

How can a mentor's personal attributes and pedagogical knowledge develop a preservice teacher's behaviour management?

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Introduction

This study presents the importance of a mentor's (experienced teacher's) personal attributes and pedagogical knowledge for developing a mentee's (preservice teacher's) teaching practices. Specifically, preservice teachers can have difficulties with behaviour management and must learn management strategies that help them to teach more effectively. This paper investigates how mentoring may facilitate the development of a mentee's behaviour management strategies, in particular what personal attributes and pedagogical knowledge are used in this process.

Literature Review

More than 20% of beginning teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Ewing, 2001). Early-career teachers, including preservice teachers, claim that classroom management can cause significant apprehension (Lewis, Romi, Qui, & Katz, 2005; Putman, 2009).

Managing student behaviour is high on the list of priorities for teachers (Australian Education Union, 2006); particularly as unsuccessful student management can produce teacher stress and early burn out (Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 1999). Of particular concern to preservice teachers is managing "relatively low level behaviours" (Crosswell, 2009, p. 42) such as students calling out, being off task or refusing to follow instructions. Burden (2003) states, "classroom management involves teacher actions to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation" (p. 3).

With a growing focus on school-wide approaches to positive behaviour support (Rogers, 2007), early-career teachers need guidance from experienced and respected teachers and leaders (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Experience is not the only deciding factor, particularly if some teachers who have had decades of experience continue to have classroom management

problems. Teachers who have developed classroom wisdom learn that mutual respect plays a key part in working with students towards facilitating positive learning environments (Sprick, 2009). When learning how to implement positive classroom management practices, mentor teachers who have learnt effective behaviour management strategies are well positioned to model these practices and explain school-wide programs to their mentees (Snowman, Dobozy, Scevak, Bryer, Bartlett, & Biehler, 2009). In addition to the support and guidance provided by the mentor, a preservice teacher can develop classroom management skills by being a reflective practitioner (Arthur-Kelly, Lyons, Butterfield, & Gordon, 2007; Larrivee, 2009; Schön, 1987). On a systems level, the Australian National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching (MCEETYA, 2003) emphasises continuous critical reflection on teaching practices as a way for improvement. Observing, practising, reflecting and improving on classroom management practices during field experience can assist the transition from university theory to effective teaching.

Unal and Unal (2009) outline three dimensions of classroom management to include managing instructions, people, and behaviour. Behaviour management has long been recognised as a way to support the teaching and learning processes. Unal and Unal further discuss how effective behaviour management requires proactive planning of expected behaviours to prevent such behaviours. Behaviour management measures may include non-interventionist, interactionist and interventionist approaches. Although preservice teachers tend to use interactionist approaches where they manage students' behaviour in the moment, management strategies can change with more knowledge of the students and more experience in the classroom. Nevertheless, it is important for preservice teachers to develop competency in behaviour management as efficiently as possible, which can be facilitated by university coursework and teachers, in their roles as mentors, within school classrooms.

The literature has grown significantly in the area of mentoring, and empirical evidence has been gathered to present effective mentoring practices for guiding a preservice teacher's development. Developmental theories of mentoring and humanistic approaches tend to focus on mentor behaviours and actions as part of relationship building with the mentee to facilitate the mentee's development (Ehrich, 2009). Many perceive learning as a one-way flow of information from mentor to mentee with unequal power balance (Clutterbuck, 2004), while Ehrich explains that there is a power exchange in effective mentoring processes. Indeed, successful mentor-mentee relationships develop and change whereby the mentee constructs a professional teacher identity (Rippon & Martin, 2006). There can be difficulties in mentoring (Long, 1997), with great variation from one mentor to another in the level of mentoring (Beutel

& Spooner-Lane, 2009). Guiding the mentoring process needs to be thoughtfully implemented for the mentee to maximise learning opportunities. However, there is little or no literature that shows how a mentor can guide a preservice teacher specifically in the development of effective classroom management. A five-factor model for mentoring has previously been identified in the literature, namely, personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling, and feedback, and items associated with each factor have been statistically justified (see Hudson, Skamp, & Brooks, 2005). This model had associated attributes and practices, which provided a theoretical framework for gathering data around mentoring, and two factors will be used specifically for understanding the mentoring towards effective classroom management (i.e., personal attributes and pedagogical knowledge; see Hudson, 2010).

The research question was: How can a mentor's personal attributes and pedagogical knowledge develop a preservice teacher's behaviour management practices?

Context

This study is located at a satellite campus of a large Australian university. The campus is situated in a low socio-economic area and, as a result, the campus strategic plan promotes community engagement such as practicum and internship for advancing preservice teacher education. The campus was successful in a grant application titled *Teacher Education Done Differently* (TEDD), with an aim to enhance mentoring practices for preservice teachers. In consultation with school site co-ordinators, principals and teachers, a mentoring professional development program was created to promote effective mentoring practices for mentors (supervising classroom teachers).

Thirty-eight preservice teachers enrolled in a field experience program were placed in their schools in week 4 of semester one, and completed six one-day weekly visits to learn about the students in their classrooms, and the school culture and infrastructure. During this period, the preservice teachers were also undertaking coursework at the university; a key focus was to develop their abilities in applying behaviour management techniques for primary students. The weekly school experiences were designed to allow them to observe the behaviour management practices of their supervising classroom teachers. These weekly visits were part of the TEDD project for creating school-based experiences for preservice teachers to assist them in making the links between theory and practice. These preservice teachers then completed a four-week block practicum.

There were two main participants in this qualitative study. The mentee, 19 years old, commenced her Bachelor of Education Primary degree immediately after completing secondary school and was in her second year of university study. This study focused on her

first field experience held within a Year 2 class. The mentor had 20 years teaching experience, mentored 8 preservice teachers throughout her career and taught in 7 different primary schools.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

An initial meeting was conducted in the week prior to the field experience with the mentor and mentee to negotiate the process for data collection and gain consent for this study. This interpretive case study (Hittleman & Simon, 2006) used a number of data collection methods and instruments over the four-week field experience. These were: researcher written observations and recorded sessions of mentor-mentee dialogue (5 formal video-recorded sessions; 8 informal audio-recorded sessions); 7 audio-recorded teaching episodes; 6 formal mentee-written lesson plans and 15 written reflections; 3 mentor-written “Feedback on Teaching” evaluations; 4 formal lesson observations; a formal individual interview with the mentee and then the mentor; and the mentee’s Interim and Final Field Studies reports. The recorded dialogues generally occurred immediately prior to or following a lesson taught by the mentee for the purposes of forward planning or reflecting on lessons.

A school requirement was for the mentee to design formal lesson plans before teaching either a small group activity or a whole class lesson and to write follow-up reflections. The mentee was guided by university coursework on how to write lesson plans and reflections. For the purpose of this study, all lesson plans developed by the mentee, (with the exception of one) and written reflections were provided. In the reflections, the mentee included aspects of the lessons that worked well and areas that needed further improvement. The mentee was formally observed by the mentor and given written feedback using the “Feedback on Teaching” documentation provided by the university. The form gave the mentor a choice of formats using ticks (checks) against select criteria or providing detailed written feedback.

The final interview conducted with the mentee (19:30 mins) then the mentor (18.27 mins) was guided by 13 semi-structured questions providing additional evidence in this study. For example, questions asked included: “What personal attributes did your mentor demonstrate that assisted you in your first field experience?” and, “Specifically, how did your mentor help you to develop your repertoire of classroom management strategies? The interview was audio-recorded as an accurate account of the responses (Yin, 2009).

In addition, the mentor’s interim and final field studies reports identified progress in line with Standards One, Two, Seven and Ten of the professional standards (Queensland College of Teachers, 2006), which were deemed appropriate for second-year preservice teachers by the university. These included a focus on designing and implementing engaging

and flexible learning experiences for students in safe environments as well as a commitment to ongoing reflective practice and professional development.

Interpretation of data sources involved cross-checking and triangulating data to gain a rich description of the mentor and mentee interaction during the field experience (e.g., see Hittleman & Simon, 2006; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). Observations, archival documents, transcriptions of audio and video interviews were analysed against the personal attributes and pedagogical knowledge practices contained within the five-factor mentoring model, as noted in the following descriptors (see Hudson, 2010).

Personal Attributes: In relation to classroom management a mentor's personal attributes includes being supportive of the mentee, comfortable in talking about teaching practices and attentive listening to the mentee. It also involves being sensitive to the mentee's needs, being caring and nurturing and having a sense of humour (Jonson, 2008). The mentor's personal attributes are used to encourage the mentee's reflection on behaviour management practices, and instil confidence and positive attitudes in the mentee for managing the classroom.

Pedagogical Knowledge: The pedagogical knowledge practices were investigated for understanding mentoring practices that facilitate effective classroom management. Indeed, effective mentors articulate how to plan for teaching; they timetable or schedule lessons for the mentee. Preparation for teaching needs to be discussed, particularly with the location and use of resources. Teaching strategies are essential for effective lesson delivery for which an effective mentor can provide experienced perspectives. A mentor needs to check on the mentee's content knowledge (e.g., key concepts) to ensure it is in keeping with the system requirements and appropriate to the grade level. There are incidental problems that arise during lessons for which the mentor can assist in explaining how to problem solve. Mentoring in classroom management includes managing student behaviour, especially as the classroom teacher (mentor) has insights into the various student personalities and behavioural traits. Effective teaching requires astute questioning skills for which a mentor can discuss higher and lower-order questions along with distributing the questions in equitable ways. Lessons have a structure and so an effective mentor can discuss the implementation processes (e.g., ensuring key learnings or concepts are apparent in the introduction, body, conclusion of a lesson). Mentors can provide pedagogical knowledge about assessment and viewpoints about effective teaching practices that link curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. As a theoretical framework, data will be gathered around these pedagogical knowledge practices in relation to classroom management.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of the data showed that mentors of preservice teachers choose to focus their mentoring for developing specific pedagogical areas. In this case study, classroom management was given priority. The following discussion analyses and interprets the data in relation to the mentor's personal attributes and pedagogical knowledge and how they positively influence the mentee's understanding of effective classroom management practices.

Personal Attributes

The mentor demonstrated specific personal attributes that the mentee claimed enhanced her understanding of proactive classroom management procedures and strategies. In the interview, Anna (mentee) described her mentor as supportive in the classroom, stating "she's helpful in the way that she'll calm the kids down if they're not going to listen to me". Although this may be considered as interfering with Anna's position as a teacher (e.g., Long, 1997), she appreciated this action as a supportive approach. Anna explained in an interview that her mentor modelled positive attitudes for teaching, was "always on time" and very reliable and this instilled similar attitudes in her, which she believed impacted positively on her classroom management. Grace (mentor) shared in her video-recorded dialogue that she believed an effective mentor needs to be comfortable with talking frequently with the mentee, to give advice, explanations and "a range of strategies" to assist in classroom management. Anna claimed in her interview that her mentor always listened to her ideas, allowed her to try new things and helped her reflect on the outcomes.

In determining the personal attributes of talking and listening within this mentor-mentee relationship, the video-recorded dialogue sessions revealed that the mentor spoke more than the mentee. In the majority of the video episodes, the mentor's talking time ranged from 4 to 14:11 minutes while the mentee's talking time ranged from 1:10 to 4:20 minutes (Table 1).

Further analysis of talking time showed that in all video dialogue sessions, with the exception of one, the mentor spoke more about classroom management strategies than the mentee. However, the focus on talking about classroom management for both the mentor and mentee was between 3.1% and 28.1% compared with the total talk time across the five sessions (Table 1). The intention of analysing mentor-mentee talk time was to determine who was more active in the dialogue. The frequency and balance between mentor and mentee's cogenerative dialogues suggested that while Grace articulated more knowledge about teaching practices, she was also willing to listen and provide opportunities for the mentee to speak more freely as her confidence grew (see Roth, Tobin, & Zimmermann, 2002).

Table 1: *Video-recorded Data of Mentor and Mentee Talk Time*

Dialogue session	Day of practicum (20 days)	Session length*	Total talk time (mins and secs)		Classroom management talk (subset of total time)	
			Mentor	Mentee	Mentor	Mentee
1	2	15:33	14:11	1:10	0:29	0:00
2	5	7:22	4:00	3:21	0:24	1:00
3	10	11:15	5:22	3:51	0:50	0:46
4	12	13:29	7:32	4:20	2:58	0:49
5	17	11:55	8:28	2:40	1:04	0:22

* Talk time in minutes and seconds

Attentive listening by the mentor was more evident in the audio-recorded dialogue sessions, where the mentor spoke less than the mentee (in 7 out of 8 dialogues), indicating that Grace provided Anna opportunities to share and discuss her lesson plans and reflections (Table 2). In the majority of audio-recorded episodes, the mentor’s talk time (questions, suggestions, confirmation, praise) ranged from 55 seconds to 5:38 minutes while the mentee’s talk time ranged from 1:46 to 8:26 minutes. Surprisingly, in only one audio session (session 6) did the mentor’s talk (5:38 mins) exceed the mentee’s (2:56 mins), when Grace offered many suggestions for teaching a full lesson on a new topic, as well as classroom management strategies (e.g., settling students after lunch breaks, refocusing strategies with students on the carpet, transitions to group work, managing noise level; e.g., see Arthur-Kelly et al., 2003; Snowman et al., 2009). One such example was when Grace stated, “It’s always important after the breaks to have a settling down activity ... that’s why I have the modelled reading”. During this session the mentee responded with short “ok” responses to all the mentor’s classroom management suggestions, however, her tone of voice and quick return to talk about content and pedagogy (e.g., questioning techniques) demonstrated that she was keen to seek clarification on these elements in her lesson plan prior to teaching. Similarly, in the final session (8), the discussion focused on the content of a new lesson and appropriate pedagogy rather than specific classroom management strategies. Data indicated that when content was new and lessons were more complex or lengthy, the dialogue focused to a greater extent on content and pedagogy. When the teaching episodes were shorter, less content-driven and more activity-based (e.g., sessions 4 and 5 - science experiments) or at specific times in the day (e.g., after lunch) greater attention was given to classroom management strategies.

Table 2: *Audio-recorded Data of Mentor and Mentee Talk Time*

Dialogue session	Day of practicum (20 days)	Session length*	Total talk time (mins and secs)		Classroom management talk (subset of total time)	
			Mentor	Mentee	Mentor	Mentee
1	2	3:51	1:17	2:15	0:15	1:02
2	2	6:07	1:30	3:35	0:21	0:46
3	4	4:55	0:55	3:33	0:17	0:49
4	5	7:36	1:45	4:36	0:27	2:13
5	7	10:59	3:12	8:26	0:33	2:03
6	7	8:54	5:38	2:56	1:00	0:05
7	12	5:56	1:25	1:46	0:04	1:18
8	17	4:51	1:16	3:21	0:00	0:00

* Talk time in minutes and seconds

Pedagogical Knowledge

The mentor guided the development of the mentee’s pedagogical knowledge and helped her to make a direct link to positive classroom management. Lesson plans and observations revealed that Anna adopted the mentor’s advice when planning the content of her lessons to assist students to develop effective language skills through repetition. As Vygotsky (1986) posits targeting student’s zone of proximal development can engage a student in tasks; hence using age-appropriate content and language can assist to facilitate this engagement. In the final report, Grace stated, “Anna modelled effective personal language, literacy and numeracy skills, particularly assisting those students needing intervention”. This further highlights that appropriate language, content knowledge and curriculum differentiation can engage students and minimise behavioural problems.

Further observations showed that relating new concepts to students’ real-life knowledge and experiences engaged them during the introduction of a new topic or lesson and minimised off-task behaviours. This was evident in a mathematics measurement lesson where students had to sort household objects into groups according to the most probable measurement capacity (litres or millilitres): “Have you heard of measurement and liquids before? Has mum said when you go to the shops that you need to get two litres of milk?” Students were engaged through her technique of questioning and responded with desirable behaviours and responses (see Horng, Hong, Chan Lin, Chang, & Chu, 2005).

Anna explained in the interview that she learnt teaching strategies from Grace that differentiated learning for the range of students in her class, which helped to engage the students and minimise disruptions. Gifted and remedial students require strategies to differentiate their learning, which helps them to gain focus (Gagné, 1995; Subban, 2006). In Anna's case, these strategies included: note taking for slower writers to get them started, using pictures in addition to words on worksheets, providing individual assistance when required, and presenting relevant extension work for early-finishing students. Observations of Anna using these proactive strategies showed that students, who may have had behaviour management problems, were highly engaged.

Observations conducted in the final two weeks of the field experience revealed that the mentee was practising a range of effective management strategies that had been either discussed in mentor-mentee dialogue sessions or modelled by her mentor. These included giving clear instructions for activities and experiments, for example, "if someone drops a paintbrush on the floor we stop, raise a hand and wait for assistance". Anna also scaffolded students' work using step-by-step demonstrations followed by guided practice which further emphasised acceptable behaviours in the classroom. In addition, she used "learning buddies" to develop students' responsibility for their own learning and generate ideas. She also reinforced the purpose of the lesson or activity throughout the lesson and used positive reinforcement strategies in line with Program Achieve, such as praise, stickers, and encouragement. Anna demonstrated psychologically-acceptable strategies such as positive reinforcement and developing in students a sense of self responsibility to ensure effective classroom management (e.g., see Woolfolk & Margetts, 2010).

In the interview, Grace discussed her conscious decision to develop Anna's classroom management strategies. She stated, "this is the first time I've had a first year (preservice teacher)" and conceded that she tended to treat her mentee as a second or third practicum student, based on her previous mentoring experience. She explained that she realised she needed to "step back a little bit" and concentrate on providing her mentee with:

...a lot of classroom management things that I thought that she would need in her lessons rather than bombard her with a lot of things that she'll learn in the next few prac's. I tried to make it hands-on, practical, more so than theoretical.

Anna's lesson on "Hard Working Pigs" as a part of Program Achieve showed how this approach was put into practice. Video and audio-recorded dialogue carried out prior to the lesson, formal lesson observation, and the mentee's lesson reflection, revealed that Anna took

on board the mentor's advice. Anna used a range of attending strategies (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2010) while students were sitting on the carpet (direct questioning, scanning for attentiveness, relocating one student, praise for listening, standing up for "wobble time", and restating expectations). She emphasised key concepts outlined by the mentor, such as using and reinforcing relevant terminology, and extending students' thinking about "persistence" while acknowledging "good manners". She gave quick, clear instructions for moving to table work and motivated students with the promise of a "gotcha" reward for speedy readiness and productive working.

Prior to this lesson, Grace had emphasised the importance of explaining to students acceptable noise levels for different types of activities. In her lesson reflection Anna stated, "using the sound gauge which was discussed at the start of the year settled the children because it was something they had previously learnt". Hence, when she explained to students that "level 3 noise" was acceptable for this activity (i.e., "working and whispering voices"), students knew what was expected and responded appropriately. Anna gave clear instructions for the activity and monitored the engagement time for discussion with "learning buddies". Consistency of matching teacher statements to "promised" rewards appeared significant to student behavioural responses (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2010). For instance, she praised and acknowledged students who were working well and provided the promised rewards, hence supporting her statements with actions.

The mentee explained in the interview that she appreciated the suggestions made by her mentor prior to this particular lesson. During the lesson observation and from the mentee's written lesson reflection, it was clear that the dialogue prior to the lesson boosted the mentee's confidence, established the foundations for successful learning to occur and improved opportunities for assessing student outcomes. Anna reflected on her mentor's guidance and the lesson implementation:

I found that even though it was the last lesson of the day, the students were really well behaved and kept on track which made me feel really confident. It was great going through my lesson with (Grace) before I actually ran the lesson because I added some really important stuff into the lesson and it also made me feel more comfortable running the lesson and having an idea that I was on the right track.

It was evident from the dialogue sessions conducted prior to each lesson, that Grace guided Anna through a problem-solving approach to classroom management, asking pertinent questions, giving her "think time" and opportunities for her to implement solutions. Grace

described herself as organised, having good “pre-emptive thoughts” about what generally works or does not work in the classroom. As a result, throughout the dialogues, she encouraged the mentee to pre-empt problems and plan ahead by asking open-ended questions followed by periods of attentive listening.

Conclusion

This qualitative study explored mentoring practices aligned with an empirical mentoring model. Specifically, it focused on the development of a mentee’s classroom management practices as a result of the mentor’s personal attributes and pedagogical knowledge. Although this case study presents a limited perspective on mentoring to develop classroom management practices, it provides practical examples in which a mentor can positively influence and develop a mentee’s practices. The mentor in this study was supportive of the mentee by providing quality time to talk and listen to the mentee on developing classroom management practices. This support along with instilling confidence in teaching showed that the mentor was prepared to cater for the mentee’s development of classroom management practices in positive and constructive ways. Even though the mentor was not selected specifically for this mentee, it appeared as a positive pairing arrangement as both the mentor and mentee were comfortable with the mentoring provided (see also Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). The system requirements (e.g., Program Achieve) presented a contextualisation for the mentee to focus on her behaviour management strategies with the mentor’s guidance.

Pedagogical knowledge was articulated at various points during the mentee’s field experiences, mainly during planning, preparation, and implementation stages. The mentor was willing to share the dialogue but also provided advice on how to be more effective in classroom management. These strategies were not limited to rewards and consequences only, instead the strategies extended to developing a positive teacher-student rapport and differentiating programs to cater for individuals. This differentiation included asking appropriate questions to ascertain students’ prior knowledge, working with individuals and small groups as well as using “learning buddies” to facilitate student success and engagement (see also Hall, 2002; Tomlinson, 2000) . This study showed that the mentor articulated knowledge about implementing the advocated “Program Achieve” to assist the mentee’s understanding of the strategies. Consequently, many of the strategies advocated by the mentor were transferred to the mentee’s classroom management practices. Furthermore, the mentor showed how to use age-appropriate language and make concepts understandable so that students were engaged in lessons and not off task, which were also adopted as practices by the

mentee. Indeed, the mentor's personal attributes and articulation of pedagogical knowledge associated with the five-factor model of mentoring assisted in developing the mentee's classroom management practices, in what was recorded and reported as a successful teaching experience.

Further research can include using the five-factor model for exploring other pedagogical knowledge practices such as planning, preparation, teaching strategies, questioning skills, assessment and so forth. For example, how can a mentor facilitate a mentee's development of teacher-student relationships or how can a mentor facilitate a mentee's reflection on practice? More studies are needed to understand how quality mentoring can enhance a mentee's pedagogical development, and gathering empirical evidence on how mentors specifically use their knowledge and skills can aid the development of more effective mentoring programs.

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