Forming the Mentor-Mentee Relationship

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Abstract

A positive mentor-mentee relationship is essential for mentees' development of teaching practices. As mentors hold the balance of power in the relationship, how do mentors develop positive mentor-mentee relationships? This multi-case study involved: (1) written responses from over 200 teachers involved in a mentoring professional development program, (2) nineteen mentor teachers with written responses and audio recorded focus groups, (3) two pairs of mentors and mentees with audio-recorded interviews. Findings revealed that positive relationships require the achievement of trust and respect by sharing information, resources, and expectations and by being professional, enthusiastic, and supportive with collaborative problem solving. A model is presented that outlines ways in which mentors can form positive mentor-mentee relationships.

Keywords: Relationships, mentor, preservice teacher, mentee.

Introduction

Mentoring is founded on the relationship between the mentor, as a more experienced professional, and the mentee as one who is learning about the profession. The purpose of this research is to identify ways in which mentor teachers can form positive mentor-mentee relationships. The research gathers evidence on how mentors have formed positive relationships and collates data to generate a model to assist mentors in thinking about how to form positive mentoring relationships.

Literature Review

Relationships and relationship building are essential in teaching, particularly as a way to engage students in education (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012) and facilitate productive collaborations with colleagues and parents (e.g., Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; Merrill, 2006; Romano & Gibson, 2006). Preservice teachers are learning about relationships and relationship building within the teaching profession when they enter the school system. They are required to work closely with their mentor teachers (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). Mentoring allows preservice teachers (mentees) in the formative stages of learning how to teach to engage productively with a more experienced teacher. The mentoring relationship is formalised within school experiences (e.g., practicum and internship) when the mentor accepts a mentee in the mentor teacher's classroom. At this point, the mentor-mentee relationship begins to construct socially. Beutel and Spooner-Lane (2009) asserted that the success of mentoring relationships lies in the skills and knowledge of the mentors; yet this also necessitates developing professional-personal relationships.

Mentors demonstrate a range of levels of interacting with their mentees from those who are highly supportive to laissez-faire or ad hoc approaches (O'Brien & Goddard, 2006), which can contribute to the quality of outcomes (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009). Mentors and mentees form professional relationships at varying levels and these "mentoring

relationships are conceptualized as close relationships that occur along a spectrum from highly functional to highly dysfunctional, with most occurring in between" (Gormley, 2008, p. 45). This recognises the complexities in various mentoring relationships and that research is required to understand "the complex interactions that constrain and promote these relationships" (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008, p. 2143). Consequently, a guided approach to mentoring can assist mentors in their practices and help to build effective professional relationships. The quality of the mentor-mentee relationship is underpinned by a variety of factors, including the mentor's and mentee's personal and professional qualities (Rippon & Martin, 2006), their skills and practices (Hall, Draper, Smith, & Bullough, 2008), the environment or context in which mentoring operates (Forsbach-Rothman, 2007), and the selection and pairing of mentors and mentees to form productive relationships (Hobson et al., 2009).

Despite mentors operating at complex levels with competing demands that shape their actions (Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009), there can be lost opportunities for learning how to teach when mentors do not have a sound relationship with mentees to enable the provision of constructive feedback. Although Niehoff (2006) focused on mentoring in another occupation, the findings of mentors' personality predictors to become a mentor may have relevance to teaching. Niehoff discovered that "mentoring involves active engagement in an environment requiring social, task, and idea-related capabilities, thus individuals who are extroverted, conscientious, and open to experience would likely feel more comfortable" (p. 321). Other researchers (Gehrke, 1988; Gormley, 2008) highlight the critical nature of strong interpersonal skills for mentors in order to articulate pedagogical knowledge effectively to their mentees. Obstacles to successful mentoring relationships mainly involve a mentor's lack of support for the mentee, poor interpersonal skills, and inadequate time for

two-way dialoguing. These and other issues provide a rationale for more rigorous mentor-selection processes (Kilburg, 2007; McCann & Johannessen, 2009).

Though mentor selection is another issue, the inadequate number of willing mentors is another obstacle, which presents as a rationale for educating mentors to build the quality and quantity of available mentors (Hudson, 2010). When entering into a mentor-mentee relationship, Anderson (2007) found among 48 mentor teachers and 56 preservice teachers that mentors and mentees need to be aware of the power differential in the mentoring roles. Hansman (2003) outlined that "mentoring is a social constructed power relationship, and the power that mentors have and exercise within mentoring relationships can be helpful or hurtful" to the mentee (p. 15); consequently mentees must learn how to manage mentors to ensure maximum benefits (Maynard, 2000). It is also important to note that the mentoring relationship can assist mentees' psychosocial development, as "mentoring relationships can be powerful and life-changing events in people's lives" (Hansman, 2003, p. 14).

Bradbury and Koballa (2008) identified sources of tension in mentoring relationships when power exists with the mentor, where the mentee "may be unwilling to question the practices of the school or mentor teacher for fear of fracturing the relationship or affecting the mentors' evaluation of their progress" (p. 2135). Bradbury and Koballa continued to outline that within didactic communication, other concerns may surface such as tensions between teaching philosophies and mentor guidance that can contrast education reform ideologies. In addition, the mentor's dual role as confidant and assessor to the mentee can be a catalyst for further relationship tensions (Ganser, 1996). There is evidence that both partners need "to illuminate expectations and to foster productive communication" to build relationships (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008, p. 2143).

Mentees seek professional and personal qualities in their mentors (O'Brien & Christie, 2005). Many researchers (e.g., Rajuan, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2007; Rippon & Martin, 2003)

have demonstrated how mentees place importance on a positive relationship with their

mentors, with the mentor's personal attributes (e.g., personal intelligence, interpersonal

skills) surrounding the mentoring process. Hudson (2006) outlined that mentor's personal

attributes contribute to the mentoring process and includes: having the personal qualities for

the mentee to be willing to reflect with the mentor, being supportive, being comfortable with

talking, being an active listener, and instilling positive attitudes and confidence in the mentee.

These qualities are claimed to assist in building the mentor-mentee relationship. Mentees can

also develop personal attributes to assist them in interacting with their mentors, such as being

motivated and reflective (Moberg, 2008). In a mixed-method study, Hudson (2013) found

that experienced mentor teachers want specific desirable mentee attributes such as:

enthusiasm for teaching, being personable for relationship building (not just with the mentor

but also with students, staff and parents), displaying commitment to children and their

learning, being a lifelong learning, having the ability to reflect on constructive feedback,

having resilience, and taking responsibility for their learning. Indeed, mentees can have

adverse experiences that require further support to gain a level of resilience (Gu & Day,

2012; Howard & Johnson, 2004).

Undoubtedly, a positive mentor-mentee relationship would help to facilitate a

successful teaching experience, hence it is important to discover ways mentors and mentees

can contribute to the relationship development (Margolis, 2007). A positive mentoring

relationship where mentors employ personal attributes can assist mentees to reflect on

practices towards achieving student outcomes (Sempowicz & Hudson, 2012); yet the process

begins with forming the mentor-mentee relationship. In teaching and in other occupations

(e.g., Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Gibson, 2004; Gormley, 2008), there is a call for more

qualitative studies to uncover attributes and practices that may assist in understanding

successful mentoring relationships. The research question was: How can mentors, in their positions of power, form positive mentor-mentee relationships?

Method

This research used a grounded-theory design as it formed "initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information" (Creswell, 2012, p. 424). The mentor-mentee relationship was a category for axial coding to occur, that is, other categories were identified that related to this central category. It was intended to generate a theory and model around this central category (see e.g., Creswell, 2012). In this qualitative multi-case study collected data from Australian teachers (predominantly Caucasian females) about their understandings of forming mentor-mentee relationships. All participants had either completed or were completing the Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET) program. This MET program was conducted by facilitators over two full days for some but others were involved in 12 one-hour sessions held within the school by a MET facilitator. The MET sessions included school culture and infrastructure, developing the mentor-mentee relationship, understanding desirable personal attributes for mentors and conflict resolution, which comprised one third of the MET program. Other sessions focused on mentoring for effective teaching about the education system requirements, articulating pedagogical knowledge, modelling teaching practices, and providing feedback to the mentee. For instance, articulating pedagogical knowledge involved eleven literature-based practices, based around: planning for teaching, timetabling and timing teaching, preparation of resources, selecting teaching strategies, having appropriate content knowledge for student learning, problem solving, classroom management, questioning skills, implementation of the lesson structure, assessment of and for learning, and the mentor's viewpoints of teaching (further details about the program can be noted here: www.tedd.net.au).

There were three case studies: (a) many mentors ($n>200$) provided written comments about how to form positive mentor-mentee relationships during the MET programs – selected as a result of facilitating eight MET programs; (b) nineteen mentors provided written responses and were audio-recorded during small focus-group and open-class discussions, and were randomly selected from one of the MET programs; and (c) two pairs of mentors and mentees were interviewed using a digital audio recorder in the school setting either the second last day or last day of the preservice teachers' four-week practicum. The two pairs of mentors and mentees were selected purposively (proximity and ease of access) from a range of different schools associated with the university's practicum program. Interview questions focused on the forming of positive mentor-mentee relationships. Data from these three case studies ($n>200$, $n=19$, $n=4$) were transcribed by an experienced research assistant with a PhD. Analysis involved a constant comparative method with provision of examples as representative of participant responses, which also assists in determining validity and trustworthiness of the findings (e.g., see Creswell, 2012).

Findings and Discussion

Multiple MET Program Analysis ($n>200$)

Analysis from eight MET programs (approximately 25 to 30 participants in each program) where participants ($n>200$) wrote their responses on how mentors can assist to form the mentor-mentee relationship indicated distinct mentor actions for facilitating this process. Many participants ($n=55$) claimed that a two-way sharing of experiences for learning about each other would initially help to form the relationship. More specifically, 18 of the 55 responses emphasised the use of personable attributes such as attentive listening, displaying a sense of humour, having empathy and asking questions as part of the two-way exchange of experiences. It was stated by one participant that questions can focus on the mentee's "background – strengths, weaknesses, motivations for teaching, previous practicum

experiences" while other comments were based on getting to know the mentee personally such as asking questions about them. Open and honest communication was considered essential by 45 participants, with 19 of these 45 outlining how this communication would help to facilitate constructive feedback to the mentee. This open and honest communication was noted as a "shared responsibility by both parties to engage in meaningful conversations – making the best use of each other's time". Participants (n=26) highlighted the attribute of enthusiasm as a friendly, optimistic approach for developing a positive professional relationship.

Articulating expectations was written down by 33 participants as a way to develop a professional relationship through which goals, visions, and clear parameters for mentees to engage in their work. One participant wrote, "Clear framework on when they will teach, you will teach, when you/they will teach, when they will take control". There were nine participants who highlighted that such expectations must be a two-way articulation, that is, mentees also need to have opportunities to express their expectations. This lends itself to a collegial sharing of information that would help to form a positive mentor-mentee relationship. Being supportive was written by 21 participants, some of whom outlined trust and having a caring approach would help to develop the relationship. There were four participants from this group who outlined that support must show the mentor as being non judgemental about the mentee. As there can be tensions within the mentor's dual role as an assessor and confidant (Ganser, 1996), the mentor needs to assess the mentee's teaching practices without being judgemental about the person. Indeed, mentors who exhibit subjectivity were noted in some responses as a possible catalyst for "personality clashes".

Participants wrote about other ways to facilitate professional relationships with their mentees, such as: displaying respect for the mentee (n=13), problem solving collaboratively (n=11), sharing information by meeting the mentee prior to formal school visits (n=6), the

mentor's sharing and modelling of expectations (n=4), and supporting the mentee through other social interactions within the school (n=4). Importantly, 17 of these participants emphasised that support required allocating and "investing time" in the mentee with a further 8 claiming such investment in time should be dedicated mostly to pedagogical practices and reflecting on teaching practices.

Written Responses and Audio Recordings (n=19)

As a case study, there was one Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET) program with a group of participants (mentor teachers n=19) who were researched over the MET two-day period. These mentor teachers claimed a positive mentor-mentee relationship helps to "develop trust" and "optimise benefits" and "productivity". Written responses argued that a favourable relationship makes the "participants more willing to invest time". It was noted that positive relationships can help to avoid conflicts with can lead to "→ negative impact on wider community → collapse" (arrows included). It was also suggested that "individuals should be matched carefully for a non-threatening relationship, but not too comfortable so that no effort is made to improve practice". The key issues for mentors around mentor-mentee relationships included: the level of mentor's skills, time, increased responsibility, "tension with role as confidante" ("balancing between being mentor and friend"), setting expectations clearly, and the "need for disclosure". These participants recognised that mentors can have an impact on forming a positive mentor-mentee relationship by: exhibiting a "willingness to be collegial and professional", "scheduling time", "respecting confidentiality", "being open in terms of not just sitting down talking, [but] model practice, seeing how you operate, sharing openly own struggles", "allowing for and recognising opportunities for success, e.g. sharing success, good practice, validate", and taking a "holistic view of person, recognising things that are happening outside of school".

A meeting time prior to commencing the formal school experience was considered valuable by these mentors for establishing a positive mentor-mentee relationship. For instance, one participant, who received consensus with the focus group, argued the need to meet face-to-face with the mentee before the mentee commences the school experience. Yet, there were other suggestions for developing the relationship where face-to-face meetings were not always possible, for example:

> Prior to the beginning being able to have a time to meet and sometimes that's a face-to-face meeting ideally. Other times it's going to be via email but trying to form some kind of interpersonal relationship and get a bit of information about one another.

In one of the focus group conversations between five of the nineteen mentor teachers, the idea of having a universal serial bus (USB) that included information about the school culture and infrastructure, pertinent school policies, other information and mentor expectations was noted as a "starting point for that relationship... because the preservice teacher has that clear expectation" and relevant information. From this point, the conversation continued as follows:

> Mentor A: It's organisation.
>
> Mentor B: And treating them as a professional.
>
> Mentor A: And valuing them and showing that you actually are welcoming them. Do you know what I mean? I think it shows a welcoming of them by being respectful of them like "Here is all the information so that you can be prepared and so that you can succeed".
>
> Mentor C: And it's an accountability point so that if there are issues then "Remember when I gave you the expectations, this is where they're written down. Tell me what's happening here and why this has become a problem". We were talking about being able to have information, ideally to meet the children and possibly get involved and build relationships especially with key students early on.

Mentor C reported back to the whole MET class about the USB kit idea and building relationships but also announced:

> ...having that accountability to those shared standards and noticing the positives "that was great how you addressed the teacher aid about that". And obviously feedback. And then we [the group of five mentors] started talking about being able to manage the frustrations where personalities don't work together.

This was where another mentor teacher reported back from a different group saying that in developing the mentor-mentee relationship it was important for the mentor to be open with the mentee by:

> ...acknowledging your [mentor's] areas of weaknesses... "we're not all perfect, we all make mistakes as well and this is what my weakness is and you probably will have seen that" and acknowledging [their] mistakes as well to make them feel comfortable about it's okay if they make mistakes.

The two thoughts about having clear mentor expectations and making mistakes were drawn together by another mentor, presenting a risk-taking approach: "we have high expectations but they're achievable, they're clear and getting the mentees to actually take a risk, encourage them with that communication to take risks 'it's okay to take a risk, don't just be in your comfort zone'".

From the pool of 19 mentors, another focus group discussed ways to alleviate the pressures sometimes linked with risk taking. Mentor E outlined a useful procedure where he uses an observation tool that has been discussed ith the mentee previously, from which the mentee nominates two areas for observational focus (e.g., questioning skills and content knowledge). Then, in an about face, he provides the tool to the mentee to observe him teaching with a focus on these observational areas. He also suggested that through his observation he would provide two positive aspects about the mentee's teaching and two areas for improvement and then reverse the role, that is, the mentee provides two positives and two

areas for improvement about the mentor's teaching. This focus group analysed these ideas for developing a positive relationship as follows:

> Mentor E: So I give them the same [observation] sheet and I get them to ask me "what are my weakness" and I put them out there. And what I'd like them to focus on and then give them the sheet to observe me at the same time and we debrief that.

> Mentor F: Can I add on to that because I liked to do the same thing when I was teaching but I found that students were a bit shy to give me a weakness so I used to call it a wonder. So two stars and a wonder. So something that you think, "Why did you do that?" or umm ... "Would you have done that a different way?" And they felt a bit more comfortable wondering rather than giving a criticism.

> Mentor G: I think too, with the mistakes, it's turning the focus into "what can we learn from this?" which makes it a safer environment as well. It's how can we learn, yeah, what are we going to learn from this now.

> Mentor H: ...allocating time to the whole process and making sure that it's a priority because so often the mentor teachers are all so involved in so many other roles that this may not be their greatest priority.

Paired Mentor-Mentee Relationships

The last case study involved interviewing two pairs of mentors and mentees (*n*=4) individually at the conclusion of a four-week school experience. During this period, it is expected from university guidelines that the mentor teacher models and articulates pedagogical knowledge practices to guide the mentee into teaching lessons. Table 1 presents the mentor demographics, for instance, Mentor 1 (M1) has 12 years experience at this school and is currently on a Year 3 class. M1 has mentored more than 30 mentees, and appears as the most experienced mentor teacher in this case study. This mentor had undertaken the Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET, see www.tedd.net.au) training program and is mentoring a university student who is in her fifth year (because this student had to re-do

incomplete university coursework because of ill health). This mentee, who was partnered with M1, reported that she had taught more than 40 lessons during this 4-week period, which amounts to an average of about two lessons per day. An analysis of the mentor-mentee interviews will be presented in the following.

Table 1. *Mentors' Demographics*

Mentor and mentee information	Mentor 1	Mentor 2
Number of years at this school	12	16
Current teaching grade	3	1
Number of mentees during career	>30	>20
Undertook MET training program	Yes	Yes
Mentee's current year at university	5	3
Number of lessons taught by the mentee	>40	7

Mentor 1 (M1), who was a teaching deputy principal of the school, claimed to be a "natural mentor" with her "biggest focus with mentoring preservice teachers is building relationships". She said her methods for building relationships was "all about taking time, listening to them, building relationships, finding connections and developing that relationship as they go along". She indicated the use of terms that facilitated relationship building such as "we're a team here". M1 stated that her preservice teacher was "all about relationship building too... and I think it's just the relationship we've built together". Yet she said the relationship was on a professional basis only, which appeared to instil respect, "we're not best friends or any of that sort of thing. There's still that fine line but she respects me and I respect her". The level of respect for the mentee was noted in M1's support with "lots of discussions... talk about reflections and the effect that reflections have on your next lesson".

Part of developing the respect seemed to be the mentor's expectations, for instance: "I have high expectations; this school has high expectations like many other schools do".

M1 highlighted that her expectations included "extensive planning" and asking questions such as "if a child didn't achieve a concept what are you going to do about it?". She expected her mentee to assess work thoroughly and ensure there was always follow up on students' work "whether it's homework, whether it's lunchtime whether you talk to them now, whether you talk to parents". M1 would share her achievements and also her challenges such as "we talk about difficult parents, we talk about children and their backgrounds and why they come to school like this and how we need to support them". It was very clear that M1's main motivation for developing a positive mentor-mentee relationship was to have her Year 3 students succeed, "Especially in this class they're quite low level and they've made massive improvements compared to any other 3 class".

Mentee 1, on the other hand, claimed that the relationship was "both personal and professional". She emphasised how the relationship was friendly, as her mentor was "very open" and made her "feel like part of the furniture, she's great, she makes me fit in". This was noted in how her mentor supported her with reflective discussions about teaching practices and students' learning and "lots of access to resources". She stated that her mentor's expectations included: "work hard, turn up every day, be prepared, organisation that was a big one... she's really drummed into me about coming in early or get it done the day before". Both M1 and Mentee 1 had a successful professional relationship and assessment of the mentee's teaching showed a high success rate across the measureable categories (e.g., planning, organisation, classroom management, & assessment). It appeared from both perspectives that this relationship was built upon mutual respect and effective communication with clear expectations.

Mentor 2 (M2) claimed she had an "open supportive relationship where she [the mentee] is allowed to express her insecurities and in an open way so that we can work on those". This was articulated as an expectation within the relationship: "I've sort of made it quite clear that is to identify her weaknesses and that's what we want to work on to make it her strengths". The level of support provided around this expectation was also forthcoming, "for example, one of the weaknesses she [the mentee] identified was behaviour management so I provided her with reading material explaining different ways, different styles of and strategies for behaviour management and we focused on trialling those". Here, the mentor provided resources and facilitated discussions around the "weaknesses" so that she could "come to her own conclusion as to what things she'd like to try". This was further supported when the mentee would trial an action to test its success, for which M2 stated:

Mainly I think I supported her through her risk taking in that learning to be a teacher is taking risks, it isn't always going to work out how you want. But the secret is to recognise that that didn't work and change it.

M2 claimed she had high expectations, particularly with a strong focus on her Year 1 students' learning, including explaining the lesson goals, assisting specific students and "differentiation for the others". She explained that her expectations involved her mentee providing "explicit instruction, modelling what was required and then following up on becoming aware of who actually attained the goals and having that assessment in your head, of who was where, who wasn't, who needed something else".

Mentee 2 stated the relationship with her mentor "was a really close relationship between us". Although her mentor did not mention a personal relationship, Mentee 2 claimed that they would "share actual personal things about each other and our life, not only... it's just not about just the professional school work, it's you know she shares you know personal things with me". Mentee 2 claimed there were mentor-mentee conversations around the

"struggles she's had becoming a teacher", which supports M2's claim about having an open supportive relationship, but there was also the aspect of encouraging this mentee "to do my best". Mentee 2 outlined the access to resources provided by her mentor: "She gave me a lot of resources which were valuable… I've got ten pages of behaviour management strategies so different ones that I can try". This was further supported with advice from her mentor, for instance, according to Mentee 2, "She said one will not work the whole time so you need to keep trying different ones". Importantly, this mentee noted how her mentor helped with planning and with student differentiation "to make modifications to see how the kids are coping with everything". Mentee 2 said her mentor's expectations were largely based on professionalism "right from the start… we share personal things but don't bring it into the classroom just be professional". Professionalism encompassed broad and specific roles (and behaviours) for this mentee, which transcended into classroom practices such as "how I catered for the different learners in the classroom… asking them questions and setting them different tasks".

Forming the mentor-mentee relationship appeared to have respect and trust at the centre of this two-way interaction (Figure 1). Relationships identified in this study required the mentor and mentee to work closely together (see also Hobson et al., 2009). The mentors are privy to the possible "struggles" and vulnerabilities mentees have in becoming teachers, which necessitates a high level of trust on behalf of the mentees. Similarly, mentors expose their teaching practices to another adult who is being educated about critical analysis of teaching, and mentors are obliged to hand over their classes to mentees, which also requires a high level of trust from the mentors. Participants indicated that the mentor-mentee relationship was socially constructed through open communication within a supportive, friendly and personally non-judgemental environment that is formed around respect and trust. For example, mentor-mentee interviews (*n*=4) suggested close relationships where respect

and trust appeared to be linchpins in relationship building (see also Gormley, 2008). These mentees trusted the mentors to guide their development through a personal-professional relationship, also presented by Rippon and Martin (2006), and the sharing of information and practices (e.g., Hall et al., 2008). In a collaborative relationship, both parties would rely on each other's professionalism for teaching the class. The interviewed mentors and mentees were not purposively selected or matched and these relationships were considered successful, despite Hobson et al. (2009) explaining that matching is a way to have successful mentoring relationships. However, these mentors had undertaken a mentoring program to understand how to mentor effectively for which the outcome of the mentoring at the conclusion of a four-week school experience was registered formally as successful.
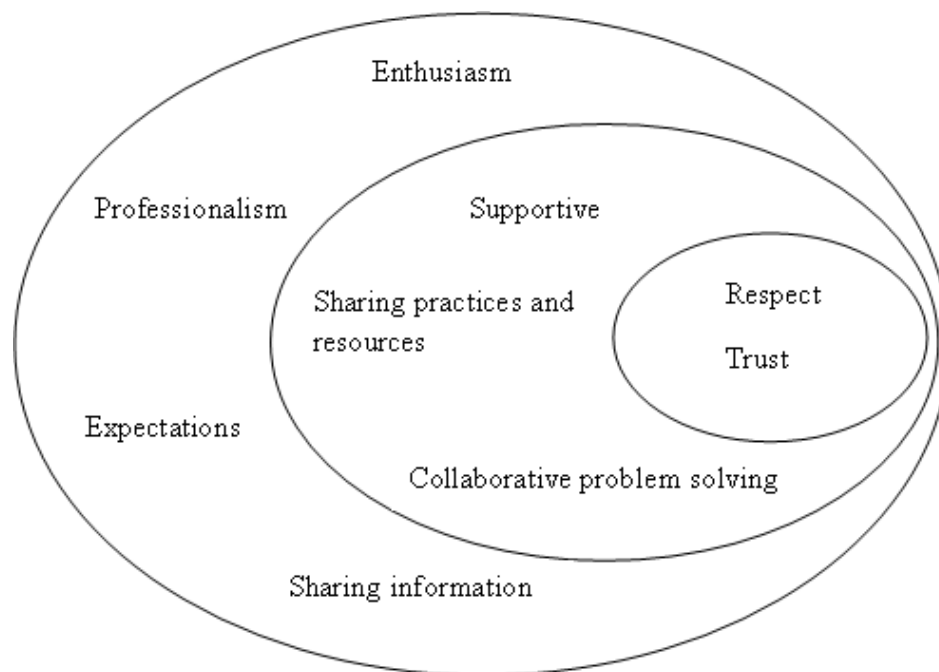

Figure 1. Model for forming the mentor-mentee relationship

It was indicated that forming more trust in the relationship required the mentor to have open and honest two-way communication about professional practices. In the focus group (*n*=19), mentors explained that articulating their own pedagogical weaknesses builds the relationship, which is based on open and honest communication, trusting one another to

share these weaknesses for the purposes of seeking improvement. However, there was also the firm direction that sharing personal information between the mentor and mentee, despite the possibility of it being emotionally taxing, should not affect the teaching in the classroom. Hence, professionalism was a surrounding theme for ensuring the relationship remains in its designated field and as a contributing factor for meeting teaching goals. O'Brien and Goddard (2006) inferred that higher levels of mentor-mentee interaction appear based on the level of supportiveness. This supportive relationship translates into mentor actions such as attentive listening, thoughtful risk-taking endeavours, and sharing of information and resources to guide the mentee around effective pedagogical practices. Consequently, this level of support may indeed contribute to the quality of the outcomes (see Hellsten et al., 2009).

There was an indication that mentors need to be actively involved in supporting the mentee through social, task-oriented activities, as outlined by Niehoff (2006), and although a level of conscientiousness seemed to be applicable, the need to have extroverted natures were not shown in this study. Indeed, the mentors' responses in this study did not suggest an obvious power differential, though power to form the relationship appeared to be more with the mentors (see Hansman, 2003); instead various comments projected to a more collaborative arrangement between the mentor and mentee to build trust and respect (see Figure 1). In reality, the mentor holds the balance of power within the mentor-mentee relationship especially with "ownership" of the classroom teaching and the power to accept or dismiss the mentee from the class; hence mentors need to be mindful of how this power can be used to create a collaborative, two-way interaction by building a positive mentor-mentee relationship. Outlining expectations of each other's role were considered essential towards forming the relationship (see also Bradbury & Koballa, 2008) and undertaking a

mentoring training program also provided mentors with opportunities to analyse pedagogical practices that would advance the mentoring relationship.

Conclusion

The findings from this study showed that there were complex levels with competing demands that shaped the mentor-mentee relationship (see also Valencia et al., 2009). It was demonstrated that successful mentor-mentee relationships need to build mutual respect and trust with personal-professional attributes and practices that contribute to the relationship development (see also Margolis, 2007). It appeared that mentors utilise personal attributes (e.g., attentive listening, humour, honest communication; Hudson, 2006, 2010) to facilitate the mentoring process and allocate sufficient time to build and sustain the relationship. Understandings about relationships and relationship building may assist the mentoring relationship and relationships with students, colleagues and parents, deemed to be essential for teaching (Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; Pianta et al., 2012). In its very essence, social constructivism as an epistemological stance projects relationships as a key for learning (Vygotsky, 1978), whether the mentee is learning about teaching or the student is learning within the class. The sharing of expectations and learning between the mentor and mentee were noted as a way to form the relationship.

Another outcome of this study was that mentors suggested they share experiences by divulging their pedagogical weaknesses with tangible solutions to mentees as a method of modelling open self reflection and that as experienced teachers they are not infallible but rather on a continued learning journey about teaching, particularly in relation to individual classes and students. This sharing of information through open self reflection was deemed to build trust and respect for the mentee to engage comfortably in the same type of practices. In addition, the model (Figure 1) generated from the study may assist mentors and mentees to understand how to form positive mentoring relationships, though this model would require

further exploration and refinement. Nevertheless, in this professional relationship, a mentor's enthusiasm for mentoring a mentee, sharing information about the school and class, and sharing expectations can lay the foundations for a productive relationship. On-going mentor support, sharing of teaching practices and resources with collaborative problem solving were further actions claimed to further develop the relationship. It was also emphasised that positive mentor actions leads towards respect and trust, where the mentee can feel supported for teaching in the classroom (Figure 1). Indeed, actions noted in Figure 1 may be reciprocated in many ways with the mentee also taking an active role in forming and sustaining the mentoring relationship, particularly as the mentoring relationship is a two-way endeavour. The research focuses mainly on the mentor's contribution to the mentoring relationship and requires further in-depth qualitative studies to determine the impact of the mentor's actions on the relationship. More research is also needed to understand common roles both mentors and mentees can undertake to form and sustain positive mentoring relationships.

Positive relationships are pivotal for advancing any organisation, and in teaching where relationships exist on multiple levels, a key part of the mentee's learning will be about learning how to develop positive relationships, which can be modelled and facilitated by the mentor. Mentors supporting mentees implies a trusting and respectful relationship, and regardless of subject areas, it appears that the mentoring relationship, including psychosocial support, can have an effect on the quality of the mentoring (e.g., Ayers & Griffin, 2005). Undoubtedly, forming positive and productive relationships also requires mentees to exhibit desirable attributes and practices (Hudson, 2013). Indeed, just as mentors can engage in mentoring programs to advance their practices, mentees will also require education about desirable attributes and practices that they can draw upon to aid in forming and sustaining productive mentoring relationships. Both parties need to be aware of the personal-

professional actions that can aid in forming a successful mentoring relationship; additionally providing mentoring programs that facilitate this awareness in mentors and mentees may lead towards more productive outcomes.

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Biography

Associate Professor Peter Hudson (*PhD, MEd, BEd, DipTeach*) has a teaching career spanning 34 years (http://staff.qut.edu.au/staff/hudsonpb). He has over 100 publications in journals and conferences and supervises national and international doctoral students. Hudson's Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET) model (http://tedd.net.au/mentoring-for-effective-teaching/) is at the forefront of his work in schools.