

Supervisor or mentor? Questioning the quality of pre-service teacher practicum experiences

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ABSTRACT

Practicum is a major component of teacher education programs. This experience is regarded as playing a vital role in preparing pre-service teachers for the real world of the classroom. Traditional views of the practicum are of an apprentice-model, where the naïve apprentice is immersed into the work situation, observing, absorbing, and ultimately imitating the master. There is an assumption of an attained level of expertise on the part of the master, and that the apprentice has little to contribute to the situation. The term 'practicum supervisor' can be seen as appropriate here. However, the view of supervisor as 'expert' and pre-service teacher as 'novice' may not be conducive to a fully productive and mutually beneficial relationship. With adoption of the word mentor rather than supervisor, a more collaborative, supportive and equitable relationship is assumed and anticipated. Yet, old ways of 'supervising' persist. Through the presentation of two case studies of pre-service teachers' experiences, the case for professional development, training, or at least for some form of certification for practicum mentors, is presented.

INTRODUCTION

Research suggests that teachers view their practicum experiences as an extremely important and essential component of their induction into the profession (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). They see the development of a productive relationship with their supervising teacher as crucial during these times (Glickman & Bey, 1990). In theory, pre-service teachers are able to observe successful teacher-practitioners model useful and efficient pedagogic practices in their classrooms, and gain useful experience in planning and managing student learning activities in a hands-on way. Furthermore, it is expected that they are able to deconstruct and reflect on their pedagogic practices in collaboration with their supervising teachers in ways that will inform their future teaching practices. Contemporary views favour teacher practitioners in the role of supportive and collaborative mentor rather than of top-down supervisor, and it is assumed that teacher-mentors will support, model and sustain effectual classroom practices. However, it seems that the practicum experience is not always all that it is either hoped or expected to be. In this paper we argue that not all experienced teachers are effective mentors, and that they need to undertake professional development and training in effective mentorship to enable them to provide fully-rounded practicum experiences for the pre-service teachers with whom they are required to work. The paper commences by describing the background to this research study, before

describing the research methodology. Two case studies are then presented and discussed. The paper concludes by arguing for the need to provide potential teacher mentors with opportunities for professional development in effective mentoring in order to encourage positive and productive practicum experiences for all involved.

BACKGROUND

The writers of this paper are members of an academic team involved in a teacher education program dedicated to preparing new practitioners for teaching students in their middle years of schooling. This was the first teacher education program focussing in the needs of students in the middle years to be established in Australia. The program was designed to be innovative, built on the philosophies and principles of the middle years schooling. These include a pedagogy built on relationships rather than authority (Harslett, 1998), student rather than subject centred teaching and curricula (Harslett, 1998; Alexander, 1995), collaborative rather than individual teaching (Harslett, 1998), reflective practice (Schon, 1983 & 1987) and genuine partnerships (Hill & Russell, 2000). Members of the teaching team at the university are dedicated to modelling these pedagogic philosophies and principles in their teacher education practices. School practicum and internship experiences are included for every semester of the pre-service teachers' education program, and assessment tasks are designed to be authentic, linking the students' knowledge of theory to their practical classroom experiences in the form of praxis.

In our role as teacher educators, we hear numerous accounts and narratives regarding practicum and internship experiences from our students, not all of them being positive. Zeichner and Gore (1990) suggest that the second most influential factor in teachers' socialisation into the profession, after that of an apprenticeship of observation experienced during their own schooling days (cf. Lortie, 1975), is the school-based practicum experience. Furthermore, it seems that "the co-operating teachers are the most powerful influence on the quality of the student teaching experience and often shape what student teachers learn by the way they mentor" (Glickman & Bey, 1990).

School-based practicum experiences are a mandatory requirement in pre-service teacher education programs, and necessary for registration as a teacher in Australian States and Territories. Beyond merely requirements for program accreditation, practicum is regarded as a means of inducting pre-service teachers into the profession, and of supporting the development of attributes deemed vital for beginning teachers (Queensland Board of Teacher Registration, 2002). In Queensland for example, professional standards for graduate teachers include: the ability to apply professional and disciplinary knowledge bases and a range of literacies relevant to their roles; the skills to create supportive and intellectually challenging learning environments to engage all learners; participation in relationships that characterise ethical professional practice within and beyond learning communities; and a commitment to reflective practice and on-going professional renewal (Board of Teacher Registration Queensland, 2002, p 6-7). Hence, practicum is a complementary component of teacher education programs, where both university courses and school practicum experiences foster the professional development of aspiring teachers.

In theory, the practicum experience is a supportive journey of development and learning, gained through immersion in the real world of teachers' workplaces. Experienced teachers model as they undertake their daily teaching duties, and pre-service teachers observe, absorb and reflect. Their professional studies at university

provide them with theoretical frameworks through which to interpret and analyse what they see and sense.

Expectations of the practicum experience have grown from traditional models that took an apprenticeship stance. We have moved beyond an induction model espoused in 1972 in *The James Report on Teacher Education and Training* (James Committee, 1972) of the UK where the purpose of school induction was to enable new teachers to:

relate the theory he has mastered to the practice in which he is now involved... His wise seniors in his first school introduce him, by example and precept, to an understanding of professional attitudes and to an appreciation of what his particular school is, how it works, how decisions are taken, how parents are involved. (para 3.8) [sic].

Yet, still we hear echoes of teacher preparation programs, even with embedded practicum, falling short in preparing new teachers for the business of teaching. As stated by Seymour in 2003 (in foreword to Trubowitz & Picard Robins, 2003, p. ix):

“The beginning teacher is ... catapulted into a classroom where she is leader and manager for which her academic courses and practice teaching were obviously inadequate” [sic]. However, the caution is that practicum experiences must be more than immersion and the provision of ‘recipes’ for successful teaching that align the norms and ethos of the school in which pre-service teachers find themselves.

Increasingly it is being acknowledged that pre-service teachers are not ‘sponges’ who merely absorb and imitate the practices they experience. They are reflective, and bring their own expertise, and can actually contribute to the professional development of the teachers to which they are assigned in schools. Yet, the road is not smooth and far from clear. Despite extensive and continuing research and suggestions for improvement in the potentially problematic relationship between pre-service teachers and their supervising (cooperating) teachers/mentors,

few mentors practice the kind of conceptually oriented, learner-centred teaching advocated by reformers ... [and] mentoring may have a conservative effect on teachers’ practice, introducing and helping to support the status quo instead of encouraging new teachers to explore innovative practice (Evertson & Smithey, 2000, p.294).

All this is in direct contrast to the educational philosophies and practices being presented within the teacher education program in which we are involved. In this situation there is a particular potential for tensions to develop between pre-service middle years of schooling (MYS) teachers and their supervising teachers during the practicum experience. Existing experienced teacher practitioners may not be fully convinced of the effectiveness of new MYS principles or practices, whereas their MYS pre-service student teachers have been both fully immersed and convinced of their effectiveness as a result of their teacher education program. We are interested in finding out how pre-service teachers negotiate and manage such tensions for the purposes of achieving ‘success’ in their practicum and internship experiences, and ask the question: what can be done to ensure that the practicum and internship experiences are positive and productive ones for both mentors and their mentees?

Many pre-service teachers on school practicum find themselves in a situation of novice/expert (Smith & Strahan, 2004), with a very unidirectional relationship maintained. Collaboration and reciprocal learning are foreign concepts in such relationships. Further, the assignation of pre-service teachers to particular teachers in schools is often done on an ad-hoc manner, with few teachers having any formal training or preparation to be a mentor to pre-service teachers (Timperley, 2001; Weiss

& Weiss, 2001). Without formal preparation for their role as mentors, the result is that “many supervising teachers/mentors draw on their own experiences when they were supervised as student teachers themselves (often many years ago) to construct their supervision practices as supervising teachers” (Board of Teacher Registration Queensland, 2004, p.9). How teachers work with pre-service teachers is often through learning and understanding derived from classroom experience and not through research on effective mentoring practices (Orland, 2001). It is generally acknowledged that the majority of mentor teachers who actively participate in school practicum experiences with pre-service teachers are willing to share their knowledge, experience and practice, yet it is also acknowledged that “expertise in teaching in itself is not sufficient to be a teacher educator” (Timperley, 2001, p. 121). Many experienced teachers may demonstrate practices that contribute to the smooth running of a classroom but, without critical reflection upon their practice, they provide little means for pre-service teachers to assess and evaluate such practices, or provide a theoretical framework upon which to build and adapt.

The issue of effective practicum experiences has resulted in numerous research studies. A plethora of approaches have been found to be successful, but all pinpoint professional development of mentor teachers as fundamental (e.g., Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2000; Sands & Goodwin, 2005; Timperley, 2001; Wang, 2001). In the absence of mentor preparation programs and accreditation and acknowledgement of the important role that mentors play in the development of beginning teachers, practicum experiences can be of little value.

METHODOLOGY

This paper derives from feedback obtained from pre-service teachers regarding their practicum experiences. We obtained the data that informs the first case study (below) from a paper written by one pre-service teacher in the form of an item presented as one of the components required for coursework assessment. The data obtained for the second case study was collected as part of a research pilot study focussing particularly on how professional talk actively constitutes institutional roles and relationships during pre-service teachers’ practicum and internship experiences.

The research is framed by the notion that texts and talk are forms of social interaction through which the social world is interactively written and talked into being (Heritage, 1984, p. 283; Baker & Keogh, 1995, p. 265). As such, social interaction and talk are viewed as “the building blocks of any social order” (Coulon, 1995, p.v). An ethnomethodological approach was used to interrogate the data. Ethnomethodology (EM) views the social world as actively accomplished and mediated through actual ongoing textual and conversational practices. Institutional ideologies are actively constituted and mediated within and through texts and talk (Smith, 1987; 1990), and, thus, can be made visible as a result of textual and transcript analysis. As such, instances of professional texts and talk are particularly suitable for the study of educational sites and institutional relationships. Membership categorisation analysis (MCA) and conversation analysis (CA) are ethnomethodological ways of approaching texts and talk to document how the social world is actively co-constructed. Both analytic approaches are strongly “‘data-driven’, - developed from phenomena which are, in various ways, evidenced in the data of interaction” (Heritage, 1984, p. 243), and have their origins in the work of Sacks (1992). MCA focuses more on matters of cultural knowledge and relevance, documenting the ways in which people ‘do’ and recognise categorical descriptions

within social settings (Baker, 2000, p.100), whereas CA focuses on the details of the sequential nature of talk (Sacks, 1974, p. 216). Although, traditionally, MCA and CA have developed to a large degree independently of each other, it can be argued that “both the sequential and the categorizable aspects of social interaction inform each other” (Hester & Eglin, 1997, p. 2). We have analysed the data under consideration in this paper using both ethnomethodological approaches simultaneously. The case studies presented document two pre-service teachers’ experiences on practicum. The first case study speaks for itself in terms of being everything mentoring should not be. The second case, however, has the appearance of a productive partnership, but closer analysis shows the unequal power relationship at play.

CASE STUDIES

Case 1: Snapshot of a mathematics class.

In this case, a female pre-service teacher is assigned to an experienced mathematics teacher. Her first observation of this teacher in action is with a Year 9 class at an all boys’ school. This snapshot of practice is presented below. The pre-service teacher has had little experience with teaching mathematics in her previous practicum placements. She is keen to pick up some tips on teaching mathematics, as she is well aware of the literature on how much many students in the middle years of schooling dislike mathematics. On this particular day, she arrives at the class before the classroom teacher.

The bell sounds to signal the beginning of the class. The teacher has not yet arrived. The students are waiting outside the classroom, but not in any orderly manner. The fact that the pre-service teacher is standing with the class makes little difference to the students’ behaviour, as the nudging, jostling, touching, talking, laughing, jeering, continues. At three minutes after the bell, the classroom teacher arrives, and walks straight into the classroom, with an invitation for the students to “Come on” as a signal to follow him. The students immediately become quiet, moving to their desks, sitting down and opening their books. All students take out their homework from the night before without being directly instructed by the teacher. The teacher does not greet the students, but opens his own notes, and stands next to the board. He gives the following instruction: “Everything out of your hands and look here.” The students all do as they are told, and all are facing the board watching as the teacher works through the first homework task: an algebraic exercise. In complete silence, the teacher works the solutions to all six homework exercises before turning to look at the class. Upon completion, the teacher asks: “Put up your hand if you got all these correct.” All but three of the students raise their hands. The teacher then instructs the students to turn to the next page of their textbook. The teacher demonstrates the procedure for solving a new type of algebraic equation. After two worked examples, the teacher instructs the students to complete the next example on their own. The teacher then completes the example on the board, and asks the students to indicate if they also got the same answer. One student replies that he did not, which is ignored by the teacher. The pre-service teacher ventures over to assist the student, but feels a reluctance on the part of the student to listen to her. Instead, he continually watches the classroom teacher, and only whispers his answers to her questions. The pre-service teacher then retreats to the back of the room, observing all students making attempts to continue with the set examples without talking to each other. The

classroom teacher moves amongst the desks offering a few comments to particular students. At one point in the very quiet lesson, the pre-service teacher hears the classroom teacher pronounce in a rather loud voice: “Why would you ask such a stupid question?” Then the bell rings. The students do not move. They wait until they are instructed to close their books and stand behind their chairs. The students exit the class. Once they are away from the class, they run to their next class, and their voices escalate.

At the conclusion of this lesson, the pre-service teacher feels somewhat dazed. She is still feeling the shock of the question vocalised by the teacher: “Why would you ask such a stupid question?” However, from her limited experience in mathematics classes, she feels that there must be some sort of justification for the teaching approach she has witnessed. In an effort to make some form of meaning from what she has seen, she says to the teacher: “It must be difficult to teach mathematics”, to which the teacher replies: “I haven’t prepared a lesson since 1972.”

In her search for meaning and a sound pedagogical framework through which to analyse her observations, the pre-service teacher analyses her observations from her own self-assessment of her current teaching capabilities, and her beliefs about teaching and learning. She feels that her own classroom management strategies are not where she would like them to be. She finds herself admiring the classroom control and the way the students immediately knew what was expected of them for the whole lesson. She wants to be able to manage a class in this way, where the students listen when they are told, where there is no calling out to the teacher, or any sort of rowdy behaviour. However, the feelings of visiting a very well-managed class are overshadowed by her analysis of the teacher’s response to one boy’s question: “Why would you ask such a stupid question?”. She concludes that the students are controlled by the teacher and that they are learning in an environment that is managed through fear. As the week continues, she becomes more certain of this conclusion. She feels frustrated that she has learnt very little, either about classroom management or about effective teaching of mathematics.

Case 2: Talking an asymmetrical relationship into being

During their practicum and internship experiences, teachers learn how to relate to members of their profession, and they learn how to talk *as* teachers, *to* teachers, *about* teaching within the workplace environment (cf. Smith, 1990, p.125). Smith suggested that professional talk might be viewed as an “ideological package [that] provides a procedure for subsuming what goes on in the classroom under professional educational discourse, making classroom processes observable-reportable within an institutional order” (1987, p.163). Analysis of professional talk can reveal the normally taken-for-granted, largely invisible workings of the institutional order. As such, analysis of talk between pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers provides a rich source of data revealing how participants to the talk-in-interaction actively constitute their roles and talk into being their institutional relationships (cf. Heritage, 1984; Baker & Keogh, 1995).

The talk that follows took place between a pre-service (MYS) teacher (Ken)¹ and his supervising teacher (T) when they were discussing the supervising teacher's entries on Ken's practicum evaluation form. During the meeting, the supervising teacher talked through and accounted for her comments. Analysis of the conversational details using Conversation Analysis (CA) and Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) provides a useful way of identifying how the talk worked towards the constitution of a particular interpersonal and professional relationship within this educational site.

The pre-service teacher who was the participant in the talk that follows described his relationship with his supervising teacher as being "very positive and productive". However, analysis of an extract of the conversation between Ken and his supervising teacher (see below) shows that the relationship they co-constructed within and through their talk was hugely asymmetrical. The issues raised for discussion in this talk took their direction from the five topics specified on the teacher evaluation form that was under consideration at this meeting, namely: Planning and Reflection; Teaching Practices; Assessment & Reporting; Learning Environments / Managing Classroom Relationships and Behaviour; Relationships with School Advisors, Peers and Other Staff; and Professional Responsibility and Goals. The meeting was audio-recorded, and the talk was then transcribed, using notations largely in keeping with Jefferson's transcription conventions (Appendix 1, cf. Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). The extract that follows features the initial eleven turns in the talk that took place during this meeting. (It should here be noted that there was, presumably, a pre-sequence to the talk that probably included talk about the hows and whys of the recording strategy, amongst other things, that may well have influenced the way the audio-taped talk commenced and continued. However, this was not recorded, so was unavailable for analysis). The transcribed talk started in the following way:

1. T: *Okay Ken, we'll go through your evaluation sheet from the last 4 weeks, um, of your being here, on your second practicum, um first of all your planning and reflection?, um, I've put down there that you've demonstrated the outcomes, and my comment is Ken demonstrated high level competence in his planning and reflection, it was evidenced from discussions? and Ken's planning that he spent considerable time reflecting and adjusting lessons where required. Due to the um small school setting and um, hh all the things that happened from day to day minute to minute hour to hour, um it's really really um, a great school to have to be so flexible and, I thought that you were able to do that, sometimes you know some people, find it extremely difficult to change their planning? um at short notice? but you weren't you didn't have that, problem, so, in a small school you need to have people that are willing to change and, ah you know accept that we do need flexible practices so that was good to see so yeah, I thought that you asked questions and seeked advice and you took notes and you reflect that way so, and thoughtfully, so, very good/*
2. K: */Yep I found with one of the lessons that I did that* [um on
3. T: [mm

¹ For the purposes of confidentiality, the names of all participants in the talk, the persons they name and the names of the schools are pseudonyms to prevent the possibility of identification.

4. K: *on speeches I actually changed, what I did with the 4 5s to the 6 7s because, it just didn't work with the 4 5s so [I just changed it to*
5. T: *[uh hu*
6. K: *to one line (in the stretched version) [putting the stroke in*
7. T: *[uh hu*
8. K: *for the 4s*
9. T: *Isn't that great though that you had the opportunity to do it again*
10. K: *Yeah yeah [(fantastic yeah)*
11. T: *[and that's been a great thing yeah (.5) okay so: o um teaching practices ...*

Looking at this extract, one is immediately struck by the disproportionately larger amount of talk provided by the teacher. T produces a relatively long utterance in contrast to a series of relatively short utterances provided by K interspersed by T's continuers (eg. "mm"; "uh hu", etc). Continuers are utterances that show a recipient's understanding that an utterance or turn in talk is not complete (Schegloff, 1982, p.80), even though the speaker might have included a possible space (a transition-relevance device, cf. Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998, p. 48) where the other participant has the opportunity of taking up the talk, such as K's use of "um" within the second turn in this talk. Such a device signals to a speaker that what has been said is received as largely incomplete by the recipient, and that s/he needs to say more. Continuers also signal to the speaker the recipient's alignment with the talk. As such, the teacher can be seen as largely 'controlling' the way the talk is proceeding, despite saying less at this point. Overall, the larger amount of speech provided by T can also be taken as an indication of who is 'in charge' of this talk, the shorter utterances indicative of who is taking the subordinate role. As such, an asymmetrical relationship between the two participants is continuously talked into being within and through this talk.

As can be seen, the supervising teacher sets the agenda for this meeting, foregrounding her views and examples as the ones that count. The pre-service teacher's responses work merely to confirm the supervising teacher's versions of his teaching. In this extract, T initiates the initial topic, that of 'Planning and Reflection', the first item that needs to be addressed on the evaluation form. A three part structural arrangement is made visible in this talk:

1. T introduces the topic to be discussed (guided by the items specified on the practicum evaluation form) in a long turn in which she reports her written comments and provides examples of her observations of K's practices that form the basis for her evaluation.
2. K concurs with the T's version by narrating an event that further illustrates his practices, in keeping with the supervising teacher's version of him as teacher.
3. T evaluates the usefulness of K's recounts of his experiences in relation to his professional development, and then moves on to the next topic.

This three part conversational structural arrangement was repeated for the remainder of the talk, the teacher moving on to each of the topics specified on the teacher evaluation form. Throughout the entire professional conversation, T takes the lead, initiating the topics, describing examples of K's actions and pedagogic strategies as supporting evidence to substantiate her written comments, and providing on-going continuers to both align herself with K, and to signal her approval. Simultaneously, K is compliant, supporting her versions of his practices by providing additional examples of his practices that agree with T's versions of events. As such, this is a very

one-way conversation. At no time does K initiate any topic or provide examples of his own practices that might contradict T's observations. T asks the questions and provides summative evaluative statements prior to initiating each new topic. As such, T can be seen as conversationally positioning herself, and being positioned as 'expert', whereas K is positions himself, and is positioned as 'novice' in this relationship. Such a relationship is indicative of a traditional master-apprentice model of practicum supervision, where the pedagogical activity is being interpreted exclusively on the basis of the supervising teacher's conceptions. Franke and Dahlgren (1996) warn that,

if the student teacher is not encouraged to reflect on what is done and why with respect to teaching and the teacher's work, there could be a risk of solely practical work contributing towards an acclimatisation of prevailing routines where the ongoing teacher training is labelled as an ideology. (p.639)

Interrogation of this professional conversation certainly suggests that the danger is, in this case, being actively enacted, despite K's assertion that his relationship with his supervising teacher was both positive and productive. The fundamental underlying workings of this unequal relationship seem to be invisible to both him and his supervising teacher. As such, their relationship has become both commonsensically normalised and received by both as acceptable.

DISCUSSION

The case studies presented here provide an alarming variability of the sort of experiences that pre-service teachers may encounter as they strive towards graduating from their teacher education programs. The fact that these experiences are presenting themselves for our pre-service teachers is a cause for concern. In examining these cases, we have selectively sourced literature on effective mentoring programs for pre-service teachers to provide a lens for closer analysis. The research studies outlined here relate to partnerships in mentoring, personal characteristics of good mentors, explicit mentor training, and attributes of graduating teachers. Like our case study pre-service teachers, we are searching for a framework to interpret the approaches taken by the classroom teachers. Fundamentally, however, the two cases reported here point to a glaring need for the issue of mentoring for pre-service teachers to receive greater prominence and attention.

Fairbanks, Freedman and Kahn (2000) described a university-school partnership study in which pre-service teachers were paired with experienced classroom teachers and met regularly with university staff over the period of practicum to document their experiences. From analysis of data, the authors outlined elements of effective mentoring that were evident in the conversations with the participants. Initially, the pre-service teachers valued the way their mentors oriented them to the school environment and the routines that were established in that environment. They also felt that their mentors had assisted in helping them establish their identity in the school, and this was through simple things, such as providing a separate desk in the classroom for the pre-service teacher, and introducing the pre-service teacher to the class as a teacher, and introducing the pre-service teacher to school personnel. The mentor teachers modelled interpersonal interactions with a range of school personnel (other teachers, administrators, parents), and particularly teacher-student interactions. The pre-service teachers valued the feedback by the

mentor teachers on their approach to establishing relationships with the students, particularly when the feedback was commensurate with the practices modelled by the mentor teacher. Explication of teacher 'craft' knowledge was highlighted by pre-service teachers as highly valuable yet, for the mentor teachers, this aspect of their practice was one of the most difficult to make explicit. Mentor teachers reported that they felt it was a challenge to determine how they had actually managed to get to this particular level of expertise, and to consider the journey that they had taken. One of the most positive outcomes of the mentoring partnership identified by the mentor teachers was that they found this experience to be an opportunity for their own self-renewal, where "both partners adapted old lessons, incorporated new materials, and as a result, developed a new curriculum" (p. 110). The authors of this study concluded that "effective mentors become companions on new teachers' journeys" (p. 11). What are the implications from this study? This study highlights the importance of mentor teachers being able to articulate their expertise, and how mentoring can be a valuable form of professional learning and renewal. In terms of our case studies, we are left wondering whether the teachers in two cases would regard their pre-service teachers as having anything valuable to offer them as experienced teachers. The second issue is that Fairbanks, Freedman and Kahn's (2000) case shows how the mentoring program was a triadic partnership between the University, school personnel, and pre-service teachers. The University orchestrated the program of mentoring, and organised the monthly feedback meetings which provided mentors to reflect upon their own practices as mentors.

In an early study on the issue of effective mentoring, Sudzina, Gielbelhaus and Coolican (1997) described interview results from pre-service and inservice teachers on what constitutes effective mentoring. Pre-service teachers identified good mentors as those who were willing to let them 'have a go' in the classroom and to be good communicators. One of their main concerns was that the mentors would not allow them to try out their own ideas, and that they would have to prescriptively follow established classroom practices. The classroom teachers described their views on the attributes of pre-service teachers, stating that they would expect them to come to the school experience with a willingness to work, to take responsibility to be adequately prepared, to develop good rapport with the students, and to be responsive to constructive criticism. In describing effective mentoring, the authors of this study found that the classroom teachers' responses fell into two distinct categories. On the one hand, the responses indicated that mentoring was one of serving as a role model, sharing the wisdom of experience, and an expectation that the pre-service teacher would be cooperative. The other category of responses related to mentoring as a partnership, with both parties taking responsibility for planning and teaching. This study highlights teachers' beliefs about mentoring, and suggests that some experienced teachers will naturally be better at mentoring than others, primarily due to the state of their beliefs about mentoring and their role is supporting beginning teachers to the profession. In terms of our two case studies, it could be argued that our classroom teachers, and particularly the teacher in case study one, have a belief set about mentoring that is not particularly helpful to pre-service teachers. Our second teacher seems to have a belief set about the importance of mentoring, yet she takes few steps to value the knowledge and learning that the pre-service teacher brings to the practicum experience.

What is required to bring about change to teachers' belief sets so that mentoring is regarded as a valuable and vital contribution to the profession? In terms of the two categories of responses analysed by Sudzina, Gielbelhaus and Coolican

(1997), we can surmise which category our two case study classroom teachers might fall. From the reported behaviour of case study one teacher, we would assume that he would regard the role of mentor as a very unidirectional approach. Further, we could surmise that as this teacher has not, by his own admission, planned a lesson since 1972, he would feel very comfortable with the apprenticeship model for inducting new and pre-service teachers into the profession. The teacher who participated in the second case study may or may not have conceptualised her relationship with her pre-service teacher as that of master-apprentice. However, the talk in this instance was largely teacher dominated and unidirectional, and the relationship thus talked into being certainly resembles the apprenticeship model.

Timperley (2001) reported on a more structured approach to mentor training in which mentor teachers were provided with specific guidance on how to converse with pre-service teachers to promote their professional learning. In the process of the training, the mentor teachers became more skilled in providing constructive feedback, and this was cited as a valued aspect of the program as reported by the pre-service teachers. Timperley's study exemplifies the high level of commitment to the process of mentoring that is required, but also how the benefits of such training contribute to the professional growth of the pre-service teachers in terms of developing their own teacher craft knowledge, but also for the mentor teachers in terms of reflecting upon their own practice. In this study, elements for effective conversations with pre-service teachers were identified, and primarily included data-based feedback where mentor teachers could state issues of concern in pre-service teachers' practice and provide specific examples they had observed. Effecting change to pre-service teachers' practice was facilitated when pre-service teachers themselves enunciated issues. The challenge in the professional conversations was to lead the pre-service teachers to verbalise particular areas of practice already identified as an issue by mentors through their observations. Through conversations about teaching, the goal was for the pre-service and mentor teacher to develop a shared action plan for implementation. The program of mentor training reported in this study was one of explicit guidelines for effective conversations. Data collected indicated the effectiveness of the training in terms of building mentor teachers' competence in providing pre-service teachers with constructive feedback in a collegial and non-confrontational manner. This study highlights the importance of a structured mentoring program with specific guidelines. Other literature on effective mentoring discusses the need for mentors to be good listeners, to be warm and approachable, to be supportive and encouraging (e.g., Enz, 1992; Odell, 1990) in order to establish the relationship that has found to be successful in the mentor-mentee situation. Timperley's study provides more specific guidelines upon which to enhance the personal skills that mentors bring to the mentoring situation to positively progress the development of pre-service teachers' professional teaching skills. In terms of our case study pre-service teachers, we can surmise that both our mentor teachers could potentially benefit from training in conversation to promote pre-service teacher learning, although our snapshot (case study one) provides little evidence of conversation between the pre-service teacher and the classroom teacher. With the second case study pre-service teacher, we see conversation between the mentor and pre-service teacher, but little evidence of the elements suggested by Timperley. In this situation, the conversation shows a very uneven power relationship, with the mentor providing few opportunities for the pre-service teacher to express his own personal philosophies on teaching and learning.

A recent study by Sands and Goodwin (2005) reports on the issue of licensing graduating teachers to make them eligible to take up teaching positions within the

profession. This study is interesting in that it highlights how graduate teacher attributes are used as a standard to certify teachers before they are allowed to enter the profession. Sands and Goodwin report on the attributes required, which fall into broad categories of classroom management, democratic schooling and professionalism, student learning characteristics and needs, literacy assessment and instruction, mathematics assessment and instruction and technology. In this exploratory study, practicing teachers as well as other school-based and University personnel were asked to assess the degree to which teacher candidates met the specified attributes, using a range of performance-based assessments. One of the most alarming aspects of this study was the fact that it became evident that some of the practicing teachers performing the assessments could not demonstrate the required attributes to a sufficient degree to that required by the teacher candidates. When considering the attributes used for licensing as reported, many questions are raised as to the exhaustiveness of the list, and the degree to which they clearly encapsulate the complex work of teachers. However, when these attributes are used to consider the classroom teacher in our first presented case study, in particular, it would seem that such attributes are a potentially useful place to start.

CONCLUSION

The two case studies reported in this paper are real examples of what is currently occurring in some schools, and of the sorts of experiences that some pre-service teachers confront during the practicum components of their teacher education courses. The literature on mentoring provides a multitude of lenses through which to analyse the two cases presented here. Our goal, however, was not to address the many issues associated with the professional development of pre-service teachers in schools, but to confirm the need for training for effective mentoring in order to facilitate the possibility of positive and productive practicum experiences for all involved. The task of mentoring is not an easy one and, like the development of expertise in teaching, requires support and scaffolding. If such training is required, there needs to be further recognition of the increased expertise and higher level of service for teachers who take up opportunities to increase their expertise in this area. It is through tangible recognition that teachers might be encouraged to undertake such courses.

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Appendix 1:

Transcription Conventions

, Just noticeable pause
(.5), (2.6) Examples of timed pauses (in seconds)
? Rise of pitch

[word
square brackets: overlapping talk

[word

hh breathiness or laughter
() talk unclear or untranscribable
// no discernible pause between turns
(()) transcriber's notes