Mentoring for the Teaching Profession: Snapshots of Practice

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Abstract

Teachers grow professionally when they are afforded opportunities to engage in professional dialogue with peers and in reflective practice and which in turn can also be critical aspects of their professional satisfaction. However, professional growth must be mindful of the multi-faceted nature of teaching, which involves intellectual work, the organization of work and emotional work (Hargraves 1998).

To facilitate the professional growth and induction of beginning teachers in Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and Department of Education (DET) introduced a mandatory mentoring program to support beginning teachers in this multi-faceted work. The successful completion of the program requires mentors assisting mentorees to complete an "evidence of practice" folio, in order for beginning teachers to move to full registration.

The paper will offer a brief description of mentoring processes, the process for beginning teachers in Victoria and insights about how mentoring adds to the well-being of teachers, schools and the profession. Data for this study is both qualitative and quantitative, with the qualitative data deliberately drawing on participants' voices in order to capture their practice and is portrayed in order to give access to for its subsequent use by the profession.

Introduction

There is recognition throughout the world that teachers grow professionally when they are afforded opportunities to engage in professional dialogue with peers and engage in reflective practice. Such dialogue and reflective practice are critical aspects of not only the professional growth of teachers, but also of their satisfaction within the profession. However, such professional growth must also be mindful of the multi-faceted nature of teaching, which involves intellectual work, emotional work and the organization of work. As Hargraves (1998) points out:

> ... teaching is an **emotional practice** that also involves heavy investments of emotional labour. It **cannot be reduced to technical competencies of clinical standards alone**. The emotions of teaching are, in this sense not just a sentimental adornment to the more fundamental parts of work. They are fundamental in and of themselves. They are deeply intertwined with purposes of teaching (p 330).

To facilitate the professional growth and induction of beginning teachers in Victoria, Australia, the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) introduced a mandatory mentoring program for all beginning teachers in conjunction with the Victorian Department of Education. A mentoring program was adopted as a mechanism that would best support beginning teachers in the multi-faceted nature of teaching. The successful completion of this mentoring and induction program is monitored through the completion of an "evidence of practice" folio which beginning teachers complete with the

assistance of their mentor throughout their first year of teaching, and results in beginning teachers moving from a status of being provisionally registered to a fully registered teacher in Victoria.

This paper examines how both mentors and mentorees perceived of the process and the impact it has had on their views of teaching. Participants in this study (N = 42) were selected from a cross section of those involved in the VIT mentoring program (N = 884) who completed a survey about their experiences of mentoring. A semi-structured interview protocol to explore their perceptions of mentoring was used to develop "snapshots" that comprise vignettes of practice that portray their experiences.

The paper will therefore offer a brief description of what the mentoring process can encompass as well as the mentoring process for beginning teachers in Victoria. In addition the paper will also offer insights from the participants' perspectives about how mentoring beginning teachers into the profession adds to the well-being of teachers, schools and the profession. The representation of data for this study deliberately draws on participants' voices in order to capture their practice and is portrayed in such a way as to give access to everyday "snapshots" of life as a teacher (whether mentor or mentoree). Two examples of vignettes, one from a mentor and the other from a mentoree, are provided within this paper. More vignettes of practice can be accessed in Corrigan & Loughran, 2007.

What is mentoring?

There have been attempts to define mentoring such as those made by Asburn et al. (1987) who describe mentoring as "… the establishment of a personal relationship for the purpose of professional instruction and guidance" (p. 2) or Crosby's (1999) definition of mentoring as, "a trusted and experienced supervisor or advisor who by mutual consent takes an active interest in the development and education of a younger, less experienced individual" (p. 13). However, it is difficult to define mentoring itself as it is so much about the relationship between a mentor and a mentoree that defines the processes and practices of mentoring. In fact there may be some dangers in defining mentoring because as Wildman et al. (1992) suggest:

> … mentoring involves highly personal interactions, conducted under different circumstances in different schools, [but] the roles of mentoring cannot be rigidly specified. Therefore, it is a mistake to develop any external definition or conception of mentoring and impose it by means of political pressure or high-powered staff development activity. (p. 212)

Mentoring relationships are complex and involve not only the personalities of the mentor and mentoree, but also the "interpersonal or psychosocial development, career and/or educational development, and socialization" (Field, 1994, p. 65) of participants with different experience, expertise and orientations. More commonly mentoring is described as a process with models proposed for how the mentoring process occurs.

Some models of mentoring focus on how mentors approach the mentoring task. Such models include comprehensive lists of the different mentoring roles (for example Abell et al., 1995), while others have developed this notion further and examine the particular orientations of individual mentors. For example, Saunders, Pettinger and Tomlinson (1995) suggested a loose typology of four orientations of teacher mentors while Mertz (2004) proposed a conceptual frame that described the mentor as role model, peer support and sponsor. Mertz's model relies on the concepts of intent, the perceived purpose of the activity and whether that intent is sought or

valued, and involvement - the amount of time and effort required to realize the intent (p. 547). The model identifies three categories of intent and ties them to different supportive relationships:

- psychosocial development (modelling);
- professional development (advising); and,
- career advancement (brokering).

This model distinguishes psychosocial functions of mentoring: "those aspects of a relationship that enhance an individuals' sense of competence, identity and effectiveness" (Kram, 1985, p. 31) from career functions of mentoring: "those aspects of a relationship that enhance advancement in an organization" (Kram, 1985, p. 24). Kram's career functions can be further subdivided into professional development: "activities designed to help individuals grow and develop professionally" (Mertz, 2004, p.549) and career advancement: "activities designed to help individuals advance professionally" (Mertz, 2004, p. 549). Such distinctions assist in distinguishing kinds of activities and roles in terms of intent and involvement (Mertz, 2004) and while professional development certainly contributes to career advancement, the distinction is useful as it is possible to promote one (e.g., professional development) without attending to the other (e.g., career advancement) and vice versa.

Mentoring beginning teachers

Mentoring of teachers beginning in the profession has become a widely used, and an often-mandated practice throughout many Western countries. Within Australia, there is a growing demand for the accreditation of teachers against defined standards and for beginning teachers (or provisionally registered teachers) to become fully registered. In Victoria this registration process is assisted by a mentoring program.

The mentoring program involves training sessions for mentors and information sessions for provisionally registered teachers about the process of gaining full registration. There are three distinct phases to the mentoring program: (i) induction for orientation; (ii) induction for professional learning; and, (iii) documenting professional practice. Mentors assist provisionally registered teachers to compile an "evidence of practice" that involves an analysis of their teaching and learning, a selective record of collegial teaching activities they have undertaken and commentaries of professional activities. The process culminates in the presentation of evidence before a panel of peers at the school level and an application and recommendation for full registration.

The aims of this mentoring process are:

> Mentoring is a key strategy of effective induction. Mentors work closely with new teachers, providing peer support and collegial advice to assist them in reflecting on their work and improving their practice. This allows the individual needs of the new teacher to be met in a timely and relevant manner and guides their progress to demonstrate the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration. Mentoring promotes the mutual and ongoing benefits of collegial activity and engages the professional community of the school, not just teachers new to the profession. Mentoring should be seen to be separate from performance assessment arrangements. This will protect the integrity of each role and foster trust and transparency in the mentoring relationship. (VIT, 2006. Supporting provisional registered teachers, p. 1)

The mentoring program is designed to run for one year. While in terms of a life long approach to learning, this time frame is relatively short, it is nevertheless substantial in comparison with many other professional development opportunities in which education professionals engage.

Mentoring is a long-term process rather than a quick fix and indeed, it is the development of a professional relationship that is the fundamental cornerstone of mentoring as a means for engaging in professional learning.

Much of the uncertainty surrounding the development of a mentoring relationship rests with the preconceived ideas participants bring to such a relationship and the time needed to clarify the basis for a mentoring relationship. The conceptual framework proposed by Mertz, despite its hierarchical limitations, does begin to provide a framework that can assist participants in gaining a shared understanding of the scope of such a relationship. The ideas centred around intent and involvement are particularly helpful and highlight the need for investments of time and effort from participants as well as time and support from organizations for such relationships to have maximum benefit.

Given the fundamental dimensions of intent and involvement, it does seem appropriate to question the mandatory nature of this program (even though participants have supported this program and articulated many benefits). The mandated nature of participation in mentoring processes for mentorees can play a significant role in destabilising the development of such professional relationships. If this enforced relationship building is undertaken, it becomes imperative that participants quickly realise the additional benefits that participation in such programs can provide.

The benefits of mentoring programs can be numerous and include the provision of personal and emotional support, career development and satisfaction. Mentorees also experience opportunities to develop competencies, skills and knowledge for improved performance while mentors have the opportunity to develop both professionally and personally. For all participants the benefits appear to be improved skills, access to new ideas and personal growth. The development of any professional relationship as a generative means of professional learning is always a balancing act and mentoring is no different. This makes the development of a clear and shared understanding critical in these relationships.

In the Beginning Teachers mentoring program, key elements of mentoring, namely personal attributes, modelling, pedagogical knowledge, understanding system requirements and receiving feedback are not articulated to participants as necessary components of mentoring in this program's aims. However, the provision of feedback and familiarisation of system requirements are implied as important elements within the program as they are seen as acting as mechanisms for monitoring the health of such a professional relationship and defining the program's results.

Monitoring professional and personal growth and professional and personal learning within such relationships is a critical aspect of mentoring. It is this that frames mentoring as a positive professional learning activity. Mentoring provides a vehicle for mentors and mentorees, both alone and together, to reflect on their practice, reconsider what they are doing and why, and work towards improving their practice. Schön (1987) described this type of process as reflection-in-action and considered it to be a powerful mechanism for changing work practices and/or personal beliefs. Mentoring is a professional relationship that can engage two or more and bring benefits to both. As a mechanism for contributing to professional learning of communities in general, mentoring is an obvious attraction.

For mentoring to flourish attention needs to be paid to the need for: shared understandings of mentoring; an awareness of the positives and negatives such relationships can offer; support for such programs particularly in terms of human, financial and system resources; the provision of appropriate mentor training for participants to aid in a shared understanding; consideration given to the selection of participants; and, appropriate evaluation of the mentoring programs. While not without its complexities, mentoring has the potential to contribute much to the professional learning of participants and professional communities.

On order to capture the complexities of participants experiences of the mentoring program, short vignettes written in the teachers voice have been used as mechanism for representing the data obtained from a semi-structured interview process. These vignettes represent "snapshots" of teachers' practice. There are many possibilities for the way in which the vignettes could be used. One such possibility is illustrated below. This approach offers an interesting way to consider mentoring by drawing out some of the issues, questions and ideas that arise through the vignette.

Snapshots of mentoring: vignettes of practice

The purpose(s) of vignettes

The following two stories are examples of a larger number of stories that have been constructed from extensive interviews with volunteer mentors and mentorees who have been involved in the mentoring program through the Victorian Institute for Teaching (VIT) and the Department of Education and Training (DE&T). From the transcripts of these interviews, vignettes have been constructed that are designed to capture the essence of the experience from that participant's perspective. The full range of stories can be accessed in Corrigan and Loughran, 2007.

Each of these vignettes carries a story in its own right. However, the vignettes are not designed in order to support or negate any particular aspect of the mentoring process but to illustrate the range of responses and reactions to involvement in the program.

The vignettes capture critical incidents/events and processes that comprise elements of the mentoring processes as experienced by these participants. They are written in a form that is intended to create opportunities for the reader to reflect on the events in order to extract new learning and reconsider the situation(s) in new ways.

Each vignette captures one or two specific events and hopefully, on reading them, one feels encouraged to talk about the teaching and learning issues that are raised. It is anticipated that these vignettes might be motivating and interesting and offer one approach to encouraging deeper considerations of the mentoring process.

These vignettes might be helpful for introducing new approaches to doing mentoring or to understanding what it is like to be mentored. Therefore, they are also a good foundation for creating workshop possibilities - especially when dilemmas, issues or concerns about practice are the main topic of interest. The vignettes hopefully help to put the reader into a situation, and, in so doing, create possibilities for new ways of understanding what it "might be like" to do or see mentoring "that way".

There is also the possibility that working with these vignettes might lead to valuable professional learning by offering insights into practice that are particularly important when considering particular issues or situations. The vignettes capture a range of important issues around a theme or topic and do so in bite-sized and readable chunks.

When reviewing these vignettes, the following questions might be helpful in shaping individual responses and the way that such reflection might lead to deeper understandings of practice:

What issue does this vignette highlight?
What issues/dilemmas/tensions do you see in the vignette?
Why is this issue/idea/concern important?
What contextual details are important to help in analysing/understanding the vignette?
How does context make a difference in this vignette?
What solutions exist/how might you manage the dilemmas/how do you feel about the situation?
What works for you in the vignette, what helps you to identify with it?
What would you do in the situation that is portrayed in this vignette?
How does this vignette help you see things differently?

Many possibilities for learning through vignettes are available by considering what these vignettes illustrate and how they might be used and it can also be helpful to think about the following questions:

"How can teachers' experiences of mentoring help others?"
"What does the knowledge of practice look like and how can it be shared?"
"What matters about what has been learnt?"

Through questions such as these, the learning from these participants can be shared, critiqued and built upon to further our knowledge of practice and lead to a greater valuing of the complex work of teaching and how mentoring might offer opportunities to see into that world in new and interesting ways.

We trust that as you read through the following vignettes that these questions will help to guide your thinking about your practice and that the experiences of these participants may influence your ideas about your future professional learning.

The two vignettes used in this paper have been formatted so that the left hand-side of the table is the vignette and the right-hand side of the table carries some indicative comments and questions that are helpful in interrogating the ideas and actions demonstrated in the vignette itself. This approach then offers possibilities for ways of thinking about reading and responding to the vignettes more generally and hopefully creates new ways of thinking about the mentoring process.

Helping a graduate adjust to full time work as a teacher	Commentary on the vignette
Adam is a Leading Teacher with major role of overseeing all Level 4 (Grades 5 and 6 classes) in his school; an outer eastern suburban primary school where he has been for 9 years. He has been teaching for 25 years and is now in his fourth school. He is involved in his school on multiple fronts as a member of the School Council and some committees and contributes to leadership within the school as opportunities arise. He is very committed, competent and conscientious. He is unassuming and matter of fact. While agreeing that mentoring is important and should be done, it is just one of the many roles to fit into a crowded week and a busy school.	
Adam is diligent and a significant presence in his school with a main responsibility of leading the Grades 5 and 6 teacher team and students. This involves 185 students and 7 teachers who are all conveniently housed in a set of adjacent rooms. It is in this dual context of wanting the best set-up he can manage in the Grades 5 and 6 area as well as his desire to generally create goodwill, positive relationships and a welcome mat for all of his colleagues in his school, that he extended his services as a mentor.	*By providing Adam as a mentor, a leading teacher within the school, the school is providing real support for the mentoring of beginning teachers program.* *Adam's motivation for mentoring is well articulated and he has a definite purpose. He also appears to be receptive to the different needs of his colleagues. These are personal attributes important in mentoring.*

The recipient of his mentoring was a graduate teacher in her first year of teaching. She commenced teaching immediately after completing her teacher education program, aged 27, having had some earlier tertiary study and work experience. While some extra years of life experience prior to commencing teaching probably contributed to making her a very good teacher, highly respected by staff, students and the community, she still saw herself as needing a mentor and she appreciated the mentoring which she received.

Adam is aware of the different experiences his mentoree brings to the relationship and demonstrates the need to develop relationships that value what mentorees bring with them and that they are not beginners with little or no knowledge.

The assistance given varied as the year progressed. Initially she was welcomed to the school and was in the orientation program overseen by another teacher. The mentor also offered a welcome, gave her assistance in lesson plans and preparation of lessons for the early part of the year, helped with units of work and resources and was nearby and available throughout the year.

The school is supporting the mentoring process through the provision of an orientation program for teachers in addition to providing a mentor.

Again Adam is providing personal support for his mentoree in multiple ways.

> Initially I gave her lots of files of units of work, work for particular strands in subjects so that she was able to refer to those, I assisted with resources that she needed at the start; and advice.

Is this type of support appropriate for a mentoree? What is the balance between supporting mentorees and producing a clone of oneself?

It is important to provide help for mentorees in ways that foster the further development of their pedagogy.

Advice and feedback are critical elements of support in a mentoring relationship.

> We planned together as a team and there were a lot of curriculum ideas we discussed together, so she was not going in cold into any of her lessons. Help was always there to deliver the lesson. There were not many times when she was left to her own. We were sharing together and it worked really well.

What does this say about the level of trust on which the relationship is based? Is this the intended message? It is important to distinguish between personal support, trust and reinforcing the status quo.

They took parallel classes in adjacent rooms with the folding doors between their rooms permanently open in a form of team teaching. Adam, as mentor, and the graduate teacher shared some joint preparation time on a weekly basis and liaised continually on common work. Adam was very strong on encouraging, and wise in allowing, the mentoree to develop independently and as an individual.

The school through its physical structure has supported the mentoring process.

The mentor has provided personal support, pedagogical support, and feedback in order to assist the professional learning of the mentoree. However, it is difficult to decide if the support given is really only one-way sharing; balance is important.

> This is a fairly high powered sort of place. We are very conscientious about proper teaching and learning styles and so a big demand is placed on a graduate teacher … I like them to be able to develop a bit in their

There is a perceived notion that the school knows what is good and not so good teaching and learning. How is this conveyed? How was this established?

own styles, their own teaching techniques as well, so I feel as a mentor I would continue in a role a bit like I do with a student teacher, give them guidance where they need it, help them with particular individual students, encourage their strengths as a teacher and a person, to enable them to build their own relationships with all the teachers and with the classes.

There is recognition here of the development of the individual as opposed to recreating oneself.

Guidance, encouragement of strengths and building one's relationships highlights three important roles of a mentor. The development of other relationships also supports pedagogical and personal development and encourages feedback.

The mentor was low-key in his attitude to mentoring and provided a lot of assistance intuitively. The mentor was concerned with many issues and interests on his agenda and in his school which had to be attended to in a crowded schedule. Mentoring was one of these tasks which he accepted with characteristic enthusiasm, thoroughness and humility:

There appears to be a level of understanding from the mentor as to what is important in the relationship – this requires thought. Is this evidenced here? However, there is obviously a commitment to mentoring from the mentor as highlighted here and elsewhere. What roles does a mentor need to take on? What personal characteristics help in this relationship?

I don't think I did anything special. An aim was to see that the graduate was comfortable in her position and not highly stressed about what was going on. You want them to enjoy the career they have chosen. You don't want them to find the job too difficult and she didn't, so that was some affirmation, I suppose.

Adam articulates what his expectations were for his mentoree - largely based on personal characteristics – did she enjoy her career?

For Adam there is some affirmation that he has been successful in achieving the aim.

Adam saw being a mentor as:

… very important, you are a role model, you model what you think you should be doing, you set the example and the standards and hope that she notes the way you relate, the way you connect, the things you say.

This highlights what Adam's expectations were of himself as a mentor in this relationship.

Adam did not see mentoring as a special 'calling' but rather just one of the many roles, albeit important, to fit into a crowded week and a busy school. As a mentor, Adam was sensitive to the role of the graduate teacher and he saw her teaching, confidence and general contribution to the school improving over time. Her increasing competence allowed him to step back a bit. He considered his major contribution in the last half of the year was to step back and not interfere with her development, ideas and approaches. One of his major lasting impressions of his value to the graduate teacher was in guiding her in preparation and compilation of her portfolio for VIT assessment.

Mentoring is not a vocation, but rather part of the work of a professional. Personal attributes are important, such as flexibility, but it is also important to give feedback, have the support of the school/system and a commitment to developing pedagogy.

It is pretty hard with the extra assignments – their portfolios – which they have to complete. I am glad that I am not a graduate at the moment, having all the extra things to

What is the value of the VIT task – is it a hoop or does it have intrinsic value?

complete and distractions to put in place. I've seen probably three portfolios put together and they each had different levels of conscientiousness, I suppose, in working on their portfolios. One took more than a year to finish her portfolio, while the one I mentored knocked hers over by September.

Both he and the graduate considered that it was a big and onerous task on top of first year of teaching to have to work on a portfolio. Another of his concerns for young teachers was the transient nature of their first few years of teaching. However, he saw mentoring and the addition of graduate teachers as important to the school:

One of questions here is what did the mentor expect to learn? – this appears to be a weakness in his perception as he never highlights what he has learnt from the process. For example, did Adam examine the purpose of the VIT evidence of practice task? He never questioned that it might be valuable, but rather that it was an additional task that got in the way of the dailyness of teaching. Is there more to teaching than this and what does it say for professional learning? How would Adam present evidence of his own teaching?

I was able to include the graduate on the social committee – I think it is important; it helps them feel they belong. The kids enjoy that too, young people with fresh ideas coming in to do things with them. Some of the people have been here a long time and they haven't got the same energy levels that the young graduates have. Schools need that mix of youth and experience. Mentoring reminds you of that.

It is important to establish a sense of belonging – part of the personal support that can be offered.

It is important to be reminded of learning from different perspectives.

Everyone needs a mentor

Abel worked as a panel-beater for maybe 15 years, then returned to study as a mature age student with the intent of becoming a teacher as he wanted to have a more meaningful work-life in which he made some contribution to the community. Aged in his mid-30s, he commenced primary teaching in 2005, in a government primary school in a mid-sized rural city in western Victoria, taking combined Grades 1 and 2. He had been born and bred in Hometown, married a local and worked in Hometown. His first school, in Hometown, was his first choice and was where he did his last teaching round. He went through university teacher education and began work in his first school following a 'charmed existence' along a very well orchestrated path. He was well supported initially in his first school, and still is, by two mentors (Josie and Dinah).

Commentary on the vignette

Abel displays competence mixed with a positive outlook and buoyancy and appears to be an outstanding graduate teacher. As a mid-30s mature age graduate teacher his assimilation of the many facets of teaching and his readiness to embrace educational developments and concepts is impressive. He was at all times gracious, humble and appreciative of his mentors and complimentary of the efforts of his colleagues in going about their business. He also had a great feel and concern for the students in his immediate care; in fact, for the whole school community. If ever anyone could be expected to survive without much assistance in his first year of teaching, Abel would have been the one.

> I would say that my training doesn't give you any real preparation because every difficult kid is different and perhaps it is not possible to get the training which is appropriate (for the uni students in the course). I think that ability to deal with issues comes with experience. … Teaching rounds aren't long enough. I used to spend a lot of extra time going into classes here as a parent, in my spare time – it was helpful to me and I was at uni and occasionally I had some spare time – and I would go into my son's class to help out – so I had that extra bit of help by spending time here. … I think that being mature age, I probably had a different respect given to me than maybe given to other people some time. I also noticed that definitely when on teaching rounds at times.

It could almost appear as though any advice and assistance from a mentor might be superfluous to someone like Abel. However, he spoke of the adjustments needed, of his initial apprehensions and suggested that he, at times, as for any new teacher and as for all teachers, had a lot to cope with and that learning about teaching was something that developed over time, it didn't just happen.

> I knew I had the job here but I suppose I was still concerned that I wouldn't be good enough, that was my biggest worry. … as my experience has grown – and I am not experienced at all really – the way I am teaching has changed over time. It is part of myself, it is the direction in which the school is going, it is professional development. It is an evolution brought

Despite the perceived level of competence and confidence, there is still a need to provide emotional support (personal support).

Abel highlights the importance of the notion of life-long learning and, as someone at the beginning of a new career, he needs to be supported so that that love of learning continues.

about by lots of factors. …

Abel is an extremely competent and resourceful beginning teacher who valued the assistance that he received from his mentors. Despite this, he did find it difficult at times to actually state what support he did receive from his mentor or to be able to distinguish between induction and mentoring. Perhaps being in a small school and well linked to the community meant that mentoring, induction and fitting in were all one and the same.

What is the relationship between induction and mentoring?

> I think that it is important that any mentor is constructive, and also very helpful. If I was alone and coming into a school and did not have the support which I had here I would have found it very hard, especially first year out.

What does it mean to be constructive? Is this about feedback? Is it modelling? Is it just talking and dialogue with a colleague? What does being a constructive mentor look like?

Again Abel highlights the importance of this initial personal and emotional support for a beginning teacher.

Preparing the portfolio was made a little easier for Abel because he had constructed one at university: "my university was particularly good for that." Abel found preparing the portfolio was a good thing to do, especially because he did his teaching rounds at the school in which he now worked. As a consequence, he already had the introduction to the school included, the socio-economic profile, etc., and only had add to it. For registration, Abel did a PowerPoint presentation that covered many of the points in the portfolio that he had constructed at university. However, he did have one interesting criticism of the process:

Abel supports the evidence of practice task. Why might this be seen as a worthwhile task?

> The preparation of a profile in first year teaching became too much of a distraction. If I had planned my time better, looking back now, started a bit earlier, it might have been better, but coming to terms with teaching and learning how to teach took priority over preparing a portfolio for the first three terms. Then when it had to be done, but also I had to still give time to managing the classroom. I didn't have time to space it out. I couldn't put the kids on hold and I couldn't put the portfolio on hold. At the same time I had to contend with the job interview here (for the ongoing position), I had reports, as well as the portfolio. I found it quite hard and it was stressful, but it had to be done, everyone had to do it, but I would have liked to minimise the impact.

The role of the mentor in assisting in this process and the organization is important - the support of the school/system in this case. Is there time to think and do these tasks associated with the evidence of practice? If it is to be valued, then it must be given relevant support and resourcing.

In fact, as Abel reflected more on his portfolio he

was drawn to restate a number of times how doing a portfolio "didn't make it easy for you in your first year of teaching, especially in that critical time when you're applying for jobs". He was grateful that he did have his job and that he was not applying for many like some of his friends. He also acknowledge that as a first year out teacher, there needed to be some form of assessment, but was again grateful that he had had the chance to prepare some of his portfolio in advance through his university course.	*What are helpful means of support for beginning teachers?*
As Abel spoke, he took himself back again to his own development. He noted how as a teacher "you know yourself whether you are getting anywhere", and how being in a small school with good staff made a difference. He reminded himself that his principal liked to communicate and keep talking with him about his development and that he arranged times throughout the year to make sure that things were "going alright". Beyond the formal talks there were also many informal occasions when he "had a bit of a chat" and how also gave him a bit of feedback, and that they did a bit of planning together, used each other's ideas, and "bounced off each other a bit". In closing, Abel summed up his view by:	*What makes a productive professional environment?* *The school support is important - in this instance it provides some tangible evidence that the person matters and are supported.*
I would have found it really hard without a mentor. Everyone needs a mentor at the start.	*Good modelling of practice in planning, feedback and developing pedagogy.*

Using vignettes in this way (in the Table above), we trust creates a way of opening up a dialogue with the vignette in order to make explicit ideas, issues, questions and concerns about being a mentor and how that influences understandings of teaching and learning and ways of sharing that with others.

The full range of vignettes (Corrigan & Loughran, 2007) illustrate the diversity of responses to being a mentor and mentoree and the representation in this paper are a small example. As outlined previously, these vignettes are not intended to offer a "particular view" of mentoring, rather to offer a range of perspectives from participants in the program to better inform the reader about how mentoring is understood and enacted.

Conclusion

It is clear from this study that mentoring is about developing a relationship to encourage professional learning, and so like any relationship, there are multiple ways to achieve success. Each mentoring relationship is unique. What the data from this study (portrayed as snapshots) offers is insights into the underlying development of such relationships and the concurrent sense of professional "trust" crucial to mentoring partners in order to enhance professional practice.

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