses the threshold into the special world, there is no turning back and they are compelled to see this to its end. Like all hero stories, there are tests, trials, challenges and enemies, a cave holding the golden sword or treasure, an ordeal to overcome and then, reward in hand, the hero embarks on his journey home, fights demons en route, emerges victorious and returns home golden sword, treasure or princess in hand.

This journey narrative has been applied across disciplines (see Lawson 2005; Kauffman 2019) as

a tool to understand the challenges of humanity in general, a mirror of the rites of passage existing across time and around the world (Robertson and Lawrence 2015: 267). Most often, however, it has been used in the field of education. Follo (2002) applied the metaphorical hero's journey to research on the perceptions on forestry of a group of female Norwegian students as a subject at school and as a possible career path. The research was especially significant because of the general under-representation of women in the forestry industry in Norway. In a largely qualitative study using semi-structured, in-depth interviews, Follo (2002: 296) concluded that the myth gives a 'coherent frame to the crucial elements of the female student's stories.' Goldstein (2005: 8), in a study with pre-service kindergarten teachers, offered the metaphor to her students 'as a powerful way to understand their field experiences and to explore their roles in those experiences.' Using her student essays and reflections as her primary sources of data, Goldstein analysed these to determine how her students applied the steps and stages to their own journey as pre-service teachers. Similarly, O'Shea and Stone (2014) analysed the stories of seven 'older women' who returned to education and used the metaphor of the hero's journey. They concluded that this metaphor provides an 'alternate' story by which to understand the student's role, that is, successful travellers as opposed to 'individuals pummelled by forces beyond their control' (2014: 89). Regalado et al. (2017) frame first-year students' experiences with the writing of a research essay in that of the hero's journey. Two librarians are introduced along the way as 'helpers and counsellors' who support the students in their journey. They found that the experience of applying the 'student-as-hero' metaphor was 'transformative' for students and librarians. By reflecting on their role as mentors in the students' research journey, librarians could (re)conceive the students' experiences at the institution and use the feedback to inform future library research instruction. Most significantly was their finding that this process encouraged students to communicate about their research journey and could, in future, use it as a frame with which to approach other writing they may engage in (Regalado, Georgas and Burgess 2017: 128).

In the context of higher education, our student-hero faces several trials and tribulations. From a literacy perspective, many of our students emerge from a disparate schooling system underprepared for the demands of higher education. The majority of students study in a language that is not their mother-tongue and they do not have the necessary literacy skills to navigate their studies successfully. Institutional discourse and pedagogical practices place these students at a disadvantage, as they are expected to acquire rhetorical knowledge and discursive resources necessary to participate in their respective disciplines with limited explicit instruction (Boughey and McKenna 2016; Lillis and Scott 2007). To succeed in higher education and beyond, students are faced with the challenges of

demonstrating their knowledge of disciplinary discourse conventions, developing and establishing their 'voice' within their disciplines and producing legitimate disciplinary arguments. Within this context, writing practices serve as a tool to control access to particular communities of knowledge – those who have knowledge of academic and disciplinary writing conventions and produce sound arguments are rewarded (Burke 2008; Clarence 2012; Drennan 2017). It is the task of mentors, helpers and protectors, in the form of lecturers, tutors, peers and the like, to help the student-hero overcome these challenges and come out victorious at the end of their education journey.

The monomyth of the hero's journey is thus ubiquitous (O'Shea and Stone 2014: 82), having been successfully applied to describe a number of life's challenges. The studies above investigated the value of the application of the metaphor for the *hero* – the student, but Regalado et al.'s (2017) findings showed that the metaphor also proved to be informative and fulfilling for the librarians in their role as *mentor*. It follows that there is merit in analysing the functions fulfilled by the mentor in the hero's journey, particularly as it could provide insight into improving and refining the assistance and guidance offered during the course of the journey. There is, however, a definite lack of research on individual steps or stages of this journey and on the application of this metaphor to the context of a writing centre. This research will therefore attempt to address this gap by focussing specifically on role of the mentor in the hero's journey as outlined by Vogler (2007) within the writing centre context. Campbell's mentor, 'is the archetype expressed in those characters who teach [specific skills] and protect heroes and give them gifts' (Vogler 2007: 39, 45). These could be writing resources, or advice on student counselling, or other support structures. Importantly these could also be more abstract gifts; that is, lessons, advice and explanations that help demystify the discipline or the entire higher education experience. The mentor is a function, not a set character type; thus, the hero may encounter multiple mentors who express different functions of the archetype. The mentors are often former heroes who have survived life's early trials and now pass on the gift of their knowledge and wisdom (Vogler 2007: 40) and therefore represent the hero's highest aspirations – what they may become if they persist on the Road of Heroes. In the context of the writing centre, the writing tutors are the multiple mentors who teach the hero specific skills and present the gifts necessary to help them overcome the writing-related trials and tribulations they will encounter on their academic journey. Vogler (2007: 120) explains that the names *Mentes* and *Mentor*, along with the word 'mental', stem from the Greek word for mind, *menos*. He states that mentors in stories strengthen the hero's mind to face an ordeal with confidence (2007: 120). Similarly, the tutor works towards building the student's confidence in their ability to navigate the complex and challenging task of producing appropriate written texts within their field of study.

This study will therefore focus on Vogler's (2007) mentor roles and their respective functions (see Table 1). This is relevant to this study, as the writing centre tutors are one of many advisors, helpers and mentors that first-year students encounter at our institution. More importantly, however, is to determine whether our writing centre tutors, during the course of a single consultation, fulfil the multiple mentor roles necessary to assist students on their academic writing journey.

Table 1: Vogler's mentor functions and roles

Mentor Roles	Function
teacher	teaching or training the hero
gift-giving	helps the hero by giving them a magic weapon, key or clue, piece of advice (that may save their life)
inventor	the gifts in the form of devices, designs and inventions
motivator	reassures and motivates the hero, helps them overcome fear
planter	provides advice or information that will become helpful later on

In one of the few studies focussing on the role of the mentor, Putri (2018: 647) conducted a textual analysis of Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Horse and His Boy* in an effort to determine the 'influence of the mentor to the hero in completing his journey'. Invoking Vogler's (2007) theory of mentor character archetypes the study found that the mentor positively influenced aspects of the hero's journey and that the 'types and roles of mentors she identified in her study can also be found in real life where people find these characteristics in the figure who guides or trains them throughout their life' (Putri 2018: 660). Both Vogler (2007) and Putri (2018) allude to the extended time a mentor may spend with the hero. This may not always apply in the case of the student and the writing centre tutor. While students are encouraged to forge a long-term relationship with the writing centre, writing centre practitioners still hold true to North's (1984) adage that we should create better writers, not just better writing. What this means in practice is that while the writing centre supports students in their writing journey, the centre should not become a crutch to the student; that the aim is that the student improves and develops until they are no longer dependant on the writing centre. Thus, it is not unusual for a tutor to see a student just once, or a few times only. This limited contact makes it even more important that the tutor guide, advise and motivate

the student effectively so that what is learnt during a consultation is applied to other writing the student engages in. To better understand the link between the roles of the metaphorical mentor and the writing tutor, the next section focusses on the role of the tutor as outlined in the writing centre literature.

Tutor roles

The contradictory nature of the peer-tutor role has long plagued writing centre experts (Trimbur 1987; Thonus 2001; Blau and Hall 2002; Carino 2003). As a start, the oxymoron 'peer-tutor' is in itself problematic, because the tutor's success as a writer, their appointment as a 'tutor' by the institution and the institutional power inherent in that relationship (Trimbur 1987: 24) sets the terms 'peer' and 'tutor' and the peer-tutoring relationship 'at odds' (24). This creates cognitive dissonance by asking tutors to be two things at once – to play what appear to them to be mutually exclusive roles (24). The ideal, he states, would be for tutors to juggle roles, to shift identify, to know when to act like an expert and when to act like a co-learner (25); to walk the fine line between teacher and peer, hierarchy and collaboration, creating a new, more flexible model for writing center tutoring (Blau, Hall and Strauss 1988; Clark and Healy 1996; Thonus 2003; Morrison 2008; Appleby-Ostroff 2017) and to acknowledge that 'tutor' is not a sharply-defined role, but a continuum of roles stretching from teacher to peer, negotiated anew in each tutorial (Thonus 2001: 61). The question that remains, however, is whether tutors *are* balancing roles and if they are, what are these roles and how does the (cognitive-affective) talk during writing centre interactions influence these. Most commonly accepted tutor roles are those of tutor as peer and tutor as teacher. Early literature, often considered 'lore' and based on anecdotal evidence and early tutor training manuals, advocated for the tutor as peer who collaborated, listened and guided through probing questions. Studies of actual tutorial interactions provided evidence of quite the opposite – that tutors were more 'teacherly' (see Thonus 2001: 61; Rambiritch and Carstens 2022) and directive, with experts advising that writing tutors be trained to adopt a range of roles.

A number of effective metaphors have been used to describe and define these tutor roles. In terms of the 'teacher' role, Harris (1986: 35) posits that teachers have wardrobes of 'hats', changing these frequently in the course of an interaction. She identifies five roles teachers adopt in one-on-one interactions: coach, commentator, counsellor, listener and diagnostician. While Harris' roles are valuable and attest to the multiple roles teachers play as part of their teaching, the main

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difference here is the role of the teacher in the classroom (which Harris refers to) and the role of the writing centre tutor (our focus). While teachers may don multiple 'hats', their role is restricted to that of teacher.

Lee, Hong and Choi's study (2017) explored tutor, student and instructor perceptions of tutor roles. Their review revealed three possible roles (145): **academic,** which involve pedagogical and intellectual responsibilities, directing, coaching cognitive activities, feedback; **managerial,** involving social, administration, organisation and sometimes pastoral care and **technical** that are specific to technology-based learning. Their findings indicate that perceptions between tutors, students and instructors differ in respect of tutor roles. The students and tutors believed that tutors should primarily provide academic and managerial support, but the instructors perceived the tutor's primary role as providing technical support (152). The researchers point out that although the instructors acknowledged that academic support was an important part of the tutor's role, the instructors and tutors had different definitions of academic tutoring (152). Overall Lee, Hong and Choi declare that the tutoring arrangement in this study was not successful as it did not bring the tutor and student 'closer' (153). The roles identified here are also not applicable to our study, which

attempts to identify distinct roles and not categories. Thonus (2001) also investigated perceptions of tutor roles. She maintains that little unanimity exists in perceptions of the tutor role by the members of the tutorial 'triangle' (tutor, tutee, instructor) (61). Her findings indicate that instructors viewed tutors as their 'surrogates'; tutors saw themselves as *'colleague'* pedagogues, thus viewing the instructor as their peer and not the tutee, while students viewed tutors as different from instructors but less authoritative (2001: 71). In a similar perception study, Abbot, Graf and Chatfield (2018) found that tutors perceived themselves not only to be writing coaches and class discussants, but also liaisons, intermediaries and connectors, linking the world of professor and student (251). Carstens and Rambiritch (2020), in discussing the main theories and sub-theories associated writing centre models, identified tutor roles that align with approach. Additional roles they identified include tutor as: remedial teacher, who focusses on correcting student papers; lawyer, who listens and asks questions: quality controller, who instructs and evaluates; and activist, who encourages students to speak freely and to resist and contest the status quo (Carstens and Rambiritch 2020: 6).

Over the years, the tutor role has extended from peer-tutor and teacher, to coach, collaborator, commentator, counsellor, diagnostician, lawyer, remedial teacher, quality controller and activist. While some of these roles overlap in some research, others are specific to each study and context. What we note, however, is that not enough research pertaining to tutor roles has looked closely

at tutor talk during writing centre interactions. Thonus (2001: 77) maintains that often tutors are themselves unaware of how they play out their actual roles and importantly that the tutor's role must be redefined and renegotiated in each interaction. This research will, as a starting point, invoke Campbell's hero's journey metaphor and Vogler's (2007) mentor types as a theoretical lens through which we can view the continuum of roles that writing centre tutors assume.

Methodology

The research methodology underlying the design of this study is qualitative. A detailed qualitative content analysis was first undertaken in an effort to interrogate writing centre literature to identify key themes. The study takes a case-study approach within a socio-constructivist ontology wherein knowledge is socially created through interactions with others. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023) defines case study research as 'a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest' (302). This definition succinctly captures our research aim, which is to investigate the extent to which tutors fulfil mentor roles during consultations with students. A case study approach is most applicable, as it allowed us to analyse a number of individual cases (writing consultations), captured in the same setting for the same purpose (writing centre), that represent the general consultation service offered by the writing centre.

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Data collection

Data was gathered through video recording 10 writing centre consultations with undergraduate visitors to the writing centre who sought assistance with their (academic) writing. The video data was transcribed by a professional transcription company using the transcription symbols adapted largely from those developed by Jefferson (1984) as adapted by Seedhouse (2005). Although the main focus of this study is specifically tutor talk, the turns of the student were transcribed as well, but only the tutor turns will be analysed here.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select cases for analysis, as it was necessary that our sample comprise undergraduate visitors to the writing centre. The reasons for this is that this is representative of the student cohort utilising the services of the writing centre. All students in this sample were in their first year of study. There were two female and one male tutor, ranging between 20 and 55 years in age, with varying levels of qualifications and tutor experience. Both tutors and students were a good representation of the tutor and student dynamics at the institution.

Data analysis

Once the data had been transcribed and verified for its correctness, data-analysis began. This comprised two steps. The first-order, qualitative analysis of the existing research on writing centre consultations allowed us to identify possible coding categories. An interrogation of writing centre literature revealed two possible categories (directive/non-directive and Higher Order Concerns/ Lower Order Concerns). One further category was included to provide further information on the purpose/focus of the interaction, that is Cognitive or Affective, thus leading to the sub-category: cognitive-affective. Mention must be made here of the fact that tutor turns could not be read and coded in isolation, as student responses impact on tutor responses, and ultimately on the codes. Once all the data was coded, Atlas.ti 7, a qualitative computer data analysis program, was used to assist researchers analyse the coded data and identify recurring themes that may or may not align with current writing centre literature. Transcripts for all ten consultations were uploaded to Atlas ti 7. Once fully coded, the program generated documents according to specific codes as requested by us. For the purpose of this study, we focussed on the output documents generated for the code cognitive-affective, given its relevance to our analysis of the function or purpose of tutor turns as they assume specific roles. The results of the analysis of the other two categories are available in a previous publication (Rambiritch and Carstens 2022). The cognitive-effective quotations were then coded according to the mentor roles identified by Vogler (2007), which were adapted slightly to align with the focus on academic writing.

Findings and discussion

In total, we identified 304 cognitive-affective quotations. Of these, 300 could be coded according to Vogler's mentor roles. Figure 2 reflects the frequency of quotations per mentor role category, illustrating how tutors assume different roles and move between a continuum of these during the consulting process. The findings for each mentor role are discussed separately below.

Figure 2: Mentor roles and number of quotations per category
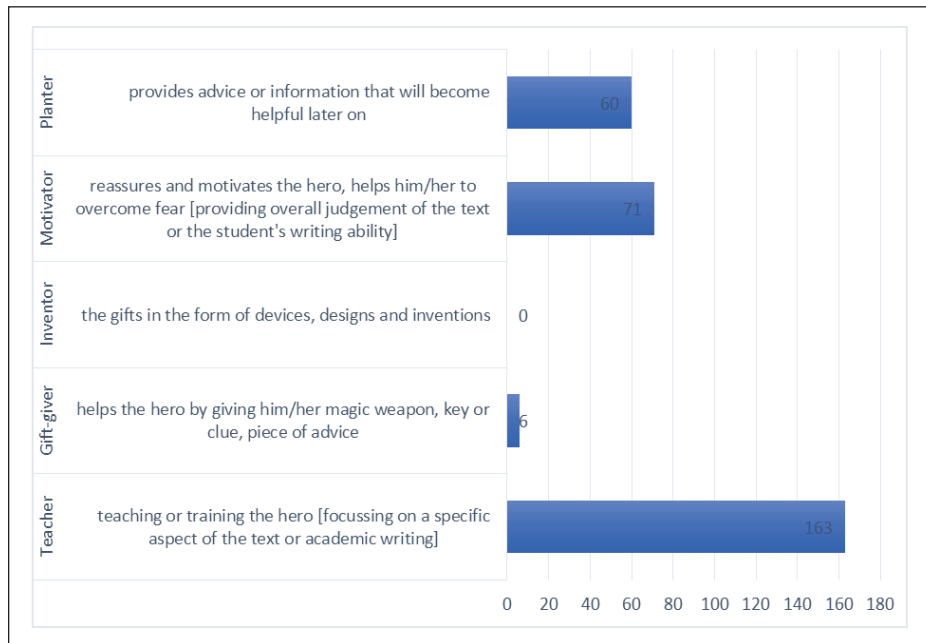
Planter (planting)

One function of the mentor archetype is to *plant* information or a prop that will become important later on in the hero's journey (Vogler 2007: 43). In the context of the writing centre, we understand this as the tutor providing invaluable advice, clues and strategies to the student that they will use later on. This is not limited to the conventions of academic writing, but incudes any information that can be used to 'survive the trials' of higher education. In keeping with the traditional definition

of a planter as someone who 'cultivates' [plants] (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2023: n.p.) or, in the case of the writing centre, cultivates academic writing skills; statements that saw the tutor use creative analogies/metaphors to describe and explain the process of academic writing were clustered in this category too. This is because these creative explanations were new and novel, enriched traditional explanations and descriptions and attempted to plant or sow knowledge that could be remembered and applied to other texts the student may write. Incidentally, a number of these quotations related directly to plants and planting.

Excerpt 1: Video 00064

Tutor turn	Dialogue	Purpose/Function
122	Yes. To catch that fish!	Explaining the hook in the introduction
230	So. Your introduction is like a seed. Everything is there. And now (.) it blossoms and grows in your body and then in your conclusion we harvest it.	Explaining the introduction
226	So. An essay is like um a TV series, but there's one difference. We tell them who the murderer is right (.) at (.) the beginning. (laughter)	Stating the thesis statement and standpoint in the introduction
310	Okay. And can you see that that is a launch pad?	Explaining the introduction

Excerpt 2: Video 0002/0003

Tutor turn	Dialogue	Purpose/Function
356	You plant that mieliepit, (.) you get (.) a beautiful, strong mielie plant (.) with (.) the stalk (.) as the main idea.	Explanation of the thesis statement
364	And then you will reach your conclusion? and you will have a fruitful (2s) harvest.	Explanation of the structure of the essay and its narrowing to the conclusion

Motivator (motivating)

This was the category with the second highest number of quotations. Vogler's (2007) Motivator *reassures and motivates the hero and helps them overcome fear.* McKiewicz and Thompson (2013: 38) state that motivation, which is the drive to actively invest in sustained effort toward a goal, is essential for writing improvement, while Kirchhoff (2016) states that motivation is one of the most important incentives of human behaviour that guarantee higher performance in any field. The aspect of motivation, though prevalent in educational studies and in studies focusing on writing in general, has not been a large focus in writing centres. One of the few studies by McKiewicz and Thompson (2013) focuses rather on motivational scaffolding and the politeness strategies that tutors use to assist students to participate in the dialogue. In the Kirchhoff (2016) study, the researcher uses her own personal experiences as a peer tutor at a writing centre to highlight the importance of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) for the evaluation of students' motivational levels. In politeness studies, the strategy of motivation and encouragement are synonymous (see McKiewicz and Thompson 2013). Thus, our tutor talk that included elements of motivation and encouragement were clustered under the role of Motivator. While a number of research articles discuss praise and encouragement together (McKiewicz and Thompson 2013), we have chosen to separate them. This is because our findings indicate that praise was specifically related to the text that was the focus of the consultation (Rambiritch and Carstens 2022); thus, praise statements were coded under the role of Teacher, while encouragement related to the student's attitude, future actions and overall writing ability as well and therefore clustered under Motivator. The comments in this category saw tutors' attempts to build confidence, motivate and encourage the new writer on their journey.

Excerpt 4: 'Motivating' tutor turns

Video/Tutor turn	Dialogue
00000/253	And I just want to encourage you (.) to keep doing that.
00005/583	And… And if you can do creat- and if you write creatively (.) you will be able to do this
	Go and save the princess.
00069/	It's good, it's a good process and keep on doing that it's really good practice. Hmm. (nods)

0048/191	But (.) I'm actually (.) li- I must say I really (2s) was impressed with your writing style because (.) um (.) the more (.) clearly someone can write about their own research topic the more it shows that they understand what they're talking about.
0048/199	Ja. (nods) So. Um. I'm I'm actually really happy with the way you write and the language that you've used.
0064/224	Wonderful, I'm so glad that you can see that for yourself. (laughter).
0069/283	So:. Just be weary of those, but ja I definitely think you're on your way to becoming a good writer.
0069/283	Bu:t if someone writes in a concise way like this, and kind of interprets the um (2s) the: (2s) the evidence, I think it's very good way of writing so ja keep on doing that.

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Teacher or trainer (teaching or training)

The role of teacher saw the highest number of quotations. This aligns closely with the writing centre research. Numerous studies have found that the writing centre tutor is more often directive and 'teacherly' (Thonus 2001) and while earlier research (lore) argued vehemently against this, later evidence-based research argued that the non-directive, non-teacherly stance may not resonate with all students (Shamoon and Burns 2001). As alluded to in the introduction, what is needed is a balance of roles and a measure of flexibility in approach on the part of the tutor. Importantly, the tutor must be guided by the needs of the student and, should a student need direct teaching and training, then these needs should ideally be met. Many of our students are first-generation university students. While the demographic information on participants indicates that 6 out of the 10 students speak English as their first/home language, this may not be the case. Given the majority of students in South Africa are non-mother-tongue speakers of English, it is highly likely that the language of these students in which they studied at school has been equated with their home language. Additionally, engaging in academic writing for any first-year student is new and daunting. These consultations took place between March and September of the academic year. Students would either have either no academic literacy and/or writing support, only one semester

of such support (in Semester 1), or would have been in the process of completing a semester of such support (during Semester 2). This may have required the tutors to teach and train during these very early visits to the writing centre.

The tutor talk in this category illustrates the teaching and learning processes of instruction (teaching principles of academic writing), responding to students' questions and/or requests for confirmation/clarification, as well as feedback on students' writing.

Excerpt 5: 'Teaching' tutor turns

Video/Tutor turn	Dialogue	Purpose/Function
Teaching a principle or rule of academic writing		
0065/160	One (.) idea per sentence. Keep it at one. (laughter)	Explaining the rule of one idea per paragraph
0064/156	(nods and writes) Yes. Number one you have to say exactly what you are talking about? So take another colour, please. And highlight (.) your thesis statement.	Explaining the function of a thesis statement
0064/258–266	Okay? And that stick (.) is your thesis {statement.} (262) So you need to (.) hold that (.) sticky in mind (.) all the time. So if you have a, um a meat kebab a meat sosatie, you have a a little piece of bee:f and then you have a piece of red pepper you know? (264) And then you have a piece of green pepper, okay and then you have your next bite. You have your little piece of mea:t and you have a… (266) (laughter) And now, this shows you your paragraphs.	Explaining paragraph formulation

0044/50	Right? So (..) But (.) for the introduction you want that kind of (.) strong lead into (.) what am I reading? What is going to be the point of this. (nods)	Explaining the function of the introduction
Responding to questions and/or requests for confirmation/clarification		
00009/306	Mm:. No. I think it's okay. 'Cause you're quoting the person (.) um: (.) You're not introducing a new idea.	Confirming whether the student quoted correctly
0057/276	Ja, that's fine. That's fine. Ja, you did it right.	Confirming whether the student quoted correctly
0070/75	Even if it's in your own words, even if it's someone else's idea (.) that you used? You need to reference it. Just to be safe.	Clarifying when to include references
Commenting on students' writing		
00006/476	And it shows. Like, I can see that (.) there is (.) clear flow of ideas.	Commenting on cohesion in the text
00007/23	Okay. (3s) This is a v- (.) it's a good introduction. I see there's a thesis statement (.) and then there's some background information. That's really good. (smiles) Né?	Praising the student's introductory paragraph formulation
	Okay. This is a ve:ry good topic sentence.	Praising the student's topic sentence formulation
0048/197	Then that's (.) it really does show that you have a clear understanding of (.) of what you want to discuss.	Praising the student's thesis statement
00000/?	So I can already tell then from (holds up both hands) this first glance that you understand like what needs to be in your introduction	Praising the student's introductory paragraph
0007/23	I see there's a thesis stateme:nt (.) and then there's some background information	Commenting on the student's introduction

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Gift-giver (gift-giving)

Vogler's gift-giving (gift-giver) helps the hero by giving them a magic weapon, key or clue, piece of advice that may save their life or, in the case of this study, their academic writing. This is not a role found anywhere in writing centre literature. In interpreting this role within the context of the writing centre, the gift-giver becomes the tutor who shares advice, tips and strategies (like the stok-sweet) with the student, often speaking as the tutor or senior student and *not* the teacher. The role of gift-giver was used very sparingly – only 6 out of 300 statements were coded as such and only one tutor made such statements: 5 in Video 00064/00065 and 1 in Video 00004/0005. The actual act of giving was found in only one instance (see Excerpt 6) where the tutor left the writing centre to get her cellphone to be able to email a list of cohesive devices that the student could use (Video 000064/000065) – a valuable resource for any student.

Excerpt 6: Video 0064/0065

Tutor turn	Dialogue	Purpose/ Function
33	Okay now. We need those linking words and that is why I actually need (.) and I'm going to run. I'm just going to get my cell phone because I've got it on my cell phone, and (.) you need to know about that. Hallelujah. (Tutor leaves the room for 20 seconds, from 03:08 to 03: 28)	Explaining the structure of an essay

The excerpt below shows other comments that offer valuable advice and information. In the first quote above, the use of the word 'they' is telling, with the tutor showing solidarity with the student and providing advice that will be valuable whenever the student is engaging in academic writing. This piece of advice resonates with the advice given by North (1984) that the aim of such tutoring should be to improve the writer and not just the writing. The same is true for the second quotation where the tutor in question *'arms'* the student with advice. In the case of turn 287, the 'stok-sweet' and 'kebab' references, classified earlier as evidence of 'planting', could also be viewed as gifts – a key that could 'save' students in their academic writing journeys. There could thus be some overlap of what could be considered evidence of different mentor roles.

Excerpt 6: Video 0064/0065

Tutor turn	Dialogue
214	At university they want us to be brave (.) right from the very beginning you stake your (.) claim.
287	So with your, with your brave little stok um woman, eating a kebab, you will be well armed.

These 'gift-giver' statements differ from those of the Teacher, which focused specifically on teaching or commenting on a particular aspect of academic writing, such as those in the excerpt below. The statement in video 0001 is another example of a potential overlap of the 'gift-giver' and 'teacher' roles, as it may also be perceived as evidence of praise.

Excerpt 7

Video/Tutor turn	Dialogue
00000/136	So here you're giving a good background.
0001/50	Your references look (.) look um (.) proper as well.

## Inventor (Inventing)

Once again, this is not a category referenced in any of the literature or one utilised by our tutors. Vogler's (2007) Inventor *gives the gifts in the form of devices, designs and inventions*. The Inventor then is closely related to the gift-giver with the difference being the kind/type of gift. One is in the form of devices, designs and inventions and the other is a magic weapon, key or clue, or piece of advice. In the context of the writing centre, the latter will be more applicable: key, clue or piece of advice, often based on a tutor's knowledge and experience. Vogler (2007: 42) points out that the Inventor is a role that occurs 'sometimes' (Vogler 2007: 42), while the gift-giving is an important part

of the mentor function (40), suggesting that the Inventor function will not always be fulfilled, as is evidenced by our findings.

The findings indicated in Figure 2 provide a clear indication that Vogler's mentor roles can be applied to tutor talk in a writing centre. Importantly, however, is how we use this information to improve our offering. Figure 3 illustrates the mentor roles adopted the individual tutors across their consultations. According to our analysis, RA adopted 4 different roles: Teacher, Planter, Motivator and Gift-giver, while JE and SS adopted 3 different roles: Teacher, Motivator and Planter.

Figure 3: Mentor roles per tutor
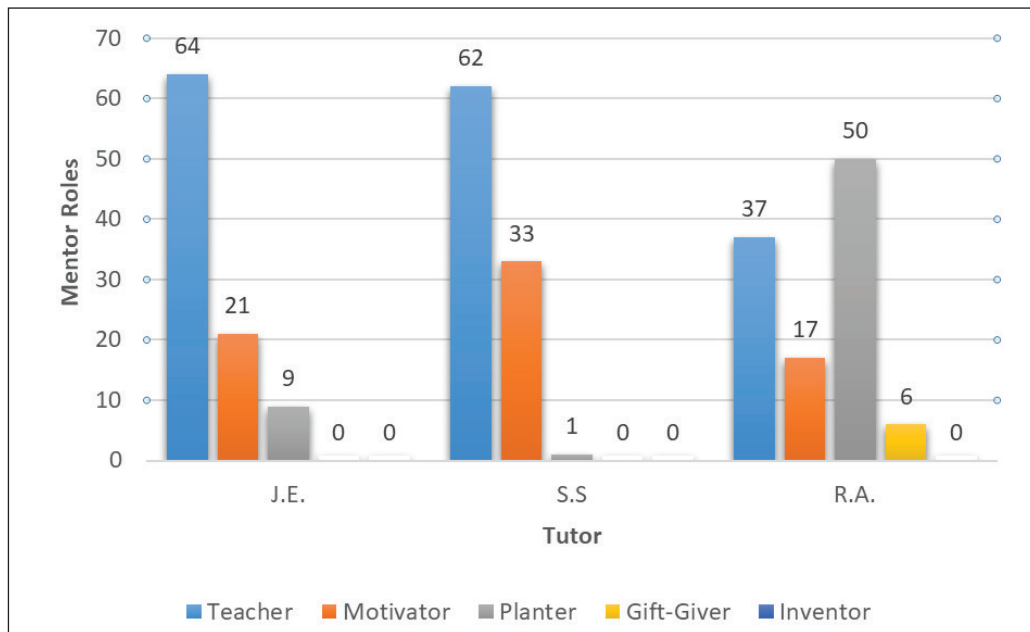
SS's consultations were dominated primarily by the roles of Teacher and Motivator. The role of Planter was adopted only once. One of the reasons for this could be that he was still an undergraduate student and had limited academic writing and consulting experience in academic writing. RA and JE had considerably more experience in the writing centre, had undergone more intensive training than SS, taught academic literacy and other modules in addition to consulting in

the writing centre and were postgraduate students with sufficient experience in academic writing. This extended experience would have built their confidence to explore a variety of consulting strategies and share valuable resources, tips and clues. Only RA adopted the Planter role more than that of the Teacher – this finding was not surprising as she is a RA is a middle-aged female whose teaching and mentoring style is much more nurturing than younger tutors.

Conclusion

Ideally, according to the literature, tutors should remain flexible and adopt a range of roles. In so doing, they will be less likely tempted to adopt only the role of Teacher, exploiting only directive tutoring. Thonus (2001: 77) maintains that often tutors are themselves unaware of how they play out their actual roles and, importantly, that the tutor's role must be redefined and renegotiated in each interaction. While the role of Teacher still dominates our consultations, it is heartening to see that tutors do make an effort to use other strategies and adopt other roles. If tutors are themselves unaware of the roles they adopt during consulting, as maintained by Thonus (2001: 77), it might be advisable that such roles as identified in the literature, as well as those exploited in this study, be introduced to tutors during their training. We share the table below as one possible way to apply the roles identified here, to the training of writing tutors. We acknowledge, too, that such application cannot be done blindly across all writing centres. Key to effective training is the need to first conduct context-specific research which can then inform training practices.

Training Opportunities/Possibilities

Mentor Roles	Function	Considerations for the writing tutor
Teacher	Teaching or training the hero	1. It is important to gauge the students' level of literacy/writing proficiency to determine how much 'teaching' is necessary. While a session that is primarily teacher-centered, where the tutor lectures and the student is a passive recipient of information, may not always be effective nor conducive to developing better writers, the writing tutor needs to engage sufficiently with the student to determine their writing needs. 2. Ideally, the tutor should maintain a balance between student-centered facilitation and teaching opportunities in a session. 3. An important aspect of the 'teacher' role is praise. Tutors should encourage students by proving positive feedback on aspects that were executed well as opposed to only identifying problems and errors in students' texts. 4. Provide sufficient and effective feedback to students. This should include reference to errors/weaknesses/gaps, explanations of why these are incorrect, as well as advise on how to rectify such errors (see Rambiritch and Carstens 2022).

Mentor Roles	Function	Considerations for the writing tutor
Gift-giver	Helps the hero by giving them a magic weapon, key or clue, piece of advice (that may save their life)	1. Although there may be some overlap between 'gift-giving' and planting', 'gifts' in this sense may include advice that a tutor can offer as a fellow writer, peer or member of the academy. For example, the tutor may have insight into the discourse rules and expectations of a particular discipline or have knowledge of institutional policies and practices that are important for the student to understand in relation to tasks and assignments. 2. Tutors should reflect on their own writing journeys and the process involved in overcoming the challenges they faced when confronted with unfamiliar and nuanced writing conventions. Such exercises are useful in identifying key strategies and approaches that may be conveyed to students during consultations. Sharing their experiences and challenges with students (solidarity in writing centre speak, see Rambiritch and Carstens 2021), may motivate students into adopting such strategies and approaches.

Mentor Roles	Function	Considerations for the writing tutor
Inventor	Provides gifts in the form of devices, designs and inventions	1. Tutors who understand and are proficient in specific disciplinary discourses and practices may be able to give students a 'recipe' that could be applied to future tasks and assignments. For example, Law courses require students to follow a particular pattern when formulating a response to discussion questions in examinations – first they discuss the Issue, then the Rule, followed by the Application and finally the Conclusion (IRAC). Knowledge of such 'recipes' are essential for students' formulation of successful responses in examinations (Hinchliffe). 2. Tutors from specific disciplines can also help students understand what constitutes 'evidence' to support and develop arguments in their writing.
Motivator	Reassures and motivates the hero, helps them overcome fear	1. To help students overcome writing anxiety and build their confidence as writers, tutors should make an asserted effort to encourage students by identifying areas where they have improved as writers. 2. Tutors should work towards building a relationship with individual students and encourage them to frequent the writing centre so that the tutor can track students' writing progress and development. 2. Showing solidarity (see point above) will also help solidify this relationship.

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Mentor Roles	Function	Considerations for the writing tutor
Planter	Provides advice or information that will become helpful later on	1. Tutors should be encouraged to use a variety of strategies, tips and/or metaphors to facilitate students' understanding of key writing aspects. Some examples include the PIE (point, information, explanation) structure to facilitate better paragraph and argument formulation; thesis statement formulation (topic + commentary = thesis statement); introductory paragraph formulation ('hooking a fish'); basic essay structure (stick-man metaphor), etc. 2. Experienced tutors could be required to source, share and discuss strategies and tips during training sessions to create a bank of 'resources' that can be used during consultation sessions.

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It must be noted too that should such a table be exploited during a training programme, it should be accompanied by effective examples and excerpts from actual consultations to give tutors a clear and accurate picture of these roles and their respective functions. It must be remembered, however, that while writing centre administrators and directors can train tutors by introducing them to a number of effective strategies, the strategies a tutor adopts is ultimately guided by their personal preference, personality and experience. Adopting roles and strategies that a tutor is uncomfortable with or inexperienced in, may unfortunately have more negative than positive outcomes.

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