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Angelina Ambrosetti
CQUniversity

John Dekkers
CQUniversity

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The Interconnectedness of the Roles of Mentors and Mentees in Pre-service Teacher Education Mentoring Relationships

Angelina Ambrosetti
John Dekkers
CQUniversity

***Abstract:** This review of the research literature focuses on the interconnectedness of the roles of mentor teachers and pre-service teachers. In order to examine the interconnectedness of mentors and mentees, the paper firstly delves into what mentoring is and what contextual factors influence mentoring in pre-service teacher education. It then examines the research literature on mentors and mentees and the roles they undertake in a mentoring relationship. Emerging from the examination of the roles is identification of how the relationship functions with regard to the mentor and mentee who work together to achieve specific goals. The paper highlights the fact that limited research has examined mentor and mentees as interconnected partners in mentoring relationships. The paper outlines how the mentoring relationship participants can actively participate and interact. In conclusion, the paper provides a definition for mentoring that embraces essential mentoring components for pre-service teacher education contexts.*

Introduction

In recent years the use of mentoring has become more prominent in pre-service teacher education, replacing ‘supervision’ in many education degrees (Price & Chen, 2003; Walkington, 2005b; Zeegers, 2005). Mentoring, in a pre-service teacher context, occurs during professional placements (or practicum) in which student teachers are being placed with classroom teachers to learn, develop and practise teaching knowledge and skills (The Queensland College of Teachers, 2007). This literature review is concerned only with researched-based mentoring literature and is drawn from an array of disciplines that include the pre-service teacher context. Specific criteria were applied to the research literature to ensure creditability: that being recent works (ten years or less) and peer reviewed scholarly articles which outline research methodologies. A wide range of literature was reviewed however many did not meet specified criteria, however the mentoring works of seminal researchers such as Kram were also included. Literature which satisfied the criteria were coded, however those that did not focus upon research that specifically examined mentoring processes and roles were discarded.

Mentoring in professional workplace contexts is well described and defined (for example Eby, McManus, Simon & Russell, 2000; Allen, 2003). However, in the specific context of pre-service teacher education, clarity about what mentoring is, who mentors and how it occurs is scarce (Lai, 2005; Hall, Draper, Smith & Bullough Jr, 2008). The aim of this paper is to critically examine the research literature in order to:

- a) describe and define mentoring as it may apply in a pre-service teacher education context, and
- b) describe the roles of mentors and mentees in the mentoring process

What is mentoring?

It is evident from the literature that there is no single definition for mentoring. Even in the pre-service teacher education context, the definitions vary greatly giving the reader differing impressions as to what mentoring is. Most definitions suggest a hierarchical relationship in which 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).

Smith (2007, p.277) defines mentoring as ‘a particular mode of learning wherein the mentor not only supports the mentee, but also challenges them productively so that progress is made’. However, 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 can be described as an intense interpersonal relationship (Kram, 1985) and Smith (2007) notes that mentoring is a process which develops the whole person, rather than parts. Kwan and Lopez (2005, p.276) view mentoring as ‘both a relationship and a process’. However in view of the definition by Fairbanks et al. (2000) outlined above, context is also a key part of mentoring. But despite the foregoing, most definitions in the literature do not consider all of the above three components that embrace mentoring – *relationship, process and context*.

Lai (2005) describes the three components in terms of dimensions – *relational, developmental and contextual*. Relational refers to the relationship between mentors and mentees. Developmental refers to how mentors and mentees develop personally and professionally whilst aiming towards particular goals. Contextual focuses on cultural and situational features of the mentoring setting. Lai notes that it is these three components which create and impact upon a mentoring relationship. Therefore the remainder of this paper will view mentoring as an event that comprises the three components as described by Lai.

The mentoring context in pre-service teacher education

Mentoring has replaced supervision in most cases in the pre-service teacher education context, but it is unclear from the research literature how mentoring is implemented and operates in this context (Walkington, 2005b; Hudson, 2004). Bray and Nettleton (2006) discuss the differences between mentoring and supervision. They indicate that supervising involves ‘the roles of teacher, boss, assessor, counsellor and expert’, whereas mentoring involves ‘assisting, befriending, guiding, advising and counselling (Bray & Nettleton, 2006, p.849). Mentoring as described in the literature generally involves supporting and providing feedback to the mentee without judgement or criteria. Walkington (2005b) highlights an important difference between supervising and mentoring in her study of the mentoring of pre-service teachers, that being the issue of assessment. According to Walkington (2005b), assessment is associated with supervising not mentoring: that is, supervisors make a

judgement on the novices' performance, whereas mentors do not. Hudson and Millwater (2006) describe supervision as having the key purpose of assessment performance, whereas mentoring is about building trust within a relationship. In this respect, Sanford and Hopper (2000) claim that the term 'supervision' has negative connotations: that one needs watching or that something needs to be fixed and also note that there is a hierarchical system within supervision: the supervisor has power over the protégé. Zeegers (2005) describes supervision as an outdated practica model, but notes that pre-service teachers need to develop specific skills and competencies in process of learning to teach.

Despite the highlighted differences between mentoring and supervision, mentors in pre-service teacher education engage in both mentoring and supervisory roles. Mentors nurture the development of the mentee through building rapport (Hudson & Millwater, 2008). They also use such interpersonal functions as supporting, advising, empathizing and role modelling, (Hopper, 2001; Le Maistre, Boudreau & Pare, 2006; Hall et al. 2008). However as a requirement of the professional placement as set by the university, mentors assess the functional competencies of the mentee (Walkington, 2005b).

Mentoring, like supervision, typically occurs during professional placements of pre-service education degree programs. The placements vary in length and structure; from individual days to blocks of weeks (House of Representatives, 2007). Pre-service teachers usually experience several different school sites throughout their degree, thus encountering a variety of mentor teachers (Queensland College of Teachers, 2007). Therefore, the kinds of mentoring relationships that a pre-service teacher forms with their mentor may be significantly different to a professional who have mentors for an extended period of time.

According to Lai (2005, p.12) 'mentoring plays an important role in enhancing novice teachers' opportunities to learn within the contexts of teaching'. Feiman-Nemser (2003, p.26) notes that 'teachers need to learn to teach in a particular context'. Therefore specific mentoring will occur that is dependant on the contextual circumstance (Hudson, 2004). Teachers often operate solo and are accountable for all aspects of their classrooms and the students that inhabit those classrooms. On the other hand, other professions, such as health or business often involve a team approach or each person having specific jobs or roles to complete. In an education context, the mentee may be required to undertake all tasks the mentor does, necessitating complex planning and organisation of the mentoring relationship and process (Hudson, 2004).

The changing stereotypes of mentors and mentees

Traditionally, the literature about mentoring stereotypes mentors as older, wiser, more experienced persons, and mentees as younger, less experienced protégé persons. However, the past decade has seen an emergence of a more contemporary view of who the mentors and the mentees are (Kostovich & Thurn, 2006; Higgins & Kram, 2001). According to Smith (2007), a mentor nowadays can be a co-worker or a peer, someone who is equal in status and in age. Peers who are mentors can be more experienced than the mentee or at the same developmental levels.

Mentors, in the traditional sense of the term, are usually people in leadership roles or are people whom the mentee aspires to be like (Cox, 2005). However research suggests that mentees may have more negative than positive experiences in this type of relationship (Eby et al. 2000). In their study of negative mentoring experiences, they found that mentor skills (or lack of them), and personality mismatches were the main causes of negativity in traditional mentoring relationships. Bullough Jr, Young, Birrell, Clark, Egan, Erickson, Frankovich, Brunetti, & Welling, (2003), in their study of peer mentoring groups concluded that negative

experiences could also occur in such relationships, but noted that the careful matching of participants might alleviate this problem.

Roles in the mentoring process

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), but their roles 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 literature rarely defines these terms in detail. 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 that relationship.

The role of the mentor

This section focuses on describing, in some detail, the role of the mentor in order to establish the nature of the work involved. While this is often considered in the literature, research that focuses specifically on gathering data about the roles of the mentor is scarce and roles are not always explained clearly or defined in terms of what mentors actually do.

Figures 1 and 2 contain a selection of research articles from the areas of teacher education and health care that have examined the roles of mentors from the perspective of both mentors and mentees. The roles defined in these Figures are representative of the perspectives extracted from the research and highlight common themes that are characteristic of what mentors do, notably providing support and feedback and modelling behaviour.

| Research Focus | Mentor Roles |
|--|---|
| <p>Focus: Mentor Teachers Reference: Hall, Draper, Smith & Bullough Jr, 2008, p.333 Methodology: Qualitative – surveys and interviews with 264 mentor teachers in the US.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Provides support - giving feedback, encouragement, sharing of ideas, guiding, directing, modelling and demonstrating. ∞ Provides support for university tasks – opportunities for observations, a place to teach and complete assessment items. ∞ Critical evaluator - giving constructive criticism, encouraging reflection and problem solving. ∞ Team teacher - collaboration and teaching together as a team. |
| <p>Focus: Mentor Teachers Reference: Jaipal, 2009 Methodology: Mixed methods– semi structured interviews with 5 mentor teachers in Ontario, Canada.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Modelling – carrying out tasks explicitly for the student teacher to observe ∞ Coaching – offering hints, feedback, suggestions and reminders ∞ Scaffolding – advice, assistance, feedback and physical supports |
| <p>Focus: Mentor Teachers Reference: Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005, pp.279-281 Methodology: Qualitative – semi structured interviews with 259 mentor teachers in Hong Kong.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Provider of feedback – discussing the student teacher’s performance. ∞ Counsellor – helping with professional or personal problems. ∞ Observer – observing lessons, preparation and professional behaviour ∞ Role model – setting a good example of professional behaviour. ∞ Equal partner – mutual support and learning from each other. ∞ Critical friend – constructive criticism of student teacher’s teaching. ∞ Instructor – providing specific instruction on how to teach. |

Figure 1 – Roles of the mentor from the perspective of the mentor

| Research Focus | Mentor Role and Components of the role |
|--|---|
| <p>Focus: Mentor Teachers Reference: Jones, 2000, p.72 Methodology: Qualitative – questionnaire with 50 graduate teachers in England and Germany.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Provider of support ∞ Critical friend – provider of constructive criticism and feedback. ∞ Collegial partner |
| <p>Focus: Mentor Teachers Reference: Maynard, 2000, pp.21-26 Methodology: Qualitative – interviews with 17 student teachers in Swansea, Wales.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Providing inclusion – student teacher is made to feel welcome, accepted and included. ∞ Providing support - advice, teamwork, communication and feedback. ∞ Role model – an effective practitioner and allows mentees to try different techniques and strategies. |
| <p>Focus: Nurse Mentors Reference: Kilcullen, 2007, pp.99-100 Methodology: Qualitative – focus groups with 29 student nurses in Dublin, Ireland</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Socialisation - making the mentee comfortable, introducing them to the ward and creating awareness of rules. ∞ Support in learning - negotiating learning objectives, giving constructive feedback, modelling and demonstrating. ∞ Role model – addresses nurse behaviours and actions. ∞ Assessor - giving the mentee feedback or a grade on their performance. |
| <p>Focus: Mentor Teachers Reference: Jewell , 2007, pp.298-299 Methodology: Qualitative – interviews with 7 experienced teachers in Oklahoma, US.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Effective communicator - allows and encourages reflective thoughts and actions ∞ Providing support – listening and advising. |

Figure 2 – Roles of the mentor from the perspective of the mentee

Figure 1 indicates that mentors consider their role to be mainly one of providing support for mentees. This support can involve giving feedback, creating a comfortable learning environment, and providing an explicit representation of the job or skill that the mentee is learning. The research indicates that mentors do this by way of offering encouragement, using specific strategies such as role modelling, observing the mentee in action and working alongside them.

Figure 2 shows that the mentee views the roles of the mentor also as being mainly those of providing support and explicit instruction and training in the job or skill. Mentors do this by way of including mentees in the work environment, providing advice and treating them as colleagues and communicating effectively with them.

It might be concluded from Figures 1 and 2 that the roles of a mentor are numerous and relatively complex. However in the research literature, both mentors and mentees pinpoint similar roles that mentors should play in their mentoring duties. Mentors tend to consider their role in terms of providing support, help, instruction, and feedback. Mentees view the roles of the mentor as being to support, include, instruct and advise.

Cherian (2007) indicates that the roles mentors are expected to perform and how they perform them, are not well documented in current research. This view is supported by Hall et al. (2008), who point out that those being asked to mentor often have a different understanding of how to perform this task from those who organise the relationship. Therefore a synthesis of mentoring and mentoring roles has been used in this review to examine the roles of a mentor in greater detail. Figure 3 identifies possible mentor roles and outlines how the mentor performs this role.

| Roles | Action of the mentors |
|---------------------------|--|
| Supporter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Assists in mentee's personal and professional development (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005) ∞ Inclusion and acceptance of the mentee (Maynard, 2000) ∞ Outlines expectations (Kilcullen, 2007) ∞ Gives honest, critical feedback (Hall et al., 2008) ∞ Provides advice during task performance (Maynard, 2000) ∞ Provides protection from unpleasant situations (Hill, Del Favero & Ropers-Huilman, 2005) ∞ Advocates for the mentee (Hall, et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2005) |
| Role Model | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Assists the mentee by example (Greene & Puetzer, 2002) ∞ Demonstrates the behaviours of the profession (Maynard, 2000; Kilcullen, 2007) ∞ Demonstrates tasks (Kilcullen, 2007) ∞ Sets and maintains standards (Bray & Nettleton, 2006) ∞ Integrates theory and practice for mentee (Kilcullen, 2007) |
| Facilitator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Provides opportunities to perform the task/job (Hall et al., 2008) ∞ Allows mentee to "develop their sense of self" (Maynard, 2000, p.25) ∞ Provides guidelines and offers support (Bullough et al., 2003; Maynard, 2000) |
| Assessor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Provides criteria based grades/marks on mentees performance (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005) ∞ Makes informed decision on progress (Kilcullen, 2007) |
| Collaborator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Uses a team like approach (Hall et al., 2008) ∞ Provides a safe environment for the mentee (Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2000; Webb, Pachler, Mitchell & Herrington, 2007) ∞ Share and reflect with mentees (Webb et. al., 2007) ∞ Give assistance to mentees (Webb et. al., 2007) ∞ Identify needs with the mentee (Webb et. al., 2007) |
| Friend | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Acts as a critical friend (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005) ∞ Provides companionship or camaraderie (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005) ∞ Encourages the mentee to try new tasks or challenges (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005) ∞ Provides advice about weaknesses in a constructive manner (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005) |
| Trainer or Teacher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Provides specific instructions about performing tasks (Bray & Nettleton, 2006) ∞ Teach basic skills (Bullough et al., 2003) ∞ Provide resources (Bullough et al., 2003) ∞ Uses explicit teaching to pass on skills and knowledge (Fairbanks et al., 2000). |
| Protector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Looks after the mentee (Hill et al., 2005) ∞ Raises mentees profile with others (Hill et al., 2005) ∞ Shields the mentee from unpleasant situations (Hall et al., 2008) ∞ Defends mentees actions (Hall et al., 2008) |
| Colleague | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Treats the mentee as one who is already part of the profession (Bray & Nettleton, 2006) ∞ Advocates for the mentee in the organisation (Bray & Nettleton, 2006) |
| Evaluator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Appraises the mentees progress (Le Maistre et al., 2006; Kilcullen, 2007) ∞ Provides feedback (Le Maistre, et al. 2006; Killcullen, 2007) ∞ Engages in mutual evaluation with mentee (Greene & Puetzer, 2002) |
| Communicator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Sharing of professional knowledge and skills (Lai, 2005) ∞ Providing a variety of communication methods (Bray & Nettleton, 2006) ∞ Provide feedback on progress to further develop learning (Jewell, 2007) |

Figure 3 – Mentoring roles and associated actions

The multiple roles that can be assumed by a mentor, as shown in Figure 3, suggest that the work of a mentor is complex and multifaceted (Hall et al., 2008; Lucas, 2001). The following key points that emerge from Figure 3 are:

- ∞ the role of a mentor is a dynamic one;

- ∞ mentor roles involve both relationship aspects and process aspects. For example, the mentor may offer the mentee advice, protection and support, but can also be creating opportunities for the mentee to carry out tasks in order to achieve goals; and .
- ∞ mentor roles are contextually based: that is, the mentor performs particular roles in particular circumstances. For example, if a student teacher has given a lesson, the mentor will perform the role of evaluator rather than the role of friend.

The role of the mentee

The present review of the literature has revealed that there has been relatively limited research regarding the role of mentees in a mentoring relationship. Walkington (2005a) considers that the mentee’s role is one of an active participant. As mentoring is a mutual, relationship, the mentee has an equally important role to that of the mentor (for example Kamvounias, McGrath-Champ & Yip, 2007; Freeman, 2008; Paris, 2010). Figure 4 summarizes four research studies that outline the mentees roles in a mentoring relationship.

| Research Focus | Mentee Roles and Characteristics |
|--|--|
| <p>Focus: Higher Education Reference: Kamvounias, McGrath-Champ & Yip, 2007 Methodology: Qualitative – written reflections with 28 university lecturers, Sydney, Australia.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Engaging in professional conversations ∞ Performing tasks as required ∞ Working with the mentor in developing skills and knowledge |
| <p>Focus: Education -Student teachers Reference: Freeman, 2008, p.33 Methodology: Qualitative – observations and interviews with 8 mentor teachers and student teachers, Glendale, US.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Setting personal goals ∞ Open to communication with the mentor ∞ Learning from the mentor: skills and knowledge about the day to day work of a teacher |
| <p>Focus: Education - Student teachers Reference: Walkington, 2005(a). Methodology: Qualitative – journal entries with 240 student teachers, Canberra, Australia.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Become involved in the day to day routine of the classroom ∞ Observe the mentor in action ∞ Teach lessons ∞ Evaluate and reflect |

Figure 4 – Roles of a mentee

As highlighted by Figure 4, the literature provides little clarity about the role of the mentee. Therefore further synthesis of the mentee’s role is needed.

The literature has been used in the preparation of Figure 5 in order to construct a further synthesis of the mentees role within a mentoring relationship. Figure 5 demonstrates the connectedness between the role of a mentee and mentor and the interdependence of these roles. It can be seen that each role of the mentor has several corresponding mentee roles; a mentee may perform one or all at the same time. However, most research has examined the roles of the mentor and mentee separately, and no studies were found that investigated the interdependence of the two roles. Figure 5 synthesises the literature on mentor and mentee roles to reveal the possible actions and reactions that may occur between mentors and mentees.

| Mentor role | Associated mentee roles |
|---------------------|--|
| Supporter | Role: Being Open The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Listens to the mentor ∞ Implements or enacts advice and suggestions from the mentor (Greene & Putzer, 2002) ∞ Brings their own perceptions and beliefs to the relationship (Walkington, 2005a) ∞ Alters and develop new perceptions and beliefs (Walkington, 2005a) ∞ Take risks (Greene & Puetzer, 2002). |
| | Role: Performs tasks The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Performs tasks and actions within the work or learning environment. ∞ Uses guidance and support from the mentor to guide the how they perform the tasks (Lai, 2005) ∞ Uses feedback from the mentor to develop their practice (Lai, 2005). |
| | Role: Documents own progress The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Is responsible for documenting their learning journey and outlining goals to achieve. (Walkington, 2005a) |
| Role model | Role: Observer The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Watches how a task or action is completed by their mentor. ∞ Keeps observation notes ∞ Discusses observations in order to develop skills and knowledge that pertains to the job (Lai, 2005) |
| | Role: Reflector The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Oral and written discussions which focus on own learning ∞ Reflects on own practice to develop skills and knowledge (Walkington, 2005a) |
| | Role: Develops own personal growth plan The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Documents own future development - experiences, goals and aspirations (Lai, 2005) |
| Facilitator | Role: Active participant The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Takes opportunities to develop professional skills and knowledge ∞ Initiates tasks to complete ∞ Volunteers for performance tasks ∞ Creates opportunities to participate (Walkington, 2005a) |
| | Role: Reflector The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Reflection on their own performance of the task or action (Walkington, 2005a) ∞ Discuss reflection with the mentor in order to clarify and develop professional progress (Lai, 2005) |
| | Role: Performs tasks The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Makes use of opportunities facilitated by the mentor ∞ Performs tasks that may be scheduled or unscheduled (Kamvournias et al., 2006). |
| | Role: Documents own progress The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Takes responsibility for their own learning. ∞ Set goals and work towards achieving the goals through facilitated opportunities. (Lai, 2005) |
| Collaborator | Role: Works with others (mentors, peers, other organisation staff) The mentee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Share ideas through conversations and actions (Fairbanks et al., 2000) ∞ Plans, participates in joint performance of a task, drawing on another for ideas or help (Laker, Laker & Lea, 2008) ∞ Initiates opportunities to work with others |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Willing participant in sharing circles ∞ Listens and takes advice |
| | <p>Role: Works in the role or job</p> <p>The mentee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Takes on the role of the profession and begins to ‘do the job’. ∞ Works along side of the mentor to perform the associated roles and tasks of the work. (Bullough et al., 2003) |
| Assessor | <p>Role: Performs tasks</p> <p>The mentee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Is familiar with the assessment criteria and uses this to guide their task performance (Bray & Nettleton, 2006). |
| | <p>Role: Performs self assessment</p> <p>The mentee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Performs critical reflection in order to make self assessments about task performance. ∞ Uses feedback from mentor with critical reflection to determine their own progress (Le Maistre et al., 2006). |

Figure 5 – Interconnectedness of mentor and mentee engagement

While this review did not find any studies that focussed specifically on the interconnectedness of mentor and mentee roles, Figure 5 summarises how mentor and mentee roles mesh. In this respect, Norman and Feiman-Nemser (2005) believe that the expectations that both the mentor and mentee hold about the task at hand will determine how the mentoring relationship is approached and how each interacts with the other. Furthermore, Lucas (2001) in her study about mentoring relationships between undergraduates and primary aged students found that the roles were redefined on a continuous basis. 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’. It can be concluded from Figure 5 that mentoring is an interactive process in which the mentor and mentee react according to the role being performed. It can also be concluded from Figure 5 that the roles of both participants are interconnected. As noted by Bullough and Draper (2004), the roles undertaken by both the mentor and mentee are influenced by the interactions they are engaged in.

Other influences on the roles of mentors and mentees

The mentoring literature reflects the viewpoint that mentoring roles change as the relationship evolves (Bullough et al., 2003; Kostovich & Thurn, 2006; Lai, 2005 ; Le Maistre et al., 2006; Rajuan, Beijgaard & Verloop, 2007). Bouquillon, Sosik & 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, the roles each participant undertakes and what mentoring occurs within the relationship (Bouquillon et al., 2005). For example, a mentee who has just begun that learning journey will need more support than one who is near the end of their journey (Le Maistre et al., 2006). In formal mentoring relationships, it may be the case that the mentee has several mentors, each of whom takes on a different phase of the relationship. As noted by McCormack and West’s (2006) multiple mentors throughout the life of a mentoring program were the key to successful outcomes for the participants. In some professions or training situations, the mentoring is defined by a series of short term, formal relationships that address the learning and/or practice of specific skills and knowledge (D’Abate & Eddy, 2008).

Conclusions

The aim of this synthesis of the research literature was to examine critically how mentoring is conceptualised in the literature as well as to arrive at a description and/or a definition of mentoring as it might apply with a pre-service teacher education context. A second aim of this synthesis was to examine the roles that mentors and mentees play in a mentoring relationship and how they interconnect. The following key points can be concluded from the synthesis:

- a) Mentoring is defined in many various ways throughout the literature. Existing definitions in pre-service teacher education do not consistently consider or embrace the three broad components of a mentoring relationship – relationship, process and context. A definition for mentoring that embraces the three components is as follows.
Mentoring is a non-hierarchical, reciprocal relationship between mentors and mentees who work towards specific professional and personal outcomes for the mentee. The relationship usually follows a developmental pattern within a specified timeframe and roles are defined, expectations are outlined and a purpose is (ideally) clearly delineated.
- b) The literature reveals that roles undertaken by mentors and mentees in mentoring relationship are numerous, depending on the context and the goals to be achieved. Nevertheless the roles are not clearly defined in terms of what actions occur during the process of mentoring. It has also been revealed that there is a clear link between the roles of mentors and mentees, but there is a significant gap in research about the synergy between mentor and mentee roles and how the roles interact and react.
- c) There is limited research about the role of mentees in the pre-service teacher context. The focus of most research studies is the role of mentors. Research is needed about the role of mentees from the perspective of mentors and mentees.

The plethora of literature about mentoring indicates that mentoring is a widespread, universally accepted relationship that occurs for a variety of reasons in many professions. This review has defined mentoring and has begun to delve into the interconnectedness between mentors and mentees. It has highlighted the need to define mentoring for the pre-service teacher context as well as defining the interconnecting roles of mentors and mentees.

Mentoring is a valuable process that impacts on both mentors and mentees. It is essential that the impact be positive, therefore both mentors and mentees need to know what their associated roles are and how they interact. Future research in the pre-service teacher context needs to focus on definitions and roles, as well as the interconnectedness between the roles.

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