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Pedagogy In Practice:
Questioning Personal Tutoring
Katie Willocks, Ruth Browning
and Kaz Stuart
6th June 2018

Initial Questions

What does personal tutoring look like in BLPSS and HPSS?

- How do lecturers use personal tutoring?
- Does personal tutoring support employability?
- How is personal tutoring arranged and practiced?
- What issues are there in personal tutoring?
- Does practice reflect policy?

Method

- Action research in that we aim to improve practice at UoC
- Semi structured interviews with 15 staff
- IRF funds for transcription – 200 pages of data
- Initial inductive thematic analysis
- Secondary analysis using activity theory deductively
- Tertiary analysis to draw out assessment relevant data
- Comparison to key literature

Key Messages from the Literature

- The personal tutor role is multifaceted (Small, 2013)
- Personal tutors are required to perform the roles of exemplar, motivator, counsellor and mentor (Harris et al, 2000)
- Personal tutoring can be therapeutic in nature, providing a safe setting where students can express concerns authentically (Warne and McAndrew, 2008).
- Personal tutors are seen as an essential element of academic support (Quality Assurance agency for Higher Education, 2014)
- There is a lack of up to date research into both academic staff and students views about personal tutoring processes.

Key Assessment Related Themes

Helping students to stay on track with assessments:

P1: Things have evolved. I know more or less where they are. Erm, I just do what other people do - checking modules, **making sure they know when the assessments are**

Key times to support students with assessment:

P1: Erm, it would normally be, erm, just before the **final year** assessment

P7: On **placement**, that we have to get, fill out these self-assessment forms and then we've got to meet with them to go through the self-assessment forms

P13: Particularly busy or we, you know, or, you know, a number of students will hit real crisis around **assessment time** and then you know, it becomes unmanageable.

Support is given for different types of assessment:

P7: On placement, that we have to get, fill out these **self-assessment** forms and then we've got to meet with them to go through the self-assessment forms

P7: Erm, not that I can think of specifically. Er, one of the first years. One of my first year's, er Personal Tutees from this year. We mark their **formative assessments** for the first module which is like study skills

Inform students about assessment processes:

P7: So they don't always know about intercalation. They don't know about different options like deferring assessments, assessment contracts

Potential role conflict with personal tutors, module leaders and wider professional services:

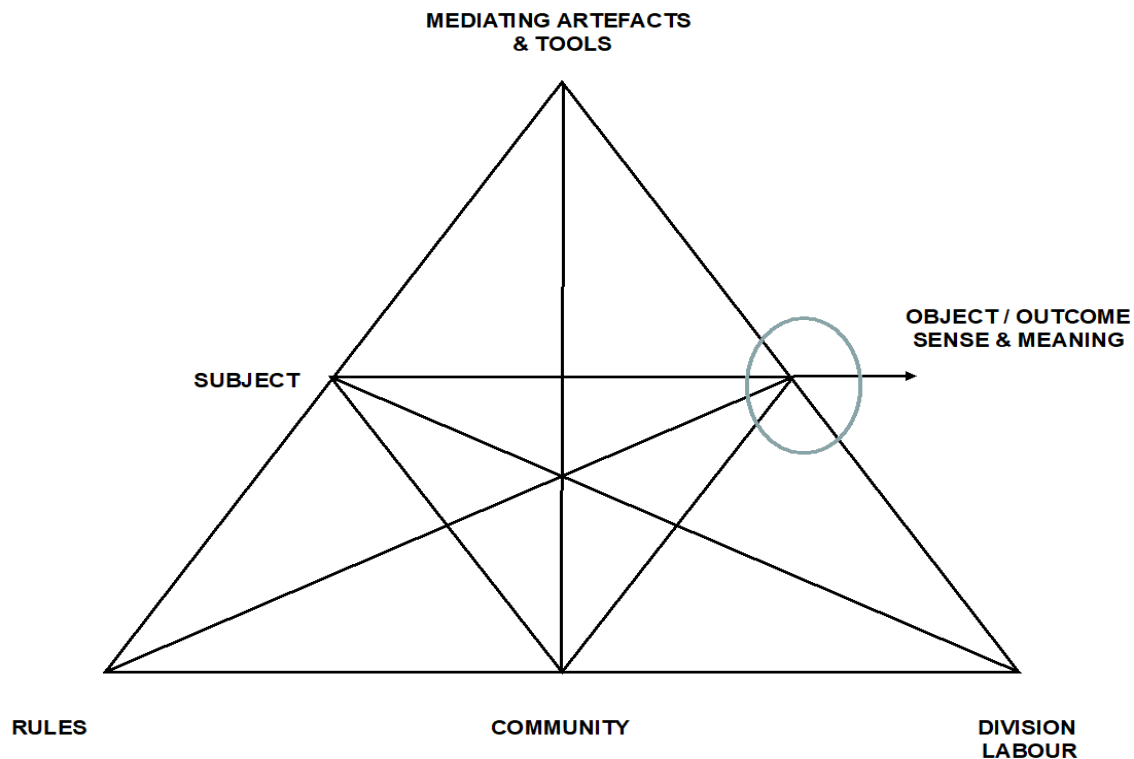
P13: But also in terms of colleagues who aren't Personal Tutors. I know one of the issues we've got is that colleagues in some of the professional services, like, as you suggested, feeling that they haven't got sufficient access to the Personal Tutor system to know, you know, "**can I refer this student back. How do I refer this student on**"? "How do I hook up"?

Time pressure supporting student assessment needs in personal tutor sessions:

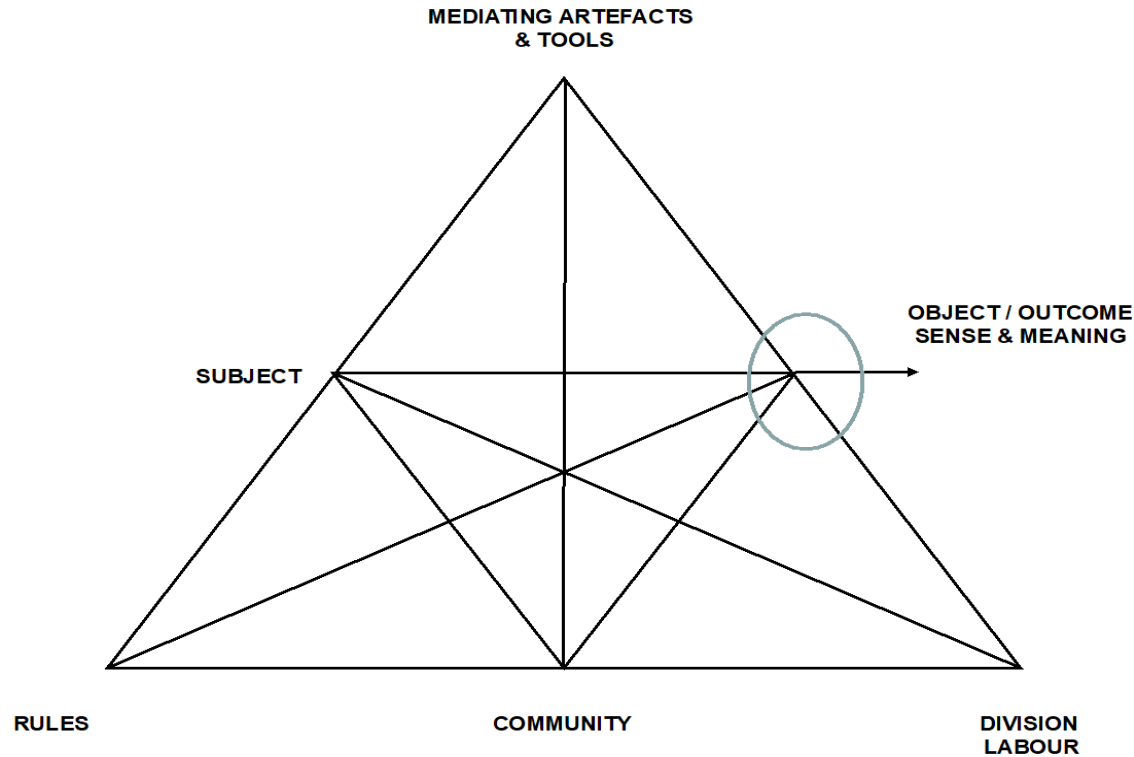
P14: It's not the ideal year for it because really **our focus is meant to be** assessment

P11: I think another issue is workload and how staff fit it in, I hear that there is not enough time with 2 hours a year per student

Activity Theory Model



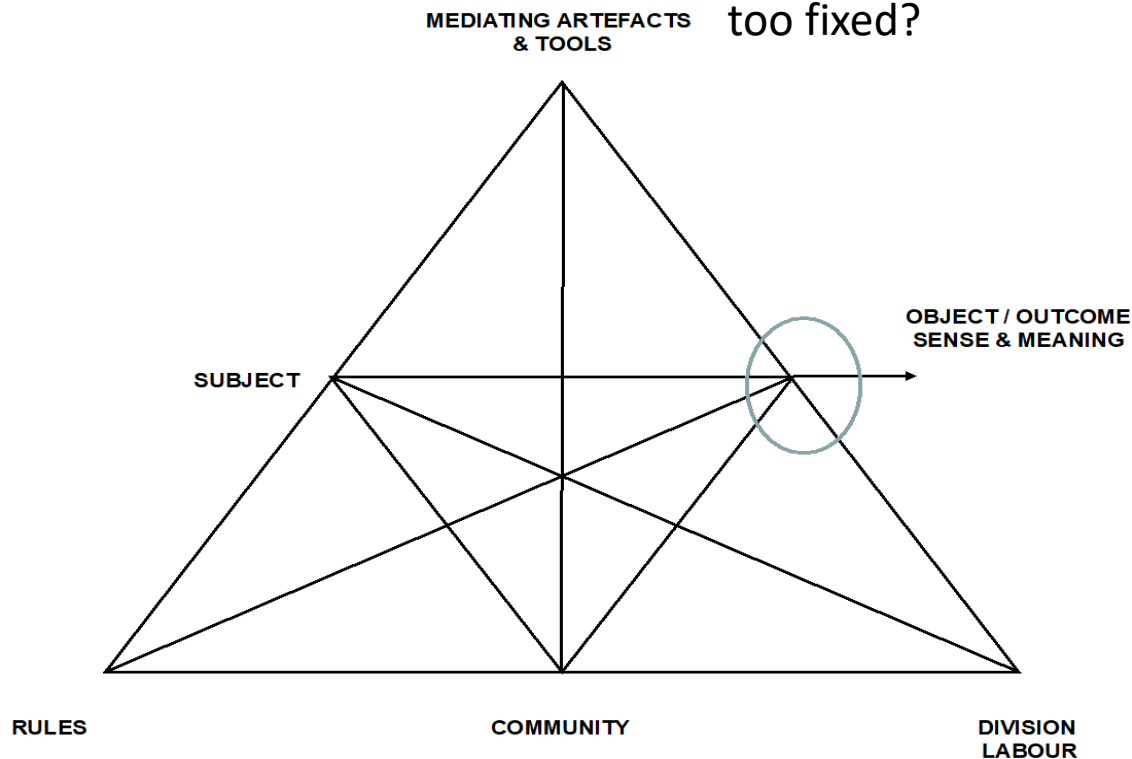
Activity Theory Model



Improving attainment.

Activity Theory Model

Highly varied tools –
differentiation? Or
loss of focus? Or
too fixed?

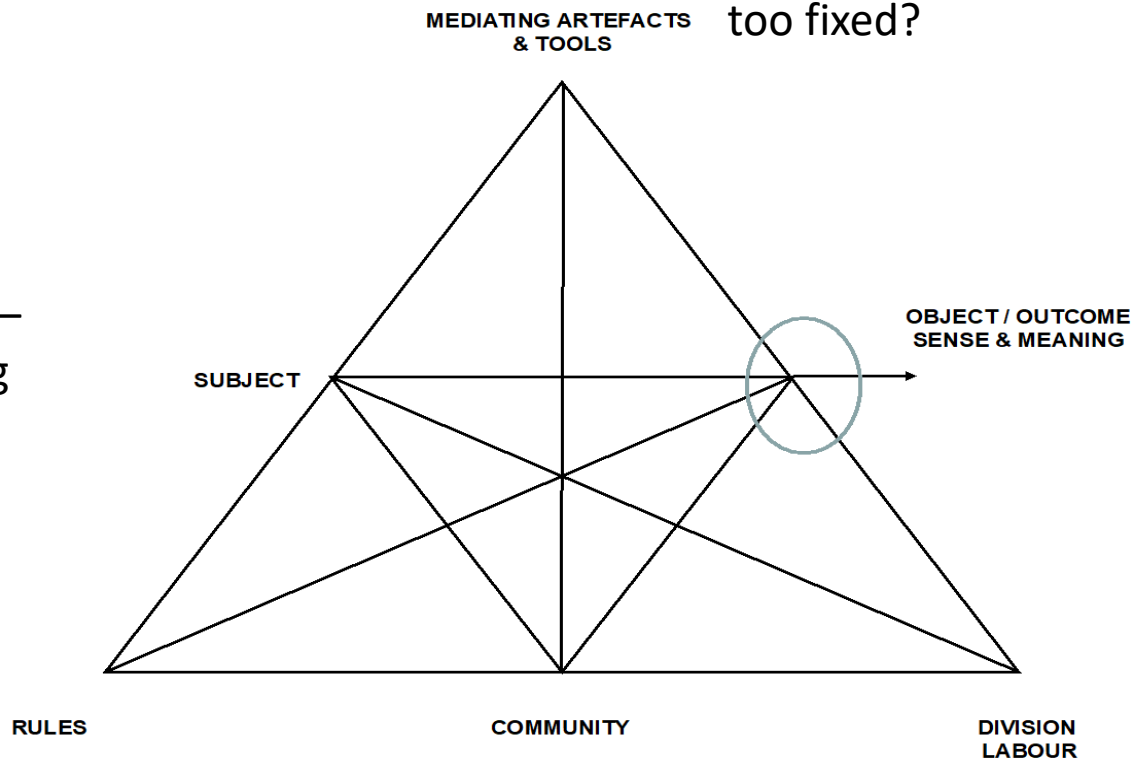


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Highly varied
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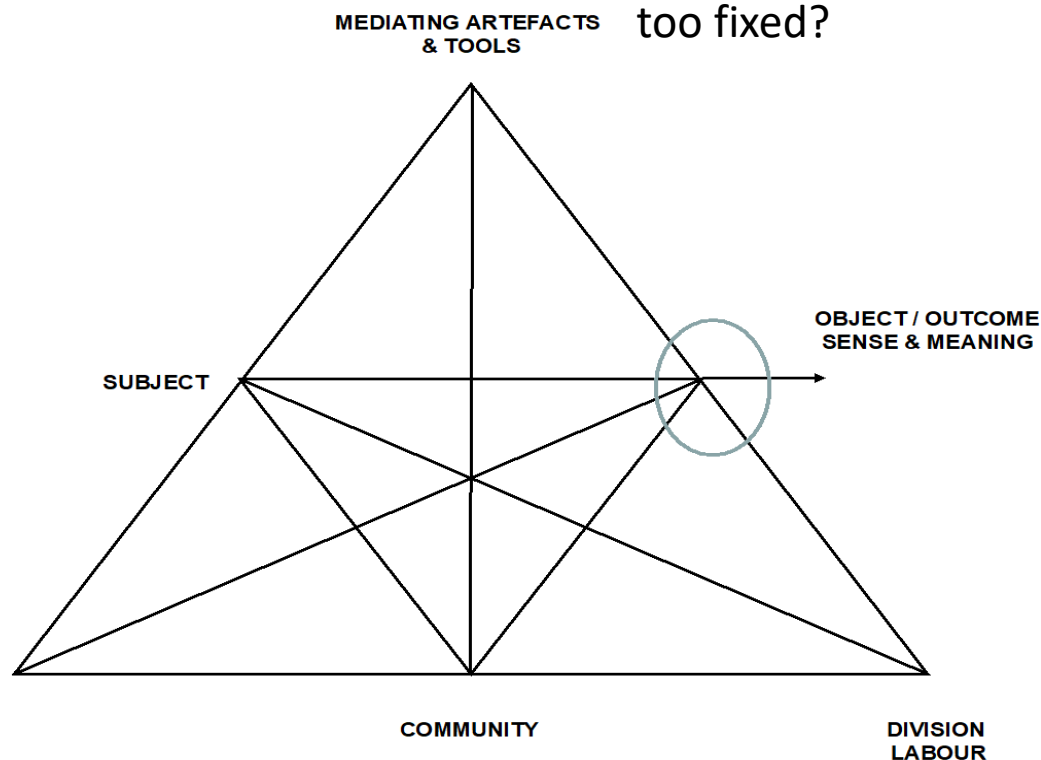
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Lack of
guidance as
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PT to support
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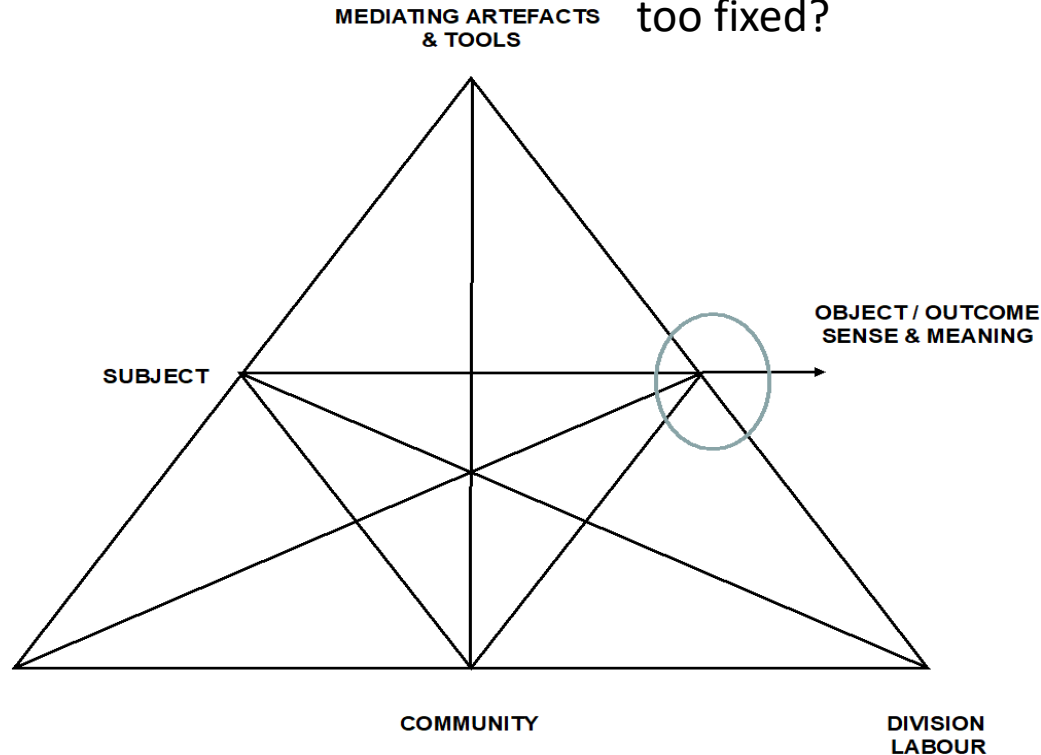
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- PT lottery?

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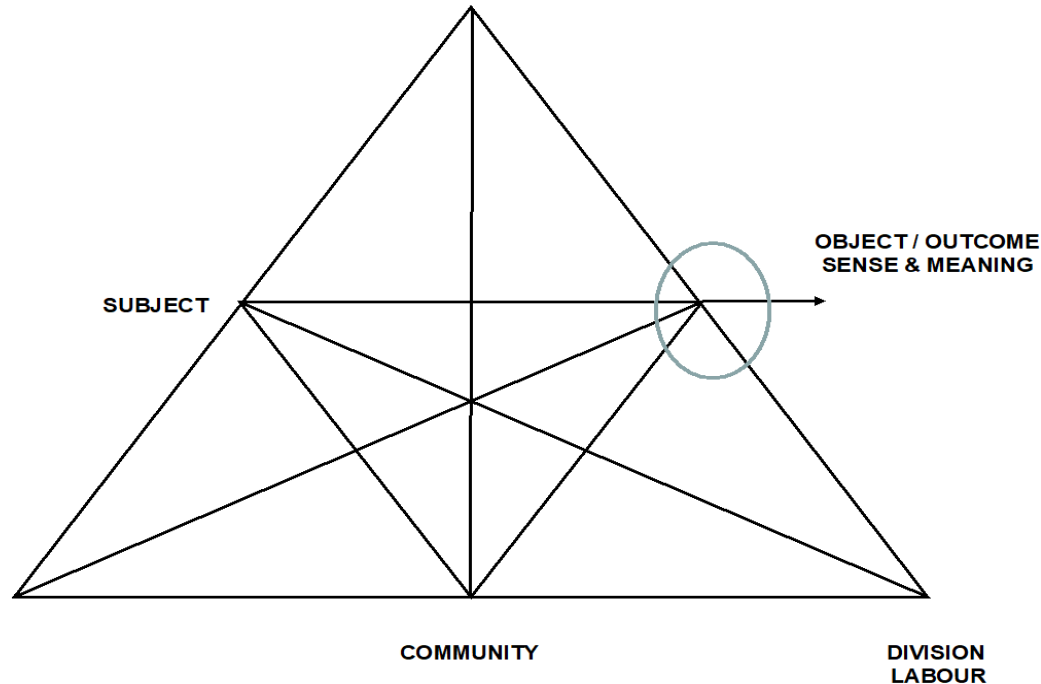
Improving
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A high number of people
could be involved. PT's vary
as much as the students do
– PT lottery?

Activity Theory Model

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MEDIATING ARTEFACTS
& TOOLS



Highly varied
students and
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- PT lottery?

Improving
attainment.

Lack of
guidance as
to how to use
PT to support
assessment.

Lack of clarity
on who does
what and how
information is
shared.

A high number of people
could be involved. PT's vary
as much as the students do
– PT lottery?

Multiple Contradictions

Contradictions	Developments
Student expectations may not align with what is available	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Clarify what personal tutoring is, boundaries➤ Student pack/ training
The personal tutors may not have the skills to meet the needs of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Training and Skills for personal tutors➤ Role clarity in support services
People are not clear on who does what, or how, with what	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Staff training pack➤ Clarify PT policy➤ Support/ supervision model for Tutors
There are too many time pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Reconsider WLM

So what?

- Consider a consistent approach to PT in your programme team
- Planning specific focussed PT sessions for assessment to increase the relevance of PT sessions
- Consider the key times when PT can support assessment
- Ask students if and how they would like PT's to support them in SSF's
- Develop clarity about roles and responsibilities between PT's and ML's and stick to these!

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