Mentoring and Learning to Teach: What do Pre-service Teachers Expect to Learn from their Mentor Teachers?

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Abstract: This research focuses on mentoring in pre-service teacher professional placements. As pre-service teachers engage in their professional placement, they have specific perceptions about what will happen and how their mentor teacher will work with them. Survey research was undertaken with first year and final year pre-service teachers to discover their perceptions about the mentoring relationships in which they were involved in during their professional placements. Specifically, the survey focused on the pre-service teachers' role in the mentoring relationship, their mentor teachers' role and the pre-service teachers' expectations of what they will learn during their professional placements. Responses from first year and final year student teachers were compared in order to discover whether their perceptions and expectations change as they progress through their teaching degree.

Keywords: Mentoring, Pre-service Teachers, Professional Placements, Learning to Teach

Introduction

TEACHING IS A complex task that requires comprehensive knowledge and skills. Learning how to teach is also a complex task: developing the comprehensive knowledge and skills needed to become a teacher takes time, practice and experience (Campbell & Brummett, 2007). Mentoring has gained prominence in pre-service teacher education courses as a way to develop such knowledge and skills *(*Price & Chen, 2003; Walkington, 2004). There are many different models of 'learning to be a teacher' and most include practical experiences under the guidance of a teacher mentor (Valeni & Vogrinc, 2007).

This research focuses on what pre-service teachers expect they will learn from their mentor teacher during their practical experiences (professional placements) in schools. In order to do this, the research delves into the qualities of mentoring relationships, as well as the roles of both the mentor and mentee from the perspective of the pre-service teacher. The paper will conclude with recommendations for future research.

The professional placement, or "practicum", is considered a "critical component" of pre-service teacher education programs throughout Australia (House of Representatives, 2007, p.67). The time spent in schools and in classrooms is reported to be a part of the teaching degree that pre-service teaching students value highly and find most useful (House of Representatives, 2007; Brett, 2006; Walkington, 2005a; Brandenburg & Ryan, 2001). Mentoring in pre-service teacher education has increased in popularity in Australia replacing in many instances a more supervisory type of role undertaken by classroom teachers during professional placements (Walkington, 2005b). The practicum as described by Walkington (2004, p.1) "is an opportunity for pre-service teachers to engage in a developmental process of observing and experimenting with teaching practice, and learning about the skills, knowledge,

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philosophies and attitudes of the professional teacher". It is during the professional placement that pre-service teachers are placed with classroom based teachers who assist the neophytes' development towards becoming equipped professionals. Professional placements in pre-service teacher education occur throughout a degree and are usually short term (Walkington, 2005a). Pre-service teachers may also be placed with numerous mentor teachers throughout their degree; therefore experiencing a different mentor teacher for each placement.

Mentoring in Pre-service Teacher Education

Fairbanks, Freedman and Kahn (2000, p.103) define mentoring in teacher education as "complex social interactions that mentor teachers and student teachers' construct and negotiate for a variety of professional purposes and in response to the contextual factors they encounter". Mentoring is also described as an intense interpersonal relationship (Kram, 1985) and as "both a relationship and a process" (Kwan & Lopez, 2005, p.276). Lai (2005) however encapsulates mentoring by highlighting three components that create a holistic mentoring relationship, those being relational, developmental and contextual components. The relational component focuses on the relationship between mentors and mentees. The developmental component refers to how mentors and mentees develop personally and professionally whilst aiming towards identified goals. The contextual component focuses on cultural and situational features of the placement setting. Lai notes that it is these three components which impact upon the success of a mentoring relationship. She also notes that all three components are equal in importance.

The literature suggests that mentoring, although complex is mutually beneficial for mentors and mentees (Hall, Draper, Smith & Bullough Jr, 2008; Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh & Wilss, 2008). Benefits of mentoring pre-service teachers include increased reflection on practice, professional growth, contributing to the profession and sharing the craft with future teachers (Heirdsfield et al., 2008; Kostovich & Thurn, 2006; Jewell, 2007; Walkington 2005a, 2005b). The benefits for mentees include observing specific professional skills, sharing professional experiences, receiving constructive feedback about their professional progress and developing reflective practices (Lai, 2005; Rajuan, Beijaard & Verloop, 2008).

Traditionally, mentoring is seen as a hierarchical relationship where the mentor is more experienced than the mentee, or that the mentor has or can provide knowledge and skills that the mentee wants or needs (McCormack & West, 2006; Aladejana, Aladejana & Ehindero, 2006; Fowler & O'Gorman, 2005; Hayes, 2001; Billett, 2003; Price & Chen, 2003). However, recent research has recognised that mentoring is a reciprocal relationship, meaning that both mentors and mentees have something to contribute to and gain from the relationship (Heirdsfield, et al., 2008; Kamvounias, McGrath-Champ & Yip, 2006; McGee 2001).

The roles of mentors and mentees are often described in non-specific terms. For instance, terms such as guide, advisor, counsellor, instructor, sharer, supporter and encourager are commonly used to describe a mentor's role (Hopper, 2001; Bray & Nettleton, 2006; Sundli, 2007; Hall et al., 2008). However the role of mentor is more complex as such. Hudson and Millwater (2008) describe the role of mentor as one which nurtures the development of the mentee through the building of rapport (Hudson & Millwater, 2008). Mentors also use such interpersonal functions such as empathizing with the mentee, and role modelling teacher behaviour and pedagogy (Hopper, 2001; Le Maistre, Boudreau & Pare, 2006; Hall et al. 2008).

Research undertaken by Maynard (2000) found that mentees expected mentors to include them, support them through advice and feedback, as well as being a role model to them. Jones' (2000) research study revealed that mentees expected mentors to advise and train the mentees and be a colleague to them. However, Cherin (2007) and Scalon (2008) suggest that the context of the mentoring situation, and therefore the nature of the mentoring relationship can influence the roles taken and played out in a relationship.

A review of the literature found limited research about the mentee's role; however the role of a mentee can be described in terms of the functions and interactions they engage in. As mentoring is a mutual, reciprocal type of relationship, the mentee has an equally important role to play along side of the mentor (Freeman, 2008; Kamvounias, et al., 2006). Walkington (2005a) considers that the mentee's role is one of an active participant and Freeman (2008) describes the mentee's role as one of learner.

Although each participant has a specific role in a mentoring relationship, the literature suggests that the roles of mentors and mentees interconnect and change throughout the relationship. Lucas (2001, p.46) reports that "time, experience together, and the perceptions and interpretations of each person continually redefine the roles of the mentor and the mentee". Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010) suggest that the roles of the mentor and mentee are interconnected as the roles are dependent upon the interactions that occur in the relationship.

Assessment of the pre-service teacher during the professional experience is a key feature of pre-service teaching degrees in Australia. Mentor teachers, in most instances, are required to assess the pre-service teacher using University based criteria. However traditionally, mentoring refers to supporting and providing feedback to mentees without judgement or criteria (Walkington, 2005b). According to Walkington (2005b) assessment by the mentor teacher is an element left over from 'supervisory' days; one which is required by the degree, but does not match the role of the mentor teacher. Assessment has the potential to disrupt a 'friendly, supportive relationship', making it one where a mentor has power over the mentee (Sanford and Hopper, 2000).

Bouquillon, Sosik and Lee (2005, p.239) have concluded that "mentoring relationships are dynamic phenomena that evolve over time and in distinct phases". The stage of the mentoring relationship will influence how the relationship functions and what occurs within it (Bouquillon et al., 2005). Therefore, a mentee who has just begun the learning journey may need more support than one who is near the end of their journey (Le Maistre, Boudreau & Pare, 2006; Jones, 2000).

Limited research regarding the pre-service teacher in mentoring relationships prompted this research. The pre-service teacher is the focus of the professional placement, however much of the recent literature focuses on the mentor teacher.

Context of the Study

This research specifically examines the mentees' (pre-service teacher) perceptions of the role of mentors and what they learn about learning to teach from mentors. The research was guided by the following question:

How do pre-service teachers' perceptions of their mentors' impact upon what they learn about learning to teach?

The specific aims of the research were to examine the perceptions of pre-service teachers about

- what a mentoring relationship will provide for them in terms of their development as teachers;
- essential characteristics of mentors and the roles they undertake;
- learning opportunities mentors should provide; and
- roles they (the pre-service teachers) undertake.

The research targets first year pre-service teachers and final year pre-service teachers. These two groups of pre-service teachers were chosen specifically due to the differing experiences each group will have had in classrooms and with mentoring. At the time of the study, first year pre-service teachers had spent a total of 10 days (single day visits) with a mentor and final year pre-service teachers had spent 70 days (combination of single day visits and blocks of weeks) over the course of their degree. The final year students had experienced two or three different mentors at that point in time.

   The purpose of the research was to compare perceptions between the two groups in order to determine whether their mentoring experiences influence their expectations about what they will learn about learning to teach. The research was looking specifically at similarities and differences in their expectations of learning to teach. Comparing the two groups of pre-service teachers allows the researcher to then review current professional placement tasks and experiences for future cohorts.

Methodology

This investigation utilised qualitative survey research. The research consisted of one survey that contained five specific mentoring questions. The survey also featured an 'about you' section where data was gathered about the participant. The five specific mentoring questions were organised by way of three themes – the mentoring relationship, the mentor teacher and the pre-service teacher. The three themes were derived from the literature and specifically link to the research question. Figure 1 shows the link between the research question and survey questions.
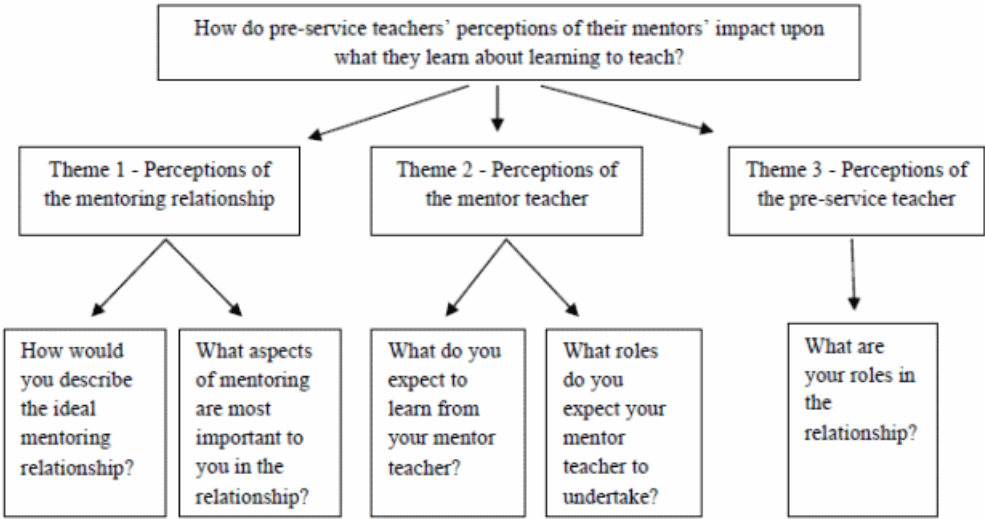
Figure 1: Research Question, Survey Themes and Survey Questions

The survey was administered via an online survey tool and was anonymous. It was distributed to two groups of pre-service teaching students: first year and final year students located at the Noosa campus of CQUniversity Australia. Table 1 outlines the research sample.

Table 1: Research Sample

Year Level	Distributed To	Response Rate		Gender
First year	90	44	49%	Male: 3
				Female: 41
Final Year	65	31	49%	Male: 5
				Female: 26

The survey contained open ended questions and ranking of set responses. Analysis of responses was undertaken by coding the responses. Lai's (2005) three mentoring components were used as the overarching coding system. As the responses were being analysed, key words and phases were identified. These key words and phases were then coded using the three mentoring components. Use of the three mentoring components (relational, developmental and contextual) allowed the researcher to explore the whole relationship rather than single parts. Table 2 outlines the mentoring components.

Table 2: Overview of Data Analysis

Mentoring Components	Description	Examples of Identified Words and Phases
Relational	Interactions between the mentor and mentee which develop the relationship	• Communication • Nurture • Help/assistance/support • Friendship
Developmental	Mentoring functions and processes • Personal – self development • Professional – learning to teach	• Guidance • Feedback from the mentor • Confidence • Role modelling • Skills • Professional knowledge • Collaboration
Contextual	Situational features of classroom and school	• Job of a teacher • Working in a school

It was decided to provide, as a reference point, both groups of pre-service teachers with a mentoring description. The description was to ensure that all participants had the same level of understanding of what mentoring is. Sundli (2007) in her research found that it could not be assumed that pre-service teachers know what mentoring is. She found that each pre-service teacher had different experiences during professional placements that ranged from coaching to co-operative teaching and therefore they could not define what mentoring was. In this research study having the same level of understanding of mentoring was deemed important, as it was acknowledged by the researcher that not all pre-service teachers may have had mentoring experiences, despite the professional placement guidelines provided to pre-service teachers using the terminology of 'mentor teacher' and 'mentoring'. The description chosen was of a general nature and was not specific to pre-service teacher education.

> "Mentoring exists when a professional person serves as a resource, sponsor and transitional figure for another person (usually, but not necessarily younger) who is entering that same profession. Effective mentors provide mentees with knowledge, advice, challenge and support as mentees pursue the acquisition of professional competence and identity". (O'Neil and Wrightsman, 2001, p.113)

Limitations

The obvious limitation of this research study is the small sample size. The number of respondents was approximately half of both cohorts. Therefore the findings of the research may not be representative of all pre-service teachers based at the location, nor of other locations. A second limitation of the research is the choice of a single instrument to collect the data. A survey in conjunction with focus groups may have allowed for more in-depth responses from

the participants as it would have allowed the researcher to ask more specific probing questions in light of the responses made in the survey. This would create rigorous data that was less open to biased interpretation.

Findings

Theme 1 - The Mentoring Relationship

The first two questions focused on the mentoring relationship. The questions asked the pre-service teachers to describe an ideal mentoring relationship and specify, from a list of descriptors, the most important aspect of a mentoring relationship. The findings for question one and two are outlined in Table 3 and are coded according to the three components of mentoring relationships – relational (R), developmental (D) and contextual (C).

Table 3: Theme 1 Results

Question	Results			
How would you describe an ideal mentoring relationship?	First Year Pre-service Teachers		Final Year Pre-service Teachers	
	One that • Provides guidance (D) • Is comfortable (R) • Provides feedback (D) • Is supportive (R) • Promotes regular communication (D) • Provides role modelling (D) • Treats me as a professional (R) • Is understanding (R) • Is friendly (R)	24% 18% 14% 10% 8% 8% 8% 6% 4%	One that • Is supportive (R) • Is friendly (R) • Provides feedback (D) • Promotes the sharing of ideas and resources (D) • Is open (R) • Promotes equality between the mentor and mentee (R)	25% 25% 20% 10% 10% 10%

What aspect of mentoring is most important to you in the relationship?	Results			
	First year pre-service teachers		Final year pre-service teachers	
	Guidance (D)	25%	Provides constructive feedback (D)	35%
	Role model (D)	23%	Support (R)	23%
	Provides constructive feedback (D)	20%	Guidance (D)	16%
	Support (R)	14%	Includes me unconditionally (R)	16%
	Includes me unconditionally (R)	9%	Role model (D)	10%
	Demonstrates techniques to me (D)	7%		0%
	Assesses my performance (D)	2%	Demonstrates techniques to me (D)	0%
			Assesses my performance (D)	

Both first year and final year cohorts identified relational and developmental dimensions in regard to characteristics of ideal mentoring relationships, but no contextual dimensions were documented in their responses. First year pre-service teacher categories were more extensive than final year categories. The first year cohort identified guidance, being comfortable in the relationship and having feedback provided as key aspects of an ideal mentoring relationship. They placed lesser emphasis on such aspects as supportiveness, having open communication channels, having a role model and being treated as a professional within the relationship.

Final year pre-service teachers indicated that they wanted to be involved in a supportive, friendly mentoring relationship where feedback is provided. The also wanted to be in a relationship where sharing occurs, where they are treated as an equal and a relationship which is open.

> *A feeling of working 'with' someone, being accepted at where I am in my development and being guided to grow. Also, having a friend who is honest and is a good role model. (First year pre-service teacher)*
> *Friendly, but professional when appropriate. One where the mentor teacher guides and gives constructive feedback but one that allows the mentee to take risks and try new things. (Final year pre-service teacher)*

Both groups of pre-service teachers were given a list of mentoring aspects for question two and were asked to choose the most important aspect of a mentoring relationship. The list contained an assortment of developmental and relational aspects. The final year cohort identified feedback, support and guidance as most important, whereas the first year cohort identified guidance, role models and feedback as the most important aspects. 'Assesses my performance' was not ranked by the final year pre-service teachers and lowly ranked by the first years. 'Demonstrates techniques' was also not ranked by the final year pre-service teachers and was lowly ranked by first years. The low ranking of 'demonstrates techniques' was a surprising result as demonstrating is a key teaching tool and is often used in conjunction with role modelling.

Theme 2 – The Mentor Teacher

The second theme focused on the perceptions about mentor teachers. Question three focused on the expectations of what pre-service teachers will learn from a mentor, and question four focused on the role of the mentor teacher in a mentoring relationship. Table 4 outlines the responses for questions three and four.

Table 4: Theme 2 Results

Question	Results			
What do you expect to learn from your mentor teacher?	First year pre-service teachers		Final year pre-service teachers	
	• Teaching practices (D) • How to be a teacher (D) • Confidence (D) • Practical experiences (D) • School life (C)	30% 25% 20% 15% 10%	• Confidence (D) • Professional knowledge (D) • How to be a teacher (D) • Professional growth (D) • School life (C)	39% 25% 21% 8% 7%
What roles do you expect your mentor teacher to undertake?	First year pre-service teachers		Final year pre-service teachers	
	• Offers support - assistance and help (R) • Guide (D) • Role model (D) • Provider of feedback (D)	44% 32% 17% 7%	• Offers support - assistance and advice (R) • Guide (D) • Encourager (R) • Provider of feedback (D)	45% 35% 8% 2%

Responses to question three focused on the developmental component with only one contextual component identified. The responses which emerged from question three are similar for both first year and final year pre-service teachers. However, the focus of the responses differed between the two cohorts. Responses which were the same were those of 'confidence', 'how to be a teacher' and 'school life'. The final year pre-service teachers placed high emphasis on building their confidence in the classroom. Many of their responses focused on creating confidence in their skills and abilities as a teacher. First year pre-service teachers did not place as much emphasis on confidence, but their responses focused on gaining confidence 'in front of the class' and in 'managing learning experiences' which corresponds to limited time spent in their professional placement.

> *I want to become confident with the learners in the classroom and to be able to plan and implement lessons successfully. (First year pre-service teacher)*
> *I expect that my mentor will help to build my confidence about myself as a teacher and my teaching abilities by allowing me to be the teacher and work like a teacher. (Final year pre-service teacher)*

Final year responses of 'how to be a teacher' focused on workplace readiness. Responses targeted such items as developing teacher presence, knowing what teaching strategies work and how to manage the day to day routines of the classroom. First year pre-service teachers were also expecting to learn about workplace readiness. However, their responses included how to work with children, manage learning and being organised.

'School life' also emerged from both group's responses. As a contextual component, limited emphasis was placed on this category, but both cohorts expected that they would learn about how their classroom operates in conjunction with the school.

> *I expect that I will have a better understanding of how a classroom, school processes and policies work within the real world of a teaching environment. (First year pre-service teacher)*

Further responses which emerged from first year pre-service teachers included 'teaching practices' and 'practical experiences'. It can be assumed that these two categories work hand in hand. Many first years identified that they wanted as much practical experience as possible in order to learn how to teacher and they expected their mentor to provide opportunities for the experiences. First years explicitly want to learn effective teaching and management strategies.

> *The practical experience that a mentor provides will help me to make sense of the theory that I am learning at Uni. I want to learn how to plan for learning, scaffold the learning and achieve outcomes for my learners. (First year pre-service teacher)*

The final year cohort identified 'professional knowledge' and 'professional growth'. Their responses focused such aspects as differentiation of the curriculum, behaviour management and reflective practice.

> *Knowledge about differentiating the curriculum, behaviour strategies that work, and more specific knowledge about the reality of being a full time teacher. (Final year pre-service teacher)*

The second question in this theme (question four) focused on the roles that pre-service teachers expect mentor teachers to undertake in the relationship. The responses focussed on relational and developmental components.

Both cohorts of pre-service teachers placed high importance on a mentor who is supportive and a guide. Both groups also nominated 'provider of feedback' as a mentor role, but only placed limited importance on this role. First year pre-service teachers did however place some emphasis on the mentor being a role model. Encourager was a mentor role that final year pre-service teachers identified.

> *Providing guidance, setting the example and nurturing my learning. (First year pre-service teacher)*
> *The mentor should help me, be there for me, show me lots of different ways to teach and give me feedback that helps me to grow. (First year pre-service teacher)*
> *Someone who provides feedback, support and encouragement, guidance and knowledge. (Final year pre-service teacher)*

A mentor's roles are helping, supporting, providing advice (both professional and personal), giving feedback about performance and making sure that I am ready to start my teaching career. (Final year pre-service teacher)

Theme 3 – The Pre-service Teacher

The final theme focused on the role of the pre-service teacher in the mentoring relationship. Question five specifically asked the pre-service teachers to describe their roles in the mentoring relationship. Table 5 outlines the responses.

Table 5: Theme 3 Results

Question	Results			
5. What are your roles in the relationship?	First year pre-service teachers		Final year pre-service teachers	
	• Accept/apply feedback (D) • Active participant (D) • Listen and observe (D) • Ask questions, advice and for help (R) • Reflect (D)	34% 26% 20% 12% 8%	• Accept/apply feedback (D) • Reflect (D) • Active participant (D) • Listen (D) • Learn (D) • Be open minded (D)	20% 20% 20% 15% 15% 10%

The responses from first year and final year pre-service teachers focus on the developmental component of mentoring. Only one first year category focused on a relational component with no contextual components being recorded. The roles identified by both cohorts of pre-service teachers are those which develop their skills as teachers. Both cohorts placed a large emphasis on accepting and applying feedback to improve their skills. Final year students also placed a large emphasis on the reflective aspect of teaching, whereas first year students did not.

Responses from first year and final year pre-service teachers indicated that their role is also one of active participant. First years specifically mentioned 'being involved', 'being proactive', 'completing tasks', 'helping the mentor out' and 'assisting where they could'. Final year pre-service teachers listed such aspects as 'making a contribution' and 'completing tasks'. These responses indicate that the pre-service teachers are aware of taking responsibility for their own learning.

My role is to learn through listening, asking questions, observing and doing. (First year pre-service teacher)
I need to be proactive and ask for help if I need it. Another role is to complete the tasks and reflect on what I did and how the lesson went. (First year pre-service teacher)
I am accepting of advice and use it in my day to day practice, I ask for feedback, use it to self-reflect and build upon my practice. (Final year pre-service teacher)
I will develop my own style of teaching, but respect what my mentor does. But I will try new strategies in the classroom and learn from what happens around me. (Final year pre-service teacher)

Discussion

The findings from this research indicate that there are more similarities than differences in expectations between first year and final year pre-service teachers about their mentor teachers and what they expect to learn during their professional placements. According to the findings, the mentoring relationship itself consists of relational and developmental components. That is, the pre-service teachers place high emphasis on

- the interactions that occur between the mentor and mentee; and
- the mentoring processes which occur throughout the relationship (these include the roles of the mentor and the mentee).

The pre-service teachers in this study placed little emphasis on the contextual component within the mentoring relationship. Contextual aspects of the mentoring relationship may include 'enculturation' activities such as introducing the pre-service teacher to other teachers and staff members, showing them around the school, explaining policy and including them in school activities (Maynard, 2000; Hall et al., 2008). The only contextual aspect which was coded in the responses concerned 'school life'. Specifically, both first year and final year pre-service teachers focussed upon understanding how school policies and processes impact upon teaching and planning. In some instances, enculturation types of activities may be undertaken by someone other than the mentor teacher at the beginning of the professional experience. This person may be a school based practicum coordinator.

There were several interesting findings that emerged from the pre-service teacher's responses – those of confidence, being treated as an equal and assessment. When asked about what they expected to learn from the mentor, both groups of pre-service teachers responded with 'confidence'. Confidence was unexpected as it is an aspect of growth, rather than a skill that can be taught. However opportunities to become involved in the life of the classroom and actively complete the tasks of a teacher may develop and grow the confidence of a pre-service teacher. Confidence, although a developmental factor, is reliant on the relational component. That is the relationship that is developed from the beginning will impact upon how the pre-service teacher develops and grows. Pre-service teachers who feel comfortable in the mentor relationship and receive guidance and support from the mentor will most likely grow and develop their confidence more quickly than those in an unsupportive relationship (Eby, McManas, Simon & Russell, 2000).

Being treated as an equal was a response that also emerged from first year and final year pre-service teachers. First year pre-service teacher's responses were phrased like 'treats me as a professional' whereas final year pre-service teachers specifically used the phrase 'treated as an equal'. Mentoring is a reciprocal relationship, meaning that both mentors and mentees have something to contribute to and gain from the relationship (Heirdsfield, et al., 2008; Kamvounias, et al., 2006; McGee 2001). Mentoring relationships have evolved over time so that the participants are on a more equal standing without one participant having the power or control over the other (Sanford & Hopper, 2000). However, it is recognised in pre-service teacher education contexts that the mentor leads the relationship (Kamvounias, et al., 2006).

It is interesting to note that the notion of assessment was not identified in the findings. In question two, assessment was provided as an important aspect but only two percent of first year pre-service teachers ranked this as most important and final years did not rank it at all.

Assessment, as noted earlier, is a mentor responsibility in teacher education degrees. However, responses provided by both cohorts of pre-service teachers about their ideal mentoring relationship overwhelmingly indicated that they require feedback from their mentors in order to learn how to teach, but do not want to be assessed or judged by them. Providing feedback is a form of summative assessment, therefore it can be concluded that mentees prefer assessment which is of a supportive nature, rather than assessment which only provides a grade or mark. According to Walkington (2005b), assessment is associated with supervising not mentoring; that is supervisors make a judgement on the novice's performance, whereas mentors nurture and guide the mentee through providing feedback. This aspect relates back to equality in the mentoring relationship. Formal assessment creates a power struggle between mentors and mentees as the mentor determines the final grade of the mentee. Previous research has found that mentees tend to 'please' the mentor in order to receive a favourable grade (Jones, 2000)

Pre-service teachers in this study have indicated that a mentoring relationship that is equal, supportive and provides opportunities for learning is considered an ideal means for learning how to teach.

Conclusions Based on these Findings

The aim of this research was to examine mentoring relationships between mentor teachers and pre-service teachers from the perspective of the pre-service teacher. This research also compared first year and final year pre-service teachers' responses in order to evaluate whether perceptions and expectations changed over the course of learning how to teach. This research used the three mentoring components of relational, developmental and contextual identified by Lai (2005) to examine the findings. The relational and developmental components were strongly evidenced in the pre-service teacher's responses. However little emphasis was placed on the contextual component as it was only identified once. This may mean that the mentee does not see this component as being important or as part of their role.

Based on the findings of this research study, the following conclusions can be made about pre-service teachers and the mentoring relationship.

- Mentees prefer a mentoring relationship that is supportive and comfortable and one where they are given feedback about their progress.
- Mentees prefer mentors from whom they can learn, rather than someone who will judge and grade them.
- Mentees view their own role as one of self-responsibility.
- Mentees expect that mentor teachers will provide opportunities for learning, and that they themselves will make use of the opportunities.

The gap between first year and final year pre-service teachers' expectations of the mentoring relationship and learning to teach was surprisingly narrow. First year and final year pre-service teachers' expectations were similar in nature, but differed in specific needs. Many of the responses from the pre-service teachers indicated that first year pre-service teachers focused on learning the process of teaching, whereas the final year pre-service teachers were polishing their abilities in anticipation of having their own class. Specific needs were connected to their stage of progress in the degree, signalling a need for awareness about ment-

oring relationships and the roles mentors and mentees play throughout a professional placement.

The findings in this research have unearthed further opportunities for research. Research regarding mentoring relationships from the pre-service teacher's perspective is limited, therefore further research will benefit understanding of mentoring relationships and how the developmental progress of the pre-service teacher impacts upon roles and processes. Exploration into the three components of mentoring relationships as identified by Lai (2005) may assist those who design the professional experience component of pre-service teaching degrees.

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Angelina Ambrosetti is a lecturer in education at CQUniversity Australia. Angelina is a qualified primary teacher who has accumulated a wide experience in primary education through both teaching in Queensland schools and in pre-service teacher education programs. Angelina has worked with pre-service teachers as both a mentor teacher and university lecturer, therefore having a unique view of how student teachers learn to teach. Angelina is also a Teaching Schools Coordinator who designs professional placement courses, places pre-service teachers with mentors and monitors student teachers learning and development as workplace ready graduates. Angelina is currently undertaking an Educational Doctorate that focuses on mentoring in pre-service teacher education. Other research interests include learning design and pedagogy.

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