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Reciprocal Mentoring Residencies ... Better Transitions to Teaching

Lisa Paris
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Abstract: The 2007 "Top of the Class" report on the Inquiry into Teacher Education in Australia found teacher induction failure and high attrition rates were endemic in most Australian states. Mentoring was advocated as an important mechanism for countering the debilitating drain attrition exerted on the profession (more than 30% within the first years in most developed nations). Reciprocal mentoring represents a departure from traditional mentoring arrangements in that it aligns two professionals with skills of equivalent importance and stature but in different discipline areas/domains. The importance of "reciprocity" in sustaining mentoring relationships is a distinctive theme in the conceptual framework for the model. In 2010 Graduate Diploma pre-service teachers from visual arts, music, drama and mathematics will be matched to mentors in reciprocal mentoring residencies in the first formal study of the mentoring innovation. This paper acts in the capacity of a prolegomena, describing the work undertaken to date and over-viewing the reciprocal mentoring which will occur in 2010.

Introduction

The attrition statistics for teachers in Australia (30 – 40% within the first 5 years) are a stark reminder of the debilitating drain on the human resource capital of the profession. This has prompted the 2007 Parliament of Australia House of Representatives inquiry into teacher education and training to call for the routine provision of mentoring for beginning teachers in partnerships between employing schools and universities. In this paper I describe a reciprocal mentoring program that was developed within the School of Education at Edith Cowan University (ECU), Perth, over the period 2005-2010. Reciprocal mentoring is a departure from traditional mentoring in that two skilled professionals are matched with each other according to skills set and needs. Each party to the arrangement has something valuable to offer the other, and each acts in the twin roles of mentor and mentee at various times during the relationship. During the five years the reciprocal-mentoring program has been in operation at ECU, over 75 pre-service teachers have been matched to Western Australian mentors in an arrangement that operated independently of the students' other practicum placements.

At the outset of the program the mentoring partnerships (2004-5) were simple one-directional, non- reciprocal structures (exclusively within visual arts) in which an experienced school-based mentor offered the graduating teacher support during his/her first year of teaching. This support proved especially effective in instances where the new teacher received little or no formal induction from his/her employing school. Though deemed useful by the participants, these early mentoring relationships largely petered out within the first year. During 2006-7 the character of the program changed and 'reciprocity' became an important feature. The visual arts pre-service teachers were linked early in their final year of

study to a mentor on the premise that this would be a *quid pro quo* relationship: the Graduate Diploma pre-service teachers had a specific skill set which would benefit the school; and, in exchange for making this expertise available, they would receive support after graduation and throughout the induction period. These latter partnerships stretched to encompass a two-year 'reciprocal arrangement'. During the first year the pre-service teachers were placed as an artist in residence and mentored secondary students in a specific arts discipline such as painting, thereby assisting the school-based teacher who had limited skills in this area. During the subsequent year (after graduation), the beginning teachers called upon the experienced teacher to support them (the beginning teachers) throughout the induction period. In 2008 - 2009 pre-service teachers from drama and music education joined in with the visual arts stream and undertook voluntary 'School Residencies'. Throughout the period 2006-9 there was overwhelming support from beginning teacher and mentor participants for the program. In 2010 a maths stream is scheduled to join visual arts, drama and music participants in their first formal investigation into 'reciprocal mentoring'.

This paper provides a critical overview of the program, elaborates its purpose, and establishes a context for the next stage of development. It is written in the style of an historical account of curriculum evolution and encapsulates reflective practice and action as a basis for research. Schön (1987) advocated reflective practice in education and higher education research settings as a useful tool in achieving excellence:

The practitioner ... reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation. (Schön, 1983, p. 68)

I have embraced this notion of reflective practice as a research tool and am hopeful that my focus upon reciprocal mentoring within the teacher education program I oversee at ECU will ultimately improve teaching and learning experiences for my students, and result in better transitions to teaching for ECU graduates. In this paper I begin by presenting the rationale for the reciprocal-mentoring program (induction failure and high attrition rates within the first 5 years), including key findings of the 2007 House of Representatives Inquiry into Teacher Education '*Top of the Class*'. I then describe the Reciprocal-Mentoring Model I have developed during 2006-2009, the profile and status typically afforded to Graduate Diploma teacher training students, and suggest that a reframing of the profession's view of this cohort is warranted. Finally, I describe the multidisciplinary cohorts scheduled to participate in reciprocal mentoring in 2010 and outline the benefits which the early trials with the model appear to deliver to participants. My concluding comments flag the direction I hope research will take 2010-15.

Induction Failure and Attrition Rates

Research from the USA, Canada, UK and Australia suggests that widespread induction failure and high attrition rates in the teaching profession are endemic in many countries and are therefore of international significance (Moir, 2003; Andrew, 2009; McDonald, 2009). Attrition figures in the USA range from 15-30% in the first 5 years, and researchers stress that induction failure is an important variable (Andrew, 2009; Ladd, 2007). Urbanski and O'Connell (2003) claim that new [American] teachers receive little or no meaningful support at the time they need it ... "we tolerate a sink or swim, survival of the fittest approach to entry into the profession" (p. 2). Croasmun, Hampton & Herrmann (2006) observe that in the US beginning teachers were most vulnerable to stress, leading to attrition during the first year of teaching:

The reason so many new teachers leave is that teaching, as a profession, has been slow to develop a systematic way to induct beginners gradually into the complexities of a job that demands hundreds of management decisions every day. Terms like *intern* and *trainee* are used in other professions to identify a beginner who has received training in the profession and who earns a stipend by participation in limited experiences under expert supervision. In the teaching profession, these terms are often used differently. Interns and trainees have full teaching responsibilities, without prior professional training; they must also attend classes in their spare time and often have limited expert supervision. If we want to retain new teachers, particularly those teaching in inner-city schools, we must introduce them to the profession humanely, in ways that engender self-

Ladd (2007) notes that attrition figures in the UK range from 15-22% within the early years of teaching and in a survey of more than 1,000 departing teachers in England (reasons for leaving the profession), 45% of respondents cited heavy workload, 36% government initiatives, and 35% identified stress as a key factor. According to Herbert (2005), attrition has an adverse effect on the beginning teacher, the profession (which is both aging and under-resourced) and the school students whose education is punctuated by a series of teacher changes resulting in loss of stability and continuity in their education. He advocated a rethinking of what occurs after course completion and particularly in the induction period. Attrition statistics for beginning teachers in Canada mirror those of the USA and UK and effective induction programs have been identified as powerful remediation agents in the attrition phenomena in that country. The Canadian North West Territories Teacher Induction Association noted quality induction programs are important because they:

... help new and beginning teachers become competent and effective professionals in the classroom. Successful induction programs help develop an understanding of the local school, community and cultures as well as curriculum matters and increase the likelihood of teacher retention. (NWTTIA, 2006, p.1)

In the Australian setting, induction failure has also been considered to be a significant factor in beginning teacher attrition rates. The House of Representatives Inquiry into teacher education and training (2007) reported that when pre-service training providers attend to induction, beginning teachers report significant benefits and express the view that they are likely to remain in teaching beyond the first five years. The inquiry urged tertiary institutions to 'get involved' in the induction process and to support better transitions to teaching:

Induction should be seen as an integral part of teacher education. It is not an add-on, a finishing touch. While there is evidence that systems and schools are endeavouring to improve induction processes, particularly by recognising the importance of mentors for beginning teachers, further changes are needed. Adequately addressing the needs of beginning teachers will require systematic changes and a partnership approach by the major stakeholders. (Hartsuyker, 2007, p. 91)

Despite agreement among education researchers that mentoring for beginning teachers throughout the early years is highly desirable, there are no induction partnerships between Western Australian Universities and schools beyond the course completion period. The House of Representatives 'Top of the Class' report noted:

Although induction is primarily the responsibility of employing authorities, the committee considers that teacher education should be a shared responsibility with all major stakeholders having an increased role, as

partners, in each of the stages of teacher education ... Over time, a partnership approach to teacher education, perhaps based initially around practicum but ultimately encompassing all aspects and all stages of teacher education, will transform the way in which teachers are prepared and supported in this country. It is an investment that the committee strongly urges the Australian Government to make. (Hartsuyker, 2007, p. 80)

My interest in mentoring, reciprocal mentoring and partnership approaches in particular, arises from my doctoral studies (Paris, 2008). I hope to contribute over time to the development of partnership-based mentoring as a component of graduation for all ECU teacher education students, and consider that reciprocal mentoring offers an innovative alternative to established practices. My University has been exploring mentoring for both undergraduate students and beginning teachers over the period 2005-2010 and I enjoy the collaborative opportunities arising from this area of research.

Better Transitions to Teaching - Mentoring Throughout Induction

The rationale for seeking better transitions to teaching is compelling: if graduates experience a supported transition from study to work and survive the first year, there are benefits for all stakeholders. Firstly, the beginning teachers receive support at the time they need it most, including the opportunity to establish network links within the profession. Secondly, the school students derive benefit from being taught by a professional practitioner who is adequately supported. Thirdly, the mentor teachers are given kudos for contributing to the profession and derive a range of personal benefits from being a reflective and collegial practitioner. Furthermore, the experience may support mentors' claims for promotion to senior teacher level (Hartsuyker, 2007). Fourthly, through ongoing engagement with schools, the University has an opportunity to actualise its commitment to supporting students and partner stakeholders, in turn leading to enhancement of the institution's reputation/standing. It redefines the 'duty of care' owed to beginning teachers and repositions the University's responsibility for students from one that currently ends at graduation. Finally, the profession itself is likely to be invigorated through the preservation of its human resource capital.

Martin (2006) defines mentoring as a 'mutually beneficial learning partnership in which a more experienced teacher (a mentor) takes an active and nurturing role in assisting a less experienced teacher (a mentee) to attain specific learning or professional development goals' (p. 8). Mentoring in any form is generally recognised as beneficial for new teachers (Martinez & MacKay, 2003; Urbanski and O'Connell, 2003; Moir, 2003; Herbert, 2005; Hartsuyker, 2007). Moir (2003) observes that mentor programs can be a critical tool in countering teacher attrition:

Mentors have an impact on new teachers in ways that no amount of training can. The real-life classroom presents questions that only real-life experience can answer. Mentors help provide those answers. They give practical, concrete advice; pose important questions to prompt reflection; model teaching techniques in the classroom; observe and offer feedback; and offer another point of view at a time when it is easy to lose all perspective. (p. 3)

She claims that, whereas the importance of mentoring is generally understood within the teaching profession, the quality of mentoring relationships tends to be highly variable. Hartsuyker (2007) similarly observes that mentoring of beginning teachers in Australia has often been informal or haphazard in style, insufficiently resourced or supported, and therefore has been flawed. The Canadian Northwest Territories Teacher Induction Authority goes further, noting that:

Research has shown that beginning teachers need support during their transition into professional practice. Teaching is the only profession that requires beginners to do the same work as experienced teachers. Through mentoring activities, both the protégé and the mentor gain understandings and concrete skills that will benefit their students and be shared with colleagues. Research shows that beginning teachers who are mentored are much more likely to stay in the profession. (http://www.newteachersnwt.ca/what_is_teacher_induction.html)

Martinez & Mackay (2003) assert that well-resourced, formally structured mentoring partnerships encompassing ‘training for the trainers’ are of critical importance. They stress the need for clearly defined mentor-mentee roles, meeting structures, communication channels, and call for training providers to play a part in school-based mentoring programs. This theme was also picked up in the final report of the Education and Training Committee commissioned by the Victorian Government where greater involvement by Universities in induction and mentoring experience was advocated:

The committee received evidence that effective induction and mentoring of new teachers is essential to ensure successful transitions into teaching. The Committee is encouraged by new Department of Education and Training and Victorian Institute of Teaching initiatives that have improved graduate induction and mentoring over recent years. Nevertheless, this inquiry identified certain aspects that can be further improved. Notably the Committee found that education faculties should play a greater role in the first year induction process. (2005, p. xxv)

The report concluded with a number of key recommendations for enhancing the quality of pre-service teacher preparation, including one which specifically embeds formalised mentoring into the graduation and induction process:

That the Victorian Institute of Teaching work with universities and employing authorities to design and implement a structured professional development program for first year graduates to complement their pre-service teacher education program. Further, that the Institute, in consultation with education faculties and schools, incorporate this program into the requirements for full teacher registration. (p. xxxvii)

The Top of the Class report (2007) similarly notes ‘much in current systems works against beginning teachers being provided with an appropriate level of support as they move from being a provisionally registered teacher to a fully registered teacher ... (induction experience) is highly variable’ (Hartsuyker, p. 84). The report goes on to recommend that beginning teachers be provided with support from a professionally trained mentor both during the induction year and, importantly, throughout the early years of teaching. Further, the committee found that mentors should receive recognition and remuneration in the form of salary and seniority for continued involvement in mentoring processes. Reciprocal mentoring picks up on this idea of ‘rewarding the mentor’ for their contribution in a form which makes ‘sustainability’ of the pool of trained mentors viable.

Reciprocal Mentoring

‘Reciprocal mentoring’ as a concept evolved from mentoring trials undertaken with graduating students over the course of 2005-9 at Edith Cowan University, Perth (Paris, 2008). The early placements were traditional in structure and style, with the mentor assuming the role of expert and the graduating teacher viewed as having little to contribute to the

partnership. During 2006-7 ‘reciprocity’ and ‘sustainability’ became important features. The visual arts pre-service teachers were linked early in their final year of study to mentors on the premise that they (the visual arts pre-service teacher) had specific skills that would benefit the mentor/host school. These latter partnerships were extended to a two-year ‘reciprocal arrangement’.

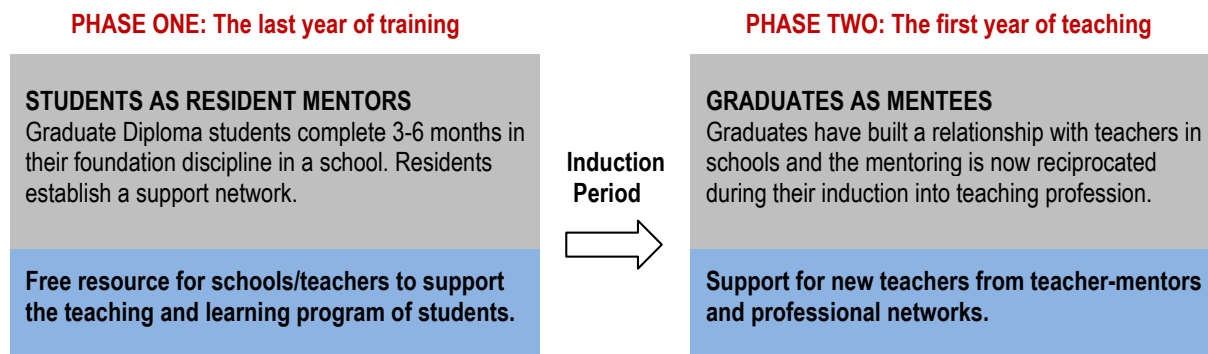


Figure One: Reciprocal Mentoring Framework

During the first year the pre-service teacher completed a placement as an artist in residence and mentored secondary students in a specific visual arts discipline such as graphic design (employing image manipulation software) or advanced techniques in oil painting in which the mentor had limited skills/expertise. Having access to a free ‘artist in residence’ had three main benefits: firstly, the placement saved the school the fee associated with employing an artist, which might cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars; secondly, the host teacher had access to a highly skilled visual artist from whom they could learn advanced contemporary techniques; and thirdly the presence of a skilled visual artist in the classroom inspired the students and lightened the teaching load of the classroom teacher who could defer to the visual arts ‘expert’. During the subsequent year (after graduation) the beginning teachers’ skills were limited, which required that they call upon the experienced teacher to mentor them throughout the induction period.

In 2009 the program changed again and students from both music (musicians in residence) and drama (actors/directors in residence) joined the visual arts stream in school-based residencies. The model represents a radical departure from familiar linear mentoring approaches that predominate in education contexts because it is predicated on an equal distribution of power and kudos between two experts; it affords to each participant the twin roles of mentor and mentee in respect of the other; it anticipates a prolonged relationship over a two-year period; and the relationship exists outside the beginning teacher’s employment context. The concept of two equal participants mentoring and being mentored by the other is a new way of viewing pre-service teachers and is particularly powerful in the case of the Graduate Diploma cohort.

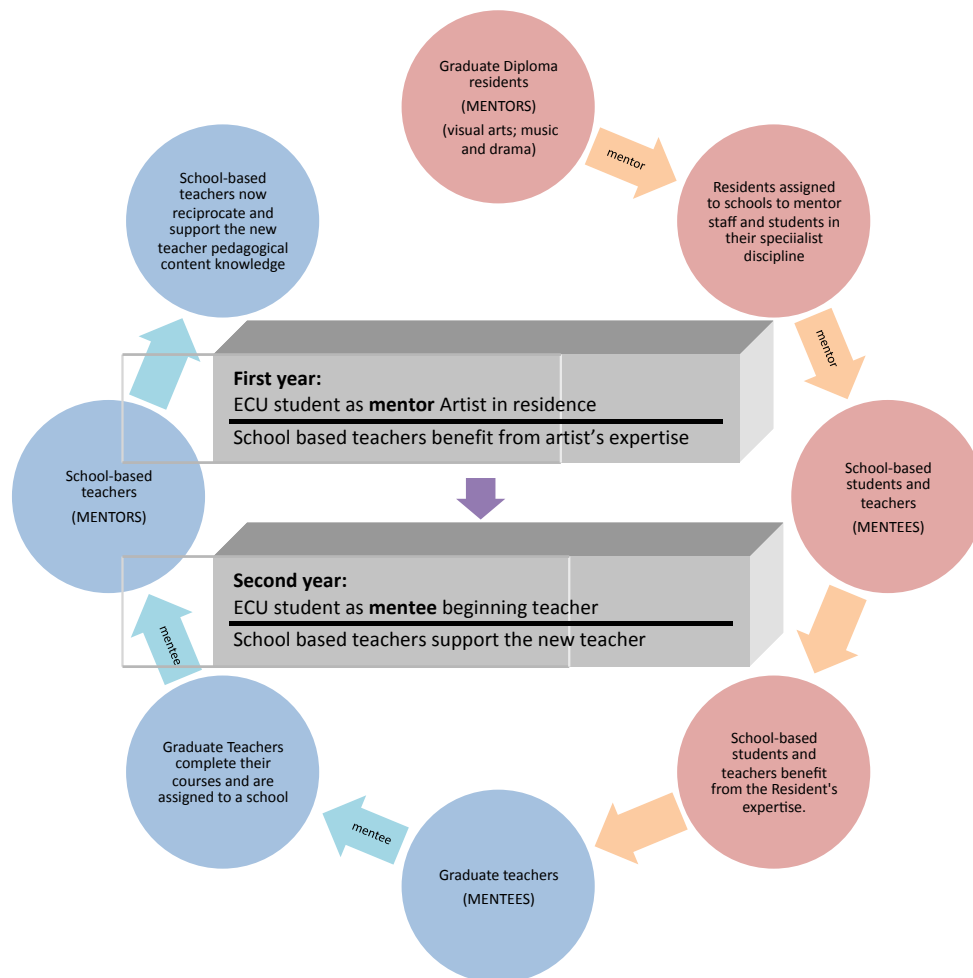


Figure Two: Reciprocal Mentoring Residencies

Graduate Diploma Pre-Service Teachers

Graduate Diploma students often come from industry settings where they may have worked for several years following the completion of their foundation degree, developing expertise in their discipline. Reciprocal mentoring acknowledges this expert status and offers to schools a skilled Graduate Diploma resident working periodically in their school for three to six months free of charge. Schools can derive significant benefit from having a highly skilled professional mentoring their students on specific projects, such as when the resident possesses industry-standard expertise (e.g. facility with sophisticated image manipulation software used by a graphic designer) that may be beyond the personal/professional resources of the classroom teacher. This service is reciprocated when the resident enters the teaching profession. In most instances the beginning-teacher is employed at a school other than the one at which the residency was completed so the mentoring in phase two is external to the employment context. Mentoring may take the form of guidance in the areas of preparing job applications; interviews; school policies and procedures; relief teaching demands; deficiencies in content knowledge (curricular, or pedagogical); teaching strategies or projects; socio-political landscape of the school; assessment and reporting; or even managing stress which may be a consequence of the new and unfamiliar employment context. Having a 'critical friend' and colleague to call upon, can help beginning teachers to build resilience (Brookes & Sikes, 1994; Franzak, 2002; Martin, 2006; Paris, 2008).

The reciprocal-mentoring model redefines the status of the Graduate Diploma student from novice to partner. In the redefined relationship the ebb and flow of information and support is bi-directional with the Graduate Diploma student offering information/skills to the teacher-mentor in return for similar processes both during the placement and after graduation. The re-conceptualisation of Graduate Diploma students within a reciprocal mentoring framework invites a relationship between mentor and mentee that is characterised by 'reciprocity'. Within this partnership, the pre-service teacher becomes very valuable and desirable - a rich resource capable of enhancing the quality of education the school offers its students. Here is what beginning teacher Chloe had to say about reciprocal mentoring:

"I participated in a student mentoring program during my Graduate Diploma year in 2007. Twice a week, I worked with year 11 and 12 students during class, offering ideas and hopefully inspiration. I continued with the reciprocal-mentoring program at the beginning of this year when I accepted the art teaching position at a rural district high school where I was teaching art but also subjects for which I was not trained. My mentor assisted me in areas of teaching where I lacked confidence, which eased the stress of starting teaching when everything seemed a little too much!"

And from her mentor Janeen:

"I enjoyed working with Chloe and the other artists in residence – they were a great help. My involvement as a mentor has also provided me with further professional development and increase of skills through the training workshops and opening up of professional discourse and networking with other mentors, mentees and University staff in a research project. I value the role of mentoring in enhancing my own professional reputation and developing further knowledge and skills which has led me to consider carrying out studies at a Masters level in the near future."

In an expanded version of the model envisaged for 2010, Graduate Diploma students who possess an undergraduate qualification in mathematics will be offered the opportunity to complete a reciprocal mentoring residency in a school over an extended period as a mathematician in residence. After graduation, the beginning maths teacher reciprocally seeks assistance during the induction period from his/her external school-based mentor. In future versions of the program placements within the English (writer in residence), science (scientist in residence), and health & physical education (sports person in residence) are envisaged.

Early Monitoring of Outcomes

Qualitative approaches to collecting data (participant interviews, pre/post placement questionnaires, email correspondence, records of meetings) have been adopted throughout the evolution of this mentoring research program (2005-2010). A convenience sample approach for research participants was employed during the period 2005-6 by arbitrarily matching a small group of Graduate Diploma beginning visual arts teachers of Edith Cowan University to schools near to where they lived; and typically before their 'induction' employment was resolved. Later a more strategic matching of mentor-mentees based on skills set (rather than geography) predominated. In the early phase participation in the program was entirely voluntary and not all graduating students wanted to be involved. The external mentors were sourced through the visual arts education professional association and selected on the basis that they were senior visual arts teachers or Head of Learning Area/Department and had time

to participate. A mentor training workshop was held in both 2005 and 2006 to ensure the mentors/mentees had shared understandings about the intent and operation of the program.

The mentor/mentee partnerships were configured where possible in groups of three, with one mentor assigned to two mentees who in turn acted as support ‘buddies’ for each other. The buddies shared their experiences and attempted to collaboratively devise solutions to challenges before calling on the mentor for advice. All participants were formally interviewed at the beginning of the year, email correspondence was gathered across the entire year, and the group met informally in a café on at least two occasions in the first two terms of the school year. By the end of each year more than half of the partnerships had become inactive largely as a consequence of the beginning teachers no longer ‘needing’ the support of the mentor. Without exception, the beginning teachers reported in their end-of-year electronic surveys that the program had exerted a positive impact on their transition to teaching – particularly in the early months of entering the profession. This was especially welcome as most reported experiencing little or no formal induction from their employing school; and three described reaching a point where they would have left teaching had it not been for the advice, support and empathy offered by the external mentor. The qualitative data gathered during the 2005-6 phase of mentoring (including interviews, regular emails, minutes of meetings, and end-of-year questionnaires) portrayed the landscape of the first year of teaching as an often ‘inhospitable’ environment that was generally unsympathetic to the needs of the new teachers in the study.

Year	B- teacher (voluntary participation from graduates of previous year)	M-teacher (sourced AEA/WA)	Groups in-tact at end	Mentors from previous year	Mentor attrition rates
2005	10 participants (from a class of 20 2004 graduating teachers)	5	2	Nil – first year	
2006	10 participants (from a class of 31 2005 graduating teachers)	5	1.5	1	80%

Table One: 2005-2006 Mentoring Partnerships

The mentors in this first phase reported feeling initially invigorated through their involvement in the program and described experiencing a sense of personal and professional wellbeing as a result of the reflective practitioner processes that unfolded as they supported the inexperienced colleague. By the end of the year, however, the mentors almost all reported feeling exhausted and unable to commit to the program for the following year. Analysis of the 2005-6 beginning teacher end-of-year questionnaires gave rise to five perceptions/conclusions about the impact of the mentoring exerted on their professional lives:

- One: improved induction experience for the beginning teacher participants that resulted in an enhanced sense of personal wellbeing;
- Two: improved attrition rates for beginning teachers during the induction period of the research; three of the beginning teachers in the study reported that they would have left teaching as a consequence of stress, had it not been for the positive support provided by their mentor;
- Three: beginning teachers felt the program offered them practical support, especially those who did not have routine access to a definitive syllabus or to subject discipline colleagues in the school setting;
- Four: facilitated ongoing access to subject discipline, pedagogical and curricular content knowledge that improved skills and confidence in visual arts teaching by the new teachers;
- Five: enhanced membership of the Art Education Association/WA from which the mentors were sourced; all participants were members of the association by the end of the study, suggesting the potential for recruitment and development (Paris, 2008).

By most measures the early trials were successful, but since the majority of mentors (80%) declined to sign on again for a second year, sustainability and wastage of resources, including lost investments (time, human resources and funding used for training the mentors), emerged as significant challenges. With limited availability of suitable host school/mentors from a finite pool of experienced teachers available to act as mentors for the next group of beginning teachers, reciprocity (quid pro quo) was conceived as a possible solution. In 2007 the structure of the program changed to accommodate the notion of reciprocity and, in addition to the next group of 10 voluntary beginning teachers and mentors, 5 Graduate Diploma pre-service teachers entered the program early in their final year of study. These students were placed as artists in residence at a mentor’s school on the basis that they would work for free as an artist in residence mentoring secondary school students, and in return the mentor would support them as a beginning teacher the year following graduation.

Year	Resident Artists	B-teachers	M-teachers	Mentors from previous year	Mentor attrition rates
2007	5 (voluntary participation from the then current 2007 final year students)	10 (voluntary participation from graduates of previous year)	15 (sourced through AEA/WA)	2	60%
2008	15 (voluntary participation from the then current 2008 final year students)	15 (voluntary participation from graduates of previous year)	20 (sourced through AEA/WA)	6	60%

Table Two: 2007-2008 Mentoring Partnerships

In this first reciprocal trial the artists in residence were also placed in a host school was near to where they lived; however, the ‘group’ structure was largely abandoned and a one-mentor/one-mentee configuration was adopted. The placements were well received and six mentors agreed to repeat their involvement in the program the following year, demonstrating that the idea of receiving ‘something in return’ and/or having a partnership for the mentoring acted as an incentive for mentors to repeat involvement in subsequent years. In two instances the pre-service student-mentor match was highly successful because the artist in residence had skills the school-based mentor did not possess (sophisticated image manipulation skills/graphic design skills) and this transformed the character of the relationship. The mentors reported in their end-of-year survey that the artist placement had been extremely valuable to their teaching and learning program and, in addition to honouring their commitment to mentor the beginning teacher the following year, they specifically requested another student artist be matched with them on the basis of a desired skills set. The results were publicised through the professional association and more potential mentors expressed interest in hosting a residency.

In 2009 the pool of Graduate Diploma students who undertook residencies widened to encompass students from music and drama as well as visual arts, with a total of 32 final-year students signing on as residents in their respective field. The established visual arts program continued to enjoy success; however, the fledgling music and drama streams largely disintegrated within a couple of months. Key staff at the university cited unspecified

‘teething problems’ and lack of time to support the placements as the cause and resolved to redefine the structure more clearly for their students in 2010.

The Research Ahead

The notion of reciprocity and sustainability in mentoring relationships appears to resonate with mentors, pre-service Graduate Diploma students and staff at the University. As a result of participant feedback and university staff input the existing reciprocal-mentoring program will undergo a number of changes in 2010. Over the next few months the structures will be refined in readiness for the next phase of inquiry due to commence in mid 2010. In addition to visual arts, music and drama streams, there will be a group of ‘reciprocal mentoring’ residencies in maths in semester two 2010. In the current phase the ‘voluntary’ dimension will be progressively phased out, with participation for all final year visual arts students as a component of their course work. Students in drama, music and maths will still participate in a voluntary capacity until the program becomes more established. Based on the results to date, it seems reasonable to hypothesise that (irrespective of specialisation) the ‘routine’ matching of Graduate Diploma students to mentors through reciprocal mentoring residencies will enhance graduates’ transition to the profession. The testing of this hypothesis is envisaged.

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