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Better together

Reciprocal professional development in a mentor training programme.

by Jo Gakonga

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

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Abstract

This thesis charts and analyses a longitudinal action research project to design and run a mentor development programme for novice mentors within a university MA TESOL programme. This involved students on the MA who were already experienced teachers mentoring their pre-service peers and using the process for their own development. The mentors collected audio recordings of their pre and post observation interactions and were supported to reflect on their practice in a data led, collaborative manner (Mann and Walsh, 2013). Feedback from the stakeholders and analysis of the mentors’ interactions in addition to my own reflections, were used to develop the programme over a five year period.

Recorded interactions of the mentors with their mentees were also analysed with two case studies used to investigate and illustrate the discourse of novices developing their mentoring skills. Finally, a wider view of the mentors’ informal and more formal reflections were used to investigate common issues for novice mentors on the programme.

The main findings suggest that such a programme was well received and can be of benefit to all stakeholders, particularly the novice mentors. In addition to this, analysis of the data shows three overlapping and complementary areas of mentoring; emotional support, support with pedagogy and support with reflection. Tensions between these three areas were found to be the main causes of difficulties within the relationships and a heuristic was developed to aid novice mentors to conceptualise these.

The insights gleaned from the research were distilled into an open access, video based online resource that it is hoped will potentially be of use to university tutors wishing to set up a similar scheme but in a more general sense, provide food for thought to mentors in diverse contexts who wish to develop their practice. In addition, the research provides robust evidence that a data led, collaborative approach to development (Mann and Walsh, 2013) within a framework of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) has value for a wide range of mentors from diverse backgrounds and with varied levels of experience.

Keywords: Mentoring, Nested Action Research, Mentor Development, Data-led Reflection, Near-peer Mentoring

Abbreviations used in this thesis

MA TESOL  Master of Arts degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
AR             Action Research
TED         Teacher Education and Development – an optional term 2 module for experienced teachers on the MA TESOL
F-on-F       Mid course ‘feedback on feedback’ meeting between mentors and myself
ZPD          Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978)
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Declaration

The work in this thesis is all my own work and has not been previously submitted for a degree at another university.
Chapter 1

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Much has been written about the practice of mentoring in a wide range of contexts and it would be easy to assume that the topic has been exhausted. The relationships that exist between mentors and mentees and the manner in which this relationship generates learning have been examined and re-examined in the literature for many years. A pertinent question to begin with then, might be ‘What insights are left to add as a ‘significant contribution’ to the field?’ Ducharme and Ducharme (1997) suggest that although the ‘recurring nature’ of issues within the area may induce a feeling of ‘déjà vu’, a more appropriate response is to understand that these are ‘perennial’ and that ‘despite the growth in the teacher education knowledge base, each generation of teachers and teacher educators must re-smash the atom of teaching and learning’ (Ducharme and Ducharme, 1997, p. 323). I take comfort in this and hope that this study can go a small way towards re-smashing the atom of mentor development.

In this thesis, I examine an unusual mentoring context; a near-peer programme in a university setting which aimed to be of benefit to mentees (in offering support) and mentors (in reflecting on and developing their skills) and also to add to the growth of the teacher education knowledge base.

![Figure 1.1. Ngram results for 'mentor' and 'mentoring'](image)
Mentoring has experienced an upsurge in interest in clinical, business and educational environments over the past 40 years and an Ngram search reveals an exponential increase in the use of the term between 1980 and 2010 (see Figure 1.1). However, this common usage does not necessarily equate to an understanding of the word or the complexity of the process (Brondyk and Searby, 2013). This effect is perhaps compounded by the fact that the literature often describes experienced mentors whose skills are already well developed (e.g. Fairbanks et al., 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Orland-Barak and Hasin, 2010). Mentoring is often not a simple or problem free affair and the detail of both how mentors develop the necessary tools for the job and how the relationship with their mentees is enacted are complex, varied, interesting and worthy of study. As the literature review will show, much has been written of the benefits of mentoring to the mentee, with analysis of hundreds of research papers reaching this overall conclusion (Ehrich et al., 2004). The literature also contains many accounts of mentoring practice but there are fewer reports of training programmes. In cases where these are examined (e.g. Childre and Rie, 2017; Spiva et al., 2017) there is scant detail about the processes involved or the methods used. Data in these reports is also often based on perceptions of the participants, gleaned by interview rather than analysis of recorded interactions. It is into this research space that the current intervention is aimed.

The context for this research is a programme for novice mentors that is designed to raise awareness of supporting another in a professional capacity and to provide an opportunity to gain practical mentoring skills in a university setting. With the issues mentioned above in mind, two aspects of this have been investigated.

• The first concerns how the programme was developed over a five year period, using cycles of action research to adapt the contents from observation and participant feedback. This aspect also includes how the programme changed in response to external changes in the wider MA programme in which it exists.

• The second is an exploration of the interactions between the participants and the issues that arose for them during the programme. For this, a range of data was analysed including audio recordings of the pre and post observation meetings between mentors and their mentees, feedback meetings between myself and the mentors and their final reflective assignments.

The study has elements of Action Research and Discourse Analysis and it is hoped that it may be useful for staff in other institutions wishing to set up a similar programme, but also to a wider audience of mentors and mentor educators. By providing a window into the interactions between mentors and mentees, it is hoped that some insight may be provided for other mentors who wish to use this to reflect on their own practice.
As has been stated, there is good evidence that mentoring has the potential for beneficial results and proponents cite the support which it can offer to pre-service and novice teachers, resulting in better outcomes and lower attrition rates (e.g. Ambrosetti, 2014; Malderez and Wedell, 2007; Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017). However, this depends to a large degree on the skill of the mentor and significant themes which arise in this research concern the balance of emotional support, support with pedagogy and support with reflection provided by a mentor, the challenges of developing rapport and affect within a relationship which is not power-equal and the inherent difficulties and skill required in balancing offering advice or alternative practices and encouraging a more autonomous, reflective approach; in the words of Ravitch and Worth ‘navigating the practical and ideological spaces between facilitating change and not imposing beliefs and values’ (Ravitch and Wirth, 2007, p. 76).

This work is concerned with these aspects; the ways in which emotional support is enacted and developed within the relationship and the tensions between a more facilitative or more directive approach. It is how this cline is viewed by both researchers in the field, mentors themselves and the novices who they seek to support which has become for me, the primary focus of my research.

1.2 My experience of and interest in mentoring

My research interests lie in the process of becoming a mentor; in the additional skills that classroom teachers need to develop in order to support the development of other professionals. In many cases, mentors have to negotiate the transition from teaching children to teaching in an adult environment but in a broader sense, they also have to develop an awareness of their own practice in order to articulate this, develop skills in observing teachers and giving feedback, and perhaps the most challenging aspect, balance facilitating reflection with providing support with teaching processes (Hobson et al., 2009; Lunenberg, 2002).

1.2.1 Being mentored

My interest in this topic area is motivated by my own experiences of being mentored and my trajectory from teacher to mentor and teacher educator. I began my career as an English language teacher in a private language school in Taiwan where the general lack of training or experience of the majority of the staff was compensated for by a system in which a more experienced teacher was employed specifically to be on hand in the staffroom to help more novice colleagues prepare before classes. This common access to an available mentor created an atmosphere of support and mutual sharing of resources between all teachers,
resulting in an ideal environment for inexperienced teachers such as myself, and a productive staffroom in which I learnt an enormous amount. In contrast to this, my worst teaching experience occurred in the first (and only) year that I taught in a British primary school. Although I was nominally assigned a mentor, this colleague was given no time or remuneration for the position, a situation which is not uncommon (Walkington, 2005) and I was consequently left without support in a new situation for which I was sorely ill-equipped. The result of this year was that I fled back to the adult education environment where I felt both competent and confident of my abilities. This has led to a career I have enjoyed and I have no regrets. However, I am aware that the year I spent on a Primary PGCE, funded by the British government was a resource which was wasted due to the lack of follow up support which may have resulted in a longer career within the state school system. My personal challenge in this situation was of the absence of a mentor but having a mentor in place does not alone ensure a positive outcome. Hobson and Malderez (2013) report on two large scale studies of mentors in secondary schools in the UK and conclude that what they term ‘judgementoring’ can be an ‘impediment to the professional learning and wellbeing of beginner teachers’ (2013, p. 89). This can have profound effects on attrition with a recent UK government report (Long and Danechi, 2021) revealing that 21.7% of newly qualified teachers were not working in the state sector a mere two years later rising to a third of all teaching graduates leaving within five years. The extra strains of Covid are likely to have inflated these figures, which are the highest since 1997, but similar reports are common historically and across contexts. Research shows that good mentoring can reduce these levels (e.g. Nguyen 2017; Hobson and Malderez 2013) and as such, mentor training would appear to be a useful and potentially cost effective strategy.

1.2.2 Becoming a mentor

These formative experiences had a profound effect on my understanding of the needs of novice teachers and undoubtedly underpinned my own approaches as a teacher educator when I became a CELTA tutor in 2000 and later an MA tutor. I feel that I was fortunate in my transition from teacher to teacher educator. My initial introduction to training novice teachers was supported by a training programme designed and mandated by Cambridge Assessment (described in Wilson and Poulter, 2015), including induction into the systems of the qualification and shadowing a full course, gradually moving from observation to full participation. Although this could be viewed as an apprenticeship, perpetrating an established model without examination, I feel it was more akin to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Legitimate Peripheral Participation model with inclusion within a professional environment.
and the opportunity for reflection and innovation within the confines of the syllabus of the programme. Much later, in 2014, on joining the staff of the MA programme on which I had previously been a student, there was less structured support for the transition to university level Teaching Fellow, but colleagues were helpful and the experience of having been a learner in this exact programme gave a solid grounding to the transition. Although I had support in these transitions, this is by no means the norm and it is a commonplace situation that teachers moving to a mentoring role do so with little induction or support. The responsibility of mentoring others, especially in school situations, is often conferred on teachers based only on their track record of being an exemplary practitioner (e.g. Berry, 2007; Zeichner, 2005). A significant element of my motivation to work with developing mentors, therefore, was to provide an opportunity for teachers to practically experience mentoring, to observe and become more aware of their own practices in this role and to develop ideas for possible alternatives. Furthermore, I wanted to widen their perspectives – provide them with choices which might suit different contexts and individuals - and support them to develop the skills to make those choices.

1.3 My research context

As I have previously stated, in 2014, I was appointed as a Senior Teaching Fellow on MA TESOL programme in a British university. My teaching included the two modules from the second term of the degree which are the context for this thesis; the elective module in Teacher Education and Development (hereafter TED) and also the Professional Practice module for pre-experience teachers. Given the centrality of these modules to the current study, an early description of them is apposite.

The MA TESOL programme at this university, in common with many others in the UK, consists of two distinct cohorts of students; the first being students with little or no experience of classroom teaching who wish to gain a grounding in the theoretical aspects of pedagogy. In practice, these are predominantly, although not exclusively, recent Chinese graduates usually from teaching or English language degrees. The second cohort are practising English language teachers with over two years experience who wish to develop further and often have ambitions to move towards a senior teacher, trainer or teacher educator role. Some of the modules on the programme, such as Second Language Acquisition and Spoken Interaction, are common to both groups but there are also areas of study in the first and second terms which are designated for a more specific audience.
In the second term, one of the elective options available to the experienced group is the Teacher Education and Development module (TED), which aims to give participants an overview of aspects of teacher education including initial and in-service training, mentoring and observing teachers and giving oral and written feedback. The experience of the participants is very varied and some have already worked in this field, but students on this course can be seen as learner teacher educators. The seminars on the course aim to draw on the wide range of experience that the participants have and the final assessment topics reflect this.

During the same term, one of the compulsory modules for the inexperienced or pre-service teachers is one which aims to develop their classroom and action research skills in an experiential way. In this module, they prepare and teach a short lesson to peers and are then asked to reflect on this and identify an aspect of their practice that they wish to improve. This is accomplished using a video recording and transcription of the lesson, observation of and interviewing more experienced teachers and reviewing the literature on this subject. During this action research project, they are given some support from tutors but there is a strong emphasis on self-discovery and the culmination is a second lesson taught to peers in which they attempt to improve in the pedagogical aspect that was their focus. The module is assessed by a reflective essay charting this journey and not on an evaluation of the standard of the lessons taught. It is of note that this module has itself been the subject of a number of papers such as the action research of module tutors in relation to pedagogical challenges faced (Brown et al., 2007) and developing teacher autonomy (Ushioda et al., 2011).

Considering these two cohorts, it can be seen that both are encouraged to develop practical skills in an environment where this is logistically problematic; pre-service teachers teach lessons with limited access to their tutor for support, and learner teacher educators may wish to develop skills of mentoring and giving oral and written feedback in an environment which is largely theoretically based. A bridge between the two seemed an obvious solution and the intervention that was conducted aimed to address these needs for both cohorts. By arranging for the TED participants to mentor the pre-service teachers, the latter were given extra support for their teaching by experienced peers and the experienced TED cohort had the rare opportunity of an authentic experience of mentoring in which they supported novice teachers, observed their lessons and gave them both oral and written feedback without the pressure or responsibility of having to deliver assessment. In addition to this, they were able
to reflect on their actions within a supportive, non-threatening and constructive atmosphere.

A further advantage to the novice mentors afforded by this opportunity is the element of it being situated in an existing education programme (the MA TESOL). At this point in their careers, they are already immersed in a learning environment and have the time, opportunity and motivation to read and reflect on many aspects of their developing practice. In a situation in which they were teaching, this is likely not to be the case. Harrison et al. (2005) raise the issue of the heavy workload for many in the teaching profession meaning that ‘educators are caught up in rhythms and systems that defy systematic reflection and analysis of that reflection’ (p.94) with professional development therefore being seen not as an opportunity but an additional burden. Many of the mentors commented on the support they had felt as part of the mentoring group, within the TED module, within the MA; that this space allowed them to stand back and consider their practice, whether or not they already felt it was legitimate. This was highlighted by a mentor in the first year of the programme who said:

1 I know that I have my checklist to follow and I can write a nice report, and I can also give feedback, you know, within the requirements. I feel now’s a time I need to look back and say, actually well, am I doing it the right way? Could I be observing in a different way? Is what we are doing as a service, the only way? Yes, it works and it fits our needs at the moment, and it’s a very EFFICIENT, coherent, very well coordinated approach, but ARE we looking for the right things in terms of feedback. It’s about now going away, casting a critical eye over it....

Mentor 02/2016 – initial interview

It is arguable that this reflection is in any case, an integral part of doing a higher degree but this is supported and given more immediate relevance, following in a long line of educators stretching back to Dewey (1933), where learning is experiential. This need for the integration of theory and practice is well established. Ehrich (1992), for example, defines the process of learning as a triumvirate of a traditional transmission of ideas, experiential learning and the articulation of our learning in collaborative reflection with others. Malderez and Wedell (2007) also divide acquired teacher knowledge into ‘knowing about’ the declarative knowledge that teachers have about their subject, ‘knowing how’ their technical classroom expertise and ‘knowing to’, the less easy to define ability usually developed by experience, which allows for the former two qualities to be used in the most effective manner in the classroom. A key aim of the mentoring programme was to mediate between theory and practice and it was designed and constructed in accordance with this, following other teacher
development models and divided into three strands: input, experiential learning and reflection. The programme is described in detail in Chapter 4, which also analyses the rationale for the initial structure and contents of the course and its development over a five year period.

1.4 My goals, research gap and contribution

The research and this PhD project, as has been described, was motivated by the opportunity I saw to incorporate an experiential element to the TED module; one that had the potential to benefit participants of both that module and the Professional Practice for pre-experience teachers. Although this could have been accomplished without the depth of research of a PhD, this accompanying study provided impetus for a more rigorous approach to the development of the programme. The data gathered are also a rich source of interactions in mentoring and as such, the study has a potentially wider audience and contributes to understanding the issues that novice mentors may face.

My aim for this intervention was to increase the mentors’ theoretical knowledge about mentoring but more importantly provide a meaningful situation in which they could develop their skills. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that ‘in shaping the relation of masters to apprentices, the issue of conferring legitimacy is more important than the issue of providing teaching’ (p. 92) and whilst I would not categorise the TED participants as apprentices, nor myself as a master, I would concur that the reality of this practical mentoring situation did confer legitimacy to the mentors’ situation and thus provided a powerful learning experience. My own research goals primarily arose from an interest in how this could be actualised in a manner that was most useful and workable for all stakeholders.

In addition to the development of the practical elements of the programme, I was also aware that an in-depth examination of talk is powerful in understanding practice (Mann and Walsh, 2013; Walsh and Mann, 2015) and I wanted to incorporate this to allow individuals to engage in meaningful, data led reflection of their own mentoring practices. Encouraging students to take a data led and reflective approach is a common theme throughout the MA with the assessment of many modules including an element of this and the Spoken Interaction module (taken by all MA TESOL students on this programme) was particularly pertinent in giving the participants the tools to investigate their talk more closely. Finally, in addition to reflection on their own personal interactions, I saw an opportunity for this data to be used as a source of input within the mentor training programme.
Little (1990) argues that ‘the promise of mentoring lies not in easing novices’ entry into teaching but in helping them confront difficult problems of practice and using their teaching as a site for learning’ (cited in Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p.18). As a corollary to this, I see mentor training as performing a similar function. By examining and reflecting on practice as a mentor and in a similar manner confronting the problems that arise, I feel that mentoring as a process can be used as a site for learning for both mentor and mentee and this has been the case for the mentor programme that I developed.

1.4.1 Innovations in Mentor Development

My research has the potential to provide useful outcomes and a contribution in several ways:

- Firstly, there is a paucity of training for mentors and little in the literature which describes the content of mentor training courses, how this is decided or developed. Notable exceptions include Ambrosetti, (2014) and Langdon, (2014) and these will be further explored in the Literature review in Chapter 2, but the focus of these investigations is usually on the mentors’ development and not that of the programme. This project documents the development of a mentoring programme which included both content and collaboration, is based on an action research model and which accounted for the viewpoints and evaluation of participant mentees, mentors and the course developer.

- Secondly, it examined the potential for reciprocal learning between pre-service teachers and in-service teachers who were inexperienced mentors, studying in the same environment; a situation which is not uncommon in MA TESOL settings, particularly in the UK and other English speaking countries. This has potential relevance for other providers who wish to examine ways in which the gap between these two cohorts of peers can be bridged.

- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, as highlighted by Hobson et al., (2009) in their review of mentoring, much of the literature describing mentor relationships rests on the perceptions of the participants and not on their interactions. In the cases where interaction is recorded and analysed, the mentors are almost invariably sufficiently experienced that they feel comfortable exposing what is usually ‘the rather private nature of mentor–mentee interactions’ (Langdon, 2014, p. 36). An example of this is Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) oft-cited investigation into Pete Frazer’s educative mentoring practice or Orland-Barack and Hasin (2010, p. 427) who considered ‘Exemplary mentors’ perspectives’. There are exceptions to this rule where less experienced mentors are
recorded such as the mentor described in Langdon’s (2014) study. In this case, one of her three observed mentors had only a year’s experience of teaching and was in her first mentoring role at the time of the study. However, the subject, was perhaps exceptional in that she was known to the researchers and had previously been a mature and exceptionally reflective teacher trainee in their institution. The current study collected data from a large number of mentors (70 over a period of 5 years) all of whom had experience teaching, but many of whom had had no previous experience of mentoring. In this environment, it was possible to examine the issues that teachers may have when they initially begin on a developmental journey of becoming mentors and consider how the relationship and the experience contributed to their development.

1.4.2 Innovation in Action Research Methodology

In addition to the contributions described above, a further innovative aspect of the research is the multi-layered nature of the action research cycles and reflection, some of which are reciprocal. This positions the mentors as researchers in their own right, reflecting on their practice in a data led and collaborative manner. Hersted et al. (2020) suggest that this is a powerful approach as it enables participants to ‘engage reflexively in social and dialogically based collaboration and create knowledge together with people from within the process itself – not from a detached and reserved position but through active experience’ (p.9).

This kind of ‘action research on action research’ is not unique in the literature (Feldman, 2020; Losito et al., 2006) and there are other examples in the field of mentoring where mentors are asked to reflect on their practice at the same time as encouraging reflection in their mentees. An illustrative example was conducted by Orland-Barak and Rachamim, (2009) who examined video data of mentor: mentee interaction in order to facilitate reciprocal development in a second order action research project. They define this as pertaining to ‘the process of critically reflecting on one’s experience as an action-research facilitator’ (p.603). Whilst this would also apply to my study, what is perhaps more innovative in this case, is the number of interlinked reflective processes which can be seen as a reflective ‘onion’. 

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Figure 1.2 Illustration of the nested nature of reflection and development within the mentoring programme.

The diagram above illustrates this multi-layered action research which begins with the peers who are taught, who have the opportunity to reflect on the experience of being a learner in a language class. The next layer is the developing pre-service teachers who (in their own action research project) reflect on their practice in the light of the peer teaching, supported by the developing mentor. The mentors then in turn reflect on their mentoring practice through the lens of the mentor training materials and with my support as a mentor trainer and researcher. Finally, the mentoring materials were developed as a result of the ongoing research and this also facilitated my reflection and development as a mentor trainer (and indeed as a PhD researcher).

1.5 Research questions and structure of the thesis

My research questions pertain to the development of the programme and an investigation of the interactions and issues that arose. They are included here to give an early overview of the nature of this study.

**How can a near peer mentoring programme be designed and run in an MA TESOL programme to develop an awareness of mentoring practice for in-service teachers?**

- What is the nature of the participants’ experience on the programme?
- What is the nature of the interaction between the participants?
- What notable issues arise between the participants?
In the following section, I will describe the structure of the thesis, giving the reader an insight into the manner in which the research has been organised and highlighting the aspects that have primary importance.

Chapter 1 - Introduction
This chapter has served as an introduction to the context, the project and my personal PhD journey. It is hoped that this gives the reader an overview of the whole.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review
In the next chapter, an insight into the current literature in the area of mentoring is given, including a definition of mentoring and an historical perspective, the benefits and issues of mentoring for all stakeholders, an overview of the reasons for mentor development and what mentors need to learn. Three aspects of mentoring that are prominent in the literature and examples of a range of existent programmes are explored.

Chapter 3 - Methodology
The methodology chapter will begin with the ontological and epistemological basis for my research and how these ideas were developed. I then go on to describe the methodology for data collection and analysis, examining the literature for Action Research and describing the ways in which the recorded and transcribed discourse was analysed. This chapter also documents the manner in which reflexivity was exercised throughout the process particularly in the consideration of ‘Best Practice’ in development programmes. Ethical considerations are noted.

Chapter 4- Development of the programme
The first of three analysis chapters, Chapter 4 constitutes a description and an exploration of the mentor development programme over a period of five years. This is based on my own observational and reflective data of the recurring action research cycles as well as individual interviews, focus groups and survey data tracking the perception of all stakeholders. A chronological overview will initially describe the changes made over the five years of delivery, followed by further analysis using a thematic approach which will consider the ways in which this ‘onion layered’ action research project was successful and aspects which were less useful. It is hoped that this may provide guidance for anyone wishing to set up a similar development programme in another context.
Having considered the programme as a whole, the remainder of the thesis will focus on the data gathered from the recorded interactions between mentors and mentees in this context, to shed light on these relationships.

**Chapter 5 - Two case studies of mentor: mentee interactions**

The second analysis chapter uses a dual case study of two mentors and their relationship with their mentees to explore their interactions and allow a more detailed investigation of the programme from the participants’ viewpoint. An inductive approach to the data was taken to allow themes to emerge and these were then grouped into the three aspects of mentoring that the literature review revealed. A mixed methods approach is used combining content analysis with quantitative data to triangulate findings on the mentoring relationships.

For both mentors, supporting another teacher was a new experience, although one had done more classroom teaching than the other. They were chosen to be included here to represent two very different mentoring experiences. In the first pairing, the perception of both mentor and mentee was that the process had been supportive and useful. In the second case, the mentor struggled to form a rapport with her mentees and there was evidence of miscommunication and an overall perception that the experience had not been so positive. Aspects of their relationships are analysed and compared.

**Chapter 6 – Issues and tensions in the wider data**

The literature review and the case studies in Chapter 5 use the framework of three aspects of mentoring - emotional support, pedagogic support and support with reflection. The third and final analysis chapter considers the tensions between those themes using data from a wider range of mentors.

**Chapter 7 - Discussion**

Drawing together the data from the previous three chapters, the discussion chapter aims to answer the research questions by:

- Considering the principles which underpinned the successful aspects of the programme
- Examining the three aspects of mentoring which emerged from the data
- Discussing the tensions between these aspects and the balances required between an affective and a pedagogic role and between a directive or facilitative approach

**Chapter 8 – Conclusion**
The final chapter will detail how the research has already been disseminated and how it will be after the viva. Limitations of the research are considered and conclusions and thoughts for further research are outlined.
Chapter 2

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1 Definition of mentoring

On the face of it, defining mentoring does not seem to be a particularly challenging task. Whether on a personal or professional level, the practice is common, with the result that ‘everyone thinks they know what mentoring is, and there is an intuitive belief that mentoring works’ (Eby et al., 2010, p. 7) The scope of the term, however, is wide and this ‘intuitive belief’ is more nuanced than may at first be suggested. It is therefore pertinent to begin this chapter with an initial statement of my interpretation of the term in this context. The definition of a mentor in this work follows Nguyen, (2017) who suggests the role is ‘viewed as a process whereby more capable teachers help each other to learn by providing each other with professional and emotional support’ (p.29).

In addition to considering a definition, the scope of mentoring may also need examining. Brondyk and Searby (2013, p. 192) provide a list of 17 possible terms that describe this activity, ranging from ‘university supervisor’ to ‘friend’ or ‘ally’ and a further nine that can refer to those they mentor. They suggest that these terms have an effect on the conceptualisation and enactment of the role and of the hierarchy which is implied. Malderez and Bodóczy (1999, p. 4) also state that mentors may take the role of ‘a model, a sponsor, an educator or [offer] support or acculturation’ and mentoring can occur at any stage of teaching, from initial training or early career to much later stages of development. It can be seen that there is a wide world of mentoring and space considerations necessitate a focus. For this reason, I will only discuss the two most prevalent instances of mentoring in educational settings; those that the mentors on my programme are most likely to encounter, at least in the early stages of their mentoring careers. These are as follows:

- pre-service training when a trainee is assigned to a cooperating teacher in their practicum
- novice teachers given a mentor, usually a colleague, in order to support their initiation into the profession
This chapter aims to situate the current study within the existing body of relevant literature and in order to do this, I begin with a brief historical and contextual perspective on the subject and the theoretical underpinning of mentoring pertinent to this study. In this section, peer mentoring will also be considered as it has a central importance to this study. I then move on to the literature pertaining to the benefits and challenges of mentoring to the stakeholders, i.e. the mentees, the mentors and the organisations in which they work and this is followed by an overview of the need for mentor training and the skills that a mentor needs to develop. Three aspects of mentor pedagogy that will be central to the thesis are introduced. In the final section of this chapter, three frameworks for mentor training suggested in the literature are explored and exemplified using existing mentor training programmes from a range of contexts.

2.1.2 Theoretical underpinning
The theoretical underpinning for the practice of mentoring can be seen to fall into three areas. The first is that of a scaffolded approach to learning (Wood et al., 1976), exemplifying Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). The second is providing a space for evolving professional development which has roots in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) work on Legitimate Peripheral Participation and the third; an important part of all mentoring and a central part of the current study, is development through Reflective Practice (Schön, 1983). These three areas can be considered to be related to each other but will be discussed in turn.

Sociocultural theory and scaffolded learning
Sociocultural theory argues that human learning is rooted in social interaction (Golombek and Johnson, 2019). Lantolf (2000, p. 79) explains that ‘rather than dichotomising the mental and the social, the theory insists on a seamless and dialectic relationship between these two domains’. This is rooted in Vygotsky’s (1978) work which argues that mental processes such as memory, rational thought and learning are organised and reorganised as a result of interactions with others and that learning occurs where there is development from the ‘zone of actual development’ through the ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD). He defines this as:

The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

(Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)
Although Vygotsky was primarily interested in children’s learning and a mentor would not usually be perceived as ‘adult guidance’ or a ‘more capable peer’, it can be seen that a mentor can assist a mentee to move from a level of teaching skill in a supported state to the same level achieved independently. Vygotsky’s ZPD provides ‘theoretical anchoring’ (Bliss et al., 1996, p. 38) for practice, with the actualisation in a learning environment being referred to in the literature as ‘scaffolding’ by Wood et al., (1976). Care needs to be taken in the way this concept is applied with Delaney, (2015) suggesting that the term ‘scaffolding’ is often misused where it equates merely to ‘helping a learner or doing part of an activity for them’ (p. 44) and the term refers instead to a more sustained process.

The concept of scaffolding has also been frequently cited as relevant to teacher education with Engin, (2013), for example, suggesting that ‘scaffolding according to the learner is particularly relevant to giving feedback in a post-observation session’ (p. 12). Scaffolding is seen to be a function of the task to be achieved and the learner so that the skill of the mentor is of great importance in being able to assess current levels of practice. This is supported in many studies with Golombek and Johnson, (2019) reminding us that ‘individuals have their own social situation of development’ (p. 26), Walker, (2010) who suggests that a ‘sensitivity to the learner’s current capabilities’ (p. 712) is an important part of the process and Lantolf and Aljaafreh, (1995) who confirm this in their empirical study within the sphere of language learning.

**Legitimate Peripheral Participation**

Further theoretical underpinning for mentoring comes from the idea, not only that learning occurs as a socially mediated process but that, for professional learning, the context in which it occurs is also important. Lave and Wenger’s work on ‘Legitimate Peripheral Participation’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991) has been seminal. They suggest that this is ‘not itself an educational form, it is an analytical viewpoint on learning, a way of understanding learning’ (p. 40). Their concept of ‘Communities of Practice’ describes how, by being involved in a group of people in a professional setting and being gradually inducted into that group and its practices, newer members of the community learn and become part of the community. There are two important and related processes involved in this model; participation and reification. Participation involves being involved in the community activity, in this case as a beginning or novice teacher, and reification is the manner in which these practices are identified, given labels, made concrete, in order that they can be understood and applied to other situations, not merely copied. Critics of a participation or apprenticeship model argue that a weakness may be the problem of transfer to new situations. The importance of theorising
practice, therefore, in the manner suggested by Feiman-Nemser’s educative mentoring (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), further discussed in Section 2.3.4, is a common theme and has been noted by many scholars in a range of contexts (Edwards, 2005; M. Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Stepney and Thompson, 2021).

A further aspect of Lave and Wenger’s model with relevance to the current study is the role played by peers or near-peers, who Lave and Wenger feel may have an important role to play since they are closer to the newcomer in terms of their knowledge.

**Reflective practice**

The third important theoretical underpinning of both mentoring and the current study more generally, is that of reflective practice. Hobson and Malderez (2013) state that a broadly reflective approach within mentoring has been both ‘strengthened and potentially guided’ (p.91) by the two educational theories previously discussed – scaffolding and legitimate peripheral participation and that a reflective approach from a mentor can encourage reflection in a mentee:

> When a mentor is in an educator role supporting the development of “reflective practitioners”, conversations with the mentee provide the ideal context for developing the practice of informed reflection “on-action”, and increase the likelihood of more appropriate intuitive responses “in-action”

(Hobson and Malderez, 2013, p. 91)

These references to Schön’s (1983) ‘reflection in action’ and ‘reflection on action’ are important in the current study, not only for a focus on reflection but for the concept of this being rooted in action. Hobson and Malderez, (2013) go on to state that ‘normative re-educative strategies’ that they define as ‘the provision of new experiences and opportunities to learn from them’ have a greater potential to affect change than a more ‘restricted “rational-empirical” strategy’ defined as ‘what research/ more knowledgeable others say’ (Hobson and Malderez, 2013, p. 102). In more straightforward terms, effective learning is achieved by action and reflection. They feel that this has importance for mentoring because of the need for a mentee to reach their own conclusions through reflection, aided by a scaffolded approach to support their autonomous growth and avoid an over-reliance on the mentor.

Reflection as a practice is ubiquitous in teacher education, with Tabachnik and Zeichner (2002) pointing out that, ‘there is not a single teacher educator who would say that he or she is not concerned about preparing teachers who are reflective’ (p. 13). However, Farrell
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(2022), as other scholars before him, bemoan the fact that ‘there is still little agreement about how to define the concept or indeed what strategies can operationalize or promote reflective teaching’ (p. 3). My own work has been deeply influenced by Walsh and Mann’s, (2015) approach to this which encourages teachers to take a more robust stance to reflection by being data led and collaborative. This is further elaborated in Chapter 4 where I explore the development of the mentoring programme.

Having considered the theoretical underpinning for mentoring, I now move on to briefly situate mentoring more broadly both historically and contextually.

2.1.3 Historical and contextual perspective

Many papers on mentoring (e.g. Lindgren, 2005) refer to the origin of the term ‘mentor’ which lies in Homer’s Odyssey, when the goddess Athena, disguised as Odysseus’ friend, an old man named Mentor, gives advice and support to Telemachus, the king’s son. It is arguable that a reference dating back 3,000 years is more background than is necessary in a work of this nature and Colley, (2010, p. 3) states that this commonly cited reading of the myth is simplistic and misleading. However, it is notable that even up to the more recent past, mentoring relationships have been seen in a hierarchical light that has its roots in this mythical origin story. This is reflected in Blackwell’s, (1989) definition of a ‘one-to-one, uni-directional, asymmetrical relationship in which a junior and less experienced individual is paired with an experienced person with intent to receive guidance and support’ (cited in Angelique et al., 2002, p. 195). Ehrich et al. (2004, p. 519) confirm this and suggest that historically a mentor was a ‘father figure who sponsors, guides, and develops a younger person’, the gendered nature of this suggesting the power differential. More recently, the emphasis in this relationship is usually on a more empathetic stance and Nguyen, (2017), as shown in Section 2.1.1, refers to a more capable teacher who provides professional or emotional support to another. This emphasis on a more mentee led approach is echoed in other scholars’ work including Lindgren (2005) who suggests that rather than a person who solves problems, a mentor should be seen as ‘an active listener who makes it easier for the novice to come to his or her own decisions’ (p.252) or a person who ‘encourages and challenges the novice’s thoughts and reflections’ (p. 252) and aids their mentee by also facilitating their subsequent decisions.

The relationship in an ideal form, is reciprocal and scholars, such as Ambrosetti and Dekkers, (2010) foreground the potential for a negotiated and shared journey of professional development in which the mentor as well as the mentee potentially derives benefit from the
arrangement. Zachary’s (2005) definition also highlights the mutual and reciprocal nature of the relationship:

[Mentoring is] reciprocal and collaborative learning between two or more individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability for helping a mentee work toward achievement of clear and mutually defined learning goals.

(Zachary, 2005 cited in Brondyk and Searby, 2013, p. 193)

In addition, scholars (e.g. Hudson, 2016; Orland-Barak and Rachamim, 2009; Stanulis, 1994) suggest that mentors frequently choose this role as a way in which to contribute to the teaching profession and see mentoring as part of their own professional and reflective growth; an adjunct to the desire to help which prompted their initial desire to teach.

The high attrition rate in novice teachers described in Chapter 1 and the solid research evidence that quality mentoring is of benefit (Ambrosetti et al., 2014, and further explored in Section 2.2 of this chapter), mean that mentors play a potentially crucial role in the education system with Hobson and Malderez (2013) suggesting that school based mentoring is ‘perhaps the single most effective means of supporting the professional learning and development of beginning teachers’ (p. 92). The importance of mentors in the guise of ‘cooperating teachers’ for pre-service teachers has increased since the 1980s but particularly over the past two decades (Clarke et al., 2014) with a decreasing focus on university based tuition and an increased emphasis on school based initiation of teachers into the profession. Zeichner (2015) states that ‘throughout the world, in various ways and to varying degrees, there has been an explosion of effort to move more of the preparation of teachers to schools.’ (p. 257). In the USA, this was introduced in the 1980s and is now mandated in 30 states and implemented in some form in 47 (Marable and Raimondi, 2007, p. 25). Hobson and Malderez (2013, p. 90) describe how the importance of mentoring rose in the UK, North America and Europe in the 1980s and how new government policies in the UK in the early 1990s meant more time in schools with a teacher colleague mentor for teacher trainees. Mentoring was also given more recognition and importance in the UK for newly qualified teachers with the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 which included mentoring within a broader induction programme for beginning teachers in their first year in post.

These shifts in a UK context at least, are explained by Clarke et al. (2014) to have been caused by a number of factors including an increased demand for teachers and changes to funding. They state, however, that university tutors felt, perhaps still feel, themselves to have ‘a superior capacity to prepare teachers relative to their school-based counterparts’ (p. 165)
and so expected school teachers to merely cooperate with them (hence ‘cooperating teachers’). Zeichner (2010), however, has argued that:

> the old paradigm of university-based teacher education where academic knowledge is viewed as the authoritative source of knowledge about teaching needs to change to one where there is a non-hierarchical interplay between academic, practitioner, and community expertise.

(Zeichner, 2010, p. 89)

In addition to this change in the physical placement of pre-service education and perhaps associated with it, is a deeper philosophical change in pre-service teacher education, from a model which emphasised skills and competencies being mastered to a level of automaticity, to one in which participation and active reflection on practice are placed in a more prominent position (Zeichner, 2010). Hoffman et al. (2015) suggest that that this ‘state of transition’ (p. 100) is a result of a ‘growing understanding of learning and teaching as experiential, social and expansive within a cognitive apprenticeship framework’ (p. 100). Whilst the presence of a mentor in a practicum does not guarantee these conditions, it provides an opportunity for them to be met and as such, the two factors discussed above have led to greater significance placed on the teacher mentor’s position (Hennissen et al., 2011, p. 1049).

There are differing ways in which mentoring relationships are constructed. The mentoring situations described in this review largely follow either a traditional dyad (in the case of novice teachers) or a triad (with pre-service teachers being supported by a cooperating teacher and a university supervisor). Other mentoring situations exist, which may innovate in the medium they use or the way in which partnerships are formed. Examples of the former are e-mentoring (Ragins and Kram, 2007) and Cooperative Development by Email (CDEM) (Edge, personal communication. See Methodology Section 3.2.2 for a description of how this was used in this study). Mentoring partnerships, on the other hand, may include ‘mentoring “constellations”’ (Higgins and Thomas, 2001), or a mentoring “mosaic” (Mullen, 2005)’ (cited in Brondyk and Searby, 2013, p. 193). A further form of non-traditional mentoring is peer mentoring and as this is exemplified in the current study, it is apposite to investigate the literature in this area.

2.1.4 Peer mentoring

There are many examples of studies into peer mentoring and these frequently report positive outcomes for the participants. (Lowery et al., 2018). Although the term may have the same inconsistencies to its use as ‘mentoring’ (Lowery et al., 2018, p.415), Terrion and Leonard
(2007) define it as ‘two individuals of similar age and/or experience [who] come together’ (p. 150) and that a range of situations may encompass this term. Peer mentoring can be identified in two ways;

- exact peers such as students on the same course
- ‘near peers’ such as novice teachers mentoring newly qualified colleagues.

An example of the first type is reported in MacFarlane and Joughin (1994) where student peers in mentoring groups worked together within a structured framework whilst studying for the LLB, a qualification in law. They argue that the group meetings provided an environment which encouraged learning, developed communication skills and provided a support network. Harrison et al (2022) also suggest that peer mentoring has the potential for ‘advancing the educational preparation of professional students’ (p. 63). Andersen and Watkins (2018) concur that peer mentoring within nursing education has value, particularly in encouraging self-directed learning, building relationships, providing emotional and educational support, and developing collaboration and leadership skills’ (p.217).

An example of ‘near peer’ mentoring, on the other hand, is described in Mann and Tang (2012) for teachers in a Hong Kong context, finding that there were advantages in mentors having greater empathy with their mentees where they were relatively inexperienced. Kram and Isabella (1985) also found that peer relationships offer alternatives to traditional formal mentoring models by ‘providing a range of developmental supports for personal and professional growth at each career stage’ (p. 116). Near peer mentoring is also reported for situations in which students on the same programme but at a later stage mentor more recent arrivals (Ellis et al., 2020). From this we can see that the programme being discussed here is probably better viewed as ‘near-peer’ mentoring, given the relative experience of the TED participants even though the participants are on the same MA TESOL course at the same time.

Peer or near-peer mentoring generally has the effect of lowering power imbalances, with Brinko (1993) stating that ‘feedback is more effective when the source of feedback is lower or equal in status to the feedback recipient.(p. 577). However, it is worth noting that this power equalisation is not a given and that a multitude of factors are at play which may affect how the relationship between mentor and mentee plays out. Donaghue (2022) reminds us that:
Power is often dependent on a range of factors which go beyond simple institutional roles. As well as (and sometimes instead of) attributed, pre-existing power from institutional hierarchy and status, power is also enacted and negotiated in discourse.

(Donaghue, 2022, p. 41)

This has particular relevance for this research since mentoring interaction and discourse are primary considerations and are analysed in Chapters 5 and 6.

2.2. Potential benefits and issues

As has been noted (in Section 2.1 above), mentoring has the reputation for being a supportive activity, and it has a positive connotation in comparison to, for example, ‘supervision’. There are certainly many potential benefits for both mentor and mentee and a growing body of literature detailing empirical studies to this effect (Crasborn et al., 2011; Hobson et al., 2009; Hodges, 1982; Lindgren, 2005; Marable and Raimondi, 2007). However, the relationship and the benefits derived from it will always be dependent on and co-constructed by the individuals concerned and the institutional context within which it is situated.

In their 2004 review of the literature on mentoring, Ehrich et al. found that of the 159 articles on mentoring in education covered, 35.8% reported that the outcomes were wholly positive, whilst only four articles in total reported ‘exclusively problematic outcomes’ (Ehrich et al., 2004, p. 522). Scholars such as Colley, however, rightly warn against the ‘celebratory regard’ often noted in research into mentoring (Colley, 2010, p. 258), suggesting that it is necessary to ensure that this is data led and empirical, rather than concerning only participant perceptions. Others (e.g. Hobson and Malderez, 2013; Hudson, 2016; Yuan, 2016) have also highlighted the potential ‘dark’ side of the relationship between mentor and mentee.

In this section, the literature on these benefits and challenges will be reviewed, firstly for the mentee, secondly for the mentor and finally, for organisations within which the mentoring occurs.

2.2.1 The mentee

Potential benefits

From the perspective of the mentee, even given the caveats previously mentioned, the literature provides robust evidence that a positive mentoring experience can make a significant difference to pre-service training and early years for teachers entering the profession. Hoffman et al. (2015) in their literature review of the interactions between
cooperating and pre-service teachers remind us of the ‘crucial role’ of the mentoring cooperating teacher (p. 99) and find that the practicum element of teacher training courses in which that mentoring relationship is situated is often the one most highly valued by teachers entering the profession. There are several aspects of this process that mentees are reported to find helpful (Brondyk and Searby, 2013, p. 189). Most frequently cited are those ‘related to support, empathy, encouragement, counselling, and friendship’ (Ehrich et al., 2004, p. 523) but studies have found that mentoring has a range of other benefits which I will examine in turn.

Beginning with aspects which could be termed ‘emotional support’, it could be argued that this is a primary function of a mentor and Bullough (2005) reported that mentors may provide a mentee with increased confidence and reduce feelings of isolation and stress. In comparison with a supervisor or tutor who has a primarily teaching and assessment function, a mentor, at least in some cases, has the freedom to adopt a role which is supportive and mentees whose mentors are not in the position of providing formal assessment can be perceived as less ‘challenging’ than their university tutors (Maynard, 1996, p. 108). A typical example of the way in which this support is appreciated by mentees comes from a novice teacher in in a study in Australia who stated:

*I feel very comfortable around her and know that she is there to help where she can.*

(Ballantyne et al., 1995, p. 300)

Marable and Raimondi’s (2007) study of 124 teachers in the USA, considered what they had found most and least supportive in their first year of teaching. The study included teachers who had and who had not been mentored in a formal manner and of those in the former group, this mentoring experience was noted as the most significant source of support. Comments included:

- *I think individual mentors are a big help for a first year teacher*
- *My mentor was my best source of support*
- *She listened to me when the new year presented challenges.*

(Marable and Raimondi, 2007, p. 30)

In the same study, the participants who had not been in a formal mentoring programme reported feeling isolated and having no support and therefore turning to family, other teachers in the school or even their classroom aide in one case, to fulfil this vital role. It seems likely that this emotional support is an important reason for the higher graduation and
Better Together. Jo Gakonga

retention rates that are reported in pre-service and beginning teachers respectively (Lowery et al., 2018; Spiva et al., 2017; Walkington, 2005).

Although emotional support is the aspect of mentoring most often cited as significant by mentees themselves, the process also has an important objective of increasing teacher competence and there is good evidence that this is achieved in many cases (Harvard and Dunne, 1992). Increased professional competence was cited in Tillman’s (2005) study of a mentoring triad within an American urban school and Chen’s, (2018) investigation in Taiwan. Ehrich et al’s (2004) review of the literature on mentoring, echoes this with more than a quarter of the studies they considered reporting on the beneficial nature of positive reinforcement and constructive criticism. As a typical example, in his investigation of educational administration in Singapore, one mentee is cited as saying, ‘every day a session is provided for me to go through the completed tasks and my mentor would give me her evaluation and feedback. This is most useful’ (Ehrich et al., 2004 p. 524).

Hodge’s (1982) research which involved NOT giving five of her pre-service teachers a cooperating teacher mentor provides an anti-example but shows similar evidence and resulted in major difficulties with content knowledge and classroom management for the non-mentored teachers. With a complete absence of a mentor in this formative stage, the five student teachers were ‘overwhelmed by the actual experience of teaching’ (Hodges, 1982, p. 26).

Mentors, as with teachers, are not a homogenous whole and there is evidence in the literature that improvement in mentee competence may be affected by the skills of the mentor. Giebelhaus and Bowman (2002) in their quasi-experimental study which examined the practice of trainee teachers who were supported by mentors who received training and those in the control group who did not, found that the mentoring made a significant difference to the planning, classroom management and reflection skills of their mentees.

**Potential challenges**

Although many studies have shown a predominantly positive view towards mentoring (e.g. Beck and Kosnik, 2000; Chen, 2018; Hobson, 2002; Sangster et al., 2013; Simpson et al., 2007), this is not universally the case and the literature also reveals less positive situations. These range from benign neglect or over-evaluation to situations in which the relationship was actively hostile.
If we begin with mentors who were benign but absent, dissatisfaction most commonly arose from a mismatch of expectations about the role. Marable and Raimondi (2007) cite mentees in their study who complained about the type or amount of support that was offered:

*My mentor was least supportive with organizational skills*

*I never met my mentor for two months, and then he never came to my room or went out of his way to help. I almost quit in November, it was horrible.*

(Marable and Raimondi, 2007, p. 33).

Stanulis et al. (2002) similarly report the case of ‘Daphne’ whose mentor caused her a greater level of anxiety than it did support.

*My mentor teacher, she is in Special Education ... She doesn’t know what is going on in second grade. ... She keeps coming by and saying, ‘We need to schedule a meeting.’ And I’m like, ‘Listen, I am here. Everyday. Come on in.’ And then three weeks later she’ll say, ‘Okay, we need to do some stuff.’ And I’m like, ‘Come on, bring it on!’ And then I won’t see her’*

(Stanulis et al., 2002, p. 74)

This situation seems to most easily arise if the mentor partners are not physically based in the same building or because they do not teach the same discipline but other factors such as personality or ideological differences were also noted in Ehrich et al.'s (2004) review of the literature.

This difficulty is reported in other studies, such as Younger’s research into pre-service trainees in the UK in which it was reported that mentors did not always utilise mentoring time which was specifically funded by the university:

*My mentor never has time; he is always so busy that I feel acutely embarrassed if I need to bother him; he has a protected period each week, but he uses it to supervise individual studies or mark GCSE work;*

(Younger, 1995, p. 33)

Moving on from mentors who were not sufficiently involved in their roles, an area which has been discussed at some length in the literature is the term ‘judgementoring’ coined by Hobson and Malderez, (2013) and further developed in Hobson, (2016). They define this as:

*...a one to one relationship between a relatively inexperienced teacher (the mentee) and a relatively experienced one (the mentor) in which the latter, in revealing too readily and/or too often her/his own judgements on or evaluations of the mentee’s planning and teaching (e.g. through “comments”, “feedback”, advice, praise, or criticism), compromises the mentoring relationship and its potential benefits.*
It is worthy of note, as the connotation of the term ‘judgementoring’ has negative overtones, that this does not necessarily imply animosity, but highlights an over-zealous approach to feedback, which may be couched in ‘praise’ and ‘advice’ as well as ‘comments’ and ‘criticism’. The issue at stake is that the mentee is not given sufficient space to reflect, formulate their own ideas and practice and function as a professional. This may easily be exacerbated in situations where the mentor also has the role of supervisor and so has an assessment role, as is common with pre-service trainees and cooperating teachers.

These examples show that a mentoring relationship can be problematic, even when the mentor is not overtly critical. However, there are also examples in the literature of more serious consequences of poor mentoring and poor relations with mentors or other school based colleagues are the most common reasons that pre-service teachers give for withdrawing from initial teacher programmes (Kyriacou et al., 2003; Thornton, 1999).

Chambers et al., (2010) report on three trainee teachers who did not complete their initial training course and in two of these cases, their mentors were a negative factor. In ‘Jo’s’ case, she felt that the reported that the ‘mentor’s oral feedback seemed to focus particularly on the negative, which often left her feeling demoralised’ (Chambers et al., 2010, p. 16) and ‘Lauren’ had difficulties because of a placement in a subject area that was outside her expertise and her mentor providing little or no constructive help beyond ‘you need to read up about it’ (Chambers et al., 2010, p. 17).

Finally, confidentiality is an issue which may also have an effect, and is cited in different studies as both as a negative and positive attribute of the process. In Marable and Raimondi’s (2007) study, mentees felt that their mentors ‘gossiped’ about them to other staff members’ (p.33) and wished for more privacy. However, several of the mentees in Lindgren’s (2005) study stated that one of the most valued aspects of the process for them was being able to discuss their practice in confidence with an experienced teacher. Clearly, in this kind of situation, much rests on the professionalism of the mentor.

2.2.2 The mentor

Having considered the potential benefits and challenges for the mentee, let us now turn to the same issues with mentors. This appears to be less often reported in the literature where the focus is often on the outcomes of the process for the mentee and less on the teachers who take on the responsibility of mentoring. Ehrich et al. (2004, p. 522) in their review of
over 300 academic papers on the subject note that over 80% noted benefits for the mentee, whilst positive outcomes for the mentors were far less often acknowledged.

Langdon (2014) also suggests that there is limited understanding of the way in which in-service mentors develop their practice and Trevethan and Sandretto (2017, p. 128) concur that the same is true for cooperating teachers working with pre-service mentees. Simpson et al. (2007) also suggest that where research has been done, the focus has been on ‘selection procedures, incentives, supervisory programmes and the degree of influence that the co-operating teacher has on the success of the practicum’ (p. 482). In this section, central to the themes and research questions of this thesis, I will consider the ways in which mentors may use the role for professional development and the challenges that they may face.

**Potential benefits**

Experienced teachers often take on a mentoring role because of a ‘a sense of commitment to the profession’ (Trevethan and Sandretto, 2017, p. 128) but the relationship between mentor and mentee is likely to be most useful for both parties when learning is reciprocal and this can be manifest in several ways that Simpson et al. (2007) categorise as personal, technical and professional.

Firstly, being selected to mentor an pre-service teacher can be seen as an affirmation of worth. An example is given in Simpson et al. (2007) where ‘Melissa’, a relatively inexperienced teacher describes how having a mentee adopt her suggestions and practices increased her self confidence in a rural situation where contact with other teachers was limited.

> Something about having a student there gives you a sense of professional, I don’t know, self esteem or something. You know, that you start to realise the skills that you’ve got, and you’ve got somebody who appreciates hearing them.

(Simpson et al., 2007, p. 487)

The same study reports on the ‘sense of pride’ that mentor teachers often felt towards their mentees with teachers reporting about their mentees that ‘they all do well’ and ‘she’s going to go out and make a difference’ (Simpson et al., 2007, p. 487). Thus, satisfaction in an affirmation of worth and a job well done may be a positive aspect of the role, providing renewed energy to develop practices and helping to prevent burnout (Beck and Kosnik, 2000; Trevethan and Sandretto, 2017). The increased confidence which can result in this may also increase ‘their leadership potential’ (Gilles and Wilson, 2004, p. 87) and thus be a factor in career development and promotion.
In addition to this affirmation and increased job satisfaction, mentoring can be seen as professionally developmental for the mentor in two principle ways. The first involves exposure to new methodology, ideas or technology and the second is in increasing self awareness and reflection.

**Exposure to new ideas**
Addressing these in turn, an advantage to the mentor of the position is often cited as ongoing exposure to teaching ideas, methodology or technology, especially for mentors of pre-service teachers who are also attending a university programme. Langdon (2014) suggests that there should be ‘a reciprocal relationship between mentor and mentee, and both should gain from the exchange of ideas’ (p. 39).

This is reported to be beneficial in a wide range of different contexts. Simpson et al. (2007) in their study on mentors in rural and isolated areas of Australia found that the primary and early childhood teachers they interviewed often had limited access to continuing professional development and that ‘at times, pre-service teachers provide a major link to current theory and practice’ (p. 481). Lopez-Real and Kwan (2005) also found that pre-service mentor teachers in Hong Kong reported positively on learning from their mentees and from the university tutors who supervised them, and in the United States one mentor teacher in Gilles and Wilson's study stated:

> What a gift this year has been for me to be able to learn and to know people outside of my building and collaborate.

(Gilles and Wilson, 2004, p. 87)

Mentees are also often reported in the literature to be able to bring benefit to their mentors in the area of technology (Bradbury and Koballa, 2008), and new ideas and resources (Hudson, 2013; Simpson et al., 2007). This has been dubbed ‘reverse mentoring’, a term which originated in the fields of management and business and refers to a situation in which a younger, less experienced subordinate gives support, often with the introduction of new technology, to a more experienced team member. This idea has been developed further in the field of education ‘as an innovative way to encourage learning and facilitate cross-generational relationships’ (Augustiniene and Ciuciulkiene, 2013, p. 75). In this guise, the meaning has developed not merely as one-way traffic where the beginner teacher is more tech-savvy than her mentor, but encompasses ‘a boomerang effect’ in which ‘the mentor gives advice to the mentee; the mentee expresses a thought, idea, or concept and gives the mentor a new insight’ (Augustiniene and Ciuciulkiene, 2013, p. 74).
This process of gaining new ideas and resources may not only be directly from the mentees themselves. One of the most widely cited advantages of being a mentor is that of networking and collegiality. This includes interactions with other colleagues in the school as well as the university tutors who are in a supervisory role. Ehrich et al. (2004 p.523) found that over a fifth of the studies they reviewed reported collaborating, cross-fertilisation and sharing of ideas with colleagues as a benefit of being a mentor.

Increased reflection

Perhaps the most beneficial factor for mentors of taking on responsibility for a mentee, reported in almost 20% of the studies that Ehrich et al, (2004) reviewed, is the manner in which this promotes self-awareness and reflection in the mentor themselves (e.g. Arnold, 2002; Torrez and Krebs, 2012). Lopez-Real and Kwan (2005) in a large scale (n=259) evaluation of a Hong Kong based mentoring programme for pre-service teachers found that the most frequently cited benefit was self reflection and the desire to provide a good model for their mentee. This result is mirrored in a study in New Zealand, (Trevethan and Sandretto, 2017) in which one of their teachers stated that the student teacher in the classroom ‘helps me to be clearer about what I’m doing … and it makes me more organized’ (p.130). It can be seen that the necessity to articulate the automated classroom practice developed as experienced teachers and to model pedagogical knowledge (Hudson, 2010; Sangster et al., 2013) may constitute ‘relearning’ skills as well as gaining a greater awareness of the process of mentoring (Gilles and Wilson, 2004, p. 87).

Potential challenges

The section above paints a rosy picture in terms of the benefits of mentoring for a mentor and there are clearly many benefits but the role is not one which is universally hailed by its participants as a positive one, with Long (1997) stating that ‘under various conditions, the mentoring relationship can actually be detrimental to the mentor, mentee or both’ (p. 115).

Teachers may be given this responsibility with little choice, little preparation and little or no remuneration or time allowance from their existing teaching. Studies also cite personal or professional incompatibility with mentees and a feeling that ‘mentoring was a burden or workload issue that often went unnoticed by others’ (Ehrich et al., 2004, p. 531). One teacher interviewed by Mann and Tang, (2012) for example, reports her ambivalence; “It’s the school’s decision… I wouldn’t say I’m passionate about it”. (p.482)

At the most extreme, Blocker and Swetnam (1995) report that some of the cooperating teachers in their study see this as ‘akin to punishment’ (p.19) and thus opt out of the process
altogether. This section will consider the challenges that are reported in the literature for mentors under the headings of personal issues, time constraints and lack of preparation.

**Personal issues**

Whilst for some teachers the increased level of scrutiny of their classroom and teaching may be an opportunity for reflection (see section above), for others, this may induce resentment of a loss of the usual privacy that teachers are afforded in their classes. This may also manifest as a feeling of being displaced (Koerner, 1992), or in concern for the wellbeing of their class. An example of this is seen in Jaspers et al. (2014) in their case study of seven primary school cooperating teachers, who found that a mentoring role was largely seen as an extra duty, with their primary concern being their pupils and their learning. This caused tensions for the teachers over whether and how to transfer responsibility for the class to the mentee and whether or not to intervene where they perceived there to be issues that may have a negative affect.

This culture of suspicion may not only be for mentors towards their mentees with Gratch (1998) for example, reporting that the pre-service teachers interviewed were ‘resistant’ to working with a mentor and Sudzina et al (1997) finding that three student teachers they followed saw their mentors only as emotional support and were suspicious of any interference with their classroom practice. These affective filters, potentially on both sides may easily lead to a lack of rapport which may in turn lead to a breakdown in the relationship.

Where the roles of mentor and assessor are conflated, this conflict of interests that may be stressful for a mentor. This is often the case for cooperating teachers with pre-service teachers, with the mentor’s judgements affecting grades, but for some mentors of novice teachers, such as the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project, mentors have the power at the end of the year for their mentee teachers’ contracts not to be renewed, a responsibility that may weigh heavily on a mentor (Yusco and Feinman-Nemser, 2008).

**Time constraints**

We have already seen (Section 2.2.1 above) that when a mentoring role is expected as an addition to existing teaching with no time or additional remuneration, this can be the root of dissatisfaction for mentees but it is, unsurprisingly, often reported to be of even greater concern to mentors. The personal difficulties noted in the section above may easily be exacerbated in situations where this is the case (Walkington, 2005). Providing effective and genuine support is time consuming and mentoring cannot be done quickly (Malderez and Bodoczky 1999). In Ehrich et al’s (2004) review of the literature, almost twice as many studies
cited lack of time as challenging for mentors (27.7%) than for mentees (15.1%). Younger (1995) suggests that the time protected for ‘regular and prearranged uninterrupted discussion with trainees, in a quiet and potentially confidential space’ is ‘crucial to the success of such subject mentoring’ (1995, p.32) but this is all too often not possible, even in programmes which theoretically do have time devoted to this. Bullough (2005) describes one teacher’s journey as a mentor in a programme which was designed to release the mentor from six hours a week of class teaching, paid for in an agreement between the university and the school district. In practice, only two hours a week was allowed, with the extra funding used for extra teaching hours; an example of the low status that is accorded mentoring generally. In this case, the mentor, ‘Barbara’, although feeling ‘misled’ and resenting the system for putting her in this position, gave of herself in an extremely generous manner, describing herself as akin to a ‘mother’ figure. This altruism, however, may not be the norm (e.g. Marable and Raimondi, 2007; Stanulis et al., 2002).

In the case of cooperating teachers, the mentoring relationship is usually a triad that includes a university based supervisor and a further difficulty for the mentor here is in feeling unsupported by their university based colleague. Bullough (2005) suggests that this may not be by malicious intent but simply a case that the ‘supervisors, who were very busy people and likely did not include working with mentors as part of their responsibilities’ (p. 152). It seems that time constraints within the system are present at all levels.

Lack of preparation

Even where mentors take on the role willingly, they are often asked to do so with little or no preparation (Tang and Choi, 2005) and being a competent or even expert teacher does not necessarily equate to good mentoring (Hall et al, 2008; Tang and Choi, 2007 cited in Ambrosetti, 2014 p.30). This may be particularly the case where cooperating teachers are expected to give feedback and summative reports on their mentees. Clarke et al. (2014) suggest that in such situations, teachers may be swayed in their judgements by a ‘halo effect’ (Thornrdike, 1920, Lachman and Bass, 1985) in which their positive personal feelings about their mentees influence their professional judgements or a leniency effect in which they tend to give higher grades than are warranted by the mentee’s professional performance (Saal and Landy 1977). Both of these effects are challenging to control for individual cooperating teachers and may render this assessment role ‘suspect’ (p. 176). Ballantyne et al. (1995) also state that the mentors in their study received no training and that this was necessary, ‘particularly with regard to how much assistance should be provided to beginners and for how long’ (p. 301).
As will be seen in Section 2.3 (below) without adequate preparation, mentors may also feel overwhelmed or default to a directive style which does not allow their mentee to reflect and grow professionally and this may be particularly the case when assessment is also part of the equation (e.g. Walkington, 2005).

2.2.3 The organisation

Whilst the outcomes for the individuals concerned are of primary concern to this study, there are also references in the literature to the ways in which mentoring programmes have an impact on the organisations within which they operate and the potential benefits and challenges in this sphere will be briefly addressed here.

Potential benefits

Ehrich et al. (2004, p. 529) note that the most commonly cited outcome to emerge from the literature they surveyed, particularly in relation to youth or peer mentoring was improved education, grades, attendance or behaviour. Lindgren (2005) also suggests that mentorship can positively affect ‘the educational organization’s growth, stability and leadership’ (p. 254) and further positive outcomes include reduced work for school leaders and providing ‘a catalyst for transformative leadership’ (Tillman, 2005, p. 609).

The increased collegiality that has been discussed above (Section 2.2.3) can also be seen as beneficial to the school environment and to higher education establishments who practise peer mentoring. Andersen and Watkins (2018) state that peer mentorship provides value to instructors and educational institutions by supporting a positive student-centered learning environment that enhances student success (p. 217) and benefits that accord with these reports were apparent in the MA TESOL programme that is the subject of this work and will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Finally, for the education organisation at a level above individual schools, mentoring can be seen as ‘one way for embedding cost-effective professional development’ into schools in a situation where ‘extensive professional development can be prohibitive across an education system’ (Sangster et al., 2013, p. 771).

Potential challenges

The main concern raised for institutions is that of cost with Robinson’s (1993) and Hanson’s (1996) reports on UK schools highlighting the difficulties of implementing effective mentoring programmes for pre-service or novice teachers due to lack of funding (Ehrich et al., 2004, p. 529). In some situations, mentoring schemes are funded by innovative means.
An interesting example is reported by Bullough and Draper, (2004) in which two intern teachers were employed on full timetables but half salary. This allowed one experienced teacher’s time to be devoted exclusively to mentoring them. Unfortunately, whilst this idea presents an ideal situation, the reality was that tight school budgets introduced constraints and the mentor teacher was only relieved of half of her timetable, limiting the amount of time that she had to interact with the mentors and with the university supervisor. This is not a new situation and other reports have suggested similar issues. Younger, (1995) writing from a context of pre-service secondary school trainee teachers in Cambridge, accepts that in the early years of their mentoring partnerships with schools finance from the University partners was ‘uncertain or restricted’ (p.33). However, issues of time allocated specifically for mentoring continued to arise even at a point when funding was guaranteed at a level of 1.5 hours a week for a pair of students. He suggests that in this case it is the school’s responsibility to ensure mentoring time is provided ‘whether through enhanced staffing, supply cover or least desirably, through additional honoraria payments to subject mentors for ‘out-of-hours’ mentoring support’ (Younger, 1995, p. 33).

In addition to cost issues, a lack of support with pre-service mentoring from university partners is cited as problematic in some studies (Ehrich et al., 2004, p. 520).

2.3. Mentor training

2.3.1 The need for training

As has been seen in Section 2.2 of this chapter, whilst mentoring has great potential for positive outcomes for mentees, mentors and organisations, if done badly, it can hinder rather than help the professional growth of mentees, resulting in a lack of autonomous development (Ling, 2009 cited in Hobson and Malderez, 2013 p.92), or have psychologically damaging effects leading to stress, anxiety and even to a decision to stop teaching (Beck and Kosnik, 2000; Bullock, 2014; T. Simpson et al., 2007). There is plentiful evidence that the mentoring relationship is one which is demanding (e.g. Malderez and Bodóczky, 1999) and for which skill sets are required that are significantly different to those used in classroom teaching. Hudson (2010) suggests a ‘five-factor model of mentoring’ which includes personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling and feedback (Hudson, 2010, p. 32) and Orland-Barak’s wish list for mentors includes:

An articulated educational ideology ... a strong correspondence between what mentors say they believe in and their enacted roles in practice ... [and] highly
developed organizational skills, interpersonal relationships, reflexivity, ability to integrate theory and practice, subject matter expertise, professionalism, leadership roles and the right combination of challenge, modelling, and support.

(Orland-Barak, 2012, p. 4)

Despite these high expectations, the preparation of mentors and teacher educators has traditionally been rather minimal (Zeichner, 2005) and it is common practice that a teacher who is perceived to be successful or who has a record of long service is given the role of initiating new practitioners into the profession (Lunenberg et al., 2005).

Hobson et al. (2009) in their paper entitled ‘Mentoring beginning teachers; What we know and what we don’t’ suggest that the potential benefits of a cooperating teacher are frequently under exploited and that the ‘conditions for effective mentoring’ (p. 214) are not met because of a lack of training. Langdon also evidences studies showing that without training it is challenging for a mentor to move ‘beyond a directive approach that favours telling, giving advice and affective support’ (p. 40) and allows more space for autonomous growth.

Whilst mentor training appears to have merit, Becker et al. (2019) found that the training and certifications associated with training mentors were ‘very heterogeneous’ both between and within teacher education programmes with a ‘variety of different approaches’ (p. 13) and although mentor training exists (examples will be discussed in Section 2.4 below) this is in many cases inadequate even to ‘address some of the most basic issues associated with supervisory work’ (Clarke et al., 2014, p. 164) and there is certainly a frequent lack of ‘specific training to enable high quality engagement and developmentally progressive support for student teachers’ (Clarke et al. 2014, p. 169). Hoffman et al. (2015) in their review of 46 studies on the preparation of cooperating teachers found that in 42 of these, no specific training on coaching had been given. In many cases (e.g. Bradbury and Koballa, 2008; Hawkey, 1998) this lack of preparation inevitably meant that cooperating teachers defaulted to their past experiences to guide their relationships and interactions with their mentees, frequently meaning that the mentees were not allowed space to develop their own teacher identity or that mentees were ‘immersed in the daily practice of teaching and be expected to quickly assume the mantle of teacher’ without adequate support (Clarke et al., 2014, p. 167). Tang and Choi (2005) also highlight the lack of mentor preparation in many programmes and Bradbury and Koballa, (2008) in their case study of two cooperating teachers in a high school science setting, found that they experienced serious challenges in
building relationships with their mentees and called for universities to offer better preparation for mentors, including a clearer understanding of the expectations of the role.

It may be that mentoring is not for all teachers, but Sangster et al., (2013), whilst acknowledging that not all teachers are suited to the role, lament the fact that

If mentors, especially those in their formative stages of mentoring, are not provided with professional development to enhance their practices then education systems will be limiting their prospects to build capacity.

(Sangster et al., 2013, p. 772)

Hobson and Malderez (2013) found that many mentors in their study were overly critical and did not develop the kind of open and supportive relationship necessary, but there is good evidence (e.g. Langdon 2013) to suggest that the effectiveness of a mentor can be developed through explicit training. Mentors who have had training were reported to have better communication skills (Evertson and Smithey 2000) and better critical and reflective thinking. They also seem to be less prone to ‘judgementoring’ (Fransson 2016) and the training is much appreciated by the mentors themselves (Stanulis and Ames 2009; Pohl and Révész 2014).

Ehrich et al. (2004), in their review of the literature on mentoring, also reached the conclusion that ‘the negative or more problematic outcomes associated with mentoring can be minimised by time and effort being directed toward the design and implementation of theoretically sound programs’ (p.533). Mentor development programmes may also serve to enable mentors to develop a sense of an identity in this role. Bullough (2005) suggests that this is an ‘important purpose’ of such training:

It is also relational, about belonging: not just a matter of developing specific skills but of helping those who work in schools with beginning teachers to (re)conceive of themselves as mentors and of mentoring as distinct from teaching. This is an important task for university-based teacher educators to embrace.

(Bullough, 2005, p. 155)

He goes on to argue that unless cooperating teachers are able to identify with teacher educators and not only with colleagues and the children that they teach, that ‘teacher education will remain little more than a weak exercise in vocational socialisation’ (Bullough, 2005, p. 144).

For many mentors, a lack of training may mean that they cannot take on the role in a manner that allows them to value their skills and to develop them. Clarke et al. also feel that cooperating teachers may lack confidence in their own abilities and should see themselves and be seen as teacher educators, a title that confers rights that they be recognised in the
same way that their university counterparts are albeit with different responsibilities and roles. He warns, however, that this also carries the responsibility that they are ‘knowledgeable about and conversant with the teacher education literature and current debates’ (Clarke et al., 2014, p. 167).

To this point, I have argued that mentor training is often lacking and is useful. This assumption lies at the heart of my research. However, the question that this begs is; if mentor training is useful, what are the qualities or skills a mentor requires and how can these be improved through a training process? In order to plan mentor development, we first need to identify the aspects of mentoring that are important. Although different scholars see this in different ways, a wide section of the literature divides practice into three areas. The table below summarises these, showing that there are clear patterns in these areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholars</th>
<th>Emotional support</th>
<th>Pedagogic support</th>
<th>Reflection support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lunenburg, (2002)</td>
<td>Understanding mentees as adult learners,</td>
<td>Reflection on their own practice and can articulate knowledge</td>
<td>Encourage, support and enable reflective practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orland-Barak and Klein, (2005)</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>Reflective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orland-Barak and Klein, (2005)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Developmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang and Odell, (2002) Literature review</td>
<td>Humanistic Perspective</td>
<td>Situated apprenticeship perspective</td>
<td>Critical constructive perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hennissen et al., (2011)</td>
<td>Emotional support</td>
<td>Task assistance</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradbury and Koballa, (2008)</td>
<td>Mentor as moral supporter</td>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>Collaborative partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 Comparison of aspects of mentoring in different scholars’ work

This categorisation is used in this study and is further considered in Chapters 5 and 6. I summarise it here (below) and follow this with further exploration of the literature in these areas.

- **Emotional support** – the affective aspect to being a mentor. Developing rapport, trust and a friendly environment for the mentoring process.
- **Support with pedagogy** – advice about teaching, including feedback on practice, tips and techniques for the classroom and help in finding resources.
- **Support with reflection** – encouraging the mentee to examine their own practice and reflect in both informal and data led ways.
2.3.2 Emotional support

Emotional support, as shown in Section 2.2.1, is a crucial part of being a mentor and important to mentees. Wang and Odell (2002) suggest that this form of mentoring is a ‘Humanistic Perspective’ in which the mentor’s main concern is as an emotional support. This is based on Rogerian principles of counselling but whilst there is evidence that this may reduce attrition, it does not ‘guarantee that novice teachers will learn better teaching than they would have learned without mentors’ (p.494).

Lunenburg suggests that forming an emotionally supportive relationship can be problematic because a mentor has to understand student or novice teachers as adult learners and adjust communication strategies accordingly. Although communication skills are a fundamental part of any teaching, for mentors from a background of primary or secondary education, a significant change in approach is required when becoming an educator of adults and Graves, (2010) suggests that these are not always transferrable from classroom practice. Little, (1990) identifies the culture of teaching itself as potentially detrimental to the development of communication skills. Teachers tend to work alone in an environment of autonomy, often have little opportunity to observe their peers and in many cases, do not discuss their practice with others, hindering them from developing the skills they will need when mentoring student or novice teachers. This may be particularly challenging when giving feedback and how this is approached is often an aspect of particular contention. We will see in Chapter 5 how difficulties in this area affected one of the mentors in my study and there are multiple examples in the literature of similar challenges. The mentor in Bullough’s, (2005) case study is a typical example. Barbara, the mentor, was concerned about how to approach feedback and what aspects of practice to give feedback on. She was aware that a critical approach may damage the relationship that she had with her mentees:

*I don’t want to offend them, [make it] so they won’t come to me. But I want to make them better teachers. Relationships are [so] important, way too important [to risk].*

(Bullough, 2005, p. 152)

However, she was also aware of her responsibility to her own learners and was thus conflicted:

*I have to protect the students. They deserve good teachers.*

(Bullough, 2005, p. 152)

It has been seen that emotional support is a fundamental foundation and a skill which will benefit from development. Mentors also need to be aware of their own practice and be able to articulate this. It is this aspect that we now turn to.
2.3.3 Support with pedagogy

Beginning again with Wang and Odell (2002), they describe a second mentoring situation to be a ‘Situated Apprenticeship Perspective’ where the mentor is primarily seen as technical support, providing advice and resources. Although this assumes a linear approach to learning to teach and is unlikely to foster alternative approaches or reflection, it is often the default position for cooperating teachers who have not had any mentor training.

There are two main difficulties which mentor training can address. The first is teachers may not be able to articulate their everyday practice in the classroom as teachers. This is a challenge noted by many scholars with Murray and Male (2005) stating that ‘Since this knowledge base has been generated in part through professional practice, it is often tacit rather than explicit’ (p. 126) and Stanulis (1994) calling this the ‘implicit theories teachers develop about the complexities of interacting and thinking-in-action’. (p. 31). She suggests that although teachers make ‘many complex decisions…they often cannot articulate…how they choose a particular decision from their repertoire’ (p. 31).

A second difficulty, which mentor training may address in this area is that an apprenticeship type approach may not allow mentees space to develop. Ballantyne et al (1995) found that whilst beginner teachers appreciated advice and assistance, some commented that ‘their mentors were, in some ways, ‘over-helpful’ and did too much, rather than ‘allowing them to develop their own skills’ (p. 300), something that the mentees found frustrating. This is also illustrated in Yuan, (2016) who shows the following example of an interaction between a mentor and pre-service teacher, Ming:

School mentor: *I don’t think you need to do the lead-in activity. It is time-consuming.*
Ming: *Okay, but I think it might be useful if they (students) can have a discussion to talk about their travel experiences before I start the new unit?*
School mentor: *Not really. Their English is not good, so even if you ask them to discuss, they may chat in Chinese. I suggest you teach the new words first. What do you think?*
Ming: *Okay.* (Field observation)

(Yuan, 2016, p. 190)

In this extract, the mentor may mean the initial suggestion as helpful, but when Ming justifies her reason for the lead in, rather than allowing her the opportunity to explore any potential issues with this and discuss alternatives, the mentor immediately and with minimal hedging (‘*Not really*’) appears to give the idea no credence and instead provide her preferred activity. Although this exchange ends by asking for agreement (‘*What do you think?*’) it seems clear
that disagreement or further discussion are not being encouraged. Whilst few would contest the benefits of a setting where ‘critical reflection is encouraged and teaching is seen as a process of inquiry’ (Trevethan and Sandretto, 2017, p. 128), achieving this is not always ‘easy or assured’ (Langdon and Ward, 2015, p. 240).

2.3.4 Facilitating reflection

A final aspect of mentoring is that of providing support with reflection and Wang and Odell (2002) term this a ‘Critical Constructive Perspective’. This aims to support learning to teach by allowing mentees the opportunity to question established practice and foster reciprocal inquiry between mentor and mentee. Whilst most contemporary literature would support this third and final perspective, Wang and Odell (2002) caution that:

It limits novices’ opportunity to access the knowledge that others have constructed (Lampert and Ball, 1998). Some knowledge is widely agreed-upon and accepted, some is unstable and tentative, and some serves as a tool for further work. However, the critical constructivist perspective fails to distinguish among these kinds of knowledge (Wang and Odell, 2002, p.492)

The literature reports that encouraging a reflective approach is often a particular challenge for mentors. Lunenberg, (2002) suggests that although good teachers are reflective practitioners, becoming a mentor requires reflection on two levels; firstly on their own practice, but also in encouraging, supporting and enabling reflective practice in their mentees. Difficulties with this are widely reported and Butcher (2002), for example, found that although mentors did offer support, the ‘opportunities for a discourse in which the mentor teacher models, guides, advises and questions the pre-service teacher in a collaborative context, were not taken up adequately’ (cited in Hennissen et al, 2011 p.1050). This is a message which is reiterated repeatedly in the literature. Mentors, perhaps in a well-meant desire to support their mentees, offer only a shoulder to cry on and classroom resources, which can be seen as a temporary crutch. One answer to this situation of over-helping comes from Feiman-Nemser, (2001) who has written extensively on a manner of mentoring that she terms ‘educative’. She suggests that this is distinguishable from ‘more conventional approaches that emphasize situational adjustment, technical advice, and emotional support’ (p.17) and aims to build on mentees’ experiences in a reflective but directing (rather than directive) manner, balancing the understanding that each teacher needs to find their own way towards a practice that suits them and their learners, with the knowledge that there are certain parameters of established good practice in education, in Feiman-Nemser’s words ‘a central tension between encouraging personal expression and
maintaining professional accountability’ (2001, p.20). In her study of an ‘exemplary’ mentor, Pete Frazer, this was attained by becoming a ‘co-thinker’ with the mentees, and providing a possible professional perspective without an expectation that this would be wholly accepted or reproduced.

Many other scholars have adopted this terminology and approach and Lindgren (2005) suggests that ‘through discussions with a more experienced teacher, educative mentorship can lead to deeper effects than mentorship that is only aimed at emotional support’ (p. 253). Trevethan and Sandretto (2017) also argue that ‘teachers can capitalise on the professional learning opportunities available through mentoring when they reposition themselves as educative mentors’ (p. 128).

In facilitating reflection, it may be a crucial part of mentor training that mentors are made more aware of their own practice. Many studies highlight the gap between a mentor’s behaviour and their perception of their behaviour; the difference between what they are actually doing and what they either want to do, approve of theoretically or think that they are doing. This is commonly exhibited in mentors being directive or monopolising the conversation leading to the mentee sitting ‘like a sponge’ in the words of one novice teacher (Hawkey, 1998, p. 665).

An example of this is shown in Orland-Barak and Klein, (2005). In their paper, entitled ‘The expressed and the realised’, they describe 12 mentors’ perceptions of their practice using oral and visual representations, comparing these to their interactions with their mentors. In one notable example, a mentor, ‘Sarah’, initially draws a picture of two birds singing together and suggests that:

‘a mentoring conversation creates harmony between the mentor and the mentee. At the beginning they are strangers to each other and at a later stage they are able to ‘sing’ together. Both the mentor and the mentee have wings, that is, each of them has the opportunity to fly in her own way at the end of the collaborative relationship’

(Orland-Barak and Klein, 2005, p. 380)

Her practice, however, belies this harmonious ideal. An extract of feedback after a physical education lesson shows a mentor who has very definite ideas of ‘best practice’ and insists on this, despite a justifying remonstration from her mentee.

Sarah: ‘Why so much whistling? It sounds like a life saver at the seashore, it already loses its effect!’
Mentee: ‘Of course, at the beginning of the lesson we decided that whistling would be the shared code’

Sarah: ‘A shared code should be one whistle only and you whistled three times sequentially’

Mentee: ‘But they did not listen to the first shared code anyway’

Sarah: ‘Let’s decide that the shared code is only one whistle’

(Orland-Barak and Klein, 2005, p. 380)

Louw et al. (2014) found similar discrepancies in the four teacher trainers that they followed when they were giving feedback. Their results show significant mismatches in some areas between the beliefs and pedagogical principles held by the mentors and their instantiation. This included beliefs that trainees should be allowed to reflect, but not eliciting from them (‘Mark’), that questions allowed mentees to reflect but not asking questions (‘Jason’) and that negative feedback is destructive and mentees should be allowed to self correct, but not giving opportunities for this (‘Simon’). They conclude that there are two sets of beliefs at work; those which are based closely on trainers’ personal experience or ‘experiential beliefs’, and ‘received beliefs’ which are ‘associated with widely-accepted progressive methodologies which trainers may be under social pressure to conform to’ (Louw et al., 2014, p. 763). Their findings, interestingly, showed that their trainers exhibited congruence between belief and realisation in cases where those beliefs were based on their experience of teaching, but were much less commonly congruent with ‘received beliefs’.

A well documented way in which mentors can be made more aware of their practice and possible differences between their values and their actions is in recording and reflecting on interactions between themselves and their mentees. In Orland-Barak and Rachamim (2009) in a collaboration between a university based tutor and a cooperating teacher where this is done, the mentor finds herself surprised that her own discourse follows exactly the pattern of ‘controlling talk’ that she condemns in her mentee:

Watching myself during the conversation makes me wonder whether I am controlling the discourse too much. For example, I used a lot of language of telling... As I watch myself I can even identify similarities between my controlling talk as a mentor and Chen’s controlling talk as a teacher. This is certainly not what I thought I was doing.

(Orland-Barak and Rachamim, 2009, p. 602)

This example is interesting in that it shows not only the discrepancy between belief and practice, but also the power that recorded discourse can have in aiding reflection, a technique which has been central to this study.
2.3.6 A consideration of ‘Best Practice(s)’

Before moving on to examples of mentor training programmes in the literature, there is one further aspect of training which links to a non-directive approach but is perhaps worth considering separately. This is the concept of ‘Best Practices’ in teaching, a concept that many teachers feel strongly about. This is dealt with more completely in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3) but an introduction to the concept is appropriate at this juncture. ‘Best Practice(s)’ is an issue about which much has been written and given the very contextualised nature of a mentor-mentee relationship, it is arguable that particular practices may be able to be said with some accuracy and relevance to be ‘better’. However, this disregards the fact that a novice teacher needs not only to learn the specifics of a particular situation but also theoretical underpinnings and a reflective mindset to enable future and further professional growth and development. Faneslow (1988) warns that to proffer advice on the precise course of action to take in any given situation implies a knowledge that ‘one set of practices is consistently superior to another, [and] that we know what needs to be done in each distinct setting’ (Faneslow, 1988, p. 127). There are few educators who would suggest that this is usually the case and this may be particularly problematic in a setting where a pre-service teacher is being taught a communicative approach which may not be the norm for the cooperating teacher. Bullough and Draper (2004) describe such a situation in which the mentee was forced to tread a diplomatic path between working with her mentor but also fulfilling assessment requirements for her university supervisor. A conceptual exploration and examination of ‘Best Practice(s)’ is therefore an important consideration for any mentor training programme.

2.4. Examples of mentor training

As has been noted, many mentors are asked to perform their role with little support. In Hoffman et al,’s (2015) literature review, only four studies mentioned that the cooperating teachers had had preparation for their role. This was either through a university mentor program (Hawkey, 1998), workshops (Bradbury and Koballa, 2008), seminars (Koerner, 1992), and participation in research that included mentor training (Hennissen et al., 2011). However, examples of mentor training programmes do exist and these appear to have an overall benefit for the mentor and their mentees, as well as having a positive effect on the learners because of an improvement in ‘teachers’ task performance in the classroom’ (Hennissen et al, 2011 p.1050).
Wang and Odell (2002) propose three models of mentor training: knowledge transmission, the theory-and-practice connection model and the collaborative inquiry model and argue that each makes ‘different assumptions about what mentoring knowledge and skills are and how mentors can acquire and use them effectively’ (p.531). In the following section, these three models will be described using examples of training programmes in the literature to both exemplify and analyse them.

2.4.1 Knowledge transmission model

The first of these, the knowledge transmission model, can be implemented before or during mentoring, is the fastest, easiest and cheapest to disseminate and comprises discrete input, which may be in lecture format or text and delivered in a face to face or online environment. This can be seen as a cognitive view which views learning as ‘product’ and ‘acquisition’ (Fuller, 2007, p. 18) and whilst this has limitations, it is not without value. One example from the literature is that of Ambrosetti, (2014) who implemented a four week, eight-hour mentor training course for cooperating teachers working with pre-service teachers in their classrooms. Although this was a limited study and based only on self-reported survey and interview data, it was found that this preparation affected both the participants’ understanding of the concept of mentoring and the practices used with their mentees. Other examples are web-based mentor training such as http://mentormodule.com/ which includes video based role-play scenarios of mentor practice and focussing questions.

There is a significant amount of evidence that the knowledge transmission model can be effective in changing mentor behaviour, although whether this translates to changes in mentee teaching is more mixed. One study, for example (Evertson and Smithey, 2000) considered the use of a three-day workshop on mentoring skills and examined the subsequent practice of those mentors who had and had not completed the training. There was a strong correlation between the training and the skills subsequently shown in mentoring, which in turn, influenced the classroom routines that the mentees were able to establish. Stallion and Zimpher (1991) however, in an empirical study with three groups of mentors, found that although mentor training improved mentor interaction with mentees, this did not translate into better classroom management ability of the mentees, unless they, too, had received direct training.

A limitation of the knowledge transmission model is that it is a unidirectional process and assumes that the knowledge gained will be available for immediate use. This approach has a place and a use but alone is of limited value for several reasons. Hawkey (1998) sums these...
up in saying that ‘training courses may carry the limitation of eliciting more ‘espoused theory’ than actual mentor practice’ (p. 332) and encompassed within this warning are two separate limitations. The first is that there is good evidence that, as with teaching skills, ‘few mentoring skills are ready to use as taught or universally effective’ (Parker, 1990 cited in Wang and Odell, 2002 p.527) even when mentors are working in the same environment. The second is that skills-based learning requires practical application and reflection to translate to a change in practice.

Wang and Odell suggest that ‘there is an inconsistency between the knowledge transmission model of learning to mentor and the knowledge transformation model of learning to teach’ (my emphasis) (p.527). They say that as the accepted practice of learning the skill of teaching is a transformational one, based on practice and reflection, there is a naivety to the assumption that the skill of mentoring can be improved solely by input, although this may be part of the picture. These issues are addressed by two further models.

2.4.2 Theory-and-practice connection model
The second model identified by Wang and Odell is the theory-and-practice connection model. This addresses the issue of the need for construction and reconstruction of learning and according to Wang and Odell ‘assumes that the knowledge of mentoring is both research based and contextualized and that acquisition of such knowledge is a process of developing connections between research-based knowledge and the practice of mentoring’ (p.532). In this conceptualisation of mentor training, there is exploration of the literature on mentoring and discussion of mentoring practices with peers and more experienced others such as university-based teacher educators. This is potentially more resource heavy than the knowledge transmission model as it requires more tutor time for individual discussion of practice, but it allows for development to be more meaningful for the mentor’s individual context and for ideas to be constructed in the light of reading and experience.

This approach very much accords with the concept of Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) discussed earlier in this chapter (Section 2.1.2). Stanulis et al (2002) suggest that ‘within such a community, teachers have an opportunity to collaboratively and relentlessly examine, question, study, experiment and implement, evaluate, reflect and change’ (p. 72). Hoffman et al. (2015) also state that ‘Talk around practice is one of the primary tools available to cooperating teachers in deconstructing their own practices’ (Hoffman et al., 2015, p. 100).
One example of this training is described in Stanulis and Ames (2009) in which mentors acting as cooperating teachers were provided with mentor study groups that they attended on a fortnightly basis for three hours as well as six full days of professional development throughout the year. These combined more formal ‘input’ with an opportunity for mentors to discuss their practice with peers. In this programme, the focus was on developing the mentors’ awareness of their own practice as teachers in order to articulate this to their mentees and on increasing their mentoring skills. Topics for the former included content, classroom management and motivating learners and to the latter included key readings, particularly related to less directive mentoring and specific strategies such as sentence stem starters to aid ‘difficult conversations’.

A further example of this model can be seen in the quasi-experimental research of Giebelhaus and Bowman (2002) mentioned in Section 2.2.1. They compared two groups of mentors where both groups had a basic induction training but one group also had ‘in-depth training in supervision’ which utilised a specific framework (Praxis ZZZ/PattLrwise) highlighting criteria for teaching standards. The programme was implemented over 10 three-hour training sessions for mentors which included discussion of each domain of the framework followed by exercises in which videoed lessons were evaluated according to these standards. There was then an opportunity for the mentors to justify and discuss their evaluation in a group and engage in further exploration of issues of teaching and learning and the teachers were instructed to use these domains and examples from the discussion to frame their weekly conversations with their mentees. The findings from this study are interesting, because, unusually in the literature, they focus, not on the mentors or their development, but on the effect that the training had on the mentees. Results from the study indicate that the beginning teachers who had trained mentors demonstrated ‘more complete and effective planning, more effective classroom instruction, and greater reflectivity on practice’ than the beginning teachers mentored by the control group (Giebelhaus and Bowman, 2002, p. 250).

Most training programmes described do not include formal assessment and so, given the nature of this study, which included voluntary written assessment, Ulvik and Sunde’s (2013) programme is also a useful one to consider. It is also unusual in the literature as being a stand-alone qualification, with voluntary participation, rather than a programme run by a university to support cooperating teachers who are mentoring their beginner teachers. In this case, the participants attended eight full-day meetings over the course of a one year
programme, which included theoretical input, group work discussions and practical exercises based on roleplay. They also wrote four essays during the year which, together with comments on peer’s work combined to produce a final examination portfolio. The programme was reported as successful and the researchers found that the mentors developed ‘a mentor language, a mentor network and a mentor attitude’ (Ulvik and Sunde, 2013, p. 754) as well as this transformative experience giving them empathy with their future mentees.

2.4.3 Collaborative enquiry model

The third and final model suggested by Wang and Odell is one they term the collaborative enquiry model. They state that this develops mentoring skills ‘through practice-centred conversation and collaborative inquiry with a community of learners’ (p.532) and this community may include novice teachers as well as mentors and university-based tutors. In this model, not only is input and discussion included, but mentors record and examine their interactions with their mentees in order to gain a better understanding of their practice, addressing the issue that although communities of practice can have useful effects on development, data led reflection is more rigorous and avoids what Mann and Walsh term ‘flabby, vague and unhelpful’ reflection (2015, p.296).

Wang and Odell concede that the main challenge of this model is the increased cost entailed in terms of time and resources, although they suggest that it has the advantage of a greater potential for development. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the cost, mentor training that follows this model is often associated with studies of individual mentors by university supervisors who wish to investigate mentoring in a rigorous, research based manner. One example of this has already been discussed in Section 2.3.3 (Orland-Barak and Rachamim, 2009) in which a collaboration between a university researcher (Orland-Barak) and a cooperating teacher (Rachamim) led to the latter being able to identify, from recordings of her practice, the ways in which she reacted in ways that were incongruent with her beliefs about mentoring.

Similar results were obtained in other studies such as Stanulis (1994) who noted the transformative effect that stimulated recall interviews using video recordings of mentoring meetings had on a school based mentor and her questioning behaviour towards her mentee. This approach is not a panacea and that there is no direct correlation of becoming aware of a particular behaviour, even if incongruent with belief, and a change in it. However, awareness of practice is an important step on the road to development.
In the two examples noted above, interactions were recorded and used in stimulated recall to enable more accurate reflection. However, this can be further developed by transcribing the discourse in order to examine it more closely. Researchers such as Hawkey (1998), working in the UK, supported a new mentor by transcribing her recorded meetings with her mentee, analysing them and subsequently discussing these with the mentor. The process, which she terms Consultative Supervision was seen as a research project, but also had a stated aim of mentor development and Hawkey (1998) states that this is ‘worthy of further consideration as a tool to promote mentor development’ (p. 345).

A further example of the use of transcribed interactions is that of Harrison et al. (2005) who ran a three-stage model which including video based training materials to explore the manner in which mentors used questions to support newly qualified teachers. They were subsequently given transcriptions and asked to code their interactions with their mentees within a given framework. An interesting aspect of this study pertinent to my own is that the video used for training purposes depicted authentic interactions of participating mentors obtained in the first part of the programme. Whilst permission was sought and granted by the individuals for this use of their data and transcripts and audio were possible to anonymise, this was not the case for the video material they used. They state that whilst the examples shown were ‘received with great appreciation as a model of best practice... it raised important questions for us about placing one teacher on such a pedestal’ (Harrison et al., 2005, p. 100). As will be seen in Chapter 4, this has relevance for my own training materials and was an aspect that required consideration.

Harrison et al. (2005) provided transcripts of recorded interactions to their cooperating teachers but this involves a considerable amount of work, even with contemporary means of machine transcription, and it is difficult to see how this could be scaled to include larger numbers of mentors, given the time required on the part of the mentor trainer for transcription and analysis. This has, however, been put into practice in New Zealand, where Langdon (2011, 2014, 2017; Langdon and Ward, 2015) has done extensive work with cooperating teachers using an approach that includes transcribing and analysing their own interactions with their mentees. This is done within a two-year long programme that also includes ten input sessions per year and a requirement of the mentors that they set mentoring goals, and analyse recordings of their interactions with their mentees, reporting back on their progress on an annual basis. Langdon’s studies focus on encouraging a more ‘educative’ approach to mentoring (see Section 2.3.4 above) and whilst they exemplify ‘how
difficult it is for mentors to move beyond a directive approach that favours telling, giving advice and affective support over a respect for the views of novices’ (Langdon, 2014, p. 47), there is evidence that mentor training programmes which include an element of data-led reflective practice can have a positive effect on promoting a more mentee-centred approach with significant progress for some of the mentors in ‘fewer closed questions, interruptions, time spent telling/ describing, speaking for the mentee and affirming comments’ (Langdon, 2014, p. 47).

2.5. Conclusion
This literature review has aimed to situate the reader in the current state of mentoring and mentor training. This has included an initial definition of the term and an historical, contextual and theoretical overview, followed by a discussion of the potential benefits and challenges for mentees, mentors and the organisations in which they operate. In subsequent sections, the literature on the need for mentor training and the aspects of practice which mentors may need to develop was explored and a range of current mentor training programmes exemplified. Although much has been written about mentoring, Colley, (2010) states that research is needed to ‘remove the discussion of mentoring from the abstract level to which it is so often confined, to an experiential level that is typically hidden from view beneath the rose-tinted aura of celebration that usually surrounds it’ (p. 11). Ehrich et al. (2004, p. 519), in their review of over 300 research papers on formal mentoring programmes also support an earlier claim (Merriam, 1983) that most research in this area consists of ‘testimonials and opinions’ (p. 172-173) and this may be because mentors and mentees alike may be reluctant to open the doors of their interactions to close scrutiny (e.g. Hawkey, 1998) My research is within this gap and aims to help address this need, providing examination of a large body of recorded data which can help to shed light on a specific context of novice mentors in a peer mentoring situation in which their dual purpose is to support their mentees but also to work on their own practice. The next chapter will detail the methodology used to investigate both the development of the training programme and the interactions within this space.
Chapter 3

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As has been described in my introduction in Chapter 1, the main thrust of this research project was to use an Action Research (AR) framework to develop a mentor training scheme within the existing Teacher Education and Development (TED) module. This has the primary purpose of availing students on this module an experience of mentoring from which to base reflections and development and a secondary purpose of supporting the pre-service teachers on the MA in their Professional Practice module as they teach their peers and reflect on their practice.

Related to the development of the programme is an examination of the discourse of the mentors with their mentees both in their lesson preparation meetings and in their oral and written feedback. The rationale for this analysis is three-fold:

- The first reason is as a research topic in its own right. From my reading, the situation of near-peer students mentoring each other in a teaching situation is unique in the literature.
- Secondly, the discourse was examined for evidence of change in the behaviour and beliefs of individual mentors from the first cycle in each annual programme to the second and to highlight issues that arose between mentors and mentees.
- Finally, on a wider level, examination of the interactions and issues has also been central to the development of the programme itself with recorded extracts of participants being used to exemplify practice for reflection.

In terms of methodology, my research took a rather unorthodox path. It is usual for a PhD student to spend the first year of their programme reading extensively around their subject area, developing research questions and investigating appropriate methodology (Dunleavy, 2003). In my case, however, I began to collect data after only three months and data collection continued in annual cycles throughout the first four (part-time) years of my studies and to a lesser extent, through a fifth year. There were practical reasons which necessitated this, (explained further below in Section 3.4.1) and I saw these as primary in the initial stages. However, as the data collection continued alongside further reading and development of my methodology, I have come to see this, not as an unwelcome necessity, but as an intrinsic part
of the AR paradigm that characterises my research and as such, to have had a positive impact on this study.

After initially restating the research questions in this section, this chapter will describe my ontological and epistemological stances and how my thoughts on these developed before going on to describe the methods used in data collection and analysis. I will then consider ethical issues that were significant in the project.

3.1.1 Restatement of research questions

I reiterate my research question and sub-questions here for convenience:

**How can a near peer mentoring programme be designed and run in an MA TESOL programme to develop an awareness of mentoring practice for in-service teachers?**

- What is the nature of the participants’ experience on the programme
- What is the nature of the interaction between the participants?
- What notable issues arise between the participants?

These questions have been developed over the period of my studies and it is of note that they have become both simpler but more difficult to articulate as my reading, thinking and understanding has widened. What initially seemed reasonably straightforward objectives have had to be examined closely as part of a more considered view of how education in the wider sense is effected and the crucial elements of context and reflexivity.

In order to understand the nature of these questions in greater depth, it is useful to step back to consider research more generally and the elements of a research question. Guba and Lincoln, (1994) suggest that inquiry paradigms can be categorised in the following manner:

- The ontological question - What is the form and nature of reality?
- The epistemological question - What is the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known?
- The methodological question - How can the inquirer go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?

(Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 108)

I will, therefore, begin by tracing my ontological and epistemological journey before moving on to an examination of the methods employed in the study.
3.2. Ontology and epistemology

*Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact, everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.*

Marcus Aurelius - Emperor philosopher 121 – 180 CE

The philosophical approaches which underpinned my choice to use a qualitative approach in my research have been an important development of my thought processes. In this section, I will outline how this has developed from a constructivist stance to consider pragmatism as more of a natural home for this project and how this has, to use Edges’ (2011) analogy, given ‘roots’ to my experience as a practitioner and researcher.

3.2.1 Qualitative research and a constructivist stance

The research that I have undertaken has been of a qualitative nature. The decision to take this path was one made early in the process, for both practical and philosophical reasons. Although the data set collected was sufficiently large to include some quantitative data, my interests lie more in the rich, deep exploration that qualitative research allows. Teaching situations foreground the nature and complexity of human interaction and investigating this would afford me a window into mentoring practice that would be impossible with the tools of a quantitative researcher. On an ontological and epistemological level, qualitative research was also the more natural choice, and this feeling has only strengthened as my thinking and reading on the subject has developed.

The notion of ontology has been one that I have laboured with as a novice researcher, but I have come to see that the study of reality can be broadly assumed to take a positivist or a constructivist worldview, the latter of which can be broadly seen to include inter-related assumptions of reality. These are that reality is ‘local and specific’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 110) and that there is no objective, external ‘truth’ to be found. Instead, reality is shaped in the situation in which it is studied and actively constructed by the actors involved, dependent on their existing values (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). Further, reality is socially constructed in interactions with others and through language. Hesse-Biber et al. (2015) summarise this as an approach which ‘assumes social reality is subjective, consisting of narratives or meanings constructed/co-constructed by individuals and others within a specific social context’ (p. 4). This approach has been defended by many scholars in the social sciences including Edge and Richards (1998), who suggest that human interactions are too complex to be easily given causal explanations. This accords well with a study of mentoring given the large number of factors in any given situation which will make it a more or less
useful experience for mentor and mentee. These include their interpersonal relationship, the stage of development of each, the lesson observed and cultural and personal norms.

Given a constructivist ontology, a researcher must also consider epistemology; the nature of how knowledge is acquired. Within education, the positivist paradigm often associated with experimental research is frequently rejected in favour of an acceptance that knowledge is co-constructed and data will always be collected and analysed through the researcher’s own value laden lens (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). This constructivist paradigm implies that data collected is co-constructed on several levels. These include the subjective beliefs of the people observed, the way in which these beliefs are communicated as a product of the relationship between researcher and researched and finally, the researcher’s subjective interpretation of them (Magnusson and Marecek, 2015).

There are two reasons that taking account of the subjectivity of data is an important concept within my situation. The first is the nature of my relationship to the participants within the programme. Throughout the process, I have had to maintain a hybrid identity in which several roles must be simultaneously balanced. I have been, on one level, the researcher who is attempting a dispassionate appraisal of the programme, on another, the course designer with a strong goal-driven agenda and a significant personal investment in the success of it. On a further level my role as a member of staff and a tutor with responsibility for assessment for at least some of the participants requires a degree of distance but at the same time I am also a mentor to the mentors themselves, aiding their reflection and so needing to have a trusting, in many cases close personal relationship with them.

The second reason that a constructivist stance is required, concerns the fact that the project undertaken is an example of practitioner research, using an Action Research (AR) approach and the nature of it is to encourage change and development. The data is not only subject to change because I am conducting the research, but because I have made a concerted effort to effect change and furthermore to effect change of a particular nature, deeply influenced by my personal philosophy regarding mentoring and feedback.

In addition to the reasons already stated for taking a constructivist approach, it was an important part of the project to enter the development of the programme with the intent of an open mind. Positivists take a deductive approach to research (Given, 2008) beginning with a theory or hypothesis to prove or disprove. In the case of this programme, however it was imperative to maintain as open an approach as possible in order not to reject possible
avenues of development. Reflexivity regarding this open approach is an important part of this project and will be discussed at greater depth below (Section 3.3.2).

3.2.2 Developing ideas through Email Cooperative Development

As can be seen from the section above, my initial thoughts were that a constructivist ontology was the best fit for the project, but as my thinking and the data collection continued, I found that troubling questions arose, and I needed to extend this initial premise. As a novice researcher, one of the ways in which I have had to develop is to deepen my understanding of the philosophical paradigms that underpin my research and the need for this became particularly apparent as I developed my research questions. This was an area in which I felt genuine unease despite taking introductory modules in the ‘Philosophy and Practice of Social Science’ funded by the ESRC. In keeping with the overarching theme of my work, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work with a mentor in this area and this came in the guise of an offer from Dr Julian Edge to be an ‘Understander’ for me in a round of cooperative development by email (EMCD). I had previously experienced cooperative development (CD) in a face to face environment but was interested to experiment with this in an asynchronous form. What follows is a brief overview of this process and the way in which it aided my insight and my journey from constructivism towards pragmatism as an epistemological standpoint.

The foundation of CD, based on the principles of Rogerian counselling (Thorne and Sanders, 2013), is that a person has the opportunity to articulate their thoughts to an active Understander who will ‘reflect’ these appropriately and in a non-evaluative manner, enabling the Speaker to take that thinking further with this support (Edge, 1992, 2002). With EMCD, these thoughts are written on a simple Word document and sent by email with the understanding that the Understander will respond within 48 hours, adding their reflections to the same document. The Speaker can then take as much or as little time as desired to articulate their next thoughts on the subject (again, on the same document). I found that this iterative process was helpful for two main reasons. The first was the absence of the pressure of real time interaction. During our interactions I found it helpful to include ‘reflexive boxes’ – a voice at a different level which addressed the process of EMCD itself in addition to the content that I was exploring. In one of the early ‘posts’ I wrote:

Another thing that I like about CD this way is the removal of time. The ability of this to be a shorter or longer exchange and also to be addressed at the time of need, not opportunity. Nice.
A second advantage for me was the opportunity that it provided to review previous and developing thought. This happened both as a result of reflecting back on the Understander’s summation of my thoughts but also in real time as I articulated my thoughts in writing. An example of the former would be the following statement: ‘It’s interesting seeing those phrases echoed back. They seem much more negative than I currently feel’ and this ‘reflexive aside’ in the talk illustrates the latter:

CD in a written form is a process that seems to be more ‘aware of itself’ than the spoken version of this tool in that I was able, in articulating my thoughts in a text-based form, to be more conscious of them. Farrell (2012) cites E.M Forster’s famous quote ‘How can I know what I think until I see what I say’ in relation to reflective journals and there is an element of this use of the written form to further and provide deeper, more meaningful reflection in EMCD. I also found the process helpful because of the way in which it is possible to reflect back upon developing thoughts and a path of development viewed over a longer period of time.

A significant factor in any form of CD is the skill of the Understander, and for this, I have much to be appreciative to Dr Edge for. At the base level, having someone to write to was a motivation to read and to think, but he also was able to draw from previous ‘posts’, pulling together themes and discrepancies in a manner which helped give me a wider perspective and move my thought processes in the area forward. An example would be the following:

Over the course of this process, the conflicts that I had been experiencing over the use of a constructivist approach became somewhat clearer and in the following section I will describe the journey that my thoughts took towards a more pragmatic approach to epistemology and
how this and ideas of teacher plausibility (Prabhu, 1990, p. 172) and emergent praxis (Edge and Richards, 1998, p. 572) informed my methodology.

3.2.3 Ontological challenges

The challenge that I faced and spent considerable time wrestling with, is intrinsic to the development of a particular practice. This was introduced in the literature review in Section 2.3.6 but bears further exploration here. My initial, in retrospect perhaps rather naïve research question was to work towards ‘the best’ and later ‘the most appropriate’ experiential mentor training programme possible in my context. However, use of language of this nature implies evaluation against an external, knowable, ‘Best Practice’ or at the very least, ‘Best Practices’; an objective ‘truth’ to be sought. This is common terminology in education (Mathison, 2005), utilised by many respected moderating bodies such as Ofsted, and the cornerstone of any teacher training course in the guise of referenced criteria (Wilson and Poulter, 2015). Some teaching practices do seem to be more successful than others; we are all aware of teachers in our past who we felt were better or less able to inculcate knowledge, inspire us and allow us to grow and a significant industry of teacher training and inspection rests upon criteria which are laid down in order to standardise ‘Best Practice’. My long experience as a teacher educator (and as a teacher more generally) has been based upon the premise that there seem to be ways that are at least ‘righter’ than others, perhaps because they engage learners more successfully or lead to more efficient learning. Meta-analyses such as Hattie (2008) or Norris and Ortega (2000) give us evidence of practices which, on average, are more successful against a measure of learner outcomes. This concept of a discoverable ‘best practice’ even if acknowledged to not be consistently achievable in the reality of a classroom or mentoring interaction, would suggest the use of a positivist paradigm.

Juxtaposing this, is the constructivist stance that reality is locally based and socially constructed (see Section 3.2.1 above), which problematises any definition of ‘Best Practice(s)’. Teaching in general and mentoring in this specific case is a highly complex activity and, even allowing for a single institutional context, each mentor: mentee relationship is unique and each interaction between them is a new situation with their practice being co-constructed based on their individual backgrounds and experiences, their learning from the module and the programme and their interaction with each other. Given this potential range of mentoring experience, a constructivist approach, denying the existence of an external, knowable ‘Best Practice’ seems entirely reasonable and a
dissatisfaction with this concept is not a new phenomenon within the field of language education or language teacher education. Edge and Richards (1998) go so far as to state that ‘Best Practice’ is ‘an illegitimate importation from an inappropriate paradigm and that its use threatens to undermine the very values that its proponents espouse’ (p. 336).

Prabhu (1990) in a paper entitled ‘There Is No Best Method-Why?’, argued that Best Practice is an untenable idea because of the large number of variables in teaching and I would argue that this is also true in mentoring. Prabhu (1990, p. 162) goes on to categorise those variables into social situation, educational organisation, teacher-related factors and learner-related factors. In my mentoring context these include the following:

- Social situation – the cultural expectations of mentors and mentees. This is particularly pertinent given that most of my mentors/mentees do not share the same first language or culture.
- Educational organisation- the mentor training programme itself and its influence, the constraints of time
- Teacher-related and learner-related factors – mentors’ and mentees’ previous experiences in mentoring and being mentored, observing, being observed and feedback. Also, personality traits and interpersonal skills of both, the relationship between mentor and mentee and the ability and aptitude of both as a teacher/mentor.

Other scholars in the field have also more recently raised the issue, including Brondyk and Searby (2013), who, whilst using the plural term ‘best practices’, also suggest that the complexity of mentoring situations renders identifying this term challenging and means that:

Although research is slowly emerging that identifies specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions that contribute to mentor effectiveness (Allen and Eby, 2011; Odell and Huling, 2004), the educational field has yet to develop research-based universally agreed upon “best practices” in mentoring.

(Brondyk and Searby, 2013, p. 190)

They espouse that there is an importance in dissemination of ‘Best Practices’, but that practices that are adopted as ‘best’ should be ‘effective in practice, empirically proven and achieve the stated purpose’ (Brondyk and Searby, 2013, p. 197). These criteria seem unobjectionable in theory but raise a serious question of how ‘empirically proven’ is practically possible given that their definition of this requires that only studies of a larger nature, including qualitative and quantitative studies, ‘conceptually founded and not based solely on practitioner experiences’ (Brondyk and Searby, 2013, p. 198) would be admissible as evidence.
3.2.4 Pragmatism as an answer to the challenges in epistemology

Whilst considering this puzzle, my reading took me to the American Pragmatist movement and to an answer of sorts within the work of John Dewey and latterly Richard Rorty. Cresswell and Cresswell (2003) list three ‘Philosophical world views’; A positivist viewpoint, a social constructivist viewpoint and a pragmatic viewpoint. In their summary of the latter, they suggest that:

> Research arises from situations, actions and consequences. Instead of focusing on methods, researchers emphasise the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem.

(Cresswell and Cresswell, 2003, p. 10)

They go on to say that researchers in this paradigm have a greater freedom of choice in terms of the philosophy and therefore the methods that they use. For me personally, this worldview has validity because it addresses the challenge of finding the ideal described above. In place of asking the question, ‘is it true?’, Pragmatists ask ‘is it useful?’. There clearly remains an evaluative aspect to this inquiry, but the impetus for a single answer is removed. Feilzer (2010) sums this up well, demonstrating the emphasis that is crucial for me, on impact.

> Pragmatism, when regarded as an alternative paradigm, sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality, accepts, philosophically, that there are singular and multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry and orients itself toward solving practical problems.

(my emphasis) (Feilzer, 2010, p. 10)

Pragmatism as a movement began in the 1870s and John Dewey was an early proponent. Rorty (1999) states that ‘pragmatists... would like to break down the distinction between knowing things and using them’ (p. 50) an idea which differed from earlier philosophical thought which placed an emphasis on an ideal, a truth, even if this was difficult to ascertain from the basis of reality. Dewey argued that the change was from the ‘search for a single or comprehensible law’ to an acceptance of ‘probability and pluralism’ (cited in Rorty, 1999, p. 30). Thus, pragmatists accept that it is impossible to define a quality or attribute except by ‘relation to human needs or consciousness or language’ (Rorty, 1999, p. 30) and that ‘inquiry and justification have lots of mutual aims, but they do not have an overarching aim call truth’ (Rorty, 1999, p. 37) In this, of course, there is a close association with a constructivist worldview. The difference for pragmatists is that whilst there is no absolute ideal, they hold that there is a justification for certain practice in human terms.
Rorty (1999) states that ‘Pragmatists are often said to confuse truth which is absolute and eternal, with justification, which is transitory because relative to an audience’ (p. 32) but that the answer to this criticism is that it is necessary to consider justification, to what Dewey called ‘warranted assertibility’ (Boyles, 2006, p. 34). This, therefore, relating to the current study, is not to say that all practices in mentoring are equal, but that the way in which to judge them is against their usefulness, assessed by the mentors on the programme themselves and by me as their tutor, and not against an absolute ideal. This accords with Kumaravadivelu’s (2001) notions of a ‘post-method’ pedagogy in which context becomes paramount in developing warranted assertions.

As I have previously stated, all teachers have beliefs about which practices seem to be more ‘true’ than others and certain aspects of reality (in this case, mentoring) seem, whatever the context, to have validity, to be accepted as fact. An example in this context might be that a mentor will be more experienced than their mentee. Rorty again (1999, p. 33) suggests that although some attributes of reality are accepted as facts whilst others are considered to be opinions is simply a function of the amount of public agreement there is on these. So, in the example above, a more experienced mentor would be the norm, but peer mentoring is also possible or even ‘reverse mentoring’ where a less experienced teacher may be able to offer support to a more experienced colleague in certain areas, such as IT (as discussed in the Literature Review). Within the current study, this idea is important. The mentors within my programme come from and will return to a wide range of contexts in which they are working with primary, secondary and tertiary teachers, in which they will be in the role of mentors, cooperating teachers, university level supervisors and government school inspectors; contexts in which cultural norms and expectations have a bearing in addition to the factors which affect every interaction between human beings and the factors which affect every teaching interaction. Given the enormity of the variation in this, a difficulty exists. If context is of paramount importance and this is expressed at a micro-local level, then to give any advice as a teacher educator, as Fanselow (1988) warns, implies that ‘one set of practices is consistently superior to another, [and] that we know what needs to be done in each distinct setting’ (p. 196). This is clearly not the case and to attempt to lay down a ‘best practice’ in the case of the mentoring programme, given the range of contexts that mentors will return to, is untenable.

In the case of a programme which aims to develop mentors, these ideas concerning a ‘Best Practice’ seem particularly pertinent. Glickman and Bey (1990) state that ‘no one supervisory
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approach is effective for all students’ (p. 560), and this is also true of mentoring. As stated above, the participants in the programme come with a range of previous experience, the vast majority of which, I have no first-hand knowledge of. They have all experienced an ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975) in which they have been trainee and novice teachers and themselves been mentored in differing ways, some of which they may be inspired to emulate, some of which they may reject. They have also had classroom teaching experience, giving them the resource of their own practice to draw on and finally, it is not uncommon that they have had some experience of mentoring teachers previously and have this to draw on. As an extension of these issues, the mentors also rarely share a geographical or educational context with their mentees (who are almost exclusively young, Chinese, recent graduates) and as such perhaps also cannot understand their needs.

Taking a pragmatic approach has allowed me the freedom to consider a range of theories of learning and education, taking from each useful ideas and using these in the construction of the course and in analysis of the mentoring interactions. It has also influenced the manner in which my first research question is asked. Not ‘How can an experiential mentor training programme BEST be developed’ but a more neutral ‘How can a near peer mentoring programme be designed and run in an MA TESOL programme to develop an awareness of mentoring practice for in-service teachers?’ and ‘What is the nature of the participants’ experience on the programme?’.

3.2.5 Statement of beliefs that underpin the programme

Given the arguments above, we are left with a potential issue when designing a training programme which aims to develop mentor’s practice. If there is no ‘Best Practice’ to work towards, then what content should be included? How can practice be evaluated or even discussed if there are no agreed principles of what is most useful? Prabhu’s (1990) answer to this lies in what he terms a teacher’s (or mentor’s) ‘sense of plausibility’ (p. 172) He suggests that ‘teachers need to operate with some personal conceptualisation of how their teaching leads to desired learning— with a notion of causation that has a measure of credibility for them’ (p. 172)

A decade later, Edge and Richards (1998) echo a similar thought in their notion of ‘emergent praxis’. They define this in the following manner:

We thus see the essence of good teaching to lie in its continually emergent nature: never completely formalised or normalised, always responding to another cycle of
action and observation, reflection, planning, and further action, through which the very nature of practice is theorised.

(Edge and Richards, 1998, p. 572)

A teacher’s ‘sense of plausibility’ or ‘emergent praxis’ are both concepts which I find pedagogically attractive and these are congruent with the AR approach that I have taken at all levels of the project (further discussed in Section 3.3.1), particularly the way in which:

- the programme has evolved over time based on what was perceived to be useful, and
- the mentors’ awareness of their practice evolved based on their data-led reflections of what was perceived to be useful.

The programme, however, does include ‘input’ which identifies potentially useful practice and this has had to be carefully considered. Recommending particular behaviours is challenging in any sphere of teaching and in the context of mentoring, most studies identify or measure nothing more objective or rigorous than mentee satisfaction. Given the previous discussion, it is arguable that I have no warrant to impose my ideals of mentoring upon the mentors on the programme and it is therefore important to maintain an awareness of the utility of the programme and to maintain a light touch in terms of ‘advice’ or ‘best practice’. Encouraging reflection is crucial, and a central part of this mentor training programme but I would argue that some level of direction is also needed. There is also evidence from good mentors that certain practices can facilitate development of teachers. For example, Feiman-Nemser (2001), in her study of an expert mentor describes that ‘For him, the challenge lay in finding something to discuss that was salient to the teacher but that would also move the teacher’s practice in fruitful directions’ (p.21). Thus, in developing the mentoring programme, I seek to achieve a balance between encouraging reflection and suggesting ways in which mentoring can be practised, whilst remaining aware of the contextual limitations which may exist.

I feel that it is useful to summarise the stance I have taken on these issues here; my own beliefs about mentoring. Certain aspects of feedback and mentoring practice I hold to be helpful. These include: developing a good rapport and being emotionally supportive of mentees; adopting politeness strategies and limiting feedback to ensure it is acceptable, manageable and developmentally appropriate; maintaining a balance between giving direction and advice and allowing sufficient space in mentoring and oral feedback for reflection and a dialogic approach.
I accept that aspects of the above may be more or less useful depending on mentors’ preferences and that this may be particularly influenced by culture and context as has been illustrated. I have been clear that the training offered should be seen in the light of ‘helpful guidelines’ rather than prescriptive rules. It is also pertinent that the training modules grew and changed as the project developed especially as examples of practice feed into it. My personal feeling is that the most useful outcome of the project is to equip mentors with a wider range of ‘tools’ that they can choose to employ for mentoring and a greater sense of awareness of the mentoring relationship in order that they can utilise these to best effect.

To my knowledge, there is no robust research which aligns a particular feedback paradigm (directive/non-directive; hedged/ direct; dialogic/ mentor dominated) with a teacher’s increased progress but the literature abounds with examples of mentors who are direct to the point of being judgemental (e.g. Hobson and Malderez, 2013) directive (e.g. Langdon, 2014) and mentor dominated (e.g. Hawkey, 1997). My own data has found that these are often the interaction patterns which are ‘default’ (see Chapter 6) and that mentors find it less easy to practise ways in which to be less direct, less directive, more inclusive and more dialogic. Thus, although I do not feel that these are a panacea to mentoring relationships, my belief is that they are useful tools and it is also my belief as a teacher educator (although not always my practice, it should be noted) that these should be the predominant model. As such, the principles on which the mentor training course is based are as follows:

- Research evidence which links a particular type of mentoring to increased teacher learning is limited. This course cannot provide mentors with a ‘Best Method’.
- The aim of the course is to make mentors aware of a wider range of mentoring practices including those which are more dialogic and more facilitative and to help them to increase their critical awareness of their own practice.
- The manner in which this aim is realised is by giving mentors an opportunity for experiential learning in which they can observe their practice and experiment with alternatives in a safe space, equating to a situation of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991)

To conclude, my own stance in terms of the mentor programme is that there is no Best Practice but that with novice mentors in the early stages of their development, there is a valid place in the training programme for direction. This tension is usefully described by Feiman-Nemser (2001) who notes that an ‘exemplary mentor’ maintains a ‘double vision’ (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 20) of an understanding that there are elements of his own ‘good teaching’ practice which are generalisable, but others which are idiosyncratic and in balancing a vision of these two, avoids the ‘two dangers in working with novices: “imposing
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his own style” and “sounding too laissez-faire.” (p. 20). In this way, he has a commitment to the novice teachers’ emergent practice whilst providing sufficient helpful guidance. This is the path that I would also wish to guide my novice mentors along.

Having clarified my philosophical stance to my research, I now move on to describe the methods I employed to answer the research questions identified in Section 3.1.1.

3.3 Participants

Any qualitative research begins with the people who participate and the central characters in this study are the mentors and mentees who took part in the programme. It is the longitudinal data from these groups over the five year period which forms the backbone of my research. The numbers of participants over the five year programme were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of mentors</th>
<th>Number of mentees</th>
<th>Ratio of mentor:mentee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (2016)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (2017)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (2018)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (2019)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (2020)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>162</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.1 Numbers of participants over all five years of the programme*

The way that participants were selected can be seen in different ways. Predominantly, this can be seen as convenience sampling (Lavrakas, 2008), since I was using the participants of the MA TESOL course who were available. Although almost all participants of the TED module and the pre-service Professional Practice took part in the programme over the five year period, completing the assignment on this topic was optional and so it is note-worthy that I have a more complete set of data (including the reflective assignment) from those mentors who found the programme of interest or benefit. These were the mentors whose data was considered in Chapter 6, and choosing the experience of only those who reflected on the programme in a formal manner could be viewed as self-selection, a factor which potentially skews the analysis (Lewis-Beck et al., 2012), taking a greater account of those who were more engaged in the process and who had a greater interest in the area. However, I would argue that there are good reasons to see those who did the assignments as a reasonable cross section of the experiences of the participants:
• A significant number of mentors chose to do this (almost 60% of the total).
• A wide range of reflections is evident in the assignments.
• My analysis of the assignments is informed by my own knowledge of the context and participants and supported by the feedback on feedback meetings and wider reference to other data.

Other stakeholders were MA tutors on the TED and Professional Practice modules and myself as the person who developed the course according to year on year AR cycles.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Early data collection
As has been stated, the data collection in this project began at a much earlier stage than is usual in a PhD. The reason for this at the outset was that the University has a regular cohort of around 50-60 students on the MA in TESOL, approximately half of whom are experienced teachers. Of this number, around 10-12 are composed of a group of students who are attending on the prestigious Hornby Scholarship scheme that is run through the British Council. This provides funding for practising and promising English language teachers from developing countries to study for an MA in the UK. These are talented and ambitious individuals and are often interested in continuing their careers as teacher educators or managers and, as a consequence, often elect to take the optional Teacher Education and Development (TED) module in the second term. Their presence guarantees a cohort of a dozen or more students on this module and the year before I began my research, the University had won the tender for this scholarship for a three-year period (later extended to four years). Given that I wished to gather data over a four to five year period using an AR paradigm and that a larger cohort on the module would give me a wider span of data, time was of the essence.

The first round of data collection began only three months into the first year of my PhD, and I consider this first initial iteration of the programme to have fulfilled a dual purpose. Firstly, and most importantly, it constituted a pilot study, in which I could ascertain the robustness of the initial idea. Pilot studies have long been a part of quantitative research and used to test research instruments, but they also have an important role in qualitative research (Malmqvist et al., 2019) and I wanted to ensure that it would be a feasible proposition for the two cohorts of peers to work together in this way successfully and that the concept was worth developing. Secondly, and also of great importance for the concept of the course I
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had, it allowed me to collect authentic audio recordings of examples of mentor: mentee interaction to use in the development of the online materials which I included and developed over the next four iterations.

3.4.3 Data collected

The programme will be described in detail in Chapter 4, but as an aid to the reader, a brief overview of the process is included here.

Mentors on the TED module were matched with mentees from the pre-service teachers doing a peer-teaching module. The mentors were charged with supporting their mentees through two rounds of peer teaching, meeting them before each lesson to help them plan, observing the lesson and then offering non-evaluative oral and written feedback. These interactions were recorded to facilitate the mentors’ reflection on their practice.

The data collected during the research can thus be divided into two broad categories. The first is data which the participants collected as an integral part of their reflective practice. This included recordings of mentoring meetings, post observation feedback meetings and feedback on feedback meetings with their tutor. The second category of data is that collected by the researcher as evidence of development of the course. This included feedback on the programme in the form of questionnaires, focus groups and interviews as well as TED assignments by participants who chose to write them. It was explained to all participants at the beginning of each year that this was the focus of my PhD and that I would collect recordings and assignments as data for this. Written consent was sought and granted.

A description of the data collected is provided in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of programme</th>
<th>Data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the first cycle of mentoring</strong></td>
<td>Audio recording of:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The mentors were asked to audio record their pre-lesson planning support meeting with their mentee(s) and their post lesson feedback meeting. They also sent me a copy of the written feedback that they gave to their mentee(s). | • pre-lesson planning  
  • post lesson feedback  
  Copy of written feedback |
| **Between two cycles of mentoring**         | Audio recording of ‘feedback on feedback’ (F-on-F) meetings                  |
| I met each mentee individually for a ‘feedback on feedback’ (F-on-F) conversation. These were audio recorded. |                                               |
| **In the second cycle of mentoring**        | Audio recording of:                                                          |
| The mentors were again asked to audio record their pre-lesson planning support meeting with their mentee(s) and their post lesson feedback meeting. | • pre-lesson planning  
  • post lesson feedback |
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>They also sent me a copy of the written feedback that they gave to their mentee(s).</th>
<th>Copy of written feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>After the mentoring programme</strong></td>
<td>Exit questionnaires from both mentors and mentees. Recordings of feedback interviews (individual and group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At this point, I collected feedback from both mentors and mentees on the programme. The form of this varied in the cycles of the programme and included anonymous feedback questionnaires and focus groups and individual interviews which were audio-recorded.</td>
<td>Copies of assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I also collected copies of any assignments which were written by the mentors on the topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online data</strong></td>
<td>Numerical data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online data was collected indicating uptake and use of the units offered to the participants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.2 Summary of data collection**

In addition to the above, I maintained a diary of notes throughout the process using OneNote as reminders of aspects of the course as they developed. These included a range of sources including personal thoughts, emails and personal communications from participants and extracts from data. In a project of this length, exacerbated by the part-time nature of my studies, this frequently proved its worth, particularly as a tool to aid reflection on the evolving nature of the programme and using an online tool allowed these reflections to be easily accessed and searched for review. Example screenshots are included below:

**Screenshot 3.3 Example of notes taken on reading on research theory.**
To summarise, the data collected and the number of samples of each was as follows:

### 1. Number of mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TED participants</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other MA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD Students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.5. Mentor numbers and participants in all five years.*

### 2. Interactions between mentors and mentees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor meeting 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Not collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post lesson feedback 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Not collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written feedback 1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Not collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor meeting 2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Not collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post lesson feedback 2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Not collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written feedback 2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Not collected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Screenshot 3.4: Example of notes taken of areas of interest as the data was analysed on an ongoing basis*
Table 3.6 Mentor: Mentee interaction data collected in all five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on feedback</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit interviews (group)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written assignments</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon written feedback from questionnaires</td>
<td>9 mentors 24 mentees</td>
<td>5 mentors 18 mentees</td>
<td>Not collected</td>
<td>Not collected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7 Data collected of interactions between mentors and myself in all five years.

4. Records of online activity

5. Researcher’s reflections

I will now describe these data sets in further detail.

Recordings of mentor/mentee interaction

The majority of the data collected was in the form of audio recordings. These include interactions in pre-lesson preparation and post-lesson feedback between mentors and mentees. The decision was made early in the project to use audio recording for all oral data collection. On a practical note, audio is easier to set up, and convenient (Lester and O’Reilly, 2019) as all participants already had the equipment (usually using an app on their phones) for this. In addition to the ease of collection, data handling by the mentors was also facilitated since audio files are much smaller than video files and can usually be sent easily by email. In terms of the level of detail that this captures, audio recording gives a significantly more accurate picture than post-interaction note-taking could (Tessier, 2012) and also allowed me to gain an insight into mentor/mentee interaction without being present. Audio recording has limitations and information about body language and gesture is lost without video recording. However, video was thought to be more intimidating and more intrusive than audio and whilst the participants are aware of being audio-recorded, it was hoped that the effects of observer paradox or the Heisenberg effect (Salkind, 2012) would be reduced given the unobtrusive nature of audio recording devices. Whilst I feel that this was generally the case, and many mentors reported ‘forgetting’ that the recording was being made, there were instances where mentors reflected that the recording was an inhibiting factor as in the example comment below, taken from a mentor’s assignment:
It is worth considering, however, that this data was not primarily collected as data for the researcher and the project, but to inform and increase mentors’ self-awareness of their practice and as such, any disadvantages of face threat or discomfort are outweighed, I would argue, by the advantages of reflection on practice being data led (Walsh and Mann, 2015).

Although primarily for the mentors themselves, having deep, rich data (Given, 2008) of this nature allowed me to investigate the discourse between mentors and mentees and provided evidence of the issues that were problematic for novice mentors and which would be most helpful to highlight when developing online and face to face input materials. One of the biggest challenges of using this data for development of the course was the sheer volume of it and the impossibility, therefore of complete analysis and development of further materials before the next round of the course. However, I was able to transcribe and analyse a significant amount of data (see Section 3.3.1 below) in the first two years to create online materials (See Chapter 4). This had impact on the programme in two ways; giving me insight into the areas of practice that were most often problematic for the mentors and also allowing the mentors to understand the nature of mentoring and feedback practices more effectively by the observation and analysis of authentic examples from their own context in short video based training materials.

As a researcher, collecting data through participants involves risk and there were several incidents in which data was lost or not collected in an optimal manner. Difficulties included recordings being lost due to phone malfunction or (in one case) a phone being stolen; recordings being difficult to hear due to the recording device being in a sub-optimal place or background noise obscuring the voices; recordings not being sent to the researcher despite reminders; recordings being sent in obscure formats and mentors simply forgetting to record the meetings. Despite these difficulties, a significant amount of data was collected (see tabulated data above), and the number of mentoring relationships recorded allowed for triangulation of the data over time (Flick, 2020).
Recordings of mentor/ tutor interaction

In addition to the recordings of interactions between mentors and mentees, an important data source was recordings of interactions between the mentors and myself as a tutor/researcher. The most informative data set here was from the ‘feedback on feedback’ (F-on-F) meetings that occurred at the midpoint of the programme in each year. This was an opportunity for the mentors to reflect on their practice with a tutor and for me as a researcher to gain a deeper insight into their thoughts on their practice. In the final two years of the programme, I also instigated Monday Meetings in the hour before the TED module lecture, which allowed the mentors to gather and talk informally about the programme and their developing thoughts on mentoring. These meetings were also recorded.

Feedback on the programme

Different methods of getting feedback on the programme were used over the duration of the research project. Anonymous written feedback was collected from both mentors and mentees each year, using a combination of Likert scale and open-ended questions. In addition to this, in the pilot study year, focus groups (Vaughn et al., 1996) were used in an attempt to gain richer, thicker feedback data. This method was subsequently abandoned, as the result was that more confident individuals dominated the talk and a realisation on my part that the potential for face threat made it very difficult for participants to voice any real concerns in this larger forum. As a result, this was replaced by exit interviews organised on an individual or paired basis for the mentors and written feedback from the mentees.

Written assignments

Information was also gathered from the written assignments of the mentors who wrote about the programme. This topic was optional but around 60% of the TED group over the five years made this choice. The assignments were an important part of my data set and analysis (see Section 3.3.2), but their use raises two main concerns. The first is that whilst it allowed participants an opportunity to reflect on the process in a deeper, more systematic manner (Farrell, 2012) and thus yielded useful information about the value of the programme, arguably, it was skewed towards the mentors who were most motivated or engaged by the process. The second limitation of using the assignments as a springboard for analysis of the wider data concerns the use of assessed work. The TED assignment and its evaluation, represents summative feedback on the module, requires a minimum mark to pass and contributes directly towards the final grade of the degree. The stakes are high and as such, it could be argued that the use of this as data is flawed because of a tendency to display writing and a consequent lack of authenticity (Frey, 2018). The marking criteria for
the assignment focus on the level of analysis of the subject and engagement with relevant literature around it and as such, the grade is not dependent on a ‘successful’ mentoring outcome, but on the reflection shown on this. Even this focus on reflection, however, has been shown to be problematic. Halbach’s (2010) study of Spanish teachers in training found that there was little depth of reflection shown in assessed diary entries with a finding that participants avoided authentic reflection because of a concern about being seen to get it ‘wrong’. Wharton (2012) summarises the issue:

Student writers will be conscious of the reader as assessor and will write to achieve academic success. They may mention setbacks and uncertainties, if they understand that this is genre-appropriate. But even so their purpose is likely to be to achieve a desired effect on the assessor.

(Wharton 2012, p. 491)

Other scholars concur, with Akbari (2007) suggesting that in reflective writing of this nature, ‘defence mechanisms to protect the ego might come into play’ (p. 199).

It is impossible to refute these difficulties and they certainly mean that this data must be viewed reflexively. However, there is also evidence from the literature that assessment of reflection can be positive; encouraging a greater engagement and depth (Kathpalia and Heah, 2008). In addition to this, my close observation of the mentors and contact with them over the course of the programme meant that I feel I was able to judge the level of authenticity in their reflections and there was also evidence from some mentors that the assignment had been a helpful part of the programme:

1 this assignment made me reflect on many aspects of my recent mentoring practice and assisted me to plan for better strategies to be used in the feedback session. This assignment has also enriched my views and professional growth as a teacher and especially as a mentor to other teachers.

Assignment Mentor 2019/11

In the majority of cases, mentors showcased a balanced and nuanced view of both the challenges they had had during the programme (whether or not resolved) and its affordances and the way in which the programme had contributed towards their development. Overall, then, while caution was exercised with the use of assignments as data, they proved a useful source.
Evidence of online activity

Online materials were created and further developed throughout the research period to support the mentors, both in terms of practical reminders of the structure of the course, and as an ongoing training resource. The final product included instructional video material, examples of mentor/mentee interactions and a structured reading programme. The level of engagement with these was monitored using the tools within the VLEs used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Online material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Three units developed with Articulate on the University Moodle VLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Online course throughout term on Learnworlds (Mark 1) 10 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Modified online course throughout term (Mark 2) 8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Second run through with online course Mark 2 – 8 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.8 Online material developed and used in each year

The uptake of this will be discussed in Chapter 4, which documents the development of the programme over a five year period.

3.4 Methods

Action Research was my primary methodology for the study and I see this as an umbrella under which other methodologies have been employed. The programme was developed using AR cycles of planning, observation, analysis and implementing change for the subsequent cycle (Kolb, 1984) but the analysis stage of this process examined the discourse between the mentors and mentees, between the mentors and myself and of the mentors’ reflective assignments and utilised a case study approach to allow a more fine-grained approach to mentor/mentee interactions in Chapter 5). I will begin this section by considering AR, its importance as a method, particularly for practitioner researchers, and its place in the context of this project. I will then go on to show my approach to analysis for both the case studies and the wider data.

3.4.1 Action Research

I came to research with a long career behind me as a language teacher and as a teacher educator and even before re-entering Higher Education to complete an MA, I would consider that my practice was reflective and built on cyclical development based on observation and reflection. At this time, the process was more informal and less rigorous, but the foundation for working in this manner was set. My MA research, which developed a workable model for an English grammar course (described in Gakonga, 2013) continued on this path and
cemented my commitment to a reflective, cyclical, practitioner-based approach to research. Given this, when contemplating a PhD, I was drawn to a project that would build towards a clear ‘so what’ factor; research in which impact was a primary concern. AR can be seen to be an ideal route for researcher-practitioners and I would agree with Reason and Bradbury in their much-cited assessment that ‘action without reflection and understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless’ (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p. 2).

Developing a new course over a period of time was important to me but what has grown from this, perhaps as an unintended but useful consequence, is not a single layer of AR but nested layers of reciprocal learning with multiple perspectives and affordances. I will begin this section by outlining the characteristics of AR and then continue to address the issues and affordances and why this approach suited this project. Finally, I will build on the introduction to nested AR in Section 1.4.2 and show how the research project built layers of AR within itself and the significance of this to the study.

According to Burnes (2004) ‘the theoretical foundations of AR lie in Gestalt psychology, which stresses that change can only successfully be achieved by helping individuals to reflect on and gain new insights into the totality of their situation’ (p. 983) and it has become more popular with the rise in social constructivism, critical theory and humanistic psychology. AR is ‘orientated towards problem-solving in social and organisational settings’ (Langdon, 2017 p.533) and is a cyclical process of identifying and examining a practice, designing a change, effecting it and reflecting on the process in a rigorous manner. Carr and Kemmis’ (1986) definition, highlights the importance of reflection but also the centrality of this methodology being for the purpose of change. They say that AR is:

Self-reflective enquiry in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out

(Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 162)

Whilst it does not necessitate an emic perspective, it is commonly used by practitioner researchers (Burns, 2005) and so commonly has one, as it does in the case of this project. The benefits of this include a ready access to participants and a pre-existing relationship with them which may aid with data collection (Mercer, 2007).

It should be noted that the literature abounds with terminology regarding this manner of working (e.g. cooperative inquiry, participatory action research, living theory action research, ethnographic action research, emancipatory action research) and Noffke (1997)
describes it as ‘a large family in which beliefs and relationships vary greatly’ (p. 306). AR has much in common with reflective practice (RP), which has its roots in the work of Dewey, (1933) who suggested that development entails ‘active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads’ (p. 9). Gore and Zeichner (1991) also discuss this and suggest that RP is distinguished from routine action which is ‘guided primarily by tradition and authority’ (p.120). It could be argued that there is a thin line between RP and AR and this could be seen to be bridged by Kolb’s reflective cycle (1984), as the same cyclical model of planning, observation and using this for onward planning for change is fundamental to both. In general, however, AR can be seen to be on a cline from reflection through reflective practice to a more rigorous approach which typically includes more structured data collection and analysis and more formal reporting of the findings (Burns, 2005). Although critics of this methodology may suggest that this is what good practitioners do anyway and there are certainly similarities between AR and the kind of informal reflection that is part of a teacher’s life, AR can serve to bring greater rigour and attention to detail as well as structure and motivation to data collection, analysis and, perhaps most importantly, dissemination, leading to empowerment of practitioners and often also research participants (Dosemagen and Schwalbach, 2019).

A collaborative approach is also often a feature of AR. Gore and Zeichner (1991) suggest that the rise in interest in AR has ‘paralleled the increased influence of constructivist approaches in the U.S. educational research community’ (p. 119) and in both cases, collaboration and learning through talk are vital elements, as they have been in the mentoring programme. In their research into the professional development of induction tutors, Harrison et al. (2005) worked on the premise that ‘dialogue of the intervention strategy would provide a way of promoting a deeper understanding of the mentoring situation’ (p. 90). The mentoring programme I developed also contains many opportunities for this; within talk about mentoring in the TED module, discussions between myself and the mentors on mentoring practices after each cycle of feedback, in our informal ‘Monday meetings’ and in peer discussions between the mentors themselves (see Chapter 4 for further explanation and discussion of these).

As a methodology, AR aims to work with research participants for their benefit. Its roots are in social action and researchers may take a critical stance about an issue. Education in a prestigious UK university is certainly not ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ but nevertheless, the
AR component of this study can be seen to have its roots in the work of Freire (1970) and other scholars following him in this tradition. Whilst there is a strong historical root of emancipation in this branch of research, there is disagreement as to the necessity of adherence to an agenda of social change. Some scholars have been critical of some AR practices, with Kemmis (2006) noting that much of the AR done is ‘inadequate’ and aims only to improve ‘the efficiency of practices rather than their efficacy and effectiveness evaluated in terms of the social, cultural, discursive and material–economic historical consequences of practices’ (p. 460).

As mentioned above, I would hesitate to hold up the current study as an example of political empowerment for the participants. Developing a programme in a UK based university, upon which high stakes assessment rests, and where there is a relatively strong pre-established focus for development, or at least clear parameters within which it can develop, cannot be said to address societal inequalities (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009). However, I feel that there is justification in a view of this as research for positive change for the following three reasons:

- As a researcher, I have made significant efforts to equalise the power balance between myself and participants
- The participants’ ideas and views articulated throughout the process have been instrumental in developing the programme
- The project has been designed with the participants’ benefit in mind.
- The opportunity that the mentors have had to analyse their interactions with their mentees for their own development purposes has given autonomy and responsibility to them as research participants.

Another criticism that AR attracts is that it may be liable to a lack of rigour and replication or an informality in reporting style particularly since many action researchers in education are primarily classroom practitioners and not professional researchers (Newton and Burgess, 2008). Many scholars have addressed these concerns (e.g. Moghaddam, 2007, Melrose, 2001) and a warrant for qualitative research in an interpretivist framework has been long established in the field (e.g. see Edge and Richards, 1998). Practitioner research has also become common and accepted with respected journals publishing papers utilising AR methods, or indeed being devoted to this (Educational Action Research, Canadian Journal of Action Research etc) and there are countless examples of AR which show rigour in both data collection and analysis (e.g. Orland-Barak and Rachamim, 2009) and in writing style (e.g. Kemmis, 2012). Scholars such as Meyer (2000) suggest that the strength of AR lies in
generating solutions to practical problems and empowering individual practitioners. It does not have to have lofty aims of social change on a wider scale and has validity where it is useful to the individual researcher (see discussion above on pragmatism-Section 3.2.3). This view concurs with Lewin, arguably the founder of AR, that ‘the understanding and learning which this process produces for the individuals and groups concerned, which then feeds into changed behaviour, is more important than any resulting change as such’ (cited in Burnes, 2004, p. 983).

AR is primarily about change with McTaggart (1991) stating that ‘Individual action researchers change themselves [and] they support others in their own efforts to change’ (p. 175). These criteria have certainly been achieved in this study, where my own development has mirrored that of the beginner mentors that I have sought to help. He goes on to suggest that participants need to have a central role in setting the research agenda, in collecting and analysing data and in reflection on the process. Again, the current study falls within these edicts and although the original basis for the research was set by the boundaries of the mentoring programme, the focus for the AR of the mentors is an individual choice, with the programme supporting their data collection, analysis and reflection. In the current study the impact of the programme will be shown (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) and it will be demonstrated that not only was the process empowering for the mentors, but that it had the potential to have a wider impact on developing a more facilitative approach. Many of the beginner mentor participants in the study originate from situations in which the power structure of teacher educators to mentees is strictly hierarchical (as an example of this, note the common surprise of MA students when asked to call tutors by their first names, unprefaced by ‘Professor’) and ‘developmental’ talk is often transmissive. Exposure to and encouragement of a more dialogic approach to education has the potential to change not only the practices of the mentors in the programme, but also the experiences of their future mentees.

The benefits outlined above are compelling and made the methodology a natural fit for this project. However, in addition to the criticisms that have already been considered, a further consideration, pertinent to the current project is that of maintaining a hybrid identity of both tutor and an emic researcher. As has previously been discussed, a completely objective stance is seen as an impossibility in a constructivist paradigm and the pragmatic way to address this is to be aware of and reflexive about the inherent biases and interpretations of the researcher. This will be addressed further below in Section 3.3.2.
Nested Action Research

Action Research is at the heart of this study, but not only at a single level and this was one of the strengths of the programme; AR within AR; second order or ‘nested’ AR. This is reported in other projects in the literature and it is not uncommon for AR projects to themselves be investigated using AR methodology (e.g. Posito et al., 1998) but I would argue that this project reaches further than that with reciprocal learning at four different levels. The diagram below summarises these levels with support shown on the left and reflection shown on the right, and they are described in further detail below:

**Figure 3.9 Diagram to show nested action research**

**Level 1- AR of pre-service teachers**
The programme is built on an existing AR based module within the MA TESOL in which pre-service teachers conduct their own AR into their practice, teaching their peers and investigating this using transcription, reflection, observation, discussion with peers and experienced teachers and literature review. They subsequently teach a second lesson with an aim to improve an aspect of their practice and are scaffolded and supported in this process by the mentors. This AR cycle is the basis of all other layers of the project.

**Level 2 – AR of mentors**
The intervention which is the heart of my PhD is AR with experienced teachers who wish to hone their mentoring skills. Mirroring the pre-service teachers’ practice, they have the opportunity to mentor pre-service teachers over two cycles of lesson preparation, observation and feedback, with this experience being scaffolded in various ways by the mentor trainer/ researcher. This has a number of reflective benefits, not only for their potential work in mentoring but also for their practice as teachers themselves.
Level 3 – AR of the programme
The third layer of the intervention is the initiation and ongoing improvement of the mentor development programme. It could be argued that this is the primary level since it is this which is the focus of my own reflection and it is this that I have the power to change. The ways in which the project was changed over time including changes to the structure and content of the programme are addressed in Chapter 4.

Level 4 – AR of my own mentoring and research practices
This layer is almost incidental and is perhaps more properly labelled ‘Reflective Practice’ but it has been powerful in two respects for my own development and as such, I include it here. Whilst I had considerable experience of teacher education prior to the project, it is well documented that this is a potentially isolated and isolating area of practice (Grierson, 2010). It is rare to be observed giving mentoring support or feedback and as such, reflection is often limited in this sphere. Prior to the project, I would suggest that I was a reflective practitioner, but had not previously recorded or listened back to my own feedback and have found that this has great potential for improving my awareness of my practice. The second element of this development is in my knowledge of research practices. Being immersed in this process has given me the opportunity to reflect on research practices and develop my own abilities in this area, which has had important ramifications, not only for my own PhD research but for my work as a Teaching Fellow in supporting MA level research.

I have described the way in which AR was central to this study but it is also important to consider how the data gathered within these cycles was analysed at a later stage with a view to understanding more about mentor/mentee interactions and about the issues that arise for novice mentors.

3.4.2 Analysis
During the programme, a significant amount of data was gathered and how to approach analysis of this was challenging. However, my overarching research question is broken down into three parts and this, ultimately became the organising principle of the analysis. As a reminder, these are:

**How can a near peer mentoring programme be designed and run in an MA TESOL programme to develop an awareness of mentoring practice for in-service teachers?**

- What is the nature of the participants’ experience on the programme
- What is the nature of the interaction between the participants?
- What notable issues arise between the participants?
The first question, pertaining to the design of the programme and the nature of the participants’ experience on it, uses the data from running the programme, from my own reflections during this and from the feedback from all stakeholders. This is addressed in Chapter 4 and as will be seen, was analysed on a year by year basis because of the AR nature of the design of the programme. The final analysis of this is written as a chronological overview, and a discussion of the themes which emerged over time.

The second stage of the analysis was undertaken after the data collection period and aimed to produce a more detailed and nuanced account of the interactions. As noted above, a challenge to this was the sheer volume of data collected and the inherent difficulty of using all of it and organising it. However, Woolf and Silver (2018) posit that, although a ‘systematic process...most styles of qualitative analysis are, to various extents, open ended, organic, and unpredictable in the way they develop’ (p.3) and I took comfort in this, trusting that as I explored the data that I had in greater detail, themes that initially emerged would be brought to a sharper focus, and this proved to be the case. I approached this in two stages. In order to investigate the interactions between mentor and mentee, I isolated and analysed two case studies, aiming to take an inductive, thematic approach to the initial analysis and then group these themes deductively into the three areas identified in the Literature Review (Section 2.3). This analysis is detailed in Chapter 5. I then analysed a wider section of the data using the assignments and the mid-programme feedback on feedback (F-on-F) meetings between myself and the mentors as a starting point, again using an open, inductive approach to begin and then grouping these themes in a deductive manner. This forms the third and final analysis chapter, Chapter 6. These three stages of analysis will be discussed in further detail in this section but before this, a note on rigour is timely.

Rigour in research
Traditionally, research within a positivist paradigm, has been judged on whether it is objective, reliable, generalisable and reproducible (O’Leary, 2007) but many scholars (e.g. Carr and Kemmis, 1986) take the view that within the sphere of human interaction, complexity mitigates against a positivist approach and a disinterested stance by a researcher is impossible. Thus, whilst a systematic approach is crucial, the relevance of the criteria listed above for qualitative research in the Social Sciences has been called into question (O’Leary, 2007) and in a study of this nature, post-positivist indicators of rigour such as transparent subjectivity, dependability, authenticity, transferability, auditability and utility (O’Leary, 2007 p.244) are more appropriate. These are useful benchmarks and part of the research
process is to decide how these can be addressed. Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest a range of procedures to promote reliability and rigour in qualitative research of these I feel that prolonged engagement in the field, thick, rich description of data and reflexivity (Creswell and Miller, 2000 p. 126) are the most relevant for this study. Reflexivity, in particular was a concept that assumes importance in a project such as this where the researcher has a stake in its success.

We have seen, earlier in this chapter (Section 3.2.1) that a constructivist paradigm of research takes as a central core, the fact that data collected is co-constructed on several levels. Given this, rigorous reflexivity needs to be adopted (Kemmis et al., 2014) and Finlay (2002) suggests that ‘researchers no longer question the need for reflexivity: the question is how to do it.’ (Finlay, 2002, p. 212).

Reading Edge’s (2011) book ‘The Reflexive Teacher Educator in TESOL’ had a significant impact on my thoughts about teacher education and on the first page, he asks two questions:

What difference does it make to the teacher education that I offer that it is I who offer it?

What difference does offering this teacher education make to me as a teacher educator?

(Edge, 2011, p. x)

As I have gone through the process of collecting and analysing data, I have tried to consider these questions, both as a teacher educator and as a researcher. To acknowledge my personal impact on the project itself and the research aspect of it and the impact of the project on my own practice as a teacher educator and researcher.

Analysis of the programme

In the first two years of data collection, 2016 and 2107, I transcribed the majority of the mentors’ recordings I was able to collect and my analysis of this, especially in the first year, gave me insight into typical issues that mentors faced and was instrumental in developing the input materials for the programme. As the majority of the data is in the form of audio recordings, the first stage of analysis was to transcribe the data to allow the spoken word to be examined more closely. In these initial stages, I used dictation software to aid transcription, listening to the original on headphones and dictating what I heard. This was time consuming but gave a sufficiently accurate result and was used for the recordings in the first two years, Using this technique had the added benefit of ensuring I listened carefully to the recordings as they were dictated, an important first step in any qualitative research
including recordings (Gibson and Brown, 2009) and then listened a second time to check the transcription made, beginning the process of ‘immersing myself’ in the data (Green et al., 2007). The audio recordings of all meetings were transcribed in a manner which would reflect accurately what was said, but which does not use Conversation Analysis conventions (ten Have, 2011) and which excluded suprasegmental detail (Gibson and Brown, 2009). The content of the talk, was deemed to be sufficient for the purposes of this study and as such, only standard punctuation is used to denote question intonation (?), surprise (!) and end of utterance(.) and pauses (...). This was partly a pragmatic decision for reasons of expedience due to the large amount of data, but was also justified as I knew the participants, had regular contact with them, and a solid understanding of their contexts with their mentees from TED seminars and F-on-F meetings.

The feedback (oral and written) from all stakeholders was also taken into consideration including that from mentors, mentees, fellow University tutors involved in the modules and notes from my reflective journal. The results of this analysis were used to make appropriate changes to the programme year on year, both in terms of practical changes and in the development of training material. In the second two years of data collection (2018 and 2019), I maintained a close relationship with the wider data, listening to the mentor/mentee recordings in order to provide feedback on this to the participants, keeping field notes on areas of potential interest which confirmed, contradicted or extended my findings from the first two years.

One of the particular challenges in the analysis of this part of the research was in avoiding bias. Miles and Huberman suggest that ‘qualitative research findings can be interesting, illuminating, and erroneous’ and that ‘interpretations that may be unsubstantiated and reflective only of researcher bias’ (cited in Whittemore et al., 2001). The well documented Hawthorne effect (Creswell, 2003) has repeatedly shown that any social situation will be affected by observation and in the case of an AR project such as this one, change (albeit of a positive nature) is not only an unwanted side effect, but, by the very nature of the intervention, a goal that the researcher strives for. A further challenge is that because it is hoped that the effects will be beneficial for participants, they will be viewed through the lens of the researcher’s personal ontology, the personal relationships and the power differentials and the halo effect previously mentioned in Section 2.2.2, in which neutral or ambiguous results are viewed in a positive light is difficult to avoid. Whilst this is never possible to completely eliminate, I have attempted to remain aware of this issue and to also identify and
address areas of the programme which were less successful. This process of development is described in Chapter 4.

Case Studies
The second part of my research question was ‘What is the nature of the interaction between the participants?’ and again, finding a way ‘into’ the data was a challenge. My solution was to begin with one case study, done originally for a progress panel, and after this, seeing it was a useful approach, a further one. With over 70 mentors to choose from, detailed analysis of only two may be considered a quixotic decision. However, the main advantage of case study analysis is the opportunity provided to explore the complexity of a mentoring relationship in depth and to provide a narrative setting to which the reader can relate. By considering the particular in detail, especially where these cases are chosen as exemplars, a more nuanced and detailed picture can emerge of the general (Simons 2020). In addition to this, my personal motivation for taking this approach lies in the value that I have found of case studies in my own development. Examples I have found to be useful and enlightening include the study of a successful ‘educative’ mentor, Pete Frazer, conducted by Feiman-Nemser (2001), the case of the mentor who realised that she did not want to produce ‘carbon copies’ of herself (Stanulis 1994), the co-researched project of Orland-Barack and Rachamim (2009) and the comparative study of two mentors (Hawkey 1998).

Simons (2009) defines case study in the following way:

Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution or system in a “real-life” context. It is research based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence led

(Simons, 2009, p. 21)

I feel that my studies conform to this definition with the data considering the mentoring practices of the participants from the view of their recorded interactions, interviews and written evaluations of the process and the analysis, whilst being largely of a qualitative nature, also encompassing a quantitative approach where this shed light on particular areas of practice.

There is the obvious danger with case studies that inferences are drawn from a singular or small number of cases and that an investigation into a non-standard case (Tight, 2017) may lead to unsubstantiated and misleading generalisations. This was avoided in this case with the use of purposeful sampling methodology (Sloan and Quan-Haase, 2017) in which the two cases were chosen as exemplifying ends of the spectrum of success of the programme. There
was good evidence from their data and my knowledge of their progress on the programme, that one had had a successful relationship with her mentee and the other had experienced significant challenges. In both cases, I had a full set of data from them including their reflective assignments and I hoped that a detailed investigation into this would work to highlight aspects of practice which commonly emerged in the data from other cases, identify important themes and display to a reader the mentoring relationships that were formed in a more narrative manner.

A further decision which had to be made in this stage of the analysis was whether an inductive or deductive approach was taken. Selvi (2020) suggests that this decision depends on the knowledge that the researcher enters the analysis with. Where less is known about the area and themes may emerge from the data, then a data-driven or inductive approach is desirable. Where the purpose of the analysis is to test a theory, then a theory, a driven or deductive approach can be used. The latter has an attraction as a method which is potentially more robust and more likely to achieve inter-rater reliability. Hennissen et al. (2011), for example, developed a system of 16 categories for coding, including attributes such as ‘showing attentive behaviour, asking an open starting question, asking for concreteness and summarising’. Although this is arguably a rather blunt instrument, they were able to identify ‘two clear sets of specific and observable mentoring skills offering either emotional support or task assistance in mentoring dialogues’ (Hennissen et al., 2011) and to show evidence that these were observably greater in number after training. With a long personal history of teacher education and training, it was unrealistic to expect that I would be able to examine mentoring interactions with complete neutrality or dispassion, but I was unwilling to impose categories initially as this has an inherent disadvantage of potentially excluding categories which were not anticipated and therefore missing opportunities to genuinely learn something new rather than confirming expectations. I therefore attempted to work on initial analysis in an inductive way, whilst remaining aware of my potential proclivities.

I did this by, for each of these two cases, uploading the transcribed data and assignments to NVivo and immersing myself in the data and coding it in an open manner. This gave me the opportunity to examine it in depth, ensuring that all parts of the interactions were considered and incorporated and allowing me as a researcher to consider the meaning of utterances, leading to a greater understanding of the whole (Tessier, 2012). I began with what Psathas (1995, p12) calls ‘unmotivated looking’, tagging utterances, sentences and longer passages with a wide range of codes in an open manner which was determined only
by my interpretation of the data. I then revisited these codes and regrouped them, rationalising them into a smaller number of categories (Selvi, 2020, p. 442). From this analysis, I grouped the themes into the three broad areas identified in the literature review. As a reminder, these were:

- Emotional support/ Developing rapport – empathy, hedging and use of praise
- Pedagogic support – resource ideas and general pedagogical advice
- Support with reflection – balance of talk, focusing and questioning and use of stimulated recall.

These accorded with the main challenges faced by mentors in the initial AR analysis and were so considered to be robust. There were, of course, overlaps between these areas. Where there was evidence of ‘judgementoring’ (Hobson and Malderez, 2013) for example, should this be categorised as a rapport issue (this was my eventual decision) or a balance of talk issue (which was often the visible symptom of this)? In an ideal research situation, the analysis would be repeated independently by another researcher to ensure an inter-rater agreement (e.g. as in Langdon, 2017) but this was not possible in my situation. However, a measure of reliability was seen to be achieved when the wider data was also coded and similar themes emerged and the data was also discussed in a group forum with other PhD peers conducting research in similar fields.

After the initial coding and theme development, I investigated codes and themes deductively using quantitative methods for such aspects as particular wording used in feedback (e.g. talk related to hedging) and for talk dominance. Comparing this approach to other, similar studies in the literature, the majority tend towards a purely qualitative but some research (notably Farr, 2010) has been done using a predominantly quantitative approach to discourse studies on feedback in teacher education. An extract of data from this can be seen in the table below.
Table 3. Distribution of compliments, criticisms and suggestions in mentors’ feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Compliments</th>
<th>Criticisms</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>acts</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>acts</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>acts</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F4</td>
<td>acts</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5</td>
<td>acts</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F6</td>
<td>acts</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>acts</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words</td>
<td>2934</td>
<td>1610</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.10 Farr, (2010) showing the distribution of compliments, criticisms, and suggestions in the post observation feedback of her six tutors.

The approach that I took was more similar to Hyland and Hyland, (2001) in which a quantitative approach is used to examine the frequency of particular discourse features (in their case, praise and criticism) but in which the primary focus is on a more qualitative analysis. Thus, the focus is more on the meaning and sees the quantitative work as a support for this, rather than the initial qualitative analysis being seen as only a ‘stepping stone’ (Selvi, 2020, p. 442) to statistical analysis.

Analysis of wider data

My final research question (What notable issues arise between the participants?) forms the basis for my third analysis chapter and aimed to consider a much wider section of the data. Again, the challenge was in approaching such a large amount of material and my decision for this part of the research was to use the assignments from all years and the transcribed recordings of the mid-course F-on-F meetings that I had with each mentor as a starting point.

The assignments took a data-led approach to the mentors’ experiences on the programme (Walsh and Mann, 2015), often including fine grained analysis of the talk between them and their mentee(s) and foregrounded the issues that were central to their experience. The F-on-F meetings were a much less formal space for reflection, but allowed a window into the mentor’s thoughts during the programme as well as providing them with an opportunity to articulate their practice and identify areas that they wished to develop.

The advantages of using these two data sets as a basis for analysis were significant. The first is that it allowed an emic perspective (Given, 2012) to emerge with a focus on the issues that were central to the mentors on the programme. Secondly, it showcased the potential that the programme had for encouraging reflection in the mentors and the extent to which this
was realised. Finally, in a more practical manner, it allowed for a principled route for investigation of a ‘jungle’ of data. With over 70 mentors and up to ten pieces of data for each, mostly audio recordings of around 30-60 minutes, it was impossible to consider all of the data in detail. I felt that I had a good overview of the whole, having lived it, interacted with the participants and given feedback on their meetings with their mentees for five years. However, I needed a systematic approach to analysis (Butler-Kisber, 2017); a path through the jungle. The starting point of the assignments and F-on-F meetings provided this path; an opening into the data set as a whole.

Initial analysis involved uploading all transcripts of the F-on-F meetings and the assignments to NVivo and coding them in an inductive manner. Whilst the codes obviously differed from the case studies, the themes emerging formed similar patterns and these provided a ground map from which I was able to explore the wider data set of recordings and transcriptions to confirm and add nuance to my understanding of the issues that emerged. The context of close relationships and regular interactions with the participants, together with my field notes, also helped to inform my reading and interpretation of the data.

By this point in the research, machine transcription had improved significantly and I was able to use Otter.ai to allow a much greater amount of material to be investigated. With this software, it was possible to upload recordings to be automatically transcribed. The accuracy of transcription using this tool, is far from perfect, but even with very poor quality recordings and a variety of accents, a very useful first draft is produced. This is then easily editable, searchable and downloadable and had a further great advantage over transcriptions done manually. This was that it is possible to see the transcription on the screen and listen to the recording simultaneously, allowing me to easily find particular parts of interest, and to conveniently replay extracts to get a fuller sense of supra-segmental aspects of the talk (Lester and O’Reilly, 2019).

As the discussion above shows, my analysis has been varied over the course of my study and this could be seen to be a double edged sword. Vaismoradi et al. (2013) state that the validity of research is often judged upon the clarity of the decisions that researchers make and that what may be seen as a flexible approach is in fact one which can lead to inconsistency (Holloway and Todres, 2005). However, Aguinaldo (2004, p. 133) suggests that ‘qualitative researchers should not be constrained within a “methodological straightjacket” and must be allowed to utilize whatever methods necessary to explore the social phenomenon under
consideration’ but that these decisions ‘need to be made explicit and held up to scrutiny’. I hope that within this section, I have achieved that end.

3.5 Ethics.
Ethical approval through official University of Warwick channels was sought and granted prior to data collection. This can be viewed here.

Ethical considerations for research should always be at the forefront of the design (Iphofen and Tolich, 2019) and, even in a case such as this where the nature of the intervention is not only benign, but designed to be beneficial, implications for the well-being of the participants must be kept in mind. Power relationships exist within any group and Given (2012, p. 671) suggests that this includes two concepts: ‘power to’ and power over’. In the context of participatory action research, a consideration of both of these has particular resonance since the participants are being empowered to examine their own practice and reflect on it; a positive aspect of ‘power to’ but considerations must also be made of the ‘power over’ relationships which exist on several levels of the project. There are four areas in which this was pertinent and in all of these cases, the issues were mitigated by an awareness of the power differentials present and accommodation of them.

3.5.1 Relationships between researcher and participants and permissions
In order for the participants to take ownership of the project, analyse their own feedback and thus develop from the experience, the relationship between researcher and participants had to be a close and personal one with open communication channels and opportunities for discussion such as the Monday Meetings and the F-on-F meetings. There was repeated evidence that mentors felt able to discuss any issues they had with me and in terms of ethical considerations, it was likely that the participants would be at little risk of harm, even in terms of face threatening situations.

All mentors and mentees were given the option of participating in the programme and the purposes of it, including its centrality in my PhD, were explained, both orally and in the form of mentor and mentee ‘handbooks’ (these can be viewed in Appendix 1) which clarified the potential benefits and commitments and their right to withdraw and to anonymity. In the early years of the programme, mentors and mentees were asked to ‘opt in’ but as evidence of the benefits of it accumulated over the years, the mentor programme became an established part of the MA TESOL and participants were therefore asked to ‘opt out’ if they did not wish to participate. This happened on only five occasions throughout the process and was usually for reasons of part-time students having other work outside the MA and not
wishing to take on an extra task. In two of these five cases – two sisters who were potential mentees - the students decided that they would like to participate when the programme got underway and they saw the potential benefits.

Arguably, the programme causes an extra workload on the MA TESOL, in a term which is already busy for the students. However, how much time and effort is put in has the possibility for great variability depending on motivation and the minimum requirement is perhaps only about 5 hours of contact with mentees over three occasions. The majority of the mentors put in much more time than this, and the programme has been seen to have the potential to inspire Directed Motivational Currents (Dörnyei et al., 2014) and an intense and beneficial learning experience. These benefits seem to mitigate potential stress.

Written permission for use of data was obtained from all participants via a written form completed at the beginning of the programme in which they consented for their data to be used anonymously. If oral recorded data was used for training materials, further written confirmation of this was also sought and obtained by email for the specific extracts used. Extracts were chosen for their interest to other mentors but care was taken that the mentors in question were not shown in a negative light where voices may be identifiable. Names nor faces were never included in these materials. Participants were advised that they could withdraw from the project at any time.

3.5.2 Relationships between mentors/mentees

Probably the most important ethical consideration in terms of the programme was the way in which the participants interacted and the potential present for anxiety or discord amongst them. Power relationships are present in all groups of people, and particularly notable in feedback situations (Donaghue, 2020; Hyland and Lo, 2006) and although, theoretically, both mentors and mentees are on the same MA TESOL course and are therefore peers, the mentors inevitably have a higher standing as they have teaching experience, are often older, more confident and often have better English language proficiency. In the vast majority of the partnerships over the five years of the course so far, the relationships between mentors and mentees has been at worst neutral and, more usually, very positive. In occasional cases, there was some friction, but this usually dissipated as the programme went on and the relationships developed. It was stressed to both mentors and mentees that it was their capacity for reflection on the process that was being assessed and not their ability to teach or to mentor.

3.5.3 Assessment
As has already been discussed, involving participants in a research programme which potentially includes a high stakes assessment is both a consideration in terms of authenticity of data but also an ethical challenge. It was made very clear to participants on the TED module that using the experience as a basis for their assignment was optional (of six possible assignment questions only two (Q4 regarding mentoring and Q6 regarding feedback) were related to the programme. Overall, 60% of the participants made this choice and many produced excellent assignments and gained distinction level marks. It could be argued (and the participants were told) that having data to write from may make assignment writing an easier task, but the fact that 40% of the TED students chose other topics, is a good indication that the group as a whole did not feel an obligation to do so. In the first year of the programme, I was concerned to avoid a bias either way in my assessment and therefore my co-tutor marked the assignments done on the mentoring programme and I subsequently blind-marked them. This can also be seen as another opportunity taken for inter-rater checking and this moderation gave me confidence that I was able to view these objectively. In subsequent years I was therefore involved in the assessment. It was stressed to the mentors that the assignment was judged on their reflection and not on the quality of their practice as mentors, and, in fact, many of the strongest examples of assignments were those in which ‘dirty laundry’ was hung out with a critical approach taken to particular aspects of their practice or incidents that occurred.

3.5.4 Relationships with other stakeholders

As a further ethical consideration, at the beginning of the project, my place as a recently appointed member of the staff on an initially fixed term teaching contract, introducing an innovation to an already very well-established module, necessitated a degree of positioning and diplomacy. There was initially understandable concern from some colleagues who teach on these programmes about the implications of some students taking on a role which may be seen to elevate their status. It was, therefore, imperative to ensure that there was understanding of the nature of the intervention as a ‘buddy/mentor’ system and that neither group’s assignments would be affected or graded in accordance with feedback from the other. As the project (and my tenure at the University) progressed and proved itself to be useful, these concerns were allayed and the programme is viewed in a very positive light by other stakeholders, evidenced by the increased responsibility that the mentors have been allowed to have.
A final ethical consideration is that of data security. The security of data storage has always been an issue in research, but with data protection laws becoming more formalised, scrutinised and enforceable (the introduction of GDPR in 2019) this has now assumed even greater importance. All data was stored in a secure M drive on the University of Warwick server and any hard copies of data (largely permission forms) was stored in a drawer in my office, which was locked when I was absent. All original recorded data will be deleted after my viva.
Chapter 4

4. Analysis 1: Development of the programme

4.1. Introduction

The primary focus of this project is the development of a near-peer mentoring programme and how this evolved over a period of five years. During the research process, my aim has been to reflect, understand and continue to develop the programme based on a reflective, cyclical action research model (Kolb, 1984). Thus, the programme acted as a vehicle for an investigation of novice mentor interactions and issues that they face, and this investigation in turn fed into the development of the programme. My questions, as a reminder to the reader, are:

How can a near peer mentoring programme be designed and run in an MA TESOL programme to develop an awareness of mentoring practice for in-service teachers?
- What is the nature of the participants’ experience on the programme?
- What is the nature of the interaction between the participants?
- What notable issues arise between the participants?

In this chapter, I will focus on the design and development of the programme and the first of my sub-questions detailing the nature of the participants’ experience. In the next chapter, I will then go on to consider the interaction between mentors and mentees using two indicative case studies, and follow this in Chapter 6 with analysis of the notable issues that arose over time.

4.1.1 Overview

I want to start this chapter by returning to Edge’s (2011) questions, identified in the Methodology chapter:

“What difference does it make to the teacher education that I offer that it is I who offer it?”
“What difference does offering this teacher education make to me as a teacher educator?”

(Edge, 2011, p.46)

The answer to his second question, is perhaps more straightforward in that offering and developing the mentoring programme has had profound effects on me as a teacher educator and a researcher and these will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter (Section 4.5). The first question, I feel, is more problematic. The purpose of this first analysis chapter is to describe the changes that I implemented over the five-year period and how these were...
dictated in an AR cycle of reflection by the perceptions of all stakeholders not least the mentors themselves. During this process, I shall endeavour to remain aware of and answer Edge’s first question as honestly as I am able but there are challenges to this. Not only was I instrumental in delivering the programme and had, therefore a strong motivation for it to succeed, but I have also analysed the data, with a subsequent danger of the presentation of a victory narrative (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). To counter this, the tools that a researcher in a qualitative framework has are rigour (Allen, 2017) and integrity (Given, 2008) as has been previously discussed in the Methodology chapter. For this part of the analysis, however, I found the following validation of action research particularly resonant. Heikkinen et al., (2007) identify principles, and subdivide these into more finely grained criteria. They can be summarised in the following manner:

1. **Principle of historical continuity**
   
   *Analysis of the history of action: how has the action evolved historically?*

2. **Principle of reflexivity**
   
   *Subjective adequacy: what is the researcher’s relationship with his/her object of research like?*

3. **Principle of dialectics**
   
   *Dialogue: how has the researcher’s insight developed in dialogue with others?*
   
   *Polyphony: how does the report present different voices and interpretations?*
   
   *Authenticity: how authentic and genuine are the protagonists of the narrative?*

4. **Principle of workability**
   
   *Pragmatic quality: how well does the research succeed in creating workable practices?*

   (Heikkinen et al., 2007, p. 8)

In accordance with these principles, I will attempt to describe the evolution of the programme over time and be honest about my relationship with the mentors, using their voices and interpretations as far as possible and showing the authenticity that I perceived in their responses. There is a circularity here in that the rapport that developed between the mentors and myself motivated many of them to invest in the programme, but I would argue that it was their genuine perception of the programme as useful, which, in most cases increased their positive response to me as a person and a tutor and gave them further impetus to expend effort, resulting in a meaningful learning experience.

Extracting the personal relationship I had with the participants from the research is, I feel, neither possible nor helpful. Overall, as I have described in Chapter 3, I would describe myself
as a pragmatist, and so my primary concern was not, a search for a ‘true’ answer to my questions, but a ‘useful’ one. Heikkinen et al’s ‘Principle of workability’ (above) therefore resonates with my approach, as does Kumaravadivelu (1994) who suggests that a ‘post-method methodology’ means that ‘teachers could devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant alternative to method, one informed by principled pragmatism’ (p27). This chapter will show the ‘workable practices’ which were developed and those which were less successful.

I will begin by describing the mentors who participated on the programme. Analysis of the feedback from the participants was ongoing over the whole of the study period and led to adaptions and fine tunings of the programme, which are described in a brief chronological overview of the programme over the five years of this study. I then take a more thematic approach and consider the impact of the programme on the stakeholders and three aspects of the programme that emerged from the analysis.

4.2. Participants
As an addition to Edge's (2011) question ‘What difference does it make to the teacher education that I offer that it is I who offer it?’ (p.46), it is perhaps also germane to ask is ‘What difference does it make to the teacher education who I am offering it to?’. The participants were largely experienced teachers on the TED module but there was a wide range of experience within the group, from those who had done at least two years classroom teaching but no training, to those who had many years of teacher education behind them. They came from a wide range of contexts including Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa; from well-resourced schools and from extremely low resource environments. What they did share, however, was a very pro-active approach to their own development, evidenced by their attendance on the MA TESOL in a prestigious British university, and by the almost universally positive attitude with which they approached the mentoring programme. On a subjective note, they were a joy to work with. With an eye to reflexivity, however, there are subgroups of the participants that require further acknowledgement.

4.2.1 Hornby Scholars
This account of the programme would not be complete without some mention of the Hornby Scholars who were, in many ways, such an integral part of the programme. As was explained in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4.1), the inclusion of these students, who were on a competitive and prestigious scholarship from the British Council, was a primary reason for early data collection and the Hornby Scholars comprised a significant proportion (over half) of the
mentors over the whole five year period that the Mentoring Programme ran. It is therefore, a consideration that the majority of the mentors have been recipients of a competitive scholarship and thus perhaps the success of the programme is in no small part due to the talents of its constituent members. I would argue, however, that there were also a significant percentage of the mentors who were not on this programme and who were often also extraordinary students, so this may also be a function merely of experienced teachers, sufficiently motivated to pursue an MA in TESOL and sufficiently academically able to do so at a top-ranking university (www.guardian.com/education) in the UK.

4.2.2 Inclusion of PhD students as mentors

In the first year of the programme, two PhD students were included as mentors and they were invited to attend lectures on the TED module and encouraged to reflect on their practice in ‘feedback on feedback’ meeting with me. There were two reasons why this was done. The first was for the benefit of the programme in that these extra mentors bolstered mentor numbers in that year and allowed an even ratio of one mentor to one teaching pair of mentees. The second was for the benefit of the individuals, who were both completing a Higher Education teaching qualification which required them to have some teaching or mentoring experience to reflect on. Whilst no major difficulties ensued, this cohort was not very successfully integrated into the group and if they attended TED seminars they often dominated. For these reasons, a decision was made not to include them again. However, in 2019 and 2020 a larger number of pre-service participants on the MA TESOL meant that the recruitment of PhD students was necessary. Again, this was not unsuccessful, but these students were never fully integrated into the group.

4.2.3 Other additions

In addition to the PhD students, 2017 and 2018, there were requests to join the programme from MA students who were experienced teachers but who had not elected to take the TED module. These students attended the TED lectures that were pertinent to mentoring and had access to the online materials and in all ways fitted in with the other MA students and were a successful addition to the cohort.

A note on anonymity: When referring to individual participants in this chapter, I have numbered them to provide anonymity and information about the year in which they participated. For example, Mentor 2019/06 was a participant in 2019. The number 06 is arbitrarily assigned but allows identification. Whilst this anonymisation has a depersonalising effect given the close relationships we had, it was the most straightforward way to identify
large numbers of mentors (over 70 in the five year period) and give the reader information about the year of participation. In cases where participants are not labelled in this way, data originates from anonymous group feedback or focus groups, and only the year is specified.

4.3. Chronological overview of innovations

As a recap, my objectives in developing the course came as a result of the situation I saw as I worked with two cohorts of students. The first were the pre-experience group who were engaged in an action research teaching project where they taught two short lessons to a small group of their peers on two occasions during the second term of the MA, once at the beginning of the term, and again, after reflection, towards the end of the term. My hope for the programme was that it would offer support to these students in what was often their first experience of being in a teaching role (the mentees). The second cohort was composed of experienced teachers who elected to take the TED module and who I felt could benefit from an experiential approach to their development as teacher educators (the mentors). The initial idea was simple and was as follows:

**Stage 1**
- Mentors grouped with mentees
- Mentors support mentee(s) to plan their first lesson (Mentor Meeting 1)
- Mentors observe lesson where mentee(s) teach their peers for 20 mins (Observation 1)
- Mentors give post-lesson oral and written feedback (Oral feedback 1 and Written feedback 1)

**Stage 2**
- Mentors listen back to their mentoring and feedback interactions and reflect alone and with peers
- Mentors have feedback on feedback meeting (F-on-F) with me to discuss reflections and identify areas for development

**Stage 3**
- Mentors support mentees to plan their second lesson (Mentor Meeting 2)
- Mentors observe mentees lesson where they teach their peers for 20 mins (Observation 2)
- Mentors give post-lesson oral and written feedback (Oral feedback 2 and Written feedback 2)

**Stage 4**
- Mentors (optionally) reflect on their findings in a more formal, literature informed manner through the TED assignment.

Changes were added to this base structure year on year. These will be itemised first before I go on to examine the important developments in a more thematic manner.
Year 1 – 2016

- **Pilot study** – First year seen as a pilot study, performing a useful function as a scaled down version of research designed to provide a ‘dress rehearsal’ and ‘assess feasibly’ (Frey, 2018).

- **Critical friends** - Feedback-on feedback (F-on-F) meetings with the mentors were in pairs to attempt to facilitate critical friend groups (Farrell 2003).

- **Findings** - Indicated that the programme had good potential but that mentors needed more guidance through the programme and that they were often very dominant in the talk; mirroring much of the literature in this area.

Year 2 – 2017

- **Handbooks** - Introduction of a handbook for mentors and mentees (see Appendix 1) to provide a clearer path through the process. These gave a week by week breakdown of the programme.

- **Input on TED** - The input on the TED module was redesigned to reflect the progression of the mentoring project and ensure that input was aligned (e.g. input on oral feedback given before mentors did this).

- **Individual meetings with mentors** – Individual F-on-F meetings found to be more productive and critical friend pairs abandoned.

- **Online materials** - Three-part video-based instruction programme made to supplement the input on the TED module and raise awareness of issues e.g. the balance between dialogic and directive feedback (Bieler, 2010; N. Mercer and Howe, 2012). This is discussed in greater detail in section 4.4.5 below and example unit can be viewed in Appendix 2.

- **Assignment questions** - two assignment question choices introduced which reflect directly on the programme. These questions are discussed in Section 4.4.4 below.

- **Findings** – indicated improvements in practical aspects needed, such as arranging timetables for observation. Also online input required more structure (Salmon, 2013) to encourage mentors to access it.

Year 3 – 2018

- **Introduction meeting** – short social introduction meeting arranged before first mentoring to allow mentors and mentees to meet

- **Monday Meetings** - instigation of weekly, optional discussion group meetings that I hoped would provide an open forum for mentors to discuss issues arising and reflect.

- **Online materials** - development of more extensive and organised online materials, including recorded data from the mentors’ interactions with their mentees from previous years, arranged in weekly units which included video lectures, data extracts with tasks and optional readings. Reminder emails sent of a new unit opening each week and weekly about the programme. This can be viewed in Appendix 2.
Year 4 – 2019

- **Fewer changes** – systems now more robust and there was little need for adjustment.
- **Mentors replaced University tutors for observation and feedback** - mentors became the sole observers of the pre-service teachers in their peer teaching with University employed tutors no longer being involved in this process.
- **Online materials** – used for a second year. Modified to reflect the new 8 week term structure.
- **Monday meetings and introduction meeting** – these continued as in Year 3.

Year 5 – 2020

- **Little change** – programme now stable and **remained unaltered** except for the change to ratios.
- **Changed ratios** – A much larger cohort of pre-service students in this year necessitated a 4:1 ratio of mentees: mentors. Oral feedback was therefore organised in group settings to reduce the pressure on the mentors.
- **Note** – Data was not collected in this year with the exception of assignments and final feedback from the mentors.

4.4. A Thematic Approach

An AR approach, especially a longitudinal project such as this, will often involve changes in the researcher’s views and my knowledge of mentoring and research has significantly increased through the process. However, my fundamental belief in the efficacy of development through data led and collaborative reflection has remained unaltered and Golombek and Johnson, (2019) in their chapter ‘Materialising a Vygostkykian-inspired language teacher education pedagogy’ crystalise these thoughts for me. They suggest that there is an importance in:

...structured mediational spaces (Johnson and Golombek 2016:92) in which teachers are encouraged and supported as they externalise their everyday concepts of teachers and teaching, engage with materialised academic concepts and critically reflect on and analyse these concepts through their own beliefs, identities, reasoning and teaching practices.

(Golombek and Johnson, 2019, P.27)

This accords with the structure of an experiential approach in which participants mentor novice teachers in a meaningful context, coupled with input of academic concepts through the TED module, online material and these aspects combined with critical reflection through peer dialogue, dialogue with a tutor and the opportunity to consolidate these reflections in a formal manner through written assessment. Other scholars concur with this view:
Learning, therefore, is not straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from external, socially mediated action to internal mediational control by individual learners, which results in the transformation of both the self and the activity (my emphasis).


If asked to define my purpose in this project, I feel that this comes very close, except that it is not only the ‘self and the activity’ that are being changed in the case of the Mentoring Programme, but the ‘selves’ (mentees, mentors, myself as a mentor trainer) and the ‘activities’ (mentoring, reflecting on mentoring, the programme itself, the PhD).

An AR project is not a single event and Golombek and Johnson (2019) go on to suggest that the recursive nature of concrete experience and abstraction of reflection on these is a basis for development of expertise:

…structured mediational spaces (Johnson and Golombek 2016:92) in which teachers are encouraged and supported as they externalise their everyday concepts of teachers and teaching, engage with materialised academic concepts and critically reflect on and analyse these concepts through their own beliefs, identities, reasoning and teaching practices.

(Golombek and Johnson, 2019, p. 27)

These thoughts helped to identify the themes used to analyse the nature of the experience for the mentors:

- the experiential, data-led nature of the programme which provided ‘concrete teaching [mentoring] experiences’ (Golombek and Johnson, 2019, p. 27) and the opportunity to apply ‘academic concepts’ to them.
- the manner in which academic concepts of mentoring were introduced
- the informal collaboration and formal assessment which encouraged reflection on and abstraction of the mentors’ concrete experiences.

Before these themes are addressed, however, it is also important to consider an evaluation of the programme itself. Kietylty (2019) suggests that there are two ways in which teacher education programmes can be evaluated; firstly by the perception of the participants and other stakeholders, and secondly by the impact that it has. In this section, I will initially consider the perceptions of stakeholders and the practical impact the programme had within the MA TESOL and then go on to consider the development of the programme under the three themes noted above.
4.4.1 Perceptions and impact

Mentors’ perceptions

The mentors were always at the heart of the project. I worked closely with them and I developed friendly, personal relationships with most of them each year. A group of experienced teachers from a wide range of contexts, intellectually curious and able and invested in their own development as evidenced by their attendance on an MA TESOL programme in a prestigious British university; they were a joy to work with and, cliched though the idea of learning from your students is, they taught me so much. All of this leads to difficulty as a researcher to either gather or analyse data regarding their perceptions of the programme with anything resembling objectivity. Despite these subjectivities, it is hard to ignore the overwhelmingly positive response that I had from the mentors every year. Feedback from the mentors included comments such as:

1. I am just glad I had been part of this project. I have come out a better teacher educator. Will help me back home in giving feedback.

Anonymous mentor feedback 2017

Some of the relationships between mentors and mentees were less successful and there were mentors who felt disappointed that the effort they put in was not reciprocated. These were small enough in number and not sufficiently serious when they did occur to warrant major changes in the programme but they provided an interesting emerging theme in the relationships between mentors and mentees and are included in further discussion in Chapter 6.

Some factors which caused the programme to be more or less successful were beyond my control. The constitution of the group members, for example, made a significant difference with a particularly proactive cohort in 2017 and 2020 making these years particularly enjoyable and in my opinion more enjoyable for the mentors, and a lecturers strike in 2018 which cut across the last month of Term 2, causing missed input and affecting the TED module delivery. Although the students were very supportive, this cast something of a shadow over the programme.

Evidencing change in teacher behaviour or belief can be challenging (Borg, 2011, 2015). I had initially hoped to see impact on mentoring behaviour exhibited, and whilst this happened in some cases, it was difficult to establish as a norm. However, there was clear evidence of increased awareness of mentor practice, particularly in the sphere of giving oral and written feedback. In the 2017 exit questionnaire, results suggested that the mentors’ perception of
their approach to both written and oral feedback had been changed substantially by the experience (all scored 4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5 where 1 was ‘no influence’ and 5 was ‘completely changed’). Comments included:

1. *During the project, recording myself and listening to what I said was reflective.*

2. *By thinking about the language I use when giving feedback, I know what to avoid e.g. past modals! Also, I was able to see how, by giving constructive feedback and ideas I could positively change someone’s teaching.*

3. *My approach towards linking oral and written feedback has changed as I feel more feedback can be given orally, leaving just the main points in the written feedback.*

Anonymous mentor feedback 2017

Even comments that were less resoundingly positive, led me to feel that I had achieved my aims:

1. *I feel that I reflected on my mentoring and I kind of(sic) know what I am doing ‘wrong’ but I’m not sure if I learned how to fix it.*

Anonymous mentor feedback 2017

Further evidence of mentor reflection will be shown in Chapters 5 and 6.

**Mentees’ perceptions**

Feedback from the mentees was also overwhelmingly positive -see data below from 2016 and 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you think of the mentoring programme?</th>
<th>Range 2016 n=18</th>
<th>Mean 2016 n=18</th>
<th>Range 2017 n=15</th>
<th>Mean 2017 n=15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helpful (1 = not helpful 5 = very helpful)</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyable (1 = not enjoyable 5 = very enjoyable)</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive (1 = not supportive 5 = very supportive)</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.2 Mentees’ perceptions of the programme in the first two years*

This data confirms that for the majority of the mentees, this was a good experience and typical comments from the feedback included the following:

**Do you have any comments about this?**

> After Our mentor is very helpful. He helped us with our teaching plans and answered a lot of questions from us.
In some cases, mentors themselves asked for feedback from their mentees and this was also often extremely positive. An example is this:

1. It is far more than I expected, especially the mentoring after peer-teaching. It really helped to
2. think back my weakness and strength during the process of teaching. For the 1st peer-teaching,
3. it helped me to improve my 2nd one and gave me new thoughts when I was planning my 2nd
4. one. For the 2nd peer-teaching. It also gave me further thinking on future teaching life. I think it
5. was nearly perfect for me, sincerely.

Mentor 2017/13

There were occasional criticisms, where the relationships were not so successful, but this was rare (only one comment each in 2016 and 2017)

Overall, there is robust evidence that the mentors and mentees benefited considerably from the mentoring programme and felt that it had been a positive innovation. Whilst these are the main stakeholders, there are other players, whose views had importance in the success of the project.

Tutors’ perceptions

As has been previously stated, I was lucky to receive support from other members of the MA TESOL staff members and I discussed the programme with the three tutors on the Professional Practice module for the pre-service MA students before initiating the pilot study. At this point their main concern was that the mentors would be too intrusive or
directive and would affect the main aim of the module, which is to involve the pre-service students in an action research project to investigate their practice and to develop in an autonomous manner. However, I interviewed the three tutors after the pilot run in 2016 and all three felt that it had been a successful intervention. Acceptance of the programme grew and in the third year (2018) with ongoing positive feedback from participants, the mentors replaced the university tutors who had previously observed and given feedback on the peer teaching. This provided considerable impact in terms of departmental saving of tutor time and as a consequence was popular.

Giving the mentors more responsibility in this way was perhaps double-edged. In the first year where the mentors were co-observing with a university tutor, there was at least some confusion as to their roles. One mentor wrote in her final assignment:

1. ...a lecturer is responsible for my mentee’s evaluation, hence my role is to help them improve their teaching skills, but also meet the lecturer’s expectation of a good lesson.

   Mentor 2016/05

This remark seems to indicate a responsibility to the university tutor/lecturer, rather than to the mentee and this confusion was mirrored in feedback from mentees in that year. In some cases, the feedback from both the university tutor and the peer mentor was seen to be a ‘repeat performance’, perhaps without a clear reason:

In other cases, the mentees noticed a different approach from University tutor and peer mentor:
In this case, although it’s unclear which mentor is which (both are named ‘my mentor’) I feel it is likely that the University tutor was more focused on the ‘pedagogical aims’ as much of the interaction data from mentors focuses on classroom management.

Having feedback from two sources, however, was not always seen as conflicting or repetitious and in the case of the mentee below, it led to a ‘very active and interesting discussion’.

I wanted to ensure that the mentors did not feel burdened or responsible for the outcome of their mentees’ assessment- indeed, the lack of this was one of the keystones of the programme- and this was emphasised, and I think understood. However, allowing the mentor to have sole responsibility for the observation and feedback to their mentees conferred greater control and ownership of the programme and was overall a positive aspect and provided the advantage of a more legitimate (Lave and Wenger, 1991) mentoring situation without the burden of assessment.

**Researcher’s perception**

‘*What difference does offering this teacher education make to me as a teacher educator?’* (Edge, 2011, p. 46)

As the stakeholder with (arguably) the greatest stake in the project, this section would not be complete without some mention of the impact that the project has had on my own development as a teacher educator and a researcher. As has been stated and shown (Screenshots 3.1 and 3.2) in the previous chapter, I kept a reflective journal electronically in OneNote throughout the process, although more regularly in the early stages. The entries in here document a range of issues, some which relate to thoughts borne of reading or discussion or about particular data extracts that interested me at the time. Reading back through these entries, it is clear that I have gained confidence over the years about the programme and its efficacy, about my own knowledge of the literature on mentoring and about my capacity as a teacher educator in this environment. Doing my own research at this level has informed my thinking on teacher education and has anchored this in a solid
foundation, corresponding to Edge’s (2011) ‘roots’. There are many accounts by teacher educators of the way in which they have learnt in the process of their teaching and their research and my journey has been no different in this regard. In Kitchen’s (2005) self-study he describes his growing awareness of often being ‘an expert judging the performance of teachers by external criteria’ (p.18) and the need for a move towards collaboration. This resonates with my own journey and the way in which I have, ironically, grown more secure about uncertainty; more comfortable with the idea that specific context has such an effect that the best way forward in development is to ensure that mentors are given a wide range of ‘tools’ to work with and the skill to choose appropriately based on their reflective practices. In many ways it feels as if I have gone a long way around to come back to what I knew early on but now approach this with more confidence and a deeper understanding of the way in which experiential learning and content knowledge need to be integrated because of the evidence I have accrued. This applies to the mentors, but also to my own status as a novice researcher and teacher educator in Higher Education. Engaging in this research has been an act of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which has informed my own mentoring practice and my dissertation supervision for MA TESOL students.

Reasonable workload for participants

A programme cannot be deemed to be successful if it is unrealistically onerous in terms of time commitment for the participants (Grant, 2021) and at the beginning of the programme, I was very hesitant to give the mentors extra work in addition to the usual TED module requirements. In the first year, I therefore made participation optional. Feedback from participants indicated that the programme had been extra work but worthwhile.

In subsequent years, I grew in confidence and asked TED participants to opt out if they felt they had a good reason to do so rather than opting in. There were two TED participants in subsequent years who asked to do this. In both cases, they were part time students who were concerned about extra workload for observation and feedback as they were not always on campus.

Mentees were always given the option to opt out but this only happened once. This was in the first year of the programme, where two sisters initially worried about the extra workload, but changed their minds and joined the programme at the first meeting.

It should be stated that the programme was not a wholly positive experience for all of the mentors and in occasional cases, workload was noted as an issue.
However, there were also MA TESOL students in this year and the previous one who asked to participate in the programme, even though they did not choose the TED module and who found it beneficial.

I grew in confidence over time and it is perhaps instructive that I was more conscious of an imposition than the students were. In an exit feedback meeting with two of the mentors in 2018, they put this into perspective:

The process throughout was always a learning curve, about developing as a researcher, about developing a programme, and about a balance between the power of enthusiasm to motivate others and the way in which this sometimes blinded me to the complexity of the programme and the fact that what was clear in my own head was actually quite complex in reality. In my reflective journal from year three, a year in which there were fewer mentors, fewer proactive personalities in the TED cohort and in which a strike cut through the end of the term causing some considerable disruption, I wrote:
I was also aware of changing circumstances over time and how these might affect workload. This was particularly pertinent in 2020 when a large increase in student numbers on the MA TESOL programme in general and in pre-service students in particular, meant that the ratio of mentors to mentees became 1:4 rather than the 1:2 which had been the norm in previous years.

In addition to a reasonable workload expectation for the mentors and mentees, a programme cannot be sustainable if the time requirement is untenable for the tutor managing it. Again, we return to Edge’s (2011) question: ‘What difference does it make to this teacher education that it is I who is doing it?’. Not only has this programme been my ‘baby’ in terms of its development, I have also had the impetus of collecting PhD data as a spur for working on it and acting as a teacher educator and manager of the programme has undoubtedly been a significant amount of work. Whilst there is no escape from the intensive nature of the course as a tutor, some systems have worked to reduce the workload to a point at which I feel it is reasonable and these could be of use if the programme were to be used in another situation. To accommodate its use in other situations, in addition to the Mentor and Mentee handbooks already described, I developed a Tutor Handbook, detailing these stages and tasks to be done in each week of the programme (See Appendix 1).

Having considered the impact that the programme had on its stakeholders, I move on to the impact that it had within the MA programme.

Philosophically aligned with the wider programme

It should be stated that, from the outset, my idea for this programme was warmly received by the University department and the staff and that this positive environment was undoubtedly instrumental in its success. At the time that I proposed the scheme, although I had a history of teacher education with pre-service trainees, I was a very novice academic, in my first year in the University and this openness to innovation on the part of my colleagues and senior academics was notable and is a factor which affects the potential of the wider
application of such a scheme. I was aware however, that in order to be sustainable the programme needed to resonate with other modules and the overall tenor of the MA TESOL. The degree has a strong emphasis on experiential learning and in addition to the obvious example of the students’ dissertation research, many of the modules also include emphasis on this as the following examples will illustrate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module [see website for details] (Compulsory/ Optional)</th>
<th>Assessment based (at least partly) on:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spoken Discourse</td>
<td>Analysis of talk collected by the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Practice (pre-service)</td>
<td>Action Research project based on peer teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Practice (post experience)</td>
<td>Development of materials for a chosen context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialism in Motivation</td>
<td>Analysis of a personal motivation diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Teaching Methodology</td>
<td>Assessed teaching practice with ESOL learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
<td>Development of a professional blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Education and Development</td>
<td>Reflections on mentoring experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Examples of experiential learning on the MA TESOL

The Mentoring Programme, thus, was in line with the prevailing philosophy of the department and in addition, built on and utilised knowledge such as Politeness Theory (Al-Duleimi et al., 2016; Brown and Levinson, 1987) and skills such as Discourse and Conversation Analysis conversation (Liddicoat, 2007; ten Have, 2011; Wooffitt, 2011) which had been developed in other Term 1 modules. This was evident in many of the assignments which included elements of discourse analysis (e.g. Mentors 2016/11 and 2017/15). Also each year there were examples of students who went on to explore mentoring and feedback further in their dissertation research, good examples being Mentor 2018/09 who examined peer mentoring and Mentor 2017/03 who researched the use of video in post observation feedback.

Bridging the gap

A further way in which the programme was useful in the department was in bridging the gap between the two cohorts of students, experienced teachers and pre-service teachers. Although they have some mixed modules and many of the optional modules in Term 2 are open to both groups, perhaps the fact that the pre-service teachers tend to be younger and almost ubiquitously Chinese means that the two groups are often quite separate. One of the unexpected benefits of the Mentoring Programme was that it gave a reason for the two groups to integrate and a structure within which they could do so. This was particularly appreciated by the mentees and comments such as the one below were not uncommon:
One mentee also commented that the programme gave her an opportunity to practice her English, which she appreciated:

```
1 I think the biggest bonus I got was the chances to practice speaking. As in our context, most
2 experienced teachers (mentor) are native speakers, and we mentees are almost Chinese.
3 Every meeting with my mentor is a good chance to push me speaking English and expressing
4 myself. It helps more with my oral English compared with group discussion and short question
5 answers in classes. From my point of view, the teaching techniques I learned from the project
6 may be forgot after several months or when I am back to China, but the improvement on
7 speaking skill will be there and benefit for a long time.
```

Exit questionnaire from mentee 2019

Whilst the project is no panacea for integration, it is a small way in which the two groups have a productive reason to mix in which both parties gain.

I have discussed the impact that the programme had on its participants and the MA TESOL. The themes that emerged as important in the programme design from analysis of the data were (as itemized above) that the programme gave participants a concrete experience of mentoring and input of academic concepts and encouraged abstraction of the concrete through informal and formal reflection. This section will now proceed to address these in turn.

### 4.4.2 Experiential and data led

The experiential element to the Mentoring Programme is its core and for many of the participants, there was a good understanding that this is how theory and practice were linked:

```
1 2018/01 The theory could be one thing, the TED and the practice is the mentoring. So you
2 can't have just the theory because this module is all about theory and practice
3 Jo And that's what I think is the strength
4 2018/01 So if you're missing one part, you are going to miss something. And I felt that. I
5 completely felt that
6 Jo That's nice to know.
```

Mentor feedback on programme 2018/01

Wallace (2003, p. 2 cited in Farr, 2010) suggests that ‘the fundamental principle of the teacher education curriculum should NOT be from knowledge to teaching practice, but from
teaching practice to knowledge’ and the hope for the programme was that a ‘practice theory’ (Delaney, 2015) would be generated, ‘constructed from moments of practice which are congruent with pre-formed views of teaching ... [and] validated by their personal constructs of success, including the response of their own learners.’ (p. 6)

This has resonance with the strength of the programme as I see it. The mentors are given an authentic mentoring role in which they can potentially give genuine support to their mentees but they remain in a ‘sandbox’ environment where neither their assessment nor the assessment of their mentees depends on this. The experiential basis of the programme changed little over the development of the programme, largely because it was always the foundation on which the whole was built and, as has been seen above, was well received by both mentors and mentees.

A crucial aspect of this experience for many students, was a deeper understanding of the importance of evidence-based practice (Walsh and Mann, 2015) and a fundamental principle was that the mentors would be encouraged to reflect using data. This meant that all mentor/mentee interactions were audio recorded and mentors listened back and also examined their written feedback with a critical eye. In both cases, this was with a pro-active view of identification of aspects of their practice that they would like to change in the second round of mentoring and feedback and then, for whether this had been achieved. As has been stated earlier, this approach resonated with, and further developed skills acquired in Term 1 language-based modules such as Spoken Interaction and Written Discourse.

In their final reflections on the programme, there is good evidence from the mentors who wrote assignments on the topic that they were using a data led approach. As can be seen from the chart below, of all 38 assignments written over five years, only one did not use data extracts with the post observation oral feedback meetings proving the most interesting interaction for most mentors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using written feedback data</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using oral feedback data</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using data from mentoring meetings</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not using data</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of assignments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.4 Data on which assignments were based*
In some cases, there was a very creative use of data, for example:

- Mentor 2019/11 and Mentor 2020/14 both using extracts of the feedback-on-feedback meetings between them and myself to illustrate mentoring talk in this context
- Mentor 2020/06 using extracts of the reflection journal she kept throughout the process
- Several mentors (e.g. 2018/09, 2018/14, 2019/06, 2019/07, 2020/05) using Conversation Analysis techniques to examine largely oral, but also written interactions for politeness strategies and evidence of the relationship between mentor and mentee.

4.4.3 Input of academic concepts

One of the major themes that has emerged from this research (further explored in Chapter 6) has been the tension between mentors giving pedagogical help or advice and encouraging reflection in their mentees. This same tension was also an important theme in developing the mentoring programme. The mentors were all teachers with developed beliefs of effective teaching based on practical experience and who had all been observed and had feedback on their lessons in the past, arguably undergoing an ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975) that would give them a solid basis for developing their own style of mentoring. In the same way that I hoped they would encourage their mentees to develop in an autonomous, reflective manner, I also hoped that they would be able to follow this path and develop their mentoring based on a cycle of experience, data led reflection and further experimentation.

However, it is well documented (e.g. Ambrosetti, 2014) that the knowledge of teaching or mentoring developed from personal experience is often implicit and difficult to articulate effectively and that blind spots occur where mentors are not aware of helpful practices that exist. In these cases, formal input can support development and provide helpful guidelines without being prescriptive.

My aim was to provide thought provoking material which would give mentors a theoretical basis for reflection which would work in tandem with the practical experience of mentoring, allowing them to assimilate and accommodate both theory and practice. There were three ways in which the theoretical input was introduced into the programme and these were adjusted over the five-year period and met with different levels of success. These will be discussed in turn.

TED module input

The Mentoring Programme arose from the TED module and the input in this has always been primary. The lecture schedule was one two-hour lecture a week and four of these (of a total
of ten weeks) had direct relevance to the Mentoring Programme. These (as can be seen below) were:

- Week 1 - Introduction and mentoring
- Week 3 - Observation and peer observation
- Week 4 - Giving oral feedback
- Week 5 - Giving written feedback
- Week 6 - Reflection
- Week 7 - Initial teacher training/ PreSETT
- Week 8 - INSET and CPD
- Week 9 - Online teacher education
- Week 10 - Presentations

These lectures were of an academic nature, including an exploration of the literature in the area, but were also interactive and worked to include and work with experience and data from the programme and to support it. For example, the session on ‘Giving oral feedback’ was timed to be in the same week that the mentors were scheduled to do this, and the ‘Giving written feedback’ session included a critical examination of the feedback that they had written that week in the light of the input given.

**Online training**

Whilst the TED lectures were important input, I felt that I would like to offer further support in the form of input to the mentors, and the most obvious way in which to do this was to
make online materials that would be available to them on demand. My rationale for this was that, with limited time available for input within the TED module, more structured input could be provided online (Salmon, 2013). I had previously done research into the development of online, video-based training materials for teachers (see www.elt-training.com for examples of this) and I see pedagogical advantages in this form of input (Gakonga, 2013). To my knowledge, there is very little mentor training material of this kind available on the internet and where there is, e.g. www.mentormodules.com it is based on role-played scenarios. Whilst this may have merit, I feel that examples of authentic practice are both motivating and helpful and my aim was to use the interactional data that I collected to inform and illustrate training material that I subsequently produced. A summary of the development of materials was as follows:

- Year 1 (2016) No online materials
- Year 2 (2017) Three training units developed with Storyline and hosted on Moodle
- Year 3 (2018) Online course developed with 10 units (one per week) hosted on LearnWorlds
- Year 4 (2019) Further development of online course with week-by-week drip feed
- Year 5 (2020) Repeated use of online course from year 4

**Storyline modules**

In the second year of the programme, I used Camtasia to make screencast videos which included recordings and transcripts of mentor/mentee interaction and embedded these into three larger units which also included interactive quiz elements and links to further reading, made using Articulate Storyline 2.

These focused on the three main areas that mentors had faced in the first year, namely a dominance in the talk by the mentors, a difficulty in listening to their mentees which resulted in frequent ‘bypassing’ (Bliss et al., 1996) and a realisation on my part that improving their awareness of their questioning techniques may help in both of these areas. An example unit can be accessed in Appendix 2.

These first online units were hosted on the TED Moodle site as SCORN packages and an example can be seen from the screenshots below with an introduction and overview.
Screenshot 4.6 Introduction to Unit 1 online content

..followed in this case, by an extract of mentor/mentee interaction from the first year of the programme. This was divided into four sections of the original audio recording supported with a visual overlay of the talk to ensure easy comprehension (especially where the audio quality was not totally clear). Each of these was around a minute in duration.

Screenshot 4.7 Mentor extract from online materials

After listening to each section, mentors were given a question to reflect on and then analysis from the tutor on the topic. This is shown in the screenshots below.
The process was then repeated for the other three sections of the extract (an example of the second is shown below).
Finally, reflective questions were given and suggested reading (see screenshots below).

As mentioned in Section 4.3, this unit can be viewed online. See Appendix 2.

The other two units followed a similar construction but varying forms of interaction including quizzes were embedded.

I hoped that these would be useful and popular, given the amount of work that they took to construct, and the mentors who elected to use them were complimentary: However, there was very little access of the materials. The following chart shows the time spent on each unit by the 20 mentors in that year (rounded to the nearest minute).

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<td>2017/20</td>
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Table 4.11 Time spent on online materials by mentors in 2017

**Total access:**
- **Unit 1** = 12 mentors (168 mins)
- **Unit 2** = 9 mentors (123 mins)
- **Unit 3** = 6 mentors (140 mins)
As can be seen, 7 of the 20 mentors did not access the units at all and numbers of mentors who accessed them declined from unit to unit (although time spent on them was surprisingly stable on average). Some of this may be attributable to difficulty of access as I am aware that the software I used (Articulate Storyline) which incorporates Flash, is blocked as a pop-up in some browsers. However, I gave online instructions for this eventuality and I can only assume that the mentors would have asked me for help if they deemed it worthwhile. This was disappointing, but I was aware that I had not integrated the online modules in a manner that would motivate their use and decided to continue with this approach but to develop it further in the third year.

**LearnWorlds course**

Although there had been little uptake for the online materials in the second year, I felt that this could be improved if the input material was organised on a week-by-week basis with information that was germane to each stage of the programme (Smith, 2014). I built this on a LearnWorlds platform, which had the advantages of a linear approach, drip feed capability, a more professional appearance and an ease of construction of units. This material is available to view – see Appendix 2

Again, I used Camtasia to make the videos, and set it up to ‘drip-feed’ to the mentors with a reminder email automatically sent to them each week. I saw a potential further benefit of this that the mentors would have weekly reminders of the stage of the programme and what was expected of them that week and this also served as an online noticeboard for observation timetables, sign-ups for feedback sessions with me and other meetings. An example of the email messages sent is shown below:

*Screenshot 4.12 Example of weekly email sent to mentors*
The weekly units followed a similar pattern to the units I had developed in 2017, but began with a ‘Dates for your diary’ reminder page:

![Screenshot 4.13 Online training weekly reminders](image)

This was followed by a short video on the topic for the week. I hosted these and as such aimed to have a personal appeal that I hoped would be motivational. The videos are deliberately short, ranging from two minutes to ten minutes long (Caulfield, 2011) and informal and chatty in style, refraining mainly from academic reference, but leading into the topic of each week. These topics were suggested from my own reading and from the data collected in the first two years of the programme to be those which would be particularly useful to novice mentors and were as follows:

1. What makes a good mentor?
2. Three aspects of mentoring (emotional support, technical support, support with reflection)
3. Beliefs and practices as a mentor
4. Balance of talk
5. Written feedback
6. Scaffolding learning
7. Questions in feedback
8. Politeness theory and feedback
9. Mentor identity
10. Stimulated recall
I then included an extract of mentor interaction data from 2016 or 2017, as a video with reflective questions. These extracts were from a range of data sources including support with planning meetings, oral and written feedback and feedback on feedback meetings with me. It should be noted that all data was anonymised as much as possible (voices would be recognisable, but no names were used) and specific permission was obtained from any mentors and mentees whose data was used in this way.

Finally, reading suggestions were included. I originally included two papers each week, one of which I dubbed ‘essential’ and one ‘recommended’. However, there was confusion over the purpose of the reading and whether it was essential for class. I therefore reduced the load to a single paper a week with extra reading included in a separate section of the
platform. I aimed to include papers that I have found inspiring arranged to further the weekly theme. These often describe mentors who have reflected in a similar way to that of the programme (e.g. Stanulis, 1998, Orland-Barack and Rachamim, 2009) either through self-study or through training programmes.

In building these materials, I was concerned that completing them would be too great an expectation of the mentors. However, the engagement this third year was much more encouraging with 14 of the 15 mentors accessing at least some of the units. Whilst this was not universal, (the range was 0-10 units accessed), the mean was a healthy 7 units of the 10 weekly units available.

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In 2019, the MA TESOL timetable was changed, with Term 2 now only having eight weeks. I used much of the same material but reformulated the course to be an introduction plus eight videos. This time, 11 of 13 MA mentors accessed the materials, and although the mean was only 5 units, this was seen to be positive as there were fewer units.

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Table 4.18 Online units accessed in 2019 by 13 mentors

In the final year of the programme, due to the larger numbers of mentees and the increased workload for the mentors, whilst I provided access to the online units, and the mentors received weekly email reminders as each unit opened, I put little emphasis on them and as a likely consequence (Caulfield, 2011; Smith, 2014) numbers accessing them fell. In this year, three of the 13 mentors never accessed the materials and the average number of units accessed fell to under three.

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<th>Units accessed (out of 9)</th>
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Table 4.19 Online units accessed in 2020 by 14 mentors
At the end of the 2020 iteration, I asked mentors for their feedback on the online units and nine of them replied. Overall, they were positive about the materials, and whilst their comments were obviously influenced by their good relationship with me, many rang true.

Comments included:

1. I used the website frequently to access information about mentoring as that was the focus for my assignment.
2. I found the online training on mentoring very easy to follow since the presentation was very clear and comprehensive.
3. The sessions are interactive, well arranged, specific, well researched about and easy to understand.

Anonymous mentor feedback on programme 2020

There were several reasons mentors stated for not accessing the site more. An obvious one, mentioned explicitly by four of the mentors and more obliquely by three others, was time. The MA is a busy year and anything which is not compulsory or seen to have immediate relevance is unlikely to be completed. Others felt that it was unnecessary:

**Extract 1**

1. After the first mentoring week I decided that I am not doing this for my assignments so I chose to spend more time on topics which I was going to work on them for my assignment.

**Extract 2**

1. One reason for not accessing it regularly were the lectures and reading that I was already attending and reading. I often thought that I was managing fine with that and always postponed it for a later date.

Anonymous mentor exit feedback 2020

Perhaps less of an expected outcome was that several of the mentors articulated the need for interaction in the course.

1. Part of the reason is the lack of interaction of using the Mentoring Programme. I mean, you do not interact what you learnt from that platform with people from the same course that you take.

Anonymous mentor exit feedback 2019

The importance of this in online education is well documented (e.g. Salmon, 2013) but there is also research evidence that learners may not seek this:

Despite the high degree of rhetoric from constructivist and feminist educational theorists of the value of interaction in creating interdependence in the learning sequence (Kirkup and von Prummer, 1990; Litzinger, Carr and Marra, 1997), there is also evidence that many students deliberately choose learning programs that allow them to minimize the amount of student-teacher and student-student interaction required (May, 2003; Kramarae, 2003).
My own experience with pre-service teachers accessing video-based online courses independently has undoubtedly influenced my opinions and I found it both surprising and interesting that in a situation where there was already a preponderance of face-to-face interaction (in the TED lectures, the weekly reflection group, the feedback on feedback) that mentors still sought interaction in the supporting online materials.

4.4.4 Abstraction of the concrete -Informal collaboration and formal assessment

I have considered the experiential and theoretical aspects of the programme; the concrete mentoring experience and the academic input. In this final section, I want to address the manner in which these were linked; the ways that mentors were encouraged to reflect on and to theorise their practice, both in more informal ways with their peers and also more formally in the written assignment. Wright and Bolitho (2007, p. 34) state that ‘the bedrock of a training course is the group of people who experience the course together’ and this was certainly true of this programme where group cohesion was generally very high. Informal reflection was trialled in three ways with varied success; mid course feedback on feedback meetings, a WhatsApp group and weekly group discussion meetings (the Monday meetings). I will discuss these first before considering the more formal reflection evidenced in the assignments.

*Feedback on Feedback meetings*

The mainstay of the dialogic, collaborative reflection on the programme was through the feedback-on-feedback (F-on-F) meetings. These were scheduled in the middle of the term after the first round of mentoring and feedback and were widely appreciated by the mentors. My initial hope had been that I would be able to encourage mentors to support each other through a critical friend pairing (Farrell, 2001) and in the pilot year, I asked mentors to attend the feedback-on-feedback meetings in pairs, hoping that this would encourage such a relationship between them. However, this was not as productive as I had hoped as the interactions in this meeting were almost exclusively between individual mentors and myself and not between the two mentors. I also felt that in many cases, one of the mentors in the pair would dominate the meeting and for both of these reasons, decided that it would be more effective to have individual meetings in subsequent years. This was more successful and allowed mentors to express a wider range of reflective thoughts although was more time consuming for the tutor.
Collaboration was mentioned by some mentors with feedback from one in 2017 suggesting a more collaborative approach between peers:

1. I think next time it could be a good idea that mentors have one or two instances to engage in
dialogical reflection of their own performances as mentors. Besides, one person’s discoveries
might show the others a different perspective on their own self-analysis. And ideally, this could
help to establish a network for the future.

Exit feedback, Mentor 2017/14

However, attempts to encourage this were not successful, perhaps due to time constraints in what is an intensive year for participants. However, one exit feedback conversation from 2018, did seem to indicate that the programme was having the desired effect of providing a focus for reflection and support through a shared experience:

1. Jo 2018/02 So those kind of discussions were outside of the Monday group? Or in.. Okay
2. Outside of the Monday group we would still talk... ‘What did you write?’ you know
3. ‘what did you think about this?’ you know I would speak to (2018/09), ‘should I put
4. a smiley face, do you think?’
5. 2018/14 we talked in the PG hub, she was showing us written feedback, my God ‘was it being
6. too formal? What do you think?’ and we talked to each other and we found oh my
7. God – no- we should approach it this way or that way so this is something out of the
8. usual schedule but it helped us.. I mean we talk to each other. This mentoring, you
9. know thinking cap that we had on ourselves, it was great
10. Jo I’m delighted that’s really nice but it’s been... You know part of your ..lives (laughs)
11. 2018/02 We are like Jo’s army. You know Dumbledore’s Army? (Loud laughter) we’re protected
12. by each other
13. Jo That’s so nice
14. 2018/02 Your find some of the people on the MA probably don’t know each other as well as
15. they think that in your group we now do because I’m saying it’s true, I’m not saying
16. it to make you happy I can actually identify.. (Loud laughter) people in the MA that...
17. I honestly don’t know but I know were in the same class but I don’t know them at all.

Exit feedback- Mentor 2018/02 and 2018/14

The two mentors in this discussion began by commenting that they had had ongoing conversations about the programme outside of class or the Monday meetings and collaborated to help each other and support their development (lines 2-9). This helped them to maintain a ‘mentoring thinking cap’ (line 9) that they appreciated. This was seen to be useful both from a pedagogic point of view but also for emotional support with Mentor 2018/02 suggesting that they were ‘Jo’s Army’, like ‘Dumbledore’s Army’, (line 11) referencing the organisation that Harry Potter instigated at Hogwarts in JK Rowling’s famous wizarding world and suggesting that the mentoring programme had been a supportive group within the main MA structure.

The content and approach of the F-on-F meetings was also a focus for change over time and with my own reflection on the process. In the first year, I aimed to listen to the audio
recordings of feedback meetings of all of the mentors before meeting them but this, it quickly became evident, was not tenable due to the workload involved and over the next three years, I experimented with various options including focusing only on their written feedback or going into the feedback session ‘blind’ without listening to the oral feedback first. However, it was through Baecher and McCormack’s (2015) work on stimulated recall that I developed a system which involved asking mentors to come identify a two-minute extract of their feedback and bring it to the meeting. They were then able to explain why they had chosen this extract, we listened together and discussed it. This was not always successful as the mentors often came to the meeting without having identified an extract, but it offers a method of feedback which is rigorous and data led but also realistic in terms of tutor time.

**WhatsApp reflection group**

In the first year of the project, it became clear that what seemed a straightforward process to me included considerable complexity in the timetable and the changing week-to-week demands, and as a support for this, I introduced a mentor WhatsApp group in 2017. In that year, it was reasonably active, with 273 posts in a two-month period. This served a purpose of ease of communication about practical matters, both from me to the mentors and also for sharing practical information between themselves. Examples of these exchanges can be seen below:

![Screenshot 4.20 WhatsApp welcome message and example interactions](image)
My hope was that tool would also served as a forum for shared reflections. Whilst these were, due to the nature of the medium, reasonably short, the immediacy of the messaging seemed to encourage sharing of ideas and reflection. These exchanges were usually initiated by me but were enthusiastically taken up by the mentors. An example exchange is shown below and illustrates this commitment to reflection on their practice and also the manner in which they listened to each other and found this group supportive:

*Screenshot 4.21 WhatsApp interactions showing in-group support*
This was well used in the first stage of the course during and after the first round of mentoring. Perhaps inevitably, this was a medium that suited some more than others, with 5 of the 20 mentors that year never contributing. Of those who did, the average number of posts was 11 with a range from only one initial acknowledgement of joining the group to four others who contributed over 20 posts each. There were fewer interactions in the second part of the programme and the platform performed more of a functional/ information sharing purpose at this point. At the end of this year, despite the uneven take-up, I felt that the group was useful and I set up the same kind of group in the following year (2018). This was never used however, largely, I feel, because its function had been replaced by the face-to-face group that was instigated in that year.

**Monday meetings – the cake and chat meetings.**

There are many examples in the literature of mentor development and support groups (e.g. Kindle and Schmidt, 2013) and in my final interviews with the participants in the 2017 cycle, many expressed interest in a regular reflection meeting. I was aware that there was a careful balance to be achieved in not overloading the mentors but I felt that some regular face to face contact might be emotionally supportive and beneficial in a reflective sense, providing a space in which ideas about mentoring could be discussed. I introduced weekly meetings in the next round of the programme in 2018 and continued through 2019 and 2020. The main purpose was for a more open forum for reflection and I did not impose any agenda on these meetings. They were always optional and were timed for the hour before the TED lectures to make them convenient to attend although the timing (a 9am start) may have been part of the reason for lower numbers. I also made a point of bringing homemade cake to these sessions to entice the mentors to attend and this was commented on positively by many of them. Whilst this is a small point, I feel that the rapport that was built in this group and between the mentors and myself was influenced in a positive way by this concrete (edible) statement of a caring approach from the tutor. Attendance varied but was generally a stable group of about 50% of the cohort. These meetings enabled mentors to air questions about each stage of the process and often provoked lively discussions, although some participants were always more vocal than others. For at least one participant, they were seen as the foundation of the training that she received through the programme, despite the input from TED and the online materials:
Findings from both assignments and feedback on the programme seem to indicate that where there is a choice to participate in optional reflection groups such as the WhatsApp group and the weekly discussion, those who choose to attend and participate find them helpful but that a 50% uptake on this is perhaps a reasonable expectation.

**Formal assessment**

A major part of the Mentoring Programme was the potential for mentors to use their data as a basis for their final TED assignment. This was optional and it was made clear to the participants that it was not the quality of their mentoring (however that was evaluated) that was the basis for the mark they would receive, but, as with any MA assignment in our department, their comprehension, critical analysis and use of appropriate literature to support their arguments, that would be the basis for their grade. In other words, the perceived success or failure of the mentoring relationship was irrelevant, and assessment was based on the quality of the reflection on the process.

In the pilot year of the project (2016), I added a question on feedback to the existing five possible assignment options for TED:

6. What considerations need to be taken into account when giving developmental feedback? Based on your reading AND on data from an experience you have had of providing EITHER written OR spoken feedback to other teachers, reflect on the factors that may make the feedback process successful and on your own developmental journey as a mentor or teacher educator.

In the same year, I amended one of the possible TED assignment questions (Q.4) to include the Mentoring Programme (the addition is marked in red below)

4. A supervisor or a mentor attempts to monitor and improve the quality of teaching done by trainees or other teachers in a given educational situation. Discuss the theoretical and practical issues involved in this role AND either:

   Based on a context known to you, draw up practical guidelines to be used in the evaluation of the teaching performance of pre-service trainees on a 6-week teaching practice in secondary schools. Give details of at least two of the instruments you might use. For the purposes of this question, you may assume that there are school-based mentors as well as

*Better Together. Jo Gakonga*
supervisors from the training institution or college or that the supervisor carries the responsibility alone.

or:
Outline the ways in which you think responsibility for mentoring junior members of teaching staff could most effectively be exercised by a mentor/senior colleague in an institution of your choice. Give details of at least two instruments which could be used.

or:
Using your own experience of mentoring and drawing on data you have collected, reflect on issues that have been raised in this process.

The following year, feeling more confident about the use and importance of the programme, I re-wrote this question to simplify it and to ensure that it was related specifically to the mentoring done during the module.

4. Discuss the theoretical and practical issues involved in the role of a mentor. Using your own experience of mentoring inexperienced MA teachers in their peer teaching project and drawing on data you collected during this programme, reflect on issues that arose.

Choosing to write the final assignment using the data from the Mentoring Programme proved to be both popular and successful with high merit or distinction level marks being common although it should be noted that the participants were often Hornby scholars and the academic potential was high in the group. The table below shows the number of students who took the option to answer a question using their data.

Numbers who did the assignment using their mentoring experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Assignments done</th>
<th>Total TED</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that numbers of mentors are often higher than number of TED participants as PhD students and other MA students were also used as mentors.

Table 4.22 TED assignments completed on the mentoring programme

In 2020, I asked mentors a specific feedback question about their reasons for deciding on their assignment question. The data set is small (n=9) of whom 3 did not do a question on mentoring but the data upholds further anecdotal evidence from previous years. The reasons given for not doing so were threefold:
One reason was that they had a particular interest in another option:

1. I went for the first choice [developing a teacher education programme] because I found it to be very practical and useful for my context and myself. I saw it as an opportunity for me to share my ideal project or at least the idea of it or a part of it with you and Steve and get feedback and recommendations on what I was really passionate about and wanted to do in the future.

Mentor 2020/13

1. I didn't choose the question 4 or 6 for my assignment. Instead, I chose question 2 (reflective practice). The main reason was that I was interested in the book Reflective Practice in English Language Teaching by Steve Mann and Steve Walsh, which provides a fair combination of theories and empirical data (in my opinion).

Mentor 2020/05

A second reason was that the topic was not relevant to their context:

1. I didn’t do the assignment of mentoring because the biggest problem in my context is to motivate teachers to start with their professional development. Teachers in Peru, especially teachers who have many years of teaching experience pay little attention to the supervisor’s advice. I think priority number one is to encourage teachers to keep improving in their practice, create awareness of the importance of progressing in their profession.

Mentor 2020/09

And a third was that the experience that they had as a mentor was less than satisfactory:

1. Well, I didn’t go for an assignment related to the mentoring because I was a little disillusioned about the mentoring experience that we had at uni. The student teachers that I was particularly working with were not very much motivated

Mentor 20202/13

Those who did do the assignment found it to be useful for two main reasons. Firstly, there were some honest admissions that it was ‘easier’ to write an assignment with ‘concrete data’ and as time had already been invested and a desire to take advantage of that (Mentors 2020/06 and 2020/11). Secondly, mentors were often inspired by mentoring and wanted to reflect more deeply and meaningfully on it. Mentors used words like ‘excited’ and ‘interested’ and expressed a desire to explore the literature more thoroughly. There was also evidence that the process of writing the assignment was beneficial in allowing a better level of reflection on mentor practice.
It is this second reason that I feel is important, and whilst the assignment being optional was beneficial, there was abundant evidence in the assignments of high levels of critical reflection on the process where mentors were given the motivation to explore the process more thoroughly.

4.5 Summary
In this chapter, I have shown both the perception and impact of the mentoring programme and how it developed over time as an answer to the first of my research questions:

**How can a near peer mentoring programme be designed and run in an MA TESOL programme to develop an awareness of mentoring practice for in-service teachers?**

- What is the nature of the participants’ experience on the programme?

In answer to this, an initial chronological summary was followed by a thematic analysis including perceptions of all stakeholders and a discussion of three notable aspects of the programme.

In the next two chapters, I will continue with data analysis to answer my two further research questions. In Chapter 5, I consider the interaction between mentors and mentees using a case study approach of a mentoring relationship that was reported as successful by both participants, and one in which there were challenges to address ‘What is the nature of the interaction between the participants?’ I then continue in Chapter 6 to explore the wider data set with a view to considering ‘What notable issues arise between the participants?’.
Chapter 5

5. Analysis 2: Two case studies

5.1. Introduction

In the thesis to this point, the focus has been on the programme itself and its development. This was achieved through my own reflections on the course and feedback from the stakeholders as described in Chapter 4. However, my interest was also to investigate the interactions between mentors and mentees and issues that arose on the programme in order to base changes on this data. In the literature, many studies consider only the perceptions of mentors or mentees (e.g., Hennissen et al, 2011) and as such offer little concrete guidance to novice mentors. However, linguistic analysis of interaction in teacher education is also well established with scholars taking the approach of corpus analysis (Farr, 2010) and conversation analysis (Bieler, 2010; Copland, 2012; Kindle and Schmidt, 2013) to investigate both successful (e.g. Feiman-Nemser 2001) and less successful (e.g. Hobson and Malderez, 2013, Yuan,2016 Orland-Barack and Rachamim, 2009) mentoring relationships.

Whilst mentoring practice is impossible to atomise, novices in my context have found analysis of explicit examples of practice enlightening. I hoped that offering an examination of interaction patterns which appear to be more or less successful in a mentoring environment would potentially benefit mentors and developers of mentor training programmes. For details of how the data was analysed, see Methodology, Section 3.3.2.

5.2 How and why these studies were chosen

The validity of case study has been discussed in Chapter 3 but this is an opportune moment to describe why these two particular cases were chosen. In conversations with fellow PhD students, it has become obvious that I have been in a fortunate position for a researcher of not finding difficulty in collecting data. The challenges I have faced have indeed been of a diametrically opposed nature and making a selection of only two cases from over 70 was not a simple task. Although the numbers of cases were high, these spanned a five year period and, whilst some mentors became more enthused and involved in the programme than others, I would maintain that I had close personal relationships with all of them. This was fostered by initial interviews, teaching them in the TED module (as well as contact with them in other modules), our weekly mentor meetings, mid-course feedback on feedback meetings, end-of-programme interviews and listening to their recordings. The result of this close and
constant contact was that I had a ‘finger on the pulse’ of the relationships that the mentors were forming with their mentors and had a good awareness of the issues that were arising.

Some decisions excluded particular subsections of the data. I made the decision, for example, not to use any of the mentors from the first year’s data as case studies as this was considered to be a ‘pilot’ study whilst the structure of the programme was developed and was therefore perhaps less representative. I also excluded the mentors from 2020 as recorded interaction data was not collected from this final cohort. There were a number of mentors where, despite my best efforts at collection, I did not have a full set of data and mentors who had not written their assignments on the mentoring programme were also excluded as this was seen to be an important insight into the mentor’s reflections and perceptions. These exclusions brought the potential number of case study candidates to a more manageable 24.

Within these cases, several were indicative of interest for deeper analysis. These included but were not limited to the following:

- **Mentor 2018/05** and **Mentor 2019/05** where the mentor and mentee shared a first language (Mandarin Chinese) and explored the effects that use of L1 or L2 had on their relationship.
- **Mentor 2018/10** who had two mentees, one being an easy, successful and productive relationship whilst the other required a considerably greater effort to develop rapport.
- **Mentor 2017/09** whose mentee’s beliefs about some principles of teaching significantly differed to her own and whose data shows how she negotiated this.
- **Mentor 2017/15** whose detailed self-evaluation laid bare the personal challenges she faced in raising challenging points of feedback with her mentee in a particularly reflective manner.

Insights and data from these cases and others are integrated into the wider discussion in Chapter 6 but my decision for this chapter was to use two case studies which exemplified opposing ends of the spectrum of perceived success of the process. In the first case, **Mentor 2017/12**, who I will call Magdalena (both case study participants have been given pseudonyms), the mentoring experience was purported by both mentor and mentee to have been successful and the data showed a warm, cooperative relationship evidencing scaffolded and co-constructed reflection and lesson support. The second, **Mentor 2019/10** who I will call Violet, was a case which was reported by the mentor as more difficult and in which the data showed miscommunication, challenges with building rapport and issues in scaffolding support for the mentees. In order to attempt an element of comparability, both of these
mentors were Hornby scholars (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2) and neither had had previous mentoring experience.

My choice of ‘plus’ and ‘minus’ here may be seen to imply the existence of a ‘Best Practice’ for mentoring, but as I have argued previously (See Chapter 3) in agreement with other scholars (Brondyk and Searby, 2013; Prabhu, 1990) this is a problematic stance. Whilst I have personal beliefs about strategies which are more desirable in a mentoring relationship and would agree with educators such as Gore and Zeichner (1991) that it is disingenuous to deny this, it is difficult to show empirically that these have a more positive outcome on the mentee’s performance or on their learners’ progress (the ultimate goal of any teacher education intervention). However, my choices were made on the basis of the reports of the mentors as to the success (plus) and challenges (minus) of the relationships and it is hoped that a closer examination of the interactions between the participants can provide insight into the strategies which resulted in what was perceived to be a successful relationship on one hand and more challenging one on the other. I also hope that this may act as awareness raising tools for novice mentors.

5.3 Case Study 1-A successful relationship

Finding a positive example of a mentoring partnership was not difficult. The vast majority of the mentors on all five years of the programme formed good relationships with their mentees and reported the experience to have been useful and enjoyable. In many cases, mentors also wrote assignments with insightful reflections evidencing their learning. This particular case from 2017 was chosen, however, because the evidence of a fulfilling relationship was particularly strong and the mentor in question had had no previous experience of supporting another teacher in their development. In this year, unlike the other years in which I gathered data, there was a relatively large cohort in the TED module and lower numbers in the pre-experience group, meaning that each mentor was responsible for only one mentee. Whilst it is possible that this one to one relationship may have had a contributing effect to the positive outcomes that will be described, there is ample evidence in data from other years of supportive and successful relationships when mentors had two mentees.

Magdalena is a teacher who had ten years’ teaching experience before beginning the MA in a range of contexts including public and private schools. She is an outgoing and pro-active individual and although, as stated, she had had no previous experience of mentoring, she had ambitions to move into teacher education in the future and saw this as an opportunity
to gain experience and insight into the process. Her East-Asian mentee Hae-Won, had previously only taught young learners in an informal manner and the Professional Practice module was her first experience of teaching a planned class to a group.

There is a significant amount of evidence that Magdalena took the role seriously. In her talks with me and her written reflections, she indicates that she was nervous about the responsibility that she perceived the role entailed, stating in our mid-programme meeting:

1. I was a little bit worried actually, with all these experience, because it’s the first time. I don’t have experience of being a mentor or a coordinator or something similar. And then, but I enjoyed it. Yeah. Because especially because I was there for her.

Magdalena F-on-F meeting 2017

This concern led her to prepare for the role and in her final assignment she states:

1. As this is a very important role of the mentor, I dedicated myself to read more about delivering feedback, and tried to analyse the most appropriate techniques to be used for this action.

Magdalena assignment 2017

There is also good evidence that even where Magdalena felt that the relationship was going well, she was aware of her practice and was reflecting on how she could change it.

1. I think I will, just I should, for the next time just do the same thing. Get prepared, have some questions to guide me through throughout the oral feedback as well, but be more aware that adaptation will be necessary as well. So maybe now I know, I know that she can make good considerations and reflection. So I know that she can do it. So I don’t have to have so many questions to guide her through. So maybe next time, I will try to pay more attention to what she’s saying. And then think better about the questions that I make at that time. Because I just when I saw that she was answering some of the questions already, I felt so nervous about what I will do next, that I kind of got nervous. Yeah.

Magdalena F-on-F meeting 2017

In this extract from our mid-course feedback meeting, she shows that she has taken note both of her mentee’s capacity ‘now I know, I know that she can make good considerations and reflection. So I know that she can do it’ (line 4) the reasons for limitations she perceived in her own practice ‘when I saw that she was answering some of the questions already, I felt so nervous about what I will do next,’ (line 7-8) and how she planned to adjust her practice in the second round by listening carefully to Hae Won and being more flexible in adapting her prepared questions to the mentee’s needs.

Dissecting a relationship to understand how it is constructed is never completely possible. Recorded data from all four formal meetings between them were examined (mentor meeting 1 and 2 and feedback meeting 1 and 2) as well as data from the mid-course and post
course reflection meetings between Magdalena and myself and her final assignment for the module, reflecting on her experience as a mentor. However, Magdalena and Hae-Won had unrecorded interactions outside the mentoring and feedback meetings and the recordings show that more sensitive matters were sometimes avoided where the meeting was recorded:

1 M  Yes. Like you mentioned last time. I remember you mentioned one student who came
2  with a different topic. Not different topic, but with a strong ideas, opinions, and then
3  you didn’t know what to do. And you said just...
4 HW  Maybe we can talk about this student after observation
5 M  Okay. Sure. As you wish (conspiratorial laughter)

Magdalena First oral feedback 2017

In addition to this, only audio recordings were made, precluding an examination of body language. With these caveats, however, analysis of the data during their meetings, can begin to show the moves made by the mentor which worked to effect a successful partnership. These moves were categorised into the three areas outlined in the Literature Review (Sections 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4). As was shown there, these areas are impossible to separate completely with emotional support informing and supporting both other areas and there being a tension between pedagogic support and support with reflection, necessitating striking a balance peculiar to the context. However, categorising interactions into these three areas gives a basis for an analysis of the relationship. They are as follows:

- **Emotional support** - the manner in which rapport was developed with the use of confirmatory talk (Kurtoglu-Hooton, 2008), shared understandings and humour
- **Support with reflection** - the way in which talk time was shared, with Magdalena, being an active listener and allowing space for her mentee to construct her thoughts.
- **Pedagogic support** - how issues were raised by the mentor in a manner which reduced potential tension and face threat (Spencer-Oatey, 2002) and how focusing and questioning techniques as well as stimulated recall were used in this regard.

These will be addressed in what follows in further detail.

5.3.1 Emotional support - Developing Rapport

As has been noted, (Section 4.4.1) the two cohorts on the MA TESOL tend to remain relatively separate and so, despite being on the same course from its October beginning and sharing several modules, Magdalena and Hae-Won had not had any direct contact with each other at the beginning of the programme in January. By the end of the second term, however, they had formed a close relationship which included personal elements such as food that they
had prepared for each other, shared birthday celebrations and the playful use of salutations in Portuguese, Magdalena’s first language in email communication. Examples which give a flavour of the relationship that grew are shown below:

From the email sent from Magdalena with the first written feedback (week 4)

Dear Hae Won…. Friendly regards, Magdalena

From the email sent from Magdalena with the second written feedback (week 9)

Hi Darling!….. See you around! Best, Magdalena

From the email sent from Hae Won to Magdalena with feedback on the programme (week 10)

Querida Magdalena… Con Carinho, Hae Won

And in reply to this (week 10)

Hae Won, sua linda! You should definitely try to learn more Portuguese hehehe. Muito obrigado!…Con carinho, Magdalena

This rapport was acknowledged by both to have been an important part of their relationship, with Hae Won remarking upon the importance to her of the ‘emotional connection and encouragement’ that they had had.

There were many ways in which rapport was developed in the discourse between Magdalena and Hae-Won. The recordings show frequent shared laughter and ‘phonetic empathy’ (Cole, 2019, p. 18) in matched, enthusiastic tones, as well as frequent instances of shared knowledge and understanding about the programme. Further analysis of the interactions shows the ways in which rapport is established using empathy, hedging and praise.

**Empathy**

Nguyen, (2017) highlights the importance of an empathetic approach to mentoring and Magdalena can frequently be seen identifying with her mentee and the situation. This manifests in two ways. The first is to give reassurance by validating her decisions or reactions, for example in the first feedback meeting, when Hae-Won admits to having been nervous, Magdalena agrees that she would have felt the same in this situation (’Definitely, I would be as well’). Empathy is also used to act as a hedging device as the following two examples illustrate:

*Extract 1 – Oral feedback 1*

1. *I would praise them, so that’s fine. But let’s be careful with choice.*

*Extract 2 – Oral feedback 2*
2 Yeah. Because you have to be in charge. I mean, we teachers have to be in charge, even though we want the students to take part.

Magdalena oral feedback 2017

In the first instance, empathy takes the form of a personal validation of the action ‘I would praise them’ (line 1) and is used as an adjunct to the suggestion that follows in a paired comment feedback pattern. The second example, is from an interaction later in the programme and here, the mentee is included in the wider teaching profession ‘we teachers’ (line 2) a ploy which had been discussed in the mentor training module and which Magdalena later stated was a deliberate attempt to change her speech to avoid a second person pronoun ‘you’. Whilst stating that this had been meant in a general manner, she feared it may be construed as more accusatory and adjusted her language accordingly ‘you have to be in charge, I mean we teachers have to be in charge’ (my emphasis) line 2.

Hedging

The use of hedging devices to soften face threatening speech acts is well documented in the literature (Fraser, 2010). Given the nature of feedback meetings, this is not unexpected and is common in the data of other mentors but it is notable in this pairing that hedging is not only used by the mentor but also by the mentee. As an indicative marker of this behaviour, the word ‘maybe’ can be seen to be used frequently by both parties to soften speech acts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instances of use of ‘maybe’</th>
<th>Magdalena</th>
<th>Hae Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring 1 (40 mins)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback 1 (35 mins)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring 2 (30 mins)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback 2 (35 mins)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Instances of ‘maybe’ in Magdalena and Hae Won’s data

Unsurprisingly, the use of ‘maybe’ as a politeness device is higher in both feedback events than in the mentoring sessions.

Magdalena hedges almost all of her comments, whether positive or negative and her stated insecurities about her mentoring may be at the heart of this. This example from the second oral feedback shows a number of examples:

1 I mentioned here [in the written feedback], we have to be careful not to overuse it. Yeah, like,
2 because it can also sound a little bit unnatural. I’m not saying that it was your case. It’s just for us to reflect.

Magdalena Second oral feedback 2017
Here, there are several examples of approximators (Fraser, 2010) such as ‘mentioned’, ‘a little bit’ and ‘just’ but also the use of inclusive pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’ and hesitations ‘yeah, like’. In addition to all of these, she uses the mitigation device (Caffi, 1999) of denying her own observation ‘I’m not saying that it was your case’ despite including it in her written feedback. This is an unusually extreme example from the data, and in other instances, Magdalena is more direct, but comments of a constructive nature are hedged in all examples. Whilst hedging language can have the effect of making communication less clear (Fraser, 2010) there is also value of this in building supportive mentoring relationships.

Use of praise.

Another common way in which mentors build rapport is in the use of praise, but there is significant research evidence that praise alone is not a useful feedback strategy (Hattie and Timperley, 2007) and that for it to be effective, it is necessary that it is specific. The initial impression from the data is that Magdalena is a supportive ally to Hae-Won in the interaction and this is expressed in explicit praise of her actions in class but also in agreement with her mentee’s comments. In order to examine support in the interaction, praise was differentiated from affirmation and for the purposes of this analysis, praise was defined as positive comments, specific to a behaviour that was seen as desirable. An example is shown here from feedback meeting 2 about the way in which the mentee worked with her co-teaching partner ‘That’s amazing because you managed to really finish what she was doing’. Affirmation, on the other hand, was defined as agreement with the mentee, whether this was in support of positive or negative comments that Hae-Won made about her lesson, e.g. ‘It’s clear. I agree with that’.

As is to be expected, instances of praise and affirmation are higher in feedback interactions, which have a more evaluative genre than lesson preparation meetings. In large measure, the affirmation consisted of supportive backchanneling (Thornbury and Slade, 2006) and this was particularly prevalent in feedback meeting 1, where 26 of Magdalena’s 73 turns are single word affirmations ‘perfect’/ ‘exactly’. Pitts and Harwood suggest that rapport ‘often requires a significant amount of verbal reassurance and repetition’ (Pitts and Harwood, 2015, p. 93) and this affirmation appeared to have a supportive function. However, Magdalena herself felt that this level of backchanneling signalled non-discriminatory listening and non-specific support. In her first feedback-on-feedback meeting with me, she said that she had been nervous as it had been the first time that she had ever given another teacher feedback and stated that she wanted to reduce this and make praise more explicit in the second round.
of mentoring. The amount of affirmation in the second oral feedback is under half that in the first and explicit praise was significantly increased. Praise was also more focused on the mentee’s performance in class in the second round of feedback. Considering the use of the word ‘good’ for example, it is used on 12 occasions, five in feedback meeting 1 and seven in feedback meeting 2. In the first, all but one of the examples refer to Hae-Won’s ability to reflect on her practice (‘good point’/ ‘good reflection’) whilst in the second, praise was more explicit to the lesson – (‘good job’/ ‘good strategy’/ ‘good voice tone’/ ‘good to check their understanding’).

A final point of interest in the praise that Magdalena gives is that although she is very positive in her evaluation, in most cases, this is modified with ‘I think’ used as a plausibility shield (Fraser, 2010):

no. that’s perfect. I think you are doing well. And
a lot already. And I think next class will be even
you made it memorable, I think they will remember it forever
very smart of you, I think, to adapt the lesson plan

This phrase functions as a politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and often as a softener for criticism. However, in this case, Magdalena uses it almost exclusively to modify praise, potentially making this less effective. Compare the use of ‘I think you are doing well’ with ‘you are doing well’ as an example. Magdalena initially felt a lack of confidence as a novice mentor as she notes in her final assignment ‘What a good mentoring practice would be was also pretty much unknown to me. Therefore, dealing with my own insecurity and doubts was also part of this experience’ and this may explain her reticence to offer even positive comments in an unhedged manner.

5.3.2 Support with reflection
The second aspect of Magdalena’s practice which was prevalent in the data and which served to build the successful and productive relationship that she had with her mentee was that she purposefully listened and encouraged shared talk, facilitating the development of her mentee’s ability to reflect. This can be seen in the balance of talk between them and in examples of Magdalena scaffolding Hae-Won’s understanding and working within her zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Golombek and Johnson, 2019).
**Balance of talk**

An aspect of the data which is striking and was unusual in the wider data is that the balance of talk is very even. In all four of the meetings, there is evidence of shared talk without domination by either party and the percentage of talk and average turn length is mirrored closely by both participants.

Table 1

**Balance of Talk and Turn Length**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M % talk</th>
<th>HW % talk</th>
<th>M turn length</th>
<th>HW turn length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring 1</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>26 words</td>
<td>28 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback 1</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>10 words</td>
<td>29 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring 2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>24 words</td>
<td>25 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback 2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32 words</td>
<td>35 words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.2 Percentage talk and turn length in mentoring and feedback interactions*

As an example from the table above, in the second mentor meeting, Magdalena’s turn length is an average of 24 words and Hae-Won’s is 25 words with total talk being equally divided at 50% each. The only interaction in which this was not the case was the first feedback meeting in which Magdalena’s percentage of the talk was lower (44%) and her average turn length only 10 words, in comparison to an average turn length of 29 words for her mentee. The reason for this was the prevalence of single word affirmations (‘perfectly’/ ‘exactly’) previously discussed. The evenness of the participation is noteworthy in comparison other mentors on this programme, who have often exhibited a tendency to dominate and where proportions of mentor talk are frequently 70% or even higher. This also accords with data from other studies e.g. Le and Vásquez (2011, p. 457) who report mentor talk of 60-68%. This was not accidental and Magdalena’s reflection in her final assignment shows that she was aware from the beginning of the programme of a need to curb her natural propensity to talk: ‘Mentor talk is the first issue to be reflected on. As I am very communicative, one of my main tasks was to balance my speaking and listening abilities’.

This was also reflected in our mid-term meeting, where she describes the restraint required to allow her mentee the space to speak and shows her awareness of the difficulty of articulating ideas which may sound disloyal (in this case to her co-teacher).
Although a novice mentor, Magdalena understood from her reading that a mentoring relationship should encourage reflection in the mentee but it was also apparent that she was making a positive effort to negotiate the challenges of maintaining an appropriate balance between this and more active support. In her final assignment, she states her reluctance to dispense advice at the expense of her mentee’s reflective development.

Her stated objectives were to elicit as much from her mentee as possible and it is perhaps a factor in the success of the relationship that Hae-Won had a strong self-awareness and thus, Magdalena was able to elicit the points she wished to raise. Magdalena acknowledges this in her assignment ‘Through reflection, the mentee could identify most of the points I had selected to be mentioned during the meetings, the positive and the ones to be improved as well.’ However, she was also aware of Schön’s edict that ‘professional practice has at least as much to do with finding the problem as with solving the problem found’ (Schön, 1983, p. 18) and understood that part of a mentor’s role is to raise awareness of practices that they see as less desirable - the critical part of being a critical friend. It is here in which a closer examination of moves is potentially helpful. This is an interesting area, involving, as it does, the element of face threat, especially for a novice mentor in a position where the relationship is near-peer. Magdalena stated that she ‘tried to be careful with the language used, eliciting ideas, using questions and modal verbs to make the suggestions.’

In the interactions recorded, there are very few instances of the mentor directly giving criticism, but there are two strategies that Magdalena uses to draw attention to the issues she wants Hae Won to reflect on. The first is a conversational move that could be likened to focusing in cooperative development (Edge, 1992) and coupled with this, a skilful use of questions to interrogate matters further. A second strategy employed was the use of video as stimulated recall to aid reflection (Baecher and McCormack, 2015).
In her reflections on the process, Magdalena states that she felt her job had been made easier because most of the issues she wished to raise with her mentee had already been noted and understood by her. It is noteworthy in the feedback data that most of the points discussed originate with Hae-Won, followed by Magdalena’s use of a focusing move (Edge, 1992) to organise the talk and allow greater depth of analysis of the points raised. Both feedback interactions begin with an open question from the mentor, for example in feedback meeting 1: ‘Do you want to tell me about your lesson? Is there something that you want to share with me? How did you feel?’. These open questions elicit a long turn from Hae-Won of almost two and a half minutes, during which she mentions three areas for development although she says she feels that ‘generally, it was quite OK’. At this time, Magdalena only backchannels, but then offers praise and focuses attention of the first of the three areas have been raised, that of the use of L1 in instructions.

She begins by nominating the issue, expressing empathy and support by telling Hae-Won that she does the same thing, giving a reason why this may be useful and offering reassurance that the practice is justified in the context. Given that language teaching methodology primers often advocate that as much L2 should be used in class as possible (e.g., Harmer, 2015) this move puts Magdalena in a strongly empathetic position of both using the same (dis-preferred) practice as her mentee and understanding its benefits. Hae-Won continues to emphasize her reasons for L1 instruction and it is only at this point that M raises the possibility of a change in practice. This is heavily hedged by making it a question, rather than a statement ‘have you thought’ and the use of modals and adverbs of possibility ‘might get clear instructions’, ‘maybe you can develop’ and modifying adverbials ‘develop a little bit’. It is also notable that the suggestion is phrased as a forward-facing suggestion using present modals. Magdalena subsequently raises the two further issues initially identified by Hae-Won as a focus for discussion.
This extract also illustrates the manner in which a questioning technique is effectively used. This is an important component of the way in which Magdalena directs the conversation and levels the balance of talk. In both the preparation and feedback meetings, there are examples of open questions which give Hae-Won scope to raise issues that are important to her, but the majority of the questions are designed to focus the mentee on a particular area for deeper discussion. In some examples, the questions push the mentee to develop ideas which may not yet be fully developed, such as this example from the second feedback meeting: ‘So as you said, and I noticed this, well, you did a lot more of praising. Yeah. So can you tell me a little bit more?’ In this question, Magdalena acknowledges Hae-Won’s contribution (‘so, as you said’) and validates it (‘and I noticed this’) before going on to encourage further analysis of the point with an open question (‘so, can you tell me a little bit more?’). This question elicits an initial long turn of over 30 seconds from Hae-Won and a further discussion of the use and value of praise.

Questions were also used extensively in the lesson preparation meetings to both ensure that Hae-Won examined her aims for activities and to aid her anticipation of potential problems in the lesson. This example from the mentor meeting 2 exemplifies the first of these where Magdalena asks, ‘It is, it is but then what are you going to do with the video? Like you’re going to show the short video one minute let’s say and then... just discuss. So just activate discussion?’ In this extract, the idea to use a video as a lead-in to the lesson has been suggested, and Magdalena pushes to ensure that Hae-Won understands the aim for this stage in the lesson and is not wooed merely by the idea of the use of multi-media. Magdalena put considerable effort into preparing the questions she used and in her final assignment she states:

1. It was extremely important to decide on what questions to ask to the mentee to generate talk and reflection, because at the same time the mentoring talks needed to be challenging and promote reflection on the mentee’s practice, they also needed to contain some sort of support and praising.

Magdalena assignment 2017

Use of video-based stimulated recall to highlight areas for feedback

A second strategy Magdalena used effectively to raise issues in feedback was the use of video for stimulated recall. This enables reflection to be data-led (Walsh and Mann, 2015) and has been well documented in the literature (Baecher and McCormack, 2015; Kleinknecht and Gröschner, 2016; Rhine and Bryant, 2007). It was also a practice which fitted well with the mentoring programme since the mentees had to record their lessons, transcribe them and
reflect on them as part of their own assessment. For many of the mentors, this was a new practice and for Magdalena, in the first oral feedback, it was an opportunity to raise a sensitive issue, that of Hae-Won’s co-teacher (a fellow novice teacher peer with a different mentor) being rather dominant in her class. Magdalena chose a short extract of the video of the class and played this during their feedback meeting, at a point when the three topics raised by Hae-Won had already been discussed. She asked for open reflection on positive aspects of this, but Hae-Won’s reaction showed that she found this uncomfortable to watch and she stated that she could only see negatives, listing three of these and ending with the point that Magdalena wishes to raise:

1. HW And the third one is this one is not only my problem with my partner, because actually, you know, in conversation we have a turn. But in my turn, my partner actually how can I say it? In many ways, she steals my turn.
2. M Exactly
3. HW Yeah, she said a lot in my part. So actually, I’m a little bit, how can I say a little bit embarrassed about that like, because I need to try to say something, but she directly gave her opinion or her instruction to students.
4. M I know, I noticed. But how did you allow her to do it?

Magdalena First oral feedback 2017

In this extract, we can see Hae-Won admitting to the issue with her co-teacher ‘in many ways she steals my turn’ (line 2-3) and Magdalena going beyond this and using the video to drill deeper and help her mentee to analyse what happened to allow this situation ‘But how did you allow her to do it?’ (line 8). It is noteworthy here that she places responsibility on Hae-Won, rather than on the co-teacher. This is arguably face threatening but her warm tone ensures it is not accusatory, but instead empowering, emphasising the potential to change the event. Magdalena plays the extract again to isolate the incident further:

1. [watching video] and then you look over and that’s the question and then look. So you kind of gave the floor to her you looked at her many times to allow her to do that. So maybe a way of solving this this situation because you are going to give another class in a few weeks is maybe decide -that’s planning –

Magdalena First oral feedback 2017

Magdalena clearly identifies the issue that Hae-Won’s lack of confidence and subsequent body language was the reason for her co-teacher’s interruption and dominance. She also suggests a potential solution to the issue in better planning and a conversation about how this could be achieved ensues. In reflection after this meeting, Magdalena describes how it was necessary to restrain herself and how she felt the point needed to come from her mentee:
I just wanted to be supportive to her. And I knew what she was going to say. Because I noticed that in the piece that I showed, represents exactly that. And then I was trying to hold myself not to say - to let HER say, and she was considering the words, not to be rude. ...and I was noticing all of that. And I was like, oh, my God, and she's going to get to the point. And then the point is delicate, because you were talking about another person. And she gets deeper into it later on. So she really opened up her heart.

Magdalena F-on-F meeting 2017

Stimulated recall using video, as can be seen in this example, has the possibility to positively affect feedback, allowing for a more mentee-centred approach and although there is an element of discomfort in watching performance in this way, it potentially reduces face threat because of the evidence-based nature of the feedback.

5.3.3 Pedagogical support

The role of the mentor as emotional support and the importance of encouraging reflection has been discussed, but a mentoring relationship is not one of complete peers and there is an expectation that a more experienced other will be able to offer their insights into the novice teacher’s practice (Stanulis et al., 2019) and to give practical support. The third area that emerged from the data as an indicator of the success of this relationship was the manner in which Magdalena was able to support Hae-Won’s practice by ‘passing on’ her own experience of the classroom.

Whilst not advocating one-way traffic, a transmissive approach, I see a place for some direction, especially in this case- a novice mentor scheme and pre-service mentees – some advice in both cases could be seen to be helpful. How this is managed, however, is an area of interest in the programme and in this section, I will consider examples in which Magdalena is able to use her previous experience to give help with practical classroom ideas as well as with methodology.

Support with resource ideas

Many scholars recommend that a mentor should play the role of a critical friend (Farrell, 2001) and ‘co-enquirer’ (Maynard and Furlong, 1995, p. 82) and Magdalena’s final reflective piece makes it clear that this was the role she aspired to achieve. This relationship has been likened to learning to dance with a partner, (Fairbanks et al., 2000, p. 106); having to ‘learn new dance steps’ after being ‘comfortable with [a] solo performance’ and having to understand when to lead and when to follow. This metaphor is a useful one, showing as it does, a situation in which two people work together to construct a shared outcome and in which one partner nominally leads but an awareness of the other and accommodation of
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their needs are necessary in order to work towards a mutually desirable outcome. It also echoes the need for trust in each other and the potential for the process to be an enjoyable one. This is an ideal and not always achievable, but there are several instances in the interactions between Magdalena and Hae-Won which exemplify this dance. The following extract shows how ideas were constructed after a need was identified by the mentee for a better lead-in to a reading text about shopping patterns.

At the beginning of the exchange, Hae-Won asks Magdalena for ideas and the mentor reminds her of one that she had previously suggested (line 4 ‘would you like to use that idea that I gave you before?’). Hae-Won’s reaction is a one of genuine surprise (line 6 ‘oh!’), indicating that she hadn’t considered this but in the next lines it is observable that they build the activity together, completing each other’s sentences and developing the activity. This exchange is then drawn to an end with Magdalena pushing Hae-Won to analyse the reason for this (line 16 ‘Why? Why would that be nice?’) and emphasizing the importance of personalisation. This extract exemplifies the mentor being responsible for providing the seed of a practical idea but then subsequently scaffolding it (Kindle and Schmidt, 2013) to a point at which the underlying pedagogical principles were understood. This theorising of practice (Arnold and Mundy, 2020) is a frequent and deliberate move and the way in which Magdalena uses language specific to the field (e.g. realia/ kinaesthetically/ affective filter)
can be seen as inclusive and as inducting Hae-Won into the profession by legitimising her place within it (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

No I think it’s good to expose her to these kinds of terms. Because if she doesn’t know, she would ask me, like she did with kinaesthetically. And if she doesn’t know a term, maybe she could look for that information. And kind of, you know, like, study another kind of content just to realize those things. So I think I find it positive for her. Okay, yeah, because she is going to be a teacher. So she needs to kind of handle those terms.

Magdalena exit feedback meeting 2017

Leinhardt and Steele term this ‘metatalk’ and define it as ‘language that supports students’ metacognitive functioning in the classroom’ (Leinhardt and Steele, 2005, p. 92) and as can be seen in the extract above, Magdalena understands that this is part of the learning to teach process.

Support with general pedagogy

Evidence of giving pedagogic help in the data was not limited to providing classroom ideas and there are other examples where Magdalena offers advice about classroom management in a manner which is not transmissive but which allows for a scaffolded approach. In the following example, she discusses checking instructions with her mentee:

Yeah, yeah. But also we need to confirm due to how much our students understand our instructions and the lessons so Nigel kept asking to his student, like, are you a me or? Okay, you guys, or are you all right or whatever. So, I think it’s quite important for our students. So, maybe we try to encourage more interaction between our students.

Good point, good point. And you think that if you ask for example, are you okay? They will say they’re not okay.

I can give extra examples or explain the instruction twice

And what about asking them to explain the instruction?

Check if they understood because sometimes if I asked him, Do you understand you will say yes, when you didn’t, do you know that me? So sometimes I like to, I like that to ask them or when the teacher asks us, okay, so I, I explain. And then I want to check if this student understood, then you first say, Did you understand they will say yes, but maybe they didn’t. So ask them okay, so tell me what do you have to do now? And then I check if they understood or not?

Ahh Wow,
did you understand? (laughs)

Yeah

What are you going to do? (laughs)

Ask a question in question to student like, explain by themselves, how much they understand the instruction?

Yeah,

really nice idea. I didn’t thought about it.

Yeah, I prefer that. Because you never know, the student can say yes. And you know students always listen to their teacher in many ways.

And this is nice, because, like having the students do something, the students can do something, not only. Sometimes we dominate everything, and we ask the questions, they shouldn’t skip asked the questions. Yeah. So make, make this consideration for your next classes for your life.
Here we can see that the idea of asking learners to relay instructions to check understanding is new to Hae Won, shown in her backchannelling (lines 20,22), their playful exchange in lines 15-17 and Hae Won’s acknowledgement that she had not previously considered this but thought it was helpful (line 21). Even after this, there is continued dialogue about this idea to reiterate and perhaps reinforce the idea.

Note: Data and analysis from this section on Magdalena has recently been published in the European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL (Gakonga and Mann, 2022).

5.4 Case Study 2 – A less harmonious relationship

In juxtaposition to the case of Magdalena, Violet had a much less satisfying relationship with her two mentees, with lower levels of rapport and in fact considerable mis-communication. The number of partnerships over the years in which this happened was low and while I was prepared for the eventuality that mentors and mentees may become sufficiently antagonistic towards each other that I may have to intervene, this never occurred. I am positioning this case as one that was less successful and there was much in the data to suggest that the relationship in this case was not an easy one. However, it is notable that there is evidence that the mentees were still grateful for the support that they received.

Violet was an teacher in the 2019 cohort and like Magdalena was a Hornby scholar with no previous experience of being a mentor herself although she was informally mentored by a colleague and there was regular observation and feedback in the school that she worked in. However, in contrast to Magdalena, she had much less teaching experience, only having had teaching practice placements during her degree and a year teaching in a first year high school class during her National Service.

Her two mentees, who I will call Bei Lei and Cha Lin were both from China and formed a teaching pair, as was the usual case in the years where the ratio of mentor to mentee was 1:2. This meant that the two inexperienced teachers shared a 40 minute lesson between them, planned as a single lesson and most usually with one mentee teaching for the first 20 minutes and the second completing the remaining half of the lesson. There was therefore logic and indeed advantage in planning the lesson and giving post lesson feedback to both mentees at the same time. As with Magdalena, recorded data from all four formal meetings between her and her mentees were examined in addition to our mid and post programme reflection meetings and her final assignment for the module.
Violet was aware of the difficulties that she had as a mentor and in her final assignment, reflected on these:

1. the mentoring session I had with my mentees illustrate what is valuable and beneficial about the mentoring role especially in rendering support, advice and giving direction. But these roles seem downplayed by crucial factors such as: the kind of relationship I had with my mentees, playing the more directive role while rendering support as a result of language barrier, my little experience in the act of mentoring versus engaging my mentees in critical reflection and enforcing a judge-mentoring approach during the post observation feedback sessions.

Violet Assignment 2019

Here, the areas and potential challenges she highlights accord with the themes of mentoring practice that emerged from Magdalena’s data. These are difficulties with the relationship ‘downplayed by crucial factors such as: the kind of relationship I had with my mentees’ (line 3) and issues with support with reflection ‘my little experience in the act of mentoring versus engaging my mentees in critical reflection’ (line 4-5). In terms of giving effective pedagogic support, there are mixed messages in her self-evaluation. In line 2 she sees her positive contribution as giving advice and direction, but she is also concerned about ‘playing a more directive role’ (line 3-4) and ‘enforcing a judgement mentoring approach’ (line 6). Each of these will be considered in turn, using the data to highlight the issues faced by Violet and contrasting them with the strategies used by Magdalena.

5.4.1 Emotional support – Developing Rapport

One of the most obvious themes that emerged from Violet’s data and a stark contrast to Magdalena’s data is that of the relationship and rapport between the mentor and mentees. Emotional support is a primary function of a mentor’s role (Gakonga, 2019) and an empathetic working relationship is crucial. When Violet’s data is examined, it can be seen this relationship was often compromised and her meetings with her mentees are interesting in this respect. In Violet’s TED assignment, in which she assesses her experience of mentoring, she is clearly aware of the difficulties that she had in forming a good working relationship with her mentees and she notes that there were ‘lost opportunities for learning to teach when the mentors do not have a sound relationship with the mentees’. One of the issues she identifies is language and she says that the lack of rapport was in part ‘as a result of my language barrier’. Whilst both mentor and mentees share a common second language and all interactions were in English, Violet has an accent that the Chinese mentees may be unfamiliar with and she often speaks quickly when she is nervous or excited. Given this, whilst there was effective communication for the majority of the time, these factors probably did contribute to some of the lack of response from the mentees that unnerved her.
It would be wrong to characterise Violet’s relationships with Bei Lei and Cha Lin as entirely antagonistic or unsuccessful and the data shows that she was able to build a personal relationship to some extent with her mentees. The second mentoring meeting, for example, begins with laughter and a brief but friendly discussion about their respective days and ends on a very positive note with warm thanks and appreciation from the mentees. Whilst this could be seen to be social nicety at the end of a (short) working relationship, there is a tone of sincerity and warmth to this and the mentor’s response is one of genuine surprise and pleasure:

1 Have I done anything? Really?! I’m glad my suggestions are useful. Thank you very much for listening because it’s quite weird when you give a suggestion and it’s not, you know, taken.
2 Thank you

Violet Second oral feedback 2019

However, the difficulties that ensued and the possible reasons for them are of potential interest as pitfalls that mentors may encounter and this section will therefore largely focus on the areas which stand in juxtaposition to the successful relationship described above.

**Empathy**

We saw above, in Magdalena’s data that she made an effort to empathise with her mentee, both in her use of inclusive language and by using examples of her own experience of challenges her mentee faced. Elements of this were also apparent in Violet’s discourse, for example in her extensive use of an inclusive pronoun ‘we’. In some places this is to signpost a joint action e.g. ‘so now can we think back before we progress further? Okay?’ but it is also often used to include herself in their planning e.g. ‘and then we have seven minutes for the vocabulary development teachings. So altogether that’s thirteen minutes. How many minutes do we have left?’ There are also instances where she includes them in the world of teachers to which she belongs and reassures them e.g. ‘Usually we teachers when we teach for the first time there is this feeling of being nervous and lack of confidence you know’ (from feedback 2)

However, in contrast to this, there are several instances in her meetings with me and in her assignment where she reveals a frustration with her mentees that speaks to a lack of empathy. In these instances, she appears not to want to accept a responsibility for developing the relationship and instead suggests that the mentees were at fault:
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1 But, my practical role as a mentor was constrained by issues such as failure to communicate tactfully and ineffective listening on the part of the mentees coupled with the issue of language barrier which often surfaces in our discourse.

4 I feel that there was not a personal connection among I and my mentees. By this I mean, my mentees did not establish a connection with me to be able to share their thoughts or perceptions about their teaching.

Violet Assignment 2019

1 the mentees did not seem to trust me, I sensed mistrust in their relationships with me

Violet Feedback on feedback meeting 2019

There is also evidence from her assignment that her expectations were perhaps unrealistically high about the partnering, leading to disappointment:

1 I believe that there ought to be careful selection and pairing of mentors and mentees to form productive relationships (Hudson 2016 p.31), as mentors and mentees should have the same chemistry but not just being course mates.

Violet assignment 2019

Whilst a mentoring relationship is self-evidently a two-way process, it is rare that the luxury of such choices are the reality and the norm that a mentor will need to use her interpersonal skills to build a rapport, even in circumstances where this is not a natural ‘fit’ in just the same way that any teacher does.

A further challenge that faced Violet in her interactions that perhaps speaks to a lack of empathy in a more practical manner was in an apparent lack of awareness of the context that the mentees were working in or the requirements and constraints of their module. This led to several frustrating exchanges, an example being early in the second mentoring meeting. The mentees teach two peer lessons during the term and can make a choice about whether to:

- teach a different lesson, but focus on a particular aspect of their practice (so, for example to improve their instructions),
- to teach the same lesson using an alternative methodology (for example teaching the same grammar point using a task based approach instead of PPP) or
- teach the same lesson exactly, but attempt to improve it in the light of the previous iteration.

The mentees in this case had chosen the latter option but this decision was not understood well by Violet despite being told by the mentees that this would be the case and she thus asked repeated questions that seemed to the mentees to make little sense. This kind of misunderstanding can be seen to produce frustration and damage the relationship.
This builds from very early in the meeting where Violet asks if they are teaching the same topic and they tell her that they are:

1. **V** Do you want to teach the same topic?
2. **BL** Yeah. The topic will not be changed
3. **V** Okay. So the topic will not be changed.

Violet Second mentoring meeting 2019

This is followed by some discussion about how they will change the lesson (change the emphasis to be less grammar focused) and then Violet asks again about how they will teach the lesson. She seems to understand here that they could use the same approach and she is told that they will, that they feel the lesson had an appropriate structure. Despite this, less than one minute later, she asks again how they will teach the lesson and again, she is told that they will not change the structure of the class.

1. **V** The thing is I’ve never taught in a CLIL class before so now I’m asking can you how will you go about teaching it. I would like to know how. Is it the same way you did the previous lesson or you’re going to use a different approach this time.
2. **BL** The same I think, we won’t have many changes this time okay. I think the. Overall structure of this class has no problem. We think so.

Violet Second mentoring meeting 2019

This pattern continues with Bei Lei again and again stating that the class will be ‘just like the previous class’ and it becomes apparent that the mentees are finding this frustrating.

1. **V** OK. Oh. You want to do a video or you want them to read
2. **BL** just like the previous class

Violet Second mentoring meeting 2019

And again very soon after:

1. **V** OK. Oh. You want to do a video or you want them to read
2. **BL** just like the previous class

Violet Second mentoring meeting 2019

Perhaps Violet feels this frustration and at ten minutes into the feedback asks with some force to see a lesson plan. Her voice tone is somewhat exasperated, and this appears to have the unfortunate effect of reducing rapport further, especially as the mentees do not produce the requested plan.
Hedging

It is arguable that the content of any mentoring interaction is almost secondary to the way in which it is expressed (Fraser, 2010) and in Magdalena’s interactions, we saw extensive use of hedging language including approximators, inclusive pronouns and hesitations (Section 5.3.1 above), particularly in situations where she was offering suggestions for change. Violet’s discourse was significantly different in this respect. The power balance is not even in a feedback scenario and the ‘rules of engagement’ are different from those in general conversation (Copland 2011); a mentee both expects and perhaps welcomes constructive comments. However, it should be remembered that this is a case of near peers working together and whilst Violet is acting as a mentor and has teaching experience that her mentees do not have (although a limited amount of this), they are all students on the same MA course.

Listening to the feedback interactions in particular, the impression is of a mentor who is very direct in her approach and this directness may be a contributing factor to the challenges that she reports in her final assignment. A good example of this is the following extract:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>BL</th>
<th>You think our instruction is not clear?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Yeah. Can you tell me the reason behind it? Given instructions your evaluation the way you give them an exercise, it was not detailed enough sort of, do you understand what I am trying to say?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Violet First oral feedback 2019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, the mentee, Bei Lei, asks a clarification question about whether her instructions were unclear (line 1) and she is met with a very clear but unmitigated and very direct, on record ‘yeah’ (line 2). A face threatening act such as this would usually be prefaced with hedging and Violet does follow this with a request for an explanation, ‘Can you tell me the reason behind it?’ (line 1) allowing the mentee to reflect and justify her actions. However, she leaves the mentee no time to reply and continues with further evaluation (line 3).

On coding the data, 18 examples of critical comments were found and of these, over half are not hedged in any way. Other examples are shown below:

- if you had prompt her a little more perhaps she could have improved
- You’re supposed to buttress you know give him more explanation of it.
- Actually, you have to be more that is why I say you have to be more clear and specific.
- Okay. and I think in terms of asking questions you should ask more of open-ended questions

(my emphasis)
Language of this nature, delivered without hedging (supposed to/ have to/ should/ could have) is unusual in the feedback of more experienced mentors (Farr, 2010) and, whilst there are definitely practices in the language classroom that seem to be more helpful than others for most learners, offering advice in such blunt terms implies a knowledge of pedagogic practices which are certain to be effective.

Where hedging occurs, it is often minimal, using ‘I think’ or ‘I feel’ or a potentially inclusive device such as ‘you know’ but she also uses expressions which modify and reduce the impact of adjectives (‘kind of’ ‘a little’ ‘a form of’).

- okay. And erm, In terms of language feedback. I think that was minimal.
- Yeah. It’s okay but at the same time for learners to understand better, I feel it’s necessary.
- You didn’t you know ask another student to answer the question.
- teacher-students interaction ok was kind of centralized,
- In terms you know of delivering your lesson or at some point you were a little timid and not very confidence, I understand that it’s a form of being nervous and all.

There are examples in the feedback where she does use other linguistic devices to hedge her prescriptive comments:

1. No, I’m not criticizing what you’ve done. What I’m saying is that your aim was kind of one sided
2. in terms of improving their reading skills OK at the expense of the grammar skills.

Violet First oral feedback 2019

Here, although she attempts hedging using a softener ‘kind of’ (line 1) and by denial (‘I’m not criticizing’ (line 1) she clearly IS criticizing what they have done and has been doing for the past 25 minutes at this point.

Use of praise

In Magdalena’s data there was good evidence of praise and indeed of praise in the second round of meetings becoming more specific (Section 5.3.1). There were fewer examples of praise being given in Violet’s data although there is evidence that she is aware of the balance that needs to be struck in feedback and, like Magdalena, uses a ‘sandwich’ technique to hedge her criticisms.

1. So, your time management was very good I would say that was impressive because you were
2. able to meet up to the 40 minutes. By giving them the content, with teaching the content and
3. also giving the class exercise which is very good. You were able to keep to time. Very very good

Violet Second oral feedback 2019
In this extract, from near the beginning of the feedback, we can see that Violet starts with a positive comment and she praises their time management. She also makes an effort to be specific in her praise, noting that they taught content and provided practice. This is perhaps rather overstated (‘very good’ being repeated three times), and as she continues (see next extract), we see that this is the forerunner to a contrastive conjunction (line 1 (However) and a rather bald statement of the fact that the lesson did not engage all of the learners.

Violet Second oral feedback 2019

Whilst ‘paired’ comments like this are commonly thought to ‘sandwich’ bad news or criticism, there is evidence from management research (e.g. Von Bergen, Bressler and Campbell, 2014) that the listener is set up to hear only the subsequent negative comment, and this may seem to be particularly the case where the juxtaposition of the two is very clear as it is in this case. ‘However’ could be considered to be more formal and therefore distancing than using ‘but’ or omitting a contrastive conjunction entirely. She does include an element of hedging language (‘kind of centralised’) but there are elements of condemnation (‘engagement was not very good’) and a use of ‘actually’ (not all the students participated, actually’) which implies a lack of recourse on the mentees’ part to brook disagreement (Aijmer, 2015). The effect overall is of the delivery of a criticism in relatively stark language.

As we have seen, Violet’s experience as a mentor was not problem free and she was aware of the difficulties that she had in forming and maintaining a rapport with her mentees. What is perhaps more interesting is to consider possible reasons for this.

In the weeks between the first round of mentoring, observation and feedback and the second, I met with all of the mentors on a one to one basis to discuss their experiences. I had, at this point, listened to their first round of oral feedback and they had listened to both this and their first round of mentoring in order to be prepared to reflect on it. In Violet’s case, our conversation explored the difficulties that she had in engaging her mentees and she identified a possible reason that she had had bad news on the day she gave oral feedback to the mentees (unrelated to the programme) and that this affected the way she was with them.
Our subsequent discussion focused on how factors that are not related to mentoring can have an impact and Violet’s own previous experience of being on the receiving end of this.

5.4.2 Support with reflection

In Magdalena’s data, we saw that a major aspect of the discourse with her mentor was in supporting reflection by purposeful listening and sharing the talk through a skilful use of questioning. In the literature on mentoring and on the development of mentors, a prevalent issue is the dominance of the mentor in the talk and the transmissive approach taken at the expense of facilitating and encouraging reflection in mentees (e.g. Orland-Barak and Rachamim, 2009). This can lead to an overbearing presence and ‘judgementoring’ (Hobson and Malderez 2013) and is a common position for novice (and many more experienced) mentors. Whilst the role of teacher trainers is not exactly that of a mentor, there are many significant common areas and so the literature in this area is also relevant and shows many similarities:

Studies show trainers to be interactionally dominant: they control the floor, have longer turns, and initiate talk and topics (Copland 2012; Hyland and Lo 2006; Vásquez 2004). Trainers also claim expertise, privilege their views, and require trainees to accept these views, even silencing trainees by their discourse practices (Copland 2012).

(Donaghue, 2019, p.3)

This emerged very clearly from Violet’s data and although it is probable that she was nervous, especially in the first meetings. Her opening lines to her first post lesson conference with the mentees begins ‘Yeah. Okay I’ll tell you based on what I saw from the observation of your teaching and this seems to set up an expectation of her giving an opinion rather than entering into a dialogic space. Her domination may also be affected, as we have seen above, by communication difficulties or a well-intentioned desire to be an advice-giver. In her reflective assignment, she says:

1 But, my practical role as a mentor was constrained by issues such as failure to communicate ...
2 As a result, I played the more directive role than being facilitative as a mentor.

Violet Assignment 2019
It is interesting to note here that she ascribes the personal difficulties that she had as the cause of a more directive approach. This is almost a chicken and egg situation. Does the almost natural instinct that seems to emerge from mentors to be directive mitigate against a facilitative approach, or is it the difficulty in developing rapport that leads to a mentor ‘falling back’ on a more default model of directiveness? As with Magdalena, the themes of balance of talk and how questions were used emerged as of primary importance. Violet, also used a playback of the video as stimulated recall in her second feedback. In all of these areas there was considerable difference in practice, giving an insight into how these practices affected the relationships.

**Balance of talk**

In all four of the meetings that Violet had with her mentees, she dominated the talk. However, this tendency was exhibited to a greater or lesser degree and there are patterns of difference between the pre-lesson support meetings and the post lesson oral feedback. It is also possible to see some change in this aspect, between first and second iterations.

If we first consider the pre-lesson meetings held to support the mentees with their lesson planning, it is noticeable that the talk is relatively balanced. In the first round, Violet’s contribution is 61% and this falls to 56% in the second round. These interactions are definitely more dialogue like and are characterised by significantly more questions than the oral feedback.

**Pre-lesson support/mentoring meetings.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>% of talk</th>
<th>Average turn length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting 1</td>
<td>Meeting 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting 1</td>
<td>Meeting 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violet</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bei Lei</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cha Lin</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.3 Percentage talk and turn length in mentoring meetings*

The post lesson oral feedback meetings display patterns that are quite different. The interaction itself is less Q&A focused and Violet dominates to a much greater extent, with much longer turns than her mentees. In fact, 75% of her talk was in only 10 turns, giving the impression of a mentor ‘delivering’ the feedback.
Post lesson oral feedback meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>% of talk</th>
<th>Average turn length</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feedback 1</td>
<td>Feedback 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violet</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bei Lei</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cha Lin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 Percentage talk and turn length in feedback meetings

These long turns characteristically consisted of a number of points of feedback that were raised but where the opportunity to explore them in a more dialogic manner was not exploited. It should be remembered that this is the first time that Violet has ever given anyone feedback on her teaching and she was probably nervous. From my own experience, in this kind of environment, it can be tempting to ‘rush on’ to the next point and there is evidence of this in Violet’s practice. An example of this is shown below:

1 And I just noticed that a particular student didn’t get much talking time because it is only a question that was directed to her as she was struggling to answer so I feel if you had prompted her a little more perhaps she could have improved and be able to repeat what you have said because of teaching. I notice that when you have a struggling learner you tend to help them to improve their speaking skills. Okay, let’s move onto your body language. Your composure was quite good. I notice you stand in front and you’re able to use your hands, Yeah. In terms of you know, delivering your lesson, at some point you were a little timid and not very confident, I understand that it’s a form of nervous and all, I believe as time goes by you will improve. Yeah.
2 Because it’s a gradual thing. Yeah. And your gesture, I notice at a point in your lesson when you’re trying to describe what evolution means, you were able to demonstrate you know and later on translate it so that you could understand what you meant by, you know, air pollution, so which it quite good. Yeah. Giving clear instructions- yeah- in that aspect, initially I think it was that instructions were not so clear or do you feel you have a reason for the way you give your instructions?

Violet First oral feedback 2019

In this extract, she gives feedback on four separate aspects of practice in a transmissive manner. In lines 1-4 she gives advice on engaging learners, the initial topic of her feedback. This is followed in line 5 by comments on their body language, in line 10 their vocabulary teaching and then in line 12 their instructions. The mentees are not given an opportunity to discuss these issues although the turn finishes with a question. This results in a nominal response from one mentee ‘I think our instruction is not clear here’ but there is little expansion on this, despite further longer turn prompting from Violet.

In the second round, there is a significant reduction in her domination of the talk and Violet’s own assessment of her development is that she was able to use a more facilitative approach in the second round of the programme. She acknowledges that a knowledge transfer model
is a more traditional one and that it has the limitation of not allowing the mentees to ‘formulate their own solutions and actions as a result of skilled listening and questioning from the mentor’. There is only a limited amount of evidence of this, but in the next section, I will show examples of how this more dialogic approach was operationalised.

Focusing and questioning

Questions are perhaps the most obvious way in which a mentor can engage a mentee and encourage reflection as was seen above in Magdalena’s data (Section 5.3.2), but skill is required in order for questions to be used effectively and there are examples in the literature (e.g. Myhill and Dunkin, 2005) and my own data from other mentors that questions can be far more directive than facilitative and be ‘straitjackets’ rather than ‘scaffolds’ (Myhill and Warren, 2005).

In her mentoring meetings and (to a much lesser extent) in her feedback meetings, Violet, like Magdalena, uses questions extensively but often with much less success at drawing her mentees into a dialogue. She was able to reflect in a perceptive manner on the difficulties that she encountered and in her final assignment, she says that she ‘could sense a tone of dislike from the response given by the mentee to the question asked by the mentor’. She ascribes this to personality type but also that the ‘inability of the mentor to frame questions correctly may prevent the mentees from engaging in reflective practice’. It is this latter aspect, of how questions are formed and how that affects a mentoring relationship that is of potential interest.

Considering the data, a common scenario is that she asks questions that are worded in a way that they are vague and consequently are not answered. Limited wait time is also possibly a limiting factor here. The beginning of the second oral feedback session is a clear example of this.

```
1  V  So based on what we discussed during the mentoring session. can you tell me if what
2       we discussed have been implemented in your lesson.
3       [no response]
4  V  So based on what we discussed during the mentoring session. can you tell me if what
5       we discussed have been implemented in your lesson.
6       [no response]
7  V  what we discussed during the mentoring session. if it was implemented in your lesson.
8       [no response]
9  BL You mean our biggest issue or problem?
10 V  During the last mentoring session we discussed about how to improve in your lesson.
11   Yeah. Yeah. So can you tell me?
12 BL Oh our biggest improvement is about the content distribution. Because, last class we
13 spent half of the time in subject teaching and another half language teaching. But this
14 time we spend more time on the one.
```
Better Together. Jo Gakonga

Violet First oral feedback 2019

In this uncomfortable beginning to the session, Violet repeats the same question three times (lines 2, 5, and 7) with no response at all from her mentees, who it seems, don’t understand what she is asking. The difficulty here may lie in the fact that she hasn’t identified and reminded them of the areas that were discussed in the pre-lesson meeting and it seems likely that they are unsure of the topic. Finally, Bei Lei attempts to clarify in line 9, seemingly guessing at a meaning that might be expected in this circumstance although it is not the area that Violet is aiming for.

In other examples, where questions are unclear, there is some evidence that the mentees do feel comfortable to clarify: This is also from the second pre-lesson meeting:

1 V So you just go to the class and then you say ‘Can you tell me about air pollution in your country and can you tell me about air pollution in your country? is that how you begin?
2 [no response]
3 4 V I'm asking.
5 BL I can't pick up what you mean.

Violet Second mentoring meeting 2019

Here, Violet’s question is unclear and delivered rather quickly. In this instance, Bei Lei does actually confess to not understanding but in other examples, this is not the case. This often leads to Violet repeating or rephrasing only slightly as in this example from the second oral feedback.

1 How were you able to come about the presentation? I'm quite, you know, inquisitive. Like, I just want to know, I'm curious to know about how you were able to bring about the presentation of the lesson? [no response]. How were you able to? What what what. How were you able to go about with the presentation, with the planning of your lesson? What was it like? Just want to show me. Perhaps I could learn something from you.

Violet Second mentoring meeting 2019

Her question here ‘How were you able to come about the presentation?’ is at best unclear and the mentees give no response. Whilst this was probably due to a lack of comprehension, we can see the mounting lack of confidence that this brings in the mentor. She falters (’what what what’) and attempts to reformulate the question ‘How were you able to go about with the presentation, with the planning of your lesson?’ but this is still not understood, and she gets no response. Her final utterances in this turn are almost a plea in line 5 (’Perhaps I could learn something from you?’).
As I have shown, the most prevalent interaction pattern is that of the dominant mentor. However, there are examples in the data of Violet encouraging reflection. In this example, she shows that she is aware of wanting to help them to reflect in a very overt manner.

That’s good. You need to make them aware of what you do. Well you you said something earlier and you know you want them to talk more.

how will you make your students talk more, to give responses to the questions.

Yeah of course. We have a lot of yes or no questions, prevented them the last class from talking more. And this time we will use more open questions.

Exactly. Okay. That’s good. You will use more open-ended questions. Well thank you. I wanted you to figure it out yourself. Okay. I’m glad that you’ve been able to identify that aspect of it. That’s great. Good

Violet Second oral feedback 2019

This extract is interesting in showing Violet’s thought processes so explicitly (line 7-9 ‘I wanted you to figure it out yourself. Okay. I’m glad that you’ve been able to identify that aspect of it’). She is clearly making an effort to promote reflective practice, but as in the previous example, whilst she encourages them to consider ways to increase levels of learner talk, the topic is terminated ‘That’s great. Good.’ and there is a feeling that this could be usefully further explored. It could also be argued that there is an element of power display in this exchange, of establishing herself as a figure of authority and perhaps this overt statement is a marker of the insecurity she may feel in this new role.

Use of video-based stimulated recall

In the second feedback session, mentors were encouraged to experiment with stimulated recall by using the video recording of the lessons. This can have very powerful results of supporting reflection but is a tool which requires skilful handling. In Magdalena’s case, as we have seen above (Section 5.3.2) she chose a particular short extract which illustrated an issue that her mentee had had with her co-teacher but may have felt embarrassed to raise. This provided a vivid and accurate recreation of the event and allowed Magdalena to ‘slow the event down’ in order for her mentee to analyse her behaviour at this point in an objective manner. The impression was given of the video allowing a topic to be discussed that might otherwise have been sensitive.

Violet also experimented with use of the video in her second feedback but with less obvious success. There appear to be several issues. The first is that she uses the video to give evidence of her criticisms, rather than as illustrative episodes:
Her ‘actually’ appears to dispute the point (Aijmer, 2015) and by implication places her judgement as an experienced teacher (that it is necessary to signpost lesson objectives to learners) in a privileged position.

This aspect of raising disputed issues is also illustrated in the following extract. Increased learner talk is cited as a ‘great improvement’ by Bei Lei but Violet appears to disagree and uses the video to show that this was not the case.

A second issue with video use was that it can be a rather harsh mirror and in this example where Violet draws attention to Cha Lin’s physical presence in the classroom, it appears to make her mentee feel uncomfortable and has the effect of reducing reflection:

It is difficult to state with any certainty the issues here. Perhaps the repetitive, rather insistent nature of the way the task was set was problematic or the word ‘posture’ may have been misunderstood, but the result was a quiet, hedged (‘a little bit’) response which was not further elaborated and so was of limited success as a reflective tool.

In the discussion so far, I have examined the ways in which emotional support and support with reflection are evident or problematic in Violet’s work as a mentor. In the final section, I
will complete the mentoring support triumvirate by looking at evidence in the data pedagogical support given in the meetings.

5.4.3 Pedagogical support

The aspect of mentoring that addresses pedagogy and concrete advice is interesting because it has the potential to be impactful in terms of practice and although many teachers would agree on common areas of ‘good practice’, there is clearly large variation in this based on individual teacher beliefs. This is perhaps exacerbated in a case where the mentor’s experience is limited and the contexts in which mentor and mentee originate are significantly different. The difference in context was also true for Magdalena and her mentee but her greater breadth of experience probably mitigated this. In Violet’s case, this meant that her understanding and suggestions may not have been as valid as in her own teaching environment and there are examples in the data of instances where her mentees did not agree with her and vocalised this:

1  V  On the other hand, do you think that you ought to begin with the subjunctive mood first? Before exposing them to the video and the article.
2  CL  But the reason why we need to teach them subjunctive is that there is subjunctive in the reading material.
3  V  Yeah, I know.
4  CL  If we teach subjunctive mood first, that will be strange.
5  V  Ohh Kayy (drawn out)
6  BL  Basically, students don’t like grammar
7  CL  they don’t like grammar, so there must be something which arouses their interest to study the grammar.
8  V  OK

Violet First oral feedback 2019

In line 6, Cha Lin, in my opinion very reasonably, suggests that the mentor’s idea of teaching the grammar out of context is ‘strange’. Violet responds to this with a drawn out ‘Ohh Kayy’ (line 7) perhaps indicating hedged disagreement and the mentees both respond by emphasising reasons for their opinion.

Support with resource ideas

In the extract we saw above in Magdalena’s data the interactions showed a mentor giving advice but doing this in a way that ideas were built in cooperation with her mentee. In Violet’s data, however, this sense of working together towards a common goal is absent and there is possibly something of a mis-match between the mentees desire to focus on skills work via a CLIL approach, which Violet has no experience of and the mentor’s approach in which grammar teaching seems to hold a more central position. There are several examples
of her drawing the topic back to the subjunctive mood, the grammar topic that the mentees plan to mention. This seems to be an area in which she feels more comfortable and in the extract below we can see her working with them to highlight the importance of contextualising grammar in the classroom:

Examples of engagement and discussion of pedagogical issues are quite rare in the oral feedback, but the following extract, from the second round illustrates that the mentees are willing to challenge the mentor’s suggestions:

In line 1, the mentee asks a question to clarify Violet’s previous suggestion to include more topic-related vocabulary and, when Violet reiterates the suggestion that one particular word is taught, Cha Lin challenges her rationale. Whilst this is explicitly phrased as a question (‘I have a question’ line 6) it could be seen as a disagreement and Violet’s response, in which she justifies her stance and rephrases her previous advice, seems to indicate that she feels tested. There are hedged argument markers here (line 9 ‘I’m not against... but...’) and her final comment ‘OK, that’s my advice’ closes the topic and appears to close off further avenues for discussion.
Support with general pedagogy

For Violet, much of this kind of teaching advice, especially in the pre-lesson support meetings, centred around time management and in her assignment reflecting on the process, Violet comments on and justifies this:

I tried to engage them in independent problem solving by asking them questions about how they intend to plan their lesson. But I noticed that the challenge was too high for them and offered support in the area of classroom time management.

Violet Assignment 2019

This focus on time management could be viewed as excessive. Activities are planned to the minute, in a way that, as an experienced teacher, I would find unrealistic. There is some evidence in the data that Violet is attempting to address this. In the following extract we can see her questioning their timing:

1  V  if i get you right, you said you will allow them to make a poster
2  CL  Yes
3  V  Within four minutes?
4  CL  it’s just for them to read the text.
5  V  how many minutes will you give them to make a poster?
6  BL  seven
7  V  so you expect them to make a poster after they might have read the material for seven minutes. So how many minutes altogether do we have?
8  BL  twenty-four
9  V  so what is the next thing you will do after they might have drawn the poster.

Violet Second mentoring meeting 2019

Here, Violet very reasonably questions the time of four minutes to make a poster (line 3). This is a misunderstanding and is changed to seven but even this seems very short and it is interesting that there is no further discussion and the topic is immediately changed by the mentor (line 8 ‘So, how many minutes altogether do we have?’). This would seem to be an area which warranted further exploration, but again, perhaps Violet’s inexperience prevented her from drilling down into this area to a depth where some useful reflection was possible.

Another example of advice being given is a suggestion made in the second pre-lesson support meeting to make the language objectives explicit to the learners at the beginning of the lesson.
Here, the mentees are seeking advice (lines 3-4) and it is given, although, as is characteristic of Violet’s mentoring, without any exploration of the potential benefits or disadvantages of doing this.

5.5 Conclusion
This chapter has shown two case studies in some detail considering aspects of mentoring that arose in the data under the tripartite division of emotional support, support with reflection and support with pedagogy. I have shown examples of how a skilled (albeit inexperienced) mentor was able to form a close and supportive relationship with her mentee and use this as a basis of pedagogically based conversation which provided input but encouraged thought and reflection on this from her mentee. In juxtaposition, we have seen how nervousness and communication issues can result in a mentor-centred and less helpful, approach.

In the next chapter I will go on to examine the wider data and consider the issues that arose in mentoring relationships.
Chapter 6

6. Analysis 3: Issues and Tensions

6.1. Introduction

This chapter is the third of my analysis chapters and addresses my final research sub-question - What notable issues arise between the participants on the programme?

I have looked, in Chapter 4, at the way the course developed over a five year period and considered the features of the programme that were reported as useful. In Chapter 5, we then saw, from two case studies, that three main themes emerged from the interaction data. These were, emotional support, support with reflection and support with pedagogy. In this chapter, I want to move on to consider the wider longitudinal data and draw on the themes from the case studies to consider the issues and tensions that arose between mentors and mentees.

The analysis is explained in the Methodology chapter, Section 3.3.2 and this offered confirmatory findings to the case studies with similar and consistent themes. However, as I examined a larger number of cases and considered the challenges that mentors faced in the programme, the two consistent tensions that arose were firstly, the way in which the mentor formed and maintained a relationship and a rapport with their mentee, and secondly, the tension between offering practical advice and encouraging reflection. I have chosen to call these ‘tensions’ because, as will be shown in the data, these are not neutral and are often challenging.

In this chapter I will draw on the data from a larger number of the mentors over the whole five year period and investigate these tensions, answering the following two questions:

- Tension 1. What issues arose with the mentors forming and maintaining relationships with their mentees that would allow for emotional support?
- Tension 2. What issues arose in the mentors finding an effective balance between support with reflection and support with pedagogy?

The data extracts that I have used in this chapter are self-evidently, a very small sample of the whole, but I have chosen them as illustrative of the themes that emerged and hope that they serve to give the reader a clear picture of these.
A note on pseudonyms

In Chapter 5, I gave the case study participants pseudonyms but for this analysis, given the larger number of participants included, I have reverted to the same convention as used in Chapter 4 of assigning each mentor with a number in two parts (e.g. 2018/07), the first denoting the year they participated and the second a unique personal identification.

6.2 Tension 1 – Forming and maintaining a relationship

6.2.1 Introduction

This section aims to answer the question ‘What issues arose with the mentors forming and maintaining relationships with their mentees that would allow for emotional support?’. I will cover four areas, beginning with examples of how good relationships were frequently achieved, echoing the majority of the cases through the years and exemplified with the case of Magdalena in Chapter 5. I will then examine some of the causes of conflict between mentees and mentors where these existed, and how these conflicts were addressed. After this, I will go on to show how the tension between being a ‘friend’ or emotional support was balanced with a pedagogic role. The final aspect of forming a relationship that I consider here was not one that was available to most of the mentors, but in cases where mentors and mentees shared a first language, there were issues around this which are of note when considering forming relationships. In summary:

- Examples of positive relationships
- Examples of conflict and how mentors dealt with this
- How mentors navigated the tensions between emotional support and pedagogy
- How language choice (L1 or L2) affected the relationships where this was an option

6.2.2 Building positive relationships

A crucial basis of any mentoring relationship is the personal relationship that it rests upon (Eller et al., 2014). As was shown in Chapter 4 (Section 4.4.1), the feedback from the mentees on the programme was very positive and there is abundant evidence from the mentors, seen in the warm tones and shared laughter (Atkinson and Delamont, 2012) in much of the recorded data, that they had good relationships with their mentees. This is exemplified in Chapter 5 with the case study of Magdalena and a further example of this is Mentor 2017/20 who reported an excellent relationship with her mentees, saying that working with them had not only helped her to reflect on her practice as a mentor but also as a teacher. There is evidence in both her mentoring and feedback meetings with the mentees that she has enabled them to progress in their module. She took her task seriously, giving her two mentees individual meetings both before and after their lessons and this extract from the
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second mentoring meeting exemplifies the strength of their relationship. The tone between them is friendly and the interaction is unusually even with the mentee holding the floor for 48% of the meeting, which lasts an hour and 14 minutes (for comparison, see Magdalena’s similar ratio but Violet’s much greater dominance shown in Chapter 5). This extract, from 10 minutes into the meeting, shows an example of successful support where they discuss the context in which the mentees should teach the lesson:

1  Mentee  In CLIL class it should not be a native speaker?
2  2017/20  Yes
3  Mentee  Ah...that’s why. So I will change it
4  2017/20  If you think...
5  Mentee  (interjects) No no actually, I think the same way. As you say.
6  2017/20  Oh really (sounds surprised). You think...
7  Mentee  I almost said, almost, you see I was smiling? Because I almost said the same thing,
8  just as you said. Not because CLIL, but now it’s a reason.

Second mentoring meeting, Mentor 2017/20

Although the mentor has had a relatively dominant role outlining CLIL in the preceding minutes, the mentee is sufficiently comfortable in line 1 to ask a question to clarify a point. The mentor answers, affirming the mentee’s thoughts and the response is instant capitulation from the mentee ‘I will change it’ (line 3). Given the relatively even relationship that is apparent, this mentor is clearly surprised and attempts to express reservation that her authority on this would be accepted so readily (line 4). The mentee interrupts her in line 5, excitedly reassuring her mentor that this was a co-constructed, not imposed idea and this elicits a tone of genuine surprise from the mentor in line 6 (‘Oh really’). She attempts to give the mentee an option not to take her advice (‘You think...’ line 6). However, the mentee is very clear that this contribution from the mentor has confirmed her own thoughts and given her a rationale for them, a good example of how a mentor can work in a cooperative environment to scaffold and support mentee development (Sharpe, 2006).

As a second example of how successful relationships were constructed, the following extract supports the importance of empathy seen in Magdalena’s and Violet’s data. In Chapter 5, examples were shown of how empathetic second person pronoun use, or including the mentees in a ‘teaching’ world can be beneficial for the relationship between mentor and mentee. Knowledge of a shared background was also a factor that some mentors used to effect as can be seen below:
In this extract, although the mentor is Singaporean and the mentee from China, a shared knowledge of a similar home educational culture was used by the mentor to build rapport. In the environment of a UK based MA TESOL, with an emphasis on a communicative approach to language teaching, a ‘teacher centred’ lesson would usually be viewed as a pejorative, and so the mentor’s admission in line 6 (‘maybe I’m used to teacher centred’) is unexpected and performs several functions. The preceding laugh suggests that the issue is not overly serious, thus acting as a reassurance to her mentee. She also implies that she didn’t notice this aspect of the lesson and in this way minimises the impact of the criticism from the mentee’s peers and allows face to be maintained (line 3). Perhaps more importantly, the mentor may be expected, as a ‘more capable other’ (Nguyen, 2017, p 5) to toe the party line of a learner-centred approach, and so her admission that teacher centred classes are common in their reality put her in alignment with her mentee and evens the power balance. The mentee in line 7 reciprocates this alignment by concurring that their backgrounds are similar.

The two examples above show mentors creating rapport with their mentees, through careful support and empathy. As was seen in Magdalena’s data, hedging was also used to effect by many of the mentors. An example from the written feedback of Mentor 2017/04 is shown here:

```
1 GIVING INSTRUCTIONS
2 In relation to this same topic, something that it may be worth thinking about more carefully is
3 “giving instructions”. How did you feel dealing with this in class?

4 TESTING OR TEACHING?
5 Finally, I would like to know what your take is on the debate “teaching to the test or teaching life
6 skills”. Please think about this topic as it relates to your class today and to a humanistic approach
7 to teaching. Let’s talk about it sometime soon in the near future. You may find this useful:
8 http://www.theguardian.com/education/2006/jul/20/schools.uk5
```

Written feedback after first observed lesson, Mentor 2017/04
This feedback is carefully composed with implied criticism of instructions in line 2 carefully hedged (‘it may be worth thinking about.’) and the onus placed upon the receiver of the feedback to validate the comment by asking them how they had felt about it (line 3). In line 5, there is clear parity building in asking for the mentee’s opinion of teaching and testing, but also some guidance in line 7-8 as to where information can be found to develop thoughts on this. (Malderez and Bodóczky, 1999) suggest that one function of a mentor can be to provide professional learning opportunities and this is exemplified here. In other cases, a much more direct approach was taken by mentors, perhaps as a function of their previous personal experience of being mentored, perhaps as a mark of their inexperience in this field (Bailey, 2006). This was not necessarily negative, however and met mixed responses, as the following two extracts will exemplify:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract 1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2016/10</td>
<td>So is it about, I want to link because your objective is giving orientations. And this activity, I’m afraid, has nothing to do with giving orientations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Mentee 1</td>
<td>Yes...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 2016/10</td>
<td>it’s more about...imperatives, yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mentee 1</td>
<td>it’s an introduction, like a link in for the grammar lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 2016/10</td>
<td>it doesn’t link. Because your objective is separate. You have one focus, small focus, which is giving directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Mentee 2</td>
<td>Direction words, content words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 2016/10</td>
<td>This could be giving instructions, it’s more about the imperative but no clear link between what you’re teaching and what she’s teaching. Maybe you think of another link but this one. I’m afraid it doesn’t work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Mentee</td>
<td>Oh! For grammar?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 2016/05</td>
<td>Yeah, you started with ‘now, we’re going to work with grammar’ and I would never, never do that (they both laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Oral feedback 1, Mentors 2016/10 and 2016/05*

These two extracts both show examples of mentors being very blunt in their feedback comments. In Extract 1, the mentor issues strongly evaluative comments in lines 1-2 (‘this activity has nothing to do with giving orientations’), line 6 (‘it doesn’t link’) and line 11 (‘it doesn’t work’) and although ‘I’m afraid’ is used as mitigation in two cases, the intonation of the delivery was unmodulated, giving an abrupt impression. In Extract 2, in comparison, the comment made by the mentor is unhedged and unequivocal (‘I would never, never do that’-line 13-14) but the intonation and delivery were such that it is likely that the mentee did not take offence and the subsequent shared laughter in the recording seems to attest to this.

In this section, I have illustrated that, as with Magdalena, relationships between the mentors and mentees were usually positive, but this was not universal and Violet was not the only
mentor to encounter difficulties in the relationship. The next section outlines some of the issues that arose when there were elements of conflict between the participants.

6.2.3 Dealing with conflict

Whilst relationships between the mentors and mentees were to a large extent harmonious and positive, as evidenced majority of these cases, these were caused by differences in expectation, often where the mentors felt that the mentees were not taking the partnership as seriously as they were. Feedback from two of the mentors in 2020 exemplifies the difficulties sometimes experienced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The student teachers that I was particularly working with were not very much motivated. They</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 were playing with their phones, not participating. One of the teachers in my group didn’t take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 any but any of the points mentioned by me or his friend seriously and he didn’t change or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 incorporate anything new when he was teaching for the second time. Even during the feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 session two of the teachers had nothing to say about themselves and also their peers which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 again was kinda disappointing and demotivating for me and the other two teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract 2

| 7 The exchanges that I had with my mentees varied and I also felt that my mentees expected |
| 8 different things from the way I was approaching it... there was very little interaction between us. |

Anonymous post-programme feedback, 2020

This feedback was anonymous and so I cannot confirm whether these mentors had options to change this 'lack of interaction'. As was seen in Chapter 5, Violet also complained that her mentees did not participate, although the data shows that there were opportunities for her to give more control of the discourse to her mentees.

There were an unusually large number of mentees in 2020 and the comments above may have been influenced by the ratio of 4:1 necessitated in that year. It is certainly conceivable that the relationships between mentor and mentees were less developed because of this. However, overall feedback in 2020 was very positive (Appendix 2) with a typical number of participants (8 of 13) choosing to write their assignments on the programme and it seems more likely that mismatched expectations were a more endemic issue for a small but regular number of the mentors in every year. As an example, in 2017, where the ratio was 1:1 ratio, Mentor 2017/17 reported a souring of the relationship when her mentee was expecting more social contact but the mentor did not feel comfortable with this. In her own words ‘you can’t play teacher with your friends’ (F-on-F meeting 2017/17).
In some cases, expectations were grounded in the mentor’s history of teacher education before the MA. Mentor 2017/15, who had experience of supporting novice teachers had an unusual amount of push-back from her mentee and stated:

1 This is really interesting and different from my previous working experience. In the institution, novice teachers in my team seemed to regard my feedback as Bible. They understood their position in the institution and my authority power well. Therefore, they were inclined to being persuaded by me. Seldom would they attempt to reject or act defensively.

Final assignment, Mentor 2017/15

This is perhaps particularly notable given that both Chinese mentee and Taiwanese mentor shared a common Chinese culture in which teachers are rarely questioned or criticised (Simpson, 2015) in the wider data of this pair, there are numerous examples of disagreement about pedagogical beliefs, an example of which is included below:

1 2017/19 Instruction? I think it’s instruction and your? And your material and the last part.
2 Mentee Yeah. But you I mean, the linking I think it’s the linking
3 Mentee The linking?
4 2017/19 The linking is the most important thing
5 2017/19 You think that’s not so important? (raised intonation – sound of surprise)
6 Mentee Linking. I also realize that the linking maybe but I think that is not the important point I think
7 2017/19 From my teaching experience I will say it is important because if you have the linking part, the students will have a clear idea about what the teacher is going to ask us to do now. And instruction and why and what’s going to do later, so this is why this part, I think is more it will help you it will help your class to go smoothly.
8 Mentee Really? (disbelieving tone)

Mentor 2017/19 Oral feedback 1

In this extract, the mentor raises the issue of linking parts of the lesson together, with a strong suggestion. Although it is delivered in a neutral tone, perhaps it is the unequivocal nature of ‘The linking is the most important part’ (line 4) which prompts an immediate dis-preferred response (ten Have, 2011) only marginally hedged ‘I think that’s not so important’ (line 5). The mentor is clearly surprised and uses the authority of her greater teaching experience (lines 8-11) to support her view, but her mentee appears unconvinced (line 12).

Despite several similar examples in their discourse, the mentor took her role seriously, spending almost an hour for each oral feedback and mentoring meeting with her mentee, and reflecting in depth on the process in her F-on-F meeting and in her assignment. Her reflections included seeing her mentee’s behaviour as defensive but admitting with some
admiration that she was ‘true to herself. Very confident in a way’ and that she saw evidence the possibility for change:

1 Yeah, but later on, if you listen to her and talk to her, I felt that she will lower her defensive wall and then to take up a little bit of your words.

F-on-F meeting, Mentor 2017/19

This negotiation over teaching beliefs was not always problematic. This extract from Mentor 2017/16, who shared a Chinese background with her mentee, indicates the way in which this common context provided a warrant for the mentor to voice and justify a difference of opinion about teaching methodology:

1 2017/16 Yeah. You need to keep some something in mind. You need to know actually beforehand some ways of answering questions and nominating students to answer
2 Mentee But in a Chinese classroom, really? Most of the time the teachers nominate students. Because no one wants to answer
3 2017/16 That’s why you’re here! (laughs) we’re the ones who are going to make some change.
4 Right? Yes. We need to...

Oral feedback meeting 1, Mentor 2017/16

Whilst there is no ultimate agreement on this (nor would I particularly expect one), I feel that the disagreement in this case had the effect of increasing rapport rather than being an inhibitor to it.

In addition to mis-matches of expectations and teaching beliefs, a further cause of conflict for some mentors was that of cultural norms. This was less common than the challenges already discussed, perhaps surprisingly, given the range of contexts that mentors came from, but was sometimes noted. Mentor 2018/01, with a background of teaching young children in Argentina, found it difficult to reconcile her preferred communicative, functional approach with the very grammar focused lesson that her Chinese mentee prepared for an audience of junior high school students. In addition to the teaching approach, the mentor found her mentees to be uncritically accepting:

1 2018/01 Yeah and they were taking notes and I was thinking like they are taking that notes because they are going to use that because they really feel that? Because they are going to use it for their assignments? Because they are going to do something different in their future career? I don’t know but is it their voices was it my voice?
2 2018/01 Are they convinced? ... in some ways it’s easier when you have that kind of person that fights against you (laughs)
3 Jo At least you get an idea of where they are.
4 2018/01 Yeah

Mentor 2018/01 Feedback on feedback meeting
This extract shows the mentor’s turmoil in reflecting on the relationship that she had with her mentees but also her thoughts about the nature of learning in this environment. Although the questions she asks are not perhaps even possible to answer, I feel that the programme was performing the function I had envisaged in promoting reflective thought.

6.2.4 Negotiating emotional support vs a pedagogic role

One of the challenges that mentors often discussed in the Monday meetings, was in reconciling their position of support with that of a role in which they were giving constructive comments to their mentees. This is a question for any mentor to consider, but was perhaps exacerbated by this context in which they were peers on the same MA programme and so arguably power-equal, but also more experienced, usually older as a consequence, often more confident and put in a position of power by the mentor role that they adopted. I have shown in Chapter 5 the language constructions that Magdalena used to bridge this gap and in this section, I will showcase other examples from the wider data set.

Rapport and trust are more easily generated and developed in some mentor relationships than others and Mentor 2018/10 experienced very different relationships with her two mentees. She found it easy to form a close and useful working relationship with the first, but her interactions with the second required significantly more thought and effort to overcome the initial emotional divide and reconcile this with giving constructive feedback. Whilst personality clashes cannot be discounted, there is evidence to suggest that this may have been due at least in part to a discontentment of the mentee with the module and the wider programme, which manifested as a reluctance to engage with her mentor in the first pre-observation meeting. In this extract the mentor is talking to both mentees and has just finished discussing the lesson of the first:

1 Mentor 2018/10 So, yeah, anything else you would like to discuss – your plans and what you are doing?
2 Mentor meeting 1 - Mentor 2018/10
3 Mentee Uh, I think mine is pretty straightforward so I just need to type it up.

The mentee’s response here (line 3) has the effect of refusing to discuss the content of her lesson with her mentor, not allowing her to see it in written form (since it is not yet typed) and suggesting that help is not required ‘I think mine is pretty straightforward’ (line 3). The mentee had done some teaching previously and her responses here may be a desire to identify as a teacher who did not require assistance. This reluctance to engage was also apparent in the post-observation feedback meeting. When asked how she felt the lesson had gone, she stated ‘I think that I was able to achieve what I had in mind’, giving the mentor
little opportunity to develop a reflective space. The mentor’s reaction to this challenge was to put considerable thought and effort into her written feedback and she states:

1. I had to pay sincere attention to the growing relationship between me and one of my mentees.
2. This mindfulness led me to put additional effort in formulating effective feedback to reduce the amount of tension and discomfort we were experiencing in our relationship.

Assignment, Mentor 2018/10

Extracts of her written feedback to her mentee demonstrate the strategies she used:

1. I enjoyed being a student in your class last Wednesday, I particularly appreciate your way of beginning the lesson in such a calm and casual manner. It worked wonderfully as an ice-breaking task for students.
2. (with reference to a later discussion task) it appeared to be a very casual discussion without any clear indication...Perhaps for our next lesson, we can think of how we can make the purpose and goals of our activity clearer.

Written feedback 1, Mentor 2018/10

Assignment, Mentor 2018/10

As with Magdalena’s data, we can see the mentor making a conscious decision to use a conversational, prose based style to lower her authority and she begins (lines 1-3) with positive, focused comments couched in an informal register ‘enjoyed, calm, wonderfully’. There is also evidence of hedging ‘it appeared to be’ (line 4), ‘perhaps’ (line 5) inclusive pronoun use (‘we’ and ‘our’ line 5) and forward facing feedback (line 5), with a reference to how change could be affected in the next lesson, rather than a reference to the observed lesson. These were all strategies that had been discussed within the programme input. The mentor also arranged for their next meeting to be one-on-one without the other mentee and whether as a result of this, or the careful feedback, or to their naturally growing relationship, their interactions in their next meeting were evenly divided, with regular turn taking and evidence of co-construction of ideas for the next lesson.

The case of Mentor 2017/15 was also interesting in this respect. She was a mature woman with a great deal of teaching experience and showed an unusual depth of reflection throughout the programme, writing detailed feedback on her own practice after each meeting in addition to the final assignment. After the first lesson observation, she felt that she needed to provide pedagogic support to her mentee:

1. My mentee presented me with various challenges. Her first lesson confirmed that she had very little experience or theoretical knowledge of lesson planning which meant I felt there were many points to be addressed if the goal of mentoring is to help mentee’s become more effective teachers, as well as promote deeper reflection.

Assignment, Mentor 2017/15
This extract highlights the responsibility she felt to help her mentee to address ‘many points’ (line 2) to become a ‘more effective teacher’ (line 3) but in the oral feedback meeting, she found it challenging to express this. Knowing her evaluation of the lesson (that there is much to improve), gives interesting nuance to the feedback data. The challenge is realised early in the discourse as the mentee begins in a confident manner that seems to indicate she does not share her mentor’s feelings:

1  2017/10  So, ok, it wasn’t like a first experience and you weren’t really nervous or anything?
2  Mentee  Actually, I wasn’t nervous at all. Well both my internship and this one because
3                                               the moment I was there, I love it. So I was like enjoying it.
4  2017/10  I can see you enjoyed it.
5  Mentee  Actually, yeah first of all I’m a bit nervous. So I exaggerated my tone a little
6  2017/10  bit but just freely because when I faced, if I face real students I wouldn’t be
7                                                     nervous.

Oral feedback 1, Mentor 2017/15

In line 1, the mentor has established the fact that the mentee has taught before, but her response is perhaps surprisingly effusive. Her initial ‘actually’ (line 2) emphasises her opposing stance to the mentor’s question ‘you weren’t really nervous or anything’ (line 1) and she is enthusiastic in her expression of how much she enjoyed the experience (line 3). Although in line 5-6 she admits to initial nerves, she again emphasises that this was minor and wouldn’t happen in a ‘real’ class. Given the context of a novice teacher who taught a lesson that the mentor considered unsuccessful, this confidence of the mentee appears to increase the mentor’s discomfort as the conversation progresses. There follows some discussion about the participation of the students in the roleplay and then nine minutes into the feedback, the mentor begins a new phase of the conversation:

7  2017/10  I’ve got a few questions for you. After the role play
8  Mentee  OK
9  2017/10  the girls did the role play
10  Mentee  Yeah
11  2017/10  Do you? What about feedback? Um...Do you...remember if you gave any
12                                                     feedback?
13  Mentee  Yeah yeah it’s really good. That kind of stuff. Yeah, just want to encourage them,
14                                                     don’t want to kill their passion.
15  2017/10  Right. OK.... But... umm so you kind of gave feedback to them, encouraging them
16  Mentee  Mhm
17  2017/10  I agree but you could you have used the feedback to...um...get a teaching point
18                                                     across, sort of ‘oh, ok’,...um. The idea was to do a role play with
19                                                     adjectives...um...Did they put some adjectives in?
20  Mentee  They put all adjectives in but I didn’t notice any on the board. I couldn’t
21                                                     remember.
22  2017/10  OK so maybe um...if the objective was...for them to do role play with
23                                                     adjectives...um...could you have done anything with the feedback there? Make a
24                                                     note?
Better Together. Jo Gakonga

22  Mentee  Yeah yeah yeah, OK
23  2017/10  ..of the adjectives and then ...report them back to the class even saying 'OK, you
24  you used that, you used that, good'?
25  Mentee  Yeah OK
26  2017/10  and maybe even talk a little bit about ...some of the adjectives or you could have
27  used that to make it a little teaching point as well. It's a possibility. Um
28  (20 second silence)
29  Do you feel you had enough time to do everything you wanted to?

Oral feedback 1, Mentor 2017/15

There is evidence of control at the beginning of this extract, (line 7) where the mentor’s statement that she has ‘a few questions’ is potentially face threatening, signalling both her authority to do this and the probable initiation of a negative phase to the feedback. The discomfort of both mentor and mentee is very apparent in the following discourse. In the case of the mentee, she initially justifies not giving her learners feedback (lines 12-13) but after this, there is little interaction except for polite backchanneling. For the mentor, she appears to want to address the issue of the target language not being used in the practice, but struggles to initially articulate this. In line 11 we see initial hesitation, use of pauses, fillers (um) and hedging ‘do you remember if..’. The discourse following this is punctuated by numerous further pauses, fillers, repetitions (e.g. line 23) and hedging ‘sort of/ maybe even/ a little bit’ all of which indicate the mentor’s discomfort. After she has made these points, there is an extended silence indicating an awkwardness between them (line 28) and the subject is changed.

The mentor’s reflection on this was that she ‘left the session feeling I had been too “kind” and not really achieved my desired goal’. Despite this, and perhaps as a result of the obvious discomfort felt by both, the mentee suggested later that she had found this feedback ‘harsh’ and also that she would have liked more ‘in-depth discussion of strategies to improve her lesson’. The mentor felt that this was what had, in fact, been discussed (Data from assignment, Mentor 2017/15).

This is an interesting example of where the mentor’s overriding desire to be supportive (described to me in her exit meeting) and not to threaten face, inhibited her ability to raise the issues that she felt were important and the balance she achieved in this case, not only left her feeling that she hadn’t addressed these issues, but also left her mentee feeling that she had been criticised. Other scholars have noted this challenge for mentors with Vásquez, (2004) as an example, noting that overuse of politeness techniques designed to make feedback more palatable, may have the effect of rendering it unclear.
A useful balance between emotional and pedagogical support is often difficult to achieve. As an addendum to the data above, my focus was more on the experience of the mentors than the mentees, but the data that I did collect from the latter, as might be expected, varied according to individuals. In some cases, mentees expressed a preference for a more direct or critical approach. An example is shown here:

**Anonymous mentee feedback 2018**

This was not the only example of similar comments, requesting ‘tough love’ and for other mentees, constructive feedback was also welcomed. This is not uncommon in the literature (e.g. Copland, 2010) and will be discussed further in Section 3.3 below, but evidence from this study shows that where the relationship between the mentor and mentee was comfortable, directive feedback was welcomed and appreciated.

**Extract 1**

1. His suggestion is very useful and he guides me to realise and talk about my problem by myself.
2. Besides, I am happy to acquire this kind of knowledge as a novice teacher. Therefore there isn’t any embarrassment for me

**Extract 2**

4. I didn’t realise that it was a problem of asking active students to answer until my mentor pointed it out. I just used to talk with students who have eye contact with me because I think they are willing to communicate. After my mentor asked me to think about it, I was conscious of my problem that I, as a teacher, was supposed to nominate quiet students in a real class where there are actually various types of students

**Mentee interviews 2018**

These extracts, collected by another mentee for her dissertation research in 2018, indicate that where a dialogic approach allows the mentee to self-identify issues (line 1) this does not lead to a loss of face ‘There isn’t any embarrassment’ (line 2-3) but that more directive feedback was also valued where mentees had not perceived particular issues ‘I didn’t realise it was a problem…until my mentor pointed it out’ (line 4-5). This concurs with Korthagen (2004) who suggests that bringing unnoticed facets of practice to more conscious noticing is the function of a reflective approach.
6.2.5 Code switching

There is one further issue that I would like to include here. In many ways, this could be seen as a bolt-on to the section as it only affected a limited number of the participants. However, I have included it because I feel that there is potentially wider impact to it, given the situation in which most mentors work where they share an L1 with their mentees. One of the factors which may affect the way in which mentoring relationships are formed and maintained in a programme such as this is the language the participants use. In this section, I will consider this and the effects that were exhibited in terms of rapport, participation and power distribution.

The majority of the mentees, over the whole length of the programme, were Chinese and the majority of the mentors over the same time were not, meaning that English (a second language for most) was the only choice of a language for communication. As all participants had a high proficiency in this language, this was rarely problematic (although evidence has been seen in Chapter 5 with Violet, that unfamiliar accents may have caused communication issues in some cases). There were nine mentors over the five year period who also spoke Mandarin (Mentors 2016/03/08, 2017/19 2018/03/04/05/08, 2019/12 and 2020/05) and in these cases, I was clear that they were free to choose whichever language they felt was most appropriate in their interactions with their mentees. These mentors often chose to use English and, when asked, suggested that this was a function of being in an English speaking university environment and performing what was viewed as an academic role. In some cases, it was also done as a courtesy to me, (despite my protestations) to allow me to understand the recordings that they were aware they were making. For some, the difference was not an issue they had considered. This extract from the feedback on feedback meeting with Mentor 2017/16 illustrates this:

1 2017/16 I think, yeah, common context might be easier for me. But the language part, I'm, I don't feel any different. I mean, as long as you can communicate. If you don't know how to say that in English, you just try to describe it and then eventually, I'll know it.
2 2017/16 OK, but there's no difference in how you feel about.. when you're speaking Chinese or English, to.. for example, to her?
3 2017/16 I don't, I don't know. I don't, I don't think...
4 2017/16 For example, if you met her and you weren't doing this, and you weren't recording this for me. OK. Would you have done it in English or Chinese?
5 2017/16 Probably Chinese. OK... Yeah, so that's interesting.

Feedback on feedback, Mentor 2017/16

2017/16 initially seems less concerned with the language although she acknowledges that a shared context may have made her relationship with her mentee easier (line 1). My further
questioning in lines 4-5 is perhaps rather directive, especially given my position of authority as a university tutor and her slight confusion in line 6 may reflect this. I was surprised, however, by her belief that choice of language would not have a bearing on communication and wished to push her to reflect on this, as can be seen in line 7-8. This has for me the desired result in eliciting an immediate response of ‘Probably Chinese’ (line 9) and a pause for reflection which appears to be a new thought articulated more slowly ‘that’s interesting’.

Other mentors on the programme who shared an L1 with their mentees were more aware of their language choices and four of them (2018/05 and 2019/05, 2019/09 and 2020/05) explored the effects of the use of L1 or L2 in their interactions with their mentees, focusing their assignments on this issue.

Mentor 2019/09’s analysis showed that code switching from English to Mandarin was more common than L1 to L2 and that in both cases, this was usually initiated by the mentor. Closer investigation of the recording of his first feedback meeting with his mentees indicates that this may be a function of the power within the discourse. He has the dominant position for the initial stages and for the first six minutes, he delivers feedback monologically in English with only minimal backchannelling from his mentees. At this point, explaining what he sees (incorrectly) as a grammar error ‘there are words you can’t use with the present perfect tense – like become, became- you can’t say I have become’ he notes confusion and he asks ‘Do you get it?’ His mentees admit that they don’t and he re-iterates, now in Mandarin. Noticeably, after the language shift, there is more interaction and participation from both mentees. After 48 seconds, however, he switches back to English ‘OK, I think the content is too hard for students’ with the punctuating ‘OK’ seeming to draw a line under the more even interaction and bring it back to a position in which he has the power and the floor. He goes on to ask about their preparation and the talk from mentee 1 is slow and stilted with evidence of self-correction ‘At.. first.. we didn’t know... what to teach...some.. other .. people taught maths or ...English but ...we think, we thought that ...’ The second mentee contributes and also seems uncomfortable, switching into Mandarin after 6 seconds to explain her point. Where the participants’ L1 is used, speech is faster, there is more evidence of overlap, a three way conversation and laughter, all of which may be indications of a more even power balance (ten Have, 2011).

Analysis of this, or the second mentoring and oral feedback meetings, is not straightforward and space prohibits greater depth of investigation. However, the majority of the talk in these latter two is in Mandarin with the mentor often, although not always, making decisions about
the language choice. In some cases, this is done overtly, for example in the second feedback at minute 11:14, when the mentee is obviously struggling to explain, he states ‘You can speak Chinese’ (spoken in English) and later in this same session (minute 21:50) he decides that this is no longer acceptable: ‘In English, sorry. You have to speak English’. In other cases, this decision about language use is made more covertly where it is the mentor who initiates the switch, again, perhaps indicating a power stance since in two cases, these shifts accompany directive suggestions about where the mentee should stand in the classroom and a request for the activities they have designed.

Mentor 2020/05 also worked with L1 and L2, finding that the use of L1 reduced power asymmetry, particularly as measured by shared laughter shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback 1 (English)</th>
<th>Mentor’s laughter</th>
<th>Mentees’ laughter</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Shared laughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback 2 (Mandarin)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assignment, Mentor 2020/05

This increased dramatically from the first feedback meeting to the second and although some increase might be expected because of a more developed relationship, this finding accords with evidence in the data from Mentor 2019/09 above.

Mentor 2019/05’s first meeting with her mentees was in English but after consulting them she used Mandarin for subsequent meetings and in her assignment, she suggests that L1 use had the advantages of being more ‘efficient and effective’ and focusing on ‘content, not language form’ and enabled her mentees to express and understand more complex concepts with ease within a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. (Assignment, Mentor 2019/05).

Discussions about language choice arose in Monday meetings on occasions, given that the use of English or a shared L1 would be a choice for most of the mentors in a role of this nature in the future. For participants who already had experience of giving feedback in their home contexts, there were both those for whom English was used, even where it was not the shared first language of mentor and mentee, and cases where L1 was the more usual medium. The rationale for the former case was that feedback in English provided a rare opportunity for teachers to practise their language and was usual within English language teacher education in that context. In the latter case, mentors cited the obvious advantages
of improved communication using L1 in contexts such as feedback, which are potentially face threatening and require nuance in language use more easily facilitated in L1.

6.3. Tension 2 – Pedagogic support vs Reflection support

6.3.1 Introduction

The second major area of concern that arose for mentors on the programme, and possibly the one which had the greatest impact on their reflection and development, was the tension between giving information, advice or resources in a directive manner and encouraging reflection using a more dialogic approach, defined by Copland et al. (2009) as ‘characterised by a large proportion of trainee talk, peer contributions, the trainer working with and valuing trainee contribution and a lack of ‘display’ questions’ (p. 18).

The question that arises and which I will address here is:

- What issues arose in the mentors finding an effective balance between support with reflection and support with pedagogy?

This section will be divided into two parts which provide confirmatory evidence and wider exemplification of the issues identified in Chapter 5;

- Talk domination and possible reasons for it
- Strategies used to balance directive (monologic) and facilitative (dialogic) support

6.3.2 Talk domination

Introduction

The following anonymous feedback from a mentee is an apposite way to begin this section on what was a challenging issue for many mentors on the programme:

This is a pattern that is also often cited in the literature (e.g. Ben-Peretz and Rumney 1991, Bullough et al. 2002, Crasborn et al. 2011 all cited in Hoffman et al., 2015), particularly for mentors in the early stages of their development (Bailey, 2006) and although it was not problematic for all mentors, a significant number found that using a recorded, data-led
approach to reflection helped to highlight their own dominance of the talk and many reported that they were shocked to realise the extent to which they held the floor, a practice which ran contrary to their teacher beliefs and their own experience of learning.

1 I had not noticed before what a poor listener I was. I felt an internal pulse to give the answers I thought my mentee needed to hear. The ironic part is that I have probably never learnt anything only because I have been told about it. And it’s not that I expected my mentee to do that either. It was this unconscious desire to tell her what I thought she needed to hear.

Exit interview, Mentor 2017/14

This extract exemplifies mentors’ common default position of ‘telling’ (I felt an internal pulse to give the answers’ – line 1 and ‘It was this unconscious desire to tell her what I thought she needed to hear’ -line 3-4) in addition to an understanding that this may not be effective (lines 2-3).

With some of the mentors, there was some evidence that this dominance had its root in cultural norms and expectations of how the relationship would be with many of the mentors coming from environments where transmissive teacher education is common.

1 I think it, it comes from the education that I received in my teacher training, previous training.
2 So most of the time, the trainer often talks, and then when trainees doesn’t agree, they just asked question, or they just, you know, fix it.

Feedback-on-feedback meeting, Mentor 2017/03

In this case the mentor’s experience of her own previous mentoring was that the trainer was usually dominant (line 2) and, perhaps more tellingly, the two options left to the mentee were to ask a question themselves or ‘just fix it’ (line 3), perhaps implying that the responsibility for this fell to the mentee.

It was not only the mentors who may have felt that a more directive approach was the norm. One mentor, for example, commented in his assignment:

1 In the first feedback session my mentees were passive, a position they claim they are socialised into in China, where teachers are revered and seldom challenged.

Assignment, Mentor 2018/13

In addition to these possible cultural influences, there appeared to be two main causes behind talk domination, the nervousness of novice mentors and a genuine desire to impart knowledge that was thought to be important. I will initially consider the evidence that mentors were often dominant in the talk, and subsequently address these two possible underlying causes.
Although this is not primarily a quantitative study, the numerical data for this issue is illuminating and in this section, sample data will show typical examples of the talk distribution patterns between mentors and mentees. As an initial overview, average talk proportions were calculated from a section of the data (n=30 mentors across three years). Results of this analysis are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor talk</th>
<th>First oral feedback</th>
<th>Second oral feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average amount of mentor talk</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of values of mentor talk</td>
<td>44 – 95%</td>
<td>45- 85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.1 Mentor talk in first and second rounds*

These figures indicate that there was little change in mentor practice in this area between the first and second oral feedback meetings, even in cases where an awareness of dominance was shown in the F-on-F meetings. This was disappointing but perhaps not unexpected given the short duration of the course and the evidence from the literature of mentors’ challenges in changing their approach even on longer programmes (Langdon, 2017). To put these figures into context, an interesting (and available) comparison from the literature is that of feedback by tutors to pre-service trainees on MA TESOL courses and the figures from Farr (2010) and Hyland and Lo (2006) show similar trends to my data with Farr’s tutors averaging 68% talk (Farr, 2010, p. 147), and Hyland and Lo’s tutors being more dominant, averaging 73.3% (Hyland and Lo, 2006).

The data above appears to show that on average, the mentors had interactions with their mentees that were relatively even. However, there are two considerations which must be noted. The first is that the range shown in the table above indicates that this remained a significant issue for a number of mentors, some of whom contributed 80-90% of the talk. The second is that these figures only show the mentors’ talk contribution, and do not take into account that in most cases, mentors were in conversations with more than one mentee. Considering mentees’ interactions in a more fine grained analysis demonstrates that individual mentees were usually not equal participants in the discourse. To demonstrate this, turn and word count data from 2016, where the ratio was 1:2 was calculated for a number of mentors and three indicative examples will be examined.
Mentor 2016/11 had an even interaction pattern with his two mentees, with an average of 53% of the talk across feedback 1 and feedback 2. The two mentees’ contributions are also reasonably equal and although Mentee 1 has a larger number of turns (average 87) compared to Mentee 2 (average 45), these are shorter since their average talk percentage is almost identical (25% and 23% respectively). This example is also notable, because in the wider data set, interactions in a group tend to be two directional, from mentor to mentee 1 and then mentor to mentee 2, without interactions within the group. This results in the mentor having half of the turns. In this case, the mentor has an average of 103 turns, with the combined turns of the mentees being 132, indicating some turns that were performed between the two mentees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016/11</th>
<th>Mentor. turns</th>
<th>Mentor talk %</th>
<th>Mentee 1 turns</th>
<th>Mentee 1 talk %</th>
<th>Mentee 2 turns</th>
<th>Mentee 2 talk %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback 1</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback 2</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 Talk percentage and turns Mentor 2016/11

The data for Mentor 2016/09 shows a different picture. Although the time for each meeting was similar to Mentor 2016/11 with all meetings being around half an hour, there are only about half as many turns (indicating that they were longer) and the mentor’s talk dominates, with an average of 80%. The two mentees have a similar amount of the remainder each, although mentee 2 has more and shorter turns on average.

In other cases, the talk distribution between the two mentees was less even as is shown in the following analysis of Mentor 2016/12’s first oral feedback meeting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016/09</th>
<th>Mentor. turns</th>
<th>Mentor talk %</th>
<th>Mentee 1 turns</th>
<th>Mentee 1 talk %</th>
<th>Mentee 2 turns</th>
<th>Mentee 2 talk %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback 1</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback 2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3 Talk percentage and turns Mentor 2016/09
This data is typical in showing the mentor speaking to each mentee individually (note his 50% turn share) with no interaction between the two mentees (their combined turns equal his). A further notable point is the uneven distribution of talk to each mentee with over three times as many words delivered to Mentee 1 as Mentee 2.

The data also shows Mentor 2016/12’s dominance of the discourse with his talk contributing 71% of the total with much longer turns on average including over 20 examples of turns exceeding 50 words. These longer turns were very rare from the mentees, with mentee 1 never speaking at length and mentee 2 only doing so on two occasions. Given the lack of evaluation inherent in this programme and the relatively equal power of the peers, it is perhaps surprising that this dominance was common but there were two commonly expressed reasons for this.

Nervousness

One reason for talk domination appeared to be nervousness on the part of the novice mentors. This can be seen to be akin to the tendency that novice teachers in a classroom often have to fill the space with talk (Walsh, 2002) and was not uncommon in the data from my study. An example is shown below from the oral feedback from the first lesson.

```
No, but you can maybe put them in groups of six, so small groups. Five or six people. So, you arrange yourselves, you arrange yourselves, so maybe not the whole group. You know, if you’ve got maybe a hundred students, yeah that’s impractical, yeah... It would be chaos (laughs) but you could do it in small groups and as they do it you could walk around and listen to them and monitor so I think, there’s always a way around it. Don’t try and do everything on a big scale. I mean I think, I think the only other couple of things I thought were, I liked from both of you I like the fact that you are using names to ask people questions. It was very rare that you asked a question to the whole group. That’s good. You are choosing people and you are making sure everybody was involved. I think that’s great... I know you know them, so you know their names, but when you have your own class it’s so important to learn names... And to direct questions to people by names. That’s great. Because you know what happens, if the teacher asks the question to the whole class one person will answer... And that same one person will try and answer everything... Because they’re the most confident. They might not be the most accurate (laughs) but they will try and take over. So I think what you two did was great... That you are asking everyone, including everybody, so
```
keep going with that… I think maybe what you could do is swap the pairs around because for both of you they were in the same pairs for everything. So maybe it could be one pair for one task and then the next task, let’s swap it around. Have a bit of movement. Talk to somebody else. Because people have slightly different abilities, it’s not always good to just be with your friend, is challenging people a bit. And a bit of movement helps to keep people awake. I know there are only four, but if it’s a bigger group then they’d be moving around the room a bit. Yeah.... But I think, it’s good to be ambitious but you’ll know as you go on how much you can include and just make sure that before you introduce the grammar point, don’t just expect them to know it. Have it introduced, or elicited at least. Before you expect them to make a sentence with it. Yeah, ...I think... You had a bit of drilling as well, I think, everyone saying things together, and that worked well. And both of you, both of you showed good knowledge, grammatical knowledge. That was good. You knew your subject, both of you. What did Jo bring up with you?

Oral feedback meeting 1, Mentor 2016/09

This shows the mentor taking one of a series of long turns (almost 500 words in this case) in which she provides positive evaluative comments (e.g. line 7-I like the fact that you are using names to ask people questions) and directives (e.g. line 15- I think maybe what you could do is swap the pairs around) but leaves no space for trainees to interact. There are frequent pauses in her speech, perhaps in an attempt to allow the mentees to interject, but she does not elicit responses and none are forthcoming. These pauses are longer in lines 15, 21 and 24, where she initiates new topics. Overall, there is a feeling that the mentor is uncomfortable in this spotlight, but does not know how to involve her mentees in a dialogue and puts them in the position of the trainee in Hawkey’s (1997) study who said ‘I sit there like a sponge’ (p.665).

Although my analysis of this extract is that the excessive talk is based in a nervousness that the mentor later confirmed (Mentor 2016/09 -personal communication), another facet of the talk here is in a desire to be helpful, to impart knowledge that the mentor felt to be important and this was another typical reason for mentors dominating the talk.

A desire to impart knowledge

From my interactions with the mentors in the mid-programme feedback on feedback meetings and the Monday meetings, it was clear that they came to the programme with a sincere desire to help their mentees; to provide support and to give the benefit of their practical knowledge of the classroom. A typical example of this, but one which was particularly well observed, was in the reflective assignment of Mentor 2018/03 who describes her path to a more dialogic approach in her assignment. This extract shows her thoughts on a critical incident in her first oral feedback meeting with her mentees.

1 The interaction went dialogically until it was interrupted by my strong desire to share my
2 own thoughts. At that moment, I opted to offer my advice when I felt that my mentee could
not ‘answer’ my question after two sensible attempts, resulting in a prolonged speech of suggestions drawing on my observation during their teaching as well as my own experience. This might be helpful for the mentees who prefer feedback that is more directive from the mentor (Hyland and Lo, 2006). Yet, I believe that more desirably, I could have built on my mentee’s idea and invited her to further develop it orally,

Assignment, Mentor 2018/03 (my emphasis)

The conversation was, as she has stated, dialogic, including questions which elicited and invited the mentees to contribute, until a point where they appeared not to be able to answer her and she provided classroom ideas in a longer turn of around 200 words. She analyses this as her ‘strong desire to share my own thoughts’ (line 1) and suggests that she could ‘have built on my mentee’s idea and invited her to further develop it orally’ (line 7) but also makes the valid point that some mentees may prefer a more directive approach. This was noted by other mentors such as Mentor 2017/14 at her exit interview, who had been working with the issue of giving advice. She states ‘I do not think that it (giving advice) is bad, probably there are things I can say that will be helpful. The issue is to be able to find the balance.’

This was also raised by mentees, not unexpectedly since all came from a culture (as has been noted in Section 3.1 above) where a more transmissive approach to all education, including teacher education, is usual. In some cases, mentors were praised for supplying practical advice in a very specific manner:

Others commented that a more directive approach would have been appreciated:

Exit feedback, 2017 Anonymous mentee
And in some cases, it appears that this balance was achieved and that the mentee also understood the value of being asked to reflect on her practice.

Exit feedback, 2017 Anonymous mentees

There is a clear connection between the difficulty in mentors dominating the talk and the question of balancing a directive approach (usually indicated by mentor-centred talk) and facilitating reflection and a dialogic approach (usually seen in more even interactions). We have seen evidence in this section that the mentors’ default stance was often one that was overly directive, often reflecting their own experiences, a scenario akin to Lortie’s apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). In the next section, evidence will be shown of the ways in which mentors on the programme addressed this issue.

6.3.3 Negotiating monologic to dialogic interactions

Introduction

The context of the programme being within an MA TESOL is perhaps an interesting one in that the mentors were already in a learning environment and had all completed a first term module in which issues in ELT (including that of directive vs transmissive education) had been highlighted. This meant that in addition to their formative personal experiences of mentoring, they were often pre-disposed to experiment with more mentee-centred, dialogic approaches. A communication with one of the mentors in 2017 exemplifies this:

1 This is my first formal experience of providing oral feedback. I have tried to make the process of giving oral feedback as dialogic as possible, encouraging the mentee to talk as much as possible, and allowing the mentee to direct the conversation. Ideas and solutions to problems should ideally be co-constructed between mentor and mentee, rather than being dictated by the mentor. Asking mentees questions which get them to articulate their reasons behind their choices is certainly of value, in that it helps them to formulate ideas which may not be
entirely clear in their minds. There is certainly crossover with teaching in terms of student
talking time vs. teacher talking time and trying to enable students to be autonomous and in
control of their learning

Email communication - reflection on first oral feedback meeting, Mentor 2017/13

Although this mentor was inexperienced (line 1) his mentor beliefs are clearly articulated here (‘as dialogic as possible’ line 2/ ‘allowing the mentee to direct’ line 2-3 ‘ideas and solutions...co-constructed’ line 4) as is his methodology (‘asking mentees...to articulate their reasons...helps them to formulate ideas’ lines 5-6) and he is able to use his previous classroom experience to effect. This attitude was the norm, with evidence in the F-on-F meetings that a dialogic stance was in line with their stated philosophy of teacher education, although (as will be shown) this was not always manifest in practice.

This balance was also one that was noted by mentees in feedback. In some cases, comments indicated that they had been happy with the balance between a directive and a reflective approach:

But there were also a significant number who would have preferred more concrete advice:

The next two sections will show data pertaining to the ways in which mentors worked to address these issues. There were two main ways this was effected; the use of questions and video as stimulated recall.

The use of questions

As has been shown in Chapter 5 with the two case studies, questions can be a powerful means to promote a dialogic approach within teaching environments (Caravaca, 2019) and this technique is used extensively by tutors with trainees (Copland, 2012). I will initially show
examples of two mentors who exercised successful questioning techniques and then
evidence from three other mentors which exemplifies challenges that commonly arose in
this area.

In Section 6.3.3 (above) the stated beliefs of Mentor 2017/13, were shown, and his recorded
data confirms that he was able to put these into practice using probing questions to elicit
and encourage his mentee’s reflection. He gave his two mentees feedback individually and
although he was the dominant party (68% and 62% of his talk in the two meetings) the talk
was characterised by short turns and regular questions designed to elicit and clarify the
mentee’s ideas. Two extracts from his first oral feedback with one of his mentees are shown
below to exemplify the manner in which he used questions to co-construct knowledge with
his mentee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2017/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Mentee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 2017/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Mentee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 2017/13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 2017/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Mentee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 2017/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Mentee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 2017/13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First oral feedback meeting, Mentor 2017/13

In the first extract, he confirms the mentee’s idea that she should write up the target
language and asks her to clarify whether this should be before or after it is elicited (line 1).
He is given an answer, but pushes his mentee further in line 3 (‘why is after better?’) to
articulate her reasoning. He does the same thing in the second extract (line 6) where he
reiterates her suggestion of splitting an activity into two parts and asks her the advantage of
her preference. This might be seen as face-threatening, but his warm tone and hedging ‘do
you think?’ equalise the power balance here. He continues to encourage her to expand on
her answer in line 10 (‘Okay, so...’) with his pause leaving the floor open for her extended
answer (ten Have, 2011).

His question in line 12 (‘What do you mean? Can you give me an example?’) appears to have
a different function since in this case, he appears to be genuinely seeking information. In
data from other mentors, and in the literature, mentors may be prone to ‘by-passing’ (Wood
Better Together. Jo Gakonga

et al., 1976) - missing cues that mentees might give and instead pursuing their own agendas - but here there is good evidence that the mentor is paying close attention to the mentee’s comments and being led by her direction; an example of a mentor who, although he lacked experience, was successfully able to maintain a dialogic approach in his interactions with his mentees.

Another example of the successful use of questioning is given by Mentor 2018/13. This is a particularly interesting case, because in addition to his recordings and assignment, I also have data from his mentee, giving her perspective because she was interviewed by another of the mentees in that year who chose to focus her dissertation research on the ‘mentees’ perspective’ of the programme.

There is evidence in the mentor’s transcript of his first feedback meeting with his mentees, that he is already taking a dialogic approach with an open, general reflection question at the beginning (‘What do you think about the whole thing?’) and more specific questions, drilling to probe for more in depth reflection as the meeting progressed (e.g. ‘There’s a point when you ask them a question and they all read from the board. Why did you put the question on the board?’). This approach was initially surprising to his mentee, who notes:

1 At first, I am not used to the way my mentor offered feedback that he preferred to ask numerous questions as elicitation. I was surprised that I was the one who said much more than him and I didn’t think about my problems and prepare the answer beforehand. During the second time, I was getting accustomed to his approach of mentoring so I responded to him with much more answer and even began to ask him some questions. This contributed to better communication and a greater atmosphere between us.

Mentee interview, 2018

It can be seen here that the mentee was not expecting this methodology (line 1) but appears to appreciate it (line 5). The implication from lines 2-3 (‘I didn’t think about my problems and prepare the answer beforehand’) is that this dialogic approach cased her to reflect more seriously prior to the second feedback and to participate more actively (‘I responded to him with much more answer and even began to ask him some questions’ line 4-5). The mentee also notes that the mentor talked less than they did (‘I was surprised that I was the one who said much more than him’ line 2) and the data bears this out, with the mentor only holding the floor for 38% of the interaction in the second feedback. Mentor 2018/13 himself was also pleased with the interactions, especially in the second feedback meeting and notes in his assignment:

1 What I find very encouraging is the mentee’s pointing out of her own mistakes without fear of criticism. She willingly shares an error she made in the lesson, displaying independent reflection and developing critical awareness of the expectations of the job.
Less successful examples

I have shown examples of successful questioning, but this was not at all universal. Although questions can be a powerful tool in mentoring, they can also have a negative effect, as was shown in Chapter 5 with Violet’s data. Myhill and Dunkin (2005) suggest that ‘Although questions invite a response and are thus notionally interactive, the nature of questions and how questions are used is of far more significance in attempting to describe the quality of classroom interactions and their relationship to pupil learning’ (p.421). Mentor 2017/10 on listening to the recording of her first mentoring stated:

1 In the first mentoring session, as my mentee was confused, I asked a lot of questions. and
2 when I listened to the recording, I got horrified...I felt that my mentee became confused
3 because I asked so many questions. She realised that she wasn’t in the right track. Because I
4 asked so many questions.

Feedback-on-feedback meeting, Mentor 2017/10

This reaction from the mentors was common and is good evidence that this data-led reflection was an effective means of raising awareness of practice. In this case, the issue was an excess of unfocused questions, but other novice mentors had simply not considered that a dialogic approach was necessary until they experienced interactions that precluded it and were required to reflect on them. An example is Mentor 2017/03 whose oral feedback on the first lesson consisted of her talking without a break for almost eight minutes in her delivery of feedback. In our F-on-F meeting, she expressed dissatisfaction with this:

1 Jo Okay, so how did you feel about your feedback?
2 2017/03 I think I didn't do a good job in the oral feedback actually,
3 Jo Because?
4 2017/03 Because what to say, it's kind of not really organized? Because I jumped from the
5 good point, then the not so good point. And then back to the good point again.
6 And, and also, when when I read, when I read your transcription, I realized that I
7 use that there's a lot of repetition. In the way I speak.
8 Jo What I thought was really interesting was who was doing the talking? What did you
9 if you look at that, that's, that's the transcription? (shows mentee a copy of
10 the transcription)
11 2017/03 Yeah. And I talk like most of the time,
12 Jo Okay. Yeah.
13 2017/03 Yeah, I think I think it's because I assumed that in the feedback is, like, mostly is
14 strictly from the trainer, or the mentor. And the mentee, if the if the mentee, you
15 know, she doesn't agree with any point, then she can feedback to me or answer.
16 But it seems like my mentee is a bit silent. she just, she just wants to listen, I
17 Jo know, and I think I really want to say a lot.
18 2017/03 So did you ask her any questions?
19 Jo Yeah. So I think, you know, when people sort of say, you know, my students didn't
20 want to speak, or my mentee didn't want to speak, I think often it's
Feedback-on-feedback meeting, Mentor 2017/03

The mentor came to the F-on-F meeting with some dissatisfaction about her feedback (line 2) but her first reflection on her feedback, interestingly, is not the talk domination, which to me was prevalent, but her lack of organisation (lines 4-7). The transcript was a useful tool here, because of the clarity with which it shows the (lack of) turn taking. With a small amount of prompting (line 16), she realises this issue (line 17 and 20) and echoes Mentor 2018/03 (Section 6.2.3 above) in her strong internal desire to give directive feedback (‘I think I really want to say a lot’ line 15). This reflection appears to have an effect and in her second feedback, although it is still rather monologic, the mentee’s contribution is now 35% and the mentor asks her opinion about the lesson in three places.

The examples above show that numbers of questions (too many/ too few) can be problematic, but the type of questions asked can also be important. Engin (2013) in the context of teacher education suggests that ‘a significant feature of scaffolding is not just the questions and prompts used, but the specificity of questions and prompts’ (p. 13). However, there is a skill inherent in questioning in a specific manner, whilst still remaining open to the mentee’s views.

Barnes’ seminal work, discussed in Leat (2008) demonstrates clearly the prevalence of ‘closed’ questions in teachers’ interactions with learners, and Bliss et al. (1996) cite Tharp and Gallimore’s distinction between ‘questioning that assesses and questioning that assists’ (p. 41). Whilst questioning as a pedagogy has a long history, it does not necessarily have the effect of increasing participation; and Wood et al., (1976) found that increasing questioning decreased pupil participation; the quality and challenge level of the questioning is crucial. The data illustrates that the same can be seen to be true in mentee/ mentor interactions.

The following extract shows an example of low challenge, closed questioning that Bliss et al (1996) term ‘hints and slots’ scaffolds in which ‘it is tempting to narrow the question down further and further until only one answer fits. The answer is a filler for the slot in the statement’ (p.47)

1 2016/12 OK, so what was the task about? Why were they going why were they reading it?
2 Mentee The primary task is to skim...
3 2016/12 Skim yeah. So skimming, what does it exactly mean? What’s skimming?
4 Mentee Getting some ideas from the text.
5 2016/12 Right. And how do people skim the text? What they normally do?
6 Mentee Umm
The topic of the talk is on ways to approach skim reading tasks and the questions asked assume knowledge about skimming and scanning that it is reasonable given the mentee’s status as MA students. These display questions either require a short answer (e.g. lines 2 and 4), are closed questions with yes/no answers (line 7) or are binary choice questions in which two possible answers which are provided (line 9-10). Turns are also short; the longest turn is 30 words, but average mentor turn length is 16 words and for the mentee, only 5.5. The pace is brisk and where there is not an immediate answer (line 6), the mentor repeats the question, reframing it in a manner that makes the answer he requires clear.

In the case of this extract, an impression is given that whilst the mentor is attempting to elicit answers from the mentees in order that they have ownership of them, the reality is that only one answer is to be allowed. The same phenomenon was noted by Smith et al (2004 p14) who report that ‘most of the questions asked were of a low cognitive level designed to funnel students' responses towards a required answer’. Myhill and Warren (2005) in their paper entitled ‘Scaffolds or Straitjackets’ note that it is easy ‘to slide from scaffolding as a learning support mechanism to scaffolding as a device to enable pupils to complete a task successfully, without necessarily grasping the learning at the heart of the task’ (p.58).

Another method that some mentors used to increase the participation and reflection levels of their mentees was to provide thinking time before the feedback by sending their mentees feedback or questions to consider before the oral feedback session. This may foreground the mentor’s agenda, but was used to good effect by some including Mentor 2020/05. He had a particular interest in reflective practice and found that by providing a writing task (in Mandarin – see Section 6.2.5 in this chapter for further reference to L1 use within the programme), the mentees’ reflection and willingness to participate were significantly increased. The questions provided in Mandarin, translated as:

1. Is there anything unexpected in your teaching? If so, please give an example.
2. What was your initial pedagogical goal(s)?
3. Do you think your goal(s) has been achieved?
4. How did you draw this conclusion?
5. Did you notice anything interesting in others’ teaching?

He states that these were ‘all ‘open questions’ which were designed to encourage mentees to go beyond factual recalls and to think probingly and tentatively’ (Assignment Mentor 2020/05). He states that a directive style was notable in the first oral feedback, evidenced by an IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback) pattern, display questions and a discourse tightly controlled by the mentor and suggests that providing these questions beforehand provided significant changes in these areas, and a more dialogic result in the second oral feedback meeting.

**Video as stimulated recall**

The mentor’s use of video as stimulated recall was discussed in Chapter 5 where we have already seen that this could be successful (Section 5.4.2) but also harsh (Section 5.5.2). This technique, which was introduced on the programme, was new for many of the mentors and most experimented with it in their second oral feedback. All of the mentees’ lessons were video recorded as a compulsory part of their module, to allow them to transcribe their own interactions and reflect on their practice. These recordings were available to the mentors and they were encouraged to use them. In many cases, as with Magdalena, this appeared to be successful in helping to achieve a more mentee-centred approach to feedback and a more dialogic approach. Mentor 2018/10, as an example, reduced her talk dominance from 81% in her first round of oral feedback, to 48% in the second where she used the video as stimulus for reflection. A reduction in talk and an increase in interaction was also reported by Mentor 2018/09.

1. The percentage of talk from the mentees increased and surpassed the percentage of the mentor to talk, thus contributing to the evidence that the interactions exhibit features of dialogic talk. However, there was a lack of multi party contributions which I would argue was due to the presence of the computer and positions we took.

Assignment, Mentor 2018/09

This further evidences the increased reflection of mentees when the video was used, an observation which is substantiated by other studies (Baecher and McCormack, 2015). It is interesting that the mentor notes a reduction in multi-party interaction (line 3). Whilst this is confirmed by the transcript, the mentees were appreciative of this form of reflection:

1. Compared to our first feedback meeting, I feel that we are digging out our teaching this time.
2. From the video, I saw something that is invisible to me...I think the use of video gives me a more objective view of my own practice.

Feedback from mentee to her mentor 2018
The feedback above, from one of the mentees uses the metaphor of ‘digging’ (line 1) and suggests that the video allowed for more objectivity (line 3), an observation which is confirmed in other studies (Charteris and Smardon, 2018). It is arguable that this added dimension to observation and reflection is available to the mentees without the aid of their mentor, as they all had access to their recordings. However, there may be advantage in viewing with others and co-constructing reflection. Another mentee also made an observation to this effect:

1 While working alone or watching my teaching video by myself, I did recognise some of my
2 behaviours and reflect by myself ... But when we were sitting together and viewed the video
3 tape we shared our experience and exchanged opinions. Sometimes there were some ‘aha’
4 moments by hearing others points and you will find that reflecting alone to some degree is
   more narrow than working collaboratively.

Feedback from mentee to her mentor 2018

These observations that video added objectivity and greater depth of reflection, especially when done collaboratively, align with the experiences in the case studies. Video use in the wider data also appears to be successful where it is used to encourage mentees to observe behaviour and used within a dialogic approach (as seen in Magdalena’s data).

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered two tensions between the three themes identified originally from the literature and seen in the case studies, drawing from the wider data set to substantiate and corroborate them. Working from a foundation of transcribed F-on-F meetings and final reflective assignments, I have been able to draw paths back to the original recordings to enable an examination of the issues that were of the greatest consequence to mentors on this programme.

In the next chapter, the Discussion, I will bring together the findings from the three analysis chapters (4,5 and 6) in order to answer my original research questions.
Chapter 7

7. Discussion

7.1. Introduction

In 2015, I had an idea for a programme which would develop reflective mentoring skills for TED participants in a practical, experiential manner, and offer support to the pre-service teachers on the MA. Over the past seven years, I have implemented that idea, reflected on it, adjusted it through analysis of the programme and also to fit with the changing environment within which it existed. I have lived it and breathed it, thought and read about it endlessly and now laid out the findings of that longitudinal study in this work.

I am now coming towards the end. I have shown an overview of the literature in the area and explained my rationale for my methodology. Over the past three chapters I have analysed the data I gathered, showing development of the programme, interactions of two case study mentoring relationships and identifying issues that mentors had from a wider set of the data. In this final part of the thesis, I want to discuss my findings to provide insights into the mentoring process that I feel have emerged and may have significance to a wider readership.

7.1.1 Research aim

In her foreword to Achinstein and Athanases’ book ‘Mentors in the Making’, Moir (2006) highlights the ‘complex skills and understandings that are rarely intuitive’ for mentors and suggests that some of the questions that we need to ask include ‘What is the pedagogy of mentoring? What sort of curriculum best supports mentoring development? and How best can we impart that curriculum?’ (Moir, 2006, p.x). Whilst there will never be simple answers to questions of this breadth, these ideas encapsulate the heart of my research. By setting up and running a mentor training programme in the particular context in which I worked and investigating the interactions and issues within it, I hoped to identify elements of the pedagogy of mentoring and how this could be taught in an effective manner.

As a reminder to the reader, my research questions are:

How can a near peer mentoring programme be designed and run in an MA TESOL programme to develop an awareness of mentoring practice for in-service teachers?

- What is the nature of the participants’ experience on the programme?
- What is the nature of the interaction between the participants?
- What notable issues arise between the participants?
I have focused on each of these questions in the previous three analysis chapters and now will review the key findings implications and discuss them with reference to the wider literature on mentoring. In doing so, I hope to answer these three related questions which may have a wider relevance to mentor pedagogy and how the insights gained may be transferrable and useful in other contexts (Frey, 2018).

- What aspects of the mentoring programme may be usefully transferable?
- What insights from the mentors’ interactions may be transferable?
- What insights from the issues arising in the programme may be transferable?

7.2. Usefully transferrable aspects of the programme

7.2.1 Introduction

Many studies have suggested that mentors are more likely to be able to employ effective strategies where they have undertaken an appropriate preparation programme (Ambrosetti, 2014; Crasborn et al., 2010; Hobson et al., 2009). It is, however, commonplace that teachers do not have access to formal preparation for a mentoring role (Hoffman et al., 2015). Achinstein and Athanases (2006) suggest that ‘Good mentors are developed through conscious, deliberate and on-going learning’ (p.6) and I feel that the programme was successful because it was able to provide this in several ways. Elements within the programme which appear to have built towards its success and development of the mentors’ skills are, in summary:

- A near-peer mentoring environment which combined a low-stakes environment with the potential for high degree of impact within a community of practice
- Information on a range of mentoring practices (frameworks/ readings) to use and the opportunity to practise using these experientially
- The opportunity to reflect, both formally and informally on their mentoring in a supportive, collaborative, data-led manner and repeat the process.

These will be discussed in turn.

7.2.2 Near peer relationships – Low stakes/ High impact

The element of the programme which, from my reading appears to be unique, is that of a mentor development programme which uses a near peer situation to both support less experienced peers/ teachers as well as developing mentoring skills in the peer mentors. There are many other mentor training programmes reported in the literature (Ambrosetti, 2014; Hudson, 2016; F. Langdon, 2011; Malderez and Bodóczy, 1999; Orland-Barak, 2012; Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017) and also other (fewer) peer mentoring programmes (Akinla et al., 2018; Lowery et al., 2018) but I have not found a programme which uses near-peer
mentoring to both support less experienced students AND to develop mentoring skills in the peer mentors.

Research on near peer mentoring is limited generally. Those that I did find within an education setting tend to focus on students in later stages of a programme supporting peers in earlier stages. Lowery et al., (2018), for example, discuss an EdD programme where students in later years of the programme mentor those who are just entering it. Akinla et al. (2018) also investigated peer mentoring in medical education and of 1861 papers found only five which investigated student peer mentoring. These studies have a common link with mine in that all participants are on the same programme with more experienced peers who are ‘further along’ in a supporting role. There is a significant difference, however, in that none of them include an element of mentor development.

The majority of mentor development programmes, on the other hand, are for in-service cooperating teachers and the participants are immersed in a situation where they are mentoring pre-service teachers in their own classroom and have responsibility for their development. The stakes, therefore, for both mentor and mentee are relatively high. The mentor plays a crucial role in the teaching practicum experience for the mentee and grades for teaching practicums will depend on the mentor’s assessment. This may put pressure on them as they are providing support to a mentee whilst also being in the position of assessing progress, a problematic balance to achieve (Tillema et al., 2011).

Ulvik and Sunde, (2013) report on a mentor development programme which uses peer roleplay to practise mentoring situations, which has the advantage of avoiding the pressures noted above, but does not allow mentors an authentic situation in which their mentoring could genuinely be of use.

These pressures do not exist in the mentoring programme in this study as there is no requirement to assess mentees’ performance and thus support and feedback can be focused on development rather than evaluation with the associated tension noted by many scholars (e.g. Copland and Donaghue, 2021) is removed. Hobson et al. (2009) suggest that mentoring is successful in ‘contexts which are relatively free from excessive emphases on externally determined goals and agendas such as prescriptive criteria for teaching practices’ (p. 211) and this is also supported by other studies (e.g. Yusco and Feinman-Nemser, 2008). In this programme, the mentors provide pre-lesson support and post lesson feedback which have potential value to the mentees, thereby experiencing a context which is arguably authentic. However, there is no responsibility for evaluating mentees and the assignment detailing the
process is optional. It would be naïve to suggest that this situation removes all face issues. Feedback is an area of discourse that is inherently face threatening (Copland, 2011) and we have seen in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 examples of the challenges that mentors faced in forming relationships and giving feedback. However, Donaghue (2022) suggests that face is ‘negotiated within and constrained by context’ (p. 39) and so, although the mentors remain in a position of power due to their relative experience, age and the position of being ‘a mentor’, the lack of assessment for both parties arguably allows mentors an opportunity and a freedom to experiment and reflect on alternative methods. This can be seen as a ‘sandbox’ in which the risk of negative effects is low and understood to be so by both parties, but the mentor’s interventions still have the potential to be of benefit to the mentee.

Researchers such as Grierson (2010) posit peer study groups as developmentally useful but in the case of complete peers, it is arguable that there is a limitation on the information that can be offered, given that all participants have similar experience. This is not the case in the programme discussed here, and the mentors therefore have the added benefit of being able to support their mentees because of their greater experience, but also exploit the ‘commonalities in their viewpoints’ (Angelique et al., 2002, p. 45) which may enable them to provide emotional support based on empathy. In addition to this, because of the reduced power differential, there is often a greater potential for a confirmation of ideas and beliefs and a greater likelihood of friendship than in a more traditional mentor/mentee scenario.

A further advantageous aspect of the near-peer element of this study was the use of recordings of mentors from previous years in the online materials with observation and analysis tasks. Fanselow (1988) details the virtues of peer observation, not for evaluative or ‘helping’ purposes but in order to allow for an alternative lens on practice. Whilst the ‘peer observation’ in the case of a recording is not collaborative in this manner, the observed party having long left the university, these extracts of practice were a further way to share experience. Using recordings from previous iterations of the programme also reduced the difficulty that Harrison et al. (2005) experienced. They report that the examples they showed of peers within the group were ‘received with great appreciation’ but that it raised important questions about ‘placing one teacher on such a pedestal’ (Harrison et al., 2005, p. 100). Using examples (with permission) from previous participants avoided this issue.

7.2.3 Input and experience
The second aspect of the programme which appeared to be successful was the access to information about mentoring and the opportunity to use this in a practical, experiential
manner. The mentors on the programme came from and would return to a wide range of contexts and my goal was not to instil a set of techniques that would constitute ‘Best Practice’ but to do two things - provide access to a range of mentoring ‘tools’ and, at the same time, give mentors the opportunity in which to experiment with them and assess their suitability for purpose.

The first of these steps is information. This was provided in two main ways; the TED seminars, including suggested reading, and the online materials, including examples of mentor practice from previous iterations of the programme. In this way, the mentors were able to gain insights into a range of mentoring methods including both theoretical (e.g. of mentor belief) and practically useful aspects (e.g. sentence stems for politeness in feedback). This suggests an idealised lack of bias, and it should be conceded that there was an emphasis on a mentee-centred, facilitative approach throughout the programme, given the balance between this and a more directive manner was, for many mentors in the direction of the latter. Akbari (2007) suggests that ‘teachers need to practice their trade based on authority and accepted practice (or routines) for a while to feel secure and to be able to move to the next stages of development and professional growth’ (p.199) and I would argue that the same is true for developing mentors. Providing frameworks for thought around mentoring such as Heron’s intervention categories (Heron, 1989) and examples of mentor interactions from both the literature (e.g. Copland, 2012; Orland-Barak and Klein, 2005) and from previous mentors, was reported as helpful by many. Information alone, however, was not sufficient and the strength of the programme was that this was embedded in a practice based model. This has been long recognised in pre-service teacher education as a necessary ‘practicum turn’ (Mattsson et al., 2012) for mentors too, this is a strong model of development that continues a tradition stretching back to Dewey and which Hoffman et al (2015) in a wide review of mentoring literature found is an effective way to induce change in practice for mentors.

The opportunity to learn mentoring ‘tools’ and have the opportunity to use them, not once but over two cycles, was fundamental to the success of the programme, but there was one further element which completes the jigsaw and this was the inclusion of collaborative, data based reflection.

7.2.4 Reflective, evidence based collaboration
As has been seen in Chapter 4, Mann and Walsh’s (2013) work has had a significant effect on my thinking and the development of the programme and they suggest that reflection should
be data-led, dialogic and collaborative. It is this that I see as the third important strand of the success of the programme and one that is potentially transferrable.

The programme was based on encouraging a reflective approach to development and built on the data-led philosophy that cuts across other modules on the MA, such as Spoken Interaction where Conversation Analysis techniques (ten Have, 2011) were taught. Encouraging mentors to base reflection on recordings of their practice, rather than memories of it and to discuss this with others in TED seminars, in the Monday meetings and in their assignments were powerful tools for development and there is good evidence from these of perceptive reflection on practice (see Chapter 6). This technique is used in other studies (Langdon, 2011, 2014; Orland-Barak and Rachamim, 2009) but is absent in much of the mentor training reported in the literature (e.g. Ambrosetti, 2014) and it was an aspect of the programme that was appreciated by mentors and benefitted their development.

The programme was also collaborative and can be seen to have developed a community of practice, between the mentors as a group and myself. Wenger defines this as ‘a group of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger, 2010, p. 125) and suggests that this is a powerful way in which people learn. Although not power-equal, the relationships between myself and the mentors were informal and friendly and the regular meetings both inside and outside the TED module (TED seminars, F-on-F meetings, Monday meetings) cemented relationships and allowed the growth of close, supportive groups that were a strength of the programme. It is possible that my own identity as a student (albeit for PhD studies) may have supported that power-equilibrium or that it may have been influenced to some extent by the inclusion of homemade cake (!) but my feeling is that it was more likely a function of the informality between students and staff in the department more generally, an aspect that surprised and pleased many of the mentors.

One of the strengths of this community of practice was in its ability to enhance reflection. Communities of practice require both participation and reification (Lave and Wenger, 1991) as discussed in the Literature Review, and the regular discussion and reflection provided an opportunity for the latter; for practice to be theorised. Clarke et al. (2014) state that reflective practice is currently a given and ‘evident in virtually every university’s Teaching Practice Handbook’ (p.178) and warn against it becoming meaningless unless teachers are explicitly supported in their reflections. I would argue that the same is true for novice mentors and that an environment in which mentors work together and collaborate and are
given support with data led, collaborative reflection (transcribing and analysing data, discussion with peers and a tutor) has been shown by in my data to be productive.

To temper this victory narrative a little, this way of working provided significant benefits to the participants but it should be noted that this did not automatically lead to changes in practice. My research question asks how a near peer mentoring programme be set up in an MA TESOL programme to develop an awareness of mentoring practice for in-service teachers (my emphasis) and there is robust evidence that it did this. However, in the early stages of the programme, I had hoped to be able to show a ‘change in mentoring practice’ and as has been seen in Chapters 5 and 6, whilst there was some evidence of that for some of the mentors, this was not universal. I realised in the first two years that given the very limited time and exposure to practice that the mentors had, that to identify major changes in mentoring behaviour was probably unrealistic. In an eight or ten week programme comprising two cycles of pre-lesson mentoring meetings, observations and feedback conferences, it is more reasonable to hope to raise awareness of some of the prevalent issues, of individual practice and to bring mentors’ beliefs to a more conscious level.

As a useful comparison, let us consider Langdon’s (2014) study of 13 mentors over a one to two year mentor development programme which included 10 professional development sessions per year, transcription and analysis by the mentors of their coaching conversations with their mentees, regular goal setting and collaboration with other mentors. In this case, all participants exhibited some level of change, but only five of the total made significant changes. These five were also those who worked on analysing the greater number of their mentoring conversations (from 8 to 11 over the course of the programme). Comparing this two year study with my ten week programme, it is perhaps not surprising that behavioural changes were limited for the majority of the mentors with only two cycles of practice and reflection.

Although a blunt instrument, the easiest marker of change towards a more facilitative approach is reduction in tutor talk and in some cases, as has been shown in Chapters 5 and 6, there were changes in mentors’ approaches which were evidenced by this. However, this was far from universal, even where mentors’ feedback on their practice showed they were aware of the limitations for a mentee where a mentor is dominant. This accords with Louw et al. (2014) who found that mentors’ avowed beliefs were not always consistent with their practice in feedback and that practice was more likely to be consistent with belief where these beliefs accord with experientially gained knowledge.
Whilst measurable change in practice is an optimal goal for any teaching and learning environment, I feel that no change is possible without an initial increase in awareness. My data reflects findings in other studies that mentor training can raise awareness of issues in the talk and relationships between mentors and their mentees (Arnold, 2002; Graves, 2010; Orland-Barak and Klein, 2005; Stanulis, 1994). The levels of reflection varied between mentors and this may be a function of their ability to articulate, their academic ability, or simply their ability to play the ‘reflection game’ (Hobbs, 2007) since a major part of this was in the form of an assessed academic essay. However, there is robust evidence that the programme caused the mentors to reflect on their practice in the F-on-F meetings, the Monday meetings and in their assignments (see Chapter 6) and it may be that the programme planted seeds for further development, both in terms of raising the mentors’ awareness of their practice and in giving them tools to examine and refine it.

7.2.5 Resources developed

One further aspect to be discussed under the umbrella of usefully transferrable aspects of the course is that of the online materials that were developed as part of the programme.

I came to this project with a personal interest in online education and this has undoubtedly influenced the amount of time and effort I have spent in developing supporting online materials for the mentoring programme. As a reminder to the reader, the programme materials can be viewed in Appendix 2.

Overall, whilst there is evidence of some successful use of the materials I developed, as has been described in Chapter 4 (Section 4.4.3), uptake on these was not high and there are four questions that need to be answered if materials of this nature are to be included in a face to face course.

*Is it integrated?*

If online materials are to be used as an adjunct to the programme to provide access to further input, then this need to be integrated in a two-way process if uptake is to occur (Kauffman, 2015). In this case, I feel that only a one-way process occurred. The online materials were aligned with the stages of the programme and therefore relevant to it (Kemaloglu and Bayyurt, 2022), but they did not feed back into the programme and so stood outside it. A possible way to address this could be to base an agenda for the weekly discussion meetings on content from the online units but this would involve a further time commitment from mentors and require all to participate.
Is it interactive?
There were interactive elements to the online materials, but these were all based on quizzes or reflective questions and not on forums or discussion in the face-to-face meetings. (Song et al., 2004). The question of interactivity perhaps links to that of integration, and both could be addressed in the same manner.

Is it necessary?
This is perhaps the most fundamental question and underpins the first two considerations. Whilst weekly ‘to do’ reminders were helpful, in a programme such as this, which is both time intensive and includes a significant amount of face to face course, my feeling after five years is that this kind of online input is probably superfluous and could be cut significantly or eliminated, allowing tutor time to be spent more productively on the weekly meetings and the feedback on feedback. It is, however, perhaps a useful additional support for those who were more interested in investigating the topics more thoroughly or who lacked confidence.

Whose needs does it fulfil?
I have discussed reflexivity at some length in terms of reaction to data, but it is also an important factor in ongoing decisions made in an action research project such as this. If you only have a hammer, the saying goes, all problems look like a nail, and in retrospect, I feel that it was perhaps my own interest in online education which drove the development of this part of the programme, rather than the needs of the participants.

The thoughts above are, I feel, valid and worthy of consideration, but I remain convinced of the great strengths of online education (Salmon, 2013) and wanted the work done on this to have a wider impact. Although some of the materials were perhaps superfluous in the context of the programme, as a result of the work already completed on the online materials, I have developed a self-access programme on my website, called ‘Mentoring Resources’ which contains video based training material and links to useful reading as well as the body of this thesis. It will be made publicly and freely available after the viva. I hope that this will be a useful resource for any tutor in a similar position to set up a near-peer mentoring programme but will also have relevance and use to a range of teachers who are in a mentoring position. This may include cooperating teachers, teacher educators or senior teachers in schools who are observing and mentoring staff. This has been mentioned in previous chapters, but as a reminder to the reader, the link is in Appendix 2.
7.3 Transferrable insights from the mentors’ interactions

7.3.1 Introduction

Successful mentoring is a skilled process and it is difficult to break down into constituent parts. All aspects are interlinked and impossible to separate entirely. However, the rationale behind the whole project was to help mentors to develop and in order to make any complex information learnable and teachable, frameworks are helpful (Duran, 2016). The Literature Review in Chapter 2 identified three important aspects of mentoring and the analysis of the data in Chapter 5 used these as a framework. As a reminder, these are:

- Emotional support – *the affective aspect to being a mentor. Developing rapport, trust and a friendly environment for the mentoring process.*
- Support with pedagogy – *advice about teaching, including feedback on practice, tips and techniques for the classroom and help in finding resources.*
- Support with reflection – *encouraging the mentee to examine their own practice and reflect in both informal and data led ways.*

The pattern of these three aspects, as was shown in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3), are not uncommon in the literature. However, they are often described as ‘competing dominant narratives’ (Orland-Barak and Klein, 2005, p. 395) rather than facets of a single whole. The same paper, suggests that these approaches are alternatives, stating, for example, that ‘By contrast to therapeutic views, other mentoring practices adopt an apprenticeship/instructional orientation’ (p.381) and that ‘these narratives are embedded in two conflicting discourses that shape the practice of in-service mentoring in Israel’ (*my emphasis*) (p.393). Other scholars such as Wang and Odell, (2002), also identify three aspects of mentoring - humanistic, situated apprentice, and critical constructivist (p.492) - which accord to the three areas in my study. In their case, they admit that these are not mutually exclusive but they warn that ‘the differences and similarities between them often are not clearly identified or conceptualized, and the consequences for mentoring and learning to teach are seldom discussed’ (p.492).

I would argue that a separation of these three aspects is neither an accurate picture of normal practice from my data or experience, or a helpful model for novice mentors. In my view, these factors all have an importance and can and should be viewed as an interdependent whole. I identify these as a triangle in the following manner:
Although it is a simplification, this is a useful metaphor and I feel that there is a pedagogical advantage for novice mentors in a framework from which to begin to see mentor pedagogy in a more logical manner. I hope that this will resonate with mentors who are developing their practice and allow a memorable and logical approach with which to examine their actions and consider alternatives. A place to start to consider practice.

All three aspects are important and have a role to play in the relationship between a mentor and mentee. In the diagram, they have been drawn as equal in size to denote the importance of each aspect. It is also not accidental that the combined shape is the same as the shapes of the individual parts. This is a reminder of the holistic nature of any mentoring relationship. None of these aspects of mentoring stand alone, they are all interlinked and interdependent. The uppermost triangle is deliberately ‘Emotional support’ due to its primary importance. The relationship between the mentor and mentee, as with most teaching relationships, rests on the keystone of their rapport and as a result, should be an aspect that mentors do not assume or take lightly. The challenge of mentoring, as I see it, is in including all three of these aspects in a balance which is appropriate to the context, the relationship between the mentor and mentee and the stage of development of both.

This triangular model is influenced by Gabrielatos (2022) who considers the ‘shape’ of a language teacher to be composed of a triangle constructed from a Person who Teaches Language i.e that there are three important aspects of teaching consisting of personality traits which equate to rapport with learners, knowledge of teaching methodology and the teacher’s own proficiency with and knowledge of the language they are teaching. He suggests that whilst all of these have importance, a triangle of them with the greatest area
(i.e. where all three qualities are equally developed) will produce the most effective language teacher. I feel that a similar idea is helpful in the field of mentoring. However, although emotional support, pedagogical support and support with reflection are all necessary and need to be balanced, that balance may have a very different appearance dependent on the context and the individuals concerned.

As stated above, all three aspects are viewed as interdependent. A warm rapport with mentees is likely to be associated with a more equal relationship, leading to an environment in which there is balance in interaction and a more reflective stance. These alone, without support with pedagogy, however, will often lead to mentee frustration (Bradbury and Koballa, 2008). Mentees in my study have been shown to value ‘tough love’ and there are good reasons to include constructive advice about teaching and pedagogic ideas and resources. Provision of such helpful ‘tips and tricks’ and honest constructive feedback on practice may also feed into a closer, more supportive relationship, where expectations of the relationship are met. All three aspects are necessary and overlapping and the triangle model may be a useful way of conceptualising this. The more interesting aspect of my study and a useful addition to this heuristic, is the tensions that exist in two directions between these three aspects.

7.4. Transferrable insights from the issues arising
7.4.1 Introduction
As was shown in Chapter 6, between the three aspects of mentoring identified in Chapter 5 and discussed above, there are two main tensions that were noted in the programme and these can be seen as existing in a vertical and horizontal direction on my triangular diagram (see below as a reminder).
These two tensions were used as an organisational principle in Chapter 6 with the findings divided into a tension between emotional and pedagogical support (the vertical arrow) and support with pedagogy and reflection (the horizontal arrow). As with identifying the three areas, these two tensions are a simplified version of the complicated relationship of a mentor and mentee, but I feel that it has the potential to illuminate the areas of mentoring that are of concern to novice mentors.

The first of these tensions, between providing emotional support to a mentee and being in a teaching role, is often exacerbated in situations where formal assessment is required (Tillema et al, 2011). and so arguably is reduced in the case of the mentoring programme (Andersen et al, 2018). However, there were still questions around this dichotomy for mentors on the programme The diagram illustrates that pedagogical support and reflection support are both part of the role of being a ‘teacher’ within the relationship. These then have to be balanced against the ‘friend’ role in giving emotional support.

![Figure 7.3 The tension between being a ‘friend’ and being a ‘teacher’](image)

The second is the tension between supporting pedagogy with advice/feedback and resources and supporting reflection by increasing the mentee’s awareness of their practice. It can be seen as the difference between a directive and facilitative role. Between the mentor ‘telling’ and ‘asking’.

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Figure 7.3 The tension between being a ‘friend’ and being a ‘teacher’
As was shown in Chapter 6, there were several ways in which issues arising over the course of the programme helped me to gain further insight into these two dichotomies, both of which can be seen as clines with two extreme limits as illustrated below:

![Diagram showing the tension between providing pedagogic support and encouraging reflection](image)

*Figure 7.4 The tension between providing pedagogic support and encouraging reflection*

From this it can be seen that any one of these roles is limited and that the ideal lies somewhere along the two clines. There is, of course, no simple answer about where an effective balance lies and this will depend on a range of factors (Engin, 2013) including the mentor’s and mentee’s personality, their relationship, the developmental stage of the mentee as well as external factors such as institutional requirements and cultural expectations. In this next section, I will consider both of these tensions, considering other scholars’ work in the area.

I feel that a mentor’s skill lies in charting an appropriate course along the clines of these dichotomies. The balance will depend on a myriad factors including the context, the culture, personalities of the mentor and mentee and stage of development of the mentee (Clarke et al., 2014).

7.4.2 Emotional support vs a ‘teaching’ role – a tension

Many studies have found that mentees expect their mentors to offer on one hand, assistance with tasks, feedback and advice on teaching, and on the other, emotional support. This is true in studies of pre-service teachers and novices (Becker et al., 2019, p. 13). On the surface, it may seem that these two functions of a mentor are unrelated and therefore not difficult
to reconcile. However, particularly in situations where the mentor is in the position of assessor (a common occurrence for pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers) there can be difficulties in forming a close relationship whilst the role also has an evaluative function. As has been described, the near-peer aspect of this programme mitigates this challenge to a large extent, but there can still be difficulties. As one of the mentors noted in Chapter 6 ‘you can’t play teacher with your friends’.

The relationship does not necessarily have to be one of ‘friends’ but studies such as Maynard’s (2000) which have sought mentees’ opinions on what is important in a mentoring relationship, find that aspects such as being recognised as individuals, and warm, friendly relationships are important. What should be noted here is that other factors such as clear expectations, hearing constructive criticism and receiving advice were also highly prized (Maynard, 2000, p. 28). A balance is clearly required.

As was shown to be the case in my study (Chapter 6 Section 6.2.3), mis-matches in expectations can be the root cause of difficulties in this area and Bradbury and Koballa’s (2008) study of two interns with cooperating teachers illustrates similar issues based on different expectations of what the roles involved. They theorise this as ‘border crossing’ in which barriers to a successful relationship were often imposed by lack of clear communication. In their study ‘neither mentor nor intern felt they developed the close relationship they had hoped for’ (Bradbury and Koballa, 2008, p. 2142).

In some studies, it has been reported that mentors err on the side of emotional support and are reluctant to provide advice, feeling that this may be disrespectful (Zanting et al., 1998), that it may damage their relationship (Bullough, 2005; Norman and Feiman-Nemser, 2005) or out of a principled coaching approach to mentoring (Lammert et al., 2020). This reluctance to engage in the potentially face threatening act of feedback has also been seen in the data from this study where the near-peer nature of the relationship meant that the mentors in some cases felt that they lacked the authority to act in even a constructively critical manner.

Other scholars, and this appears to be more common in the literature, have found that mentors take an over-evaluative stance and are guilty of ‘judgementoring’ (Hobson, 2016; Hobson and Malderez, 2013) or believe that their role is to ‘serve as a model’ and ‘be a master who corrects’ (Franke and Dahlgren, 1996, p. 631). This overt intention was not prevalent in the data in my study, but we have seen with Violet’s data and others in Chapter 6 that a dominant stance was common.
In many cases, the balance that mentors achieve on this cline appears not to be a conscious one. As an example from the literature, Orland-Barak and Klein’s, (2005) study shows the difference between the mentors’ graphical illustration of their relationship with their mentees (e.g. birds singing in harmony) in comparison to the lived experience. These were often very different. It was also common in my data that mentors were surprised by their interactions on listening to their recordings about the differences between their intended relationships and the actuality ‘My voice sounds so rough!’ (Mentor 2017/10). There is robust evidence that the mentors often made efforts to address this balance and in the recordings from the second part of the programme (see data in Chapters 5 and 6) they were using the strategies given to them in input, such as use of modal verbs, forward facing feedback and hedging of evaluative talk. This appears to be a way in which a mentor development programme can play a useful part in making mentors more aware of their practice and also in providing suggestions for ways to approach face threatening acts such as feedback and advice. Again, I see this as providing novice mentors with an array of tools to use whilst also emphasising that the choice of tool for a particular mentoring situation can only be made by the mentor themself.

7.4.3 Pedagogic support vs reflection support – a tension

The second area of tension identified in Chapter 6 is the manner in which a mentor balances providing information to the mentee - pedagogical advice, feedback and teaching tips or resources - with encouraging reflection and this is an area which may be of wider interest for other mentoring programmes and for mentor pedagogy. As was shown in Chapter 6, talk domination is a common theme in my data and in the literature (e.g. Orland-Barak and Klein, 2005) but an over-reliance on reflection can be limiting or frustrating, especially for novice teachers. Although the citation is over 30 years old, Gore and Zeichner’s (1991) statement (noted in Chapter 1) resonates with me particularly: ‘We do not accept the implication that exists throughout much of the literature, that teachers’ actions are necessarily better just because they are more deliberate and intentional’ (p.120)

As has been argued in the previous section, both of these aspects are a necessary part of good mentoring, but with limited time available, these need to be prioritised appropriately. This can be viewed as the balance between a directive and a facilitative approach but I have chosen not to use this nomenclature because of the negative connotation associated with the former.
In many ways, this was the aspect of the interaction which most interested me. As a teacher educator with extensive experience of work with pre-service teachers in an environment where time pressures are considerable and certain criteria for assessment have to be met, I was very aware of the delicate balance that needs to be found between giving advice and encouraging reflection. Much has been written of this dichotomy (e.g. Brandt, 2008; Copland, 2010, 2012; Donaghue, 2019) and I see this as the area in which the greatest skill as a mentor lies. The tension between emotional support and a teacher role (discussed above), can often be mitigated by a mentor’s natural interpersonal skills, as was the case with Magdalena, even though it may also be supported by training. However, finding an appropriate balance between ‘telling’ and ‘asking’ seems, from my data and from the literature to loom large as an area which mentors find most challenging and for which training is especially helpful and can be seen to bring changes. Langdon (2014) as an example, found that her training programme resulted in ‘fewer closed questions, interruptions, time spent telling/describing, speaking for the mentee and affirming comments’ (p. 47).

My feeling is that this cuts to the heart of one of the greatest difficulties of mentoring; the balance between allowing mentees to reflect and develop in their own way and yet providing advice and guidance on issues when there is good reason to do so.

Pre-service and novice teachers often desire and are appreciative of a directive supply of information and critique of their practice and there are good reasons to include these. Akbari (2007) reminds us that it is important for teachers to have ‘accepted practice (or routines) for a while to feel secure and to be able to move to the next stages of development and professional growth’ (2007, p.200). This is clearly dependent on the teacher and some are
more able to draw on their past experiences of being learners (Lortie, 1975) and build on this than others are. However, many scholars remind us that there is a danger in expecting reflection alone to be enough as in many cases, teachers are not able to see issues with their practice.

Problem identification needs trained eyes, which many teachers, especially novice ones, lack. Even if teachers can identify what the problem is, there are many instances when they are incapable of taking any action.

(Akbari, 2007, p. 199)

Again, this was upheld in my data and several mentees specifically stated that their mentee had raised their awareness of aspects that they would otherwise not have noticed.

Providing guidance, advice, resources and feedback on practice is therefore an important part of the job of a mentor but from my data and my reading, in the majority of cases, a significant issue in mentoring is that the balance is skewed towards supporting pedagogy and insufficient attention is paid to encouraging reflection. Clarke et al.’s (2014) literature review found that the ‘majority of feedback given by cooperating teachers tends to be technical, emphasizing the what and how rather than the why of practice’. This is not always the case, and Bradbury and Koballa (2008) (mentioned above in Section 7.4.2) found that in their study, the mentors erred perhaps too far to the side of expecting reflection and relationships with their mentees suffered because of this. However, the norm is that mentors tend to take a dominant position and tell more than they ask. In the case of my mentors, there is evidence that this may have been a result of their own transmissive initiation into the teaching profession but they were not alone. Ben-Peretz and Rumney’s (1991) research demonstrated that the vast majority of the post lesson conferences they recorded (29 of 31) were evaluative, with cooperating teachers relying on ‘their own wisdom of practice and … traditions of “successful” teaching modes’ in an authoritative manner, whilst their pre-service mentees were ‘mostly passive’ (p517). Other studies report similar interaction patterns (e.g. Crasborn et al., 2010).

There may be different reasons behind this. In many cases, time may be an issue. As was seen in Chapter 2, the Literature Review, even in situations where there is an officially designated for mentoring, this can often be truncated because of a busy teaching environment. Looking again at Ben-Peretz and Rumney’s (1991) study, where the majority of interactions were evaluative, meetings were always short (between 10 and 20 minutes) unless the university supervisor was present. Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1993) take a pragmatic stance and state that 'When time is short, telling beginning teachers what to do
may be more efficient than helping them think through alternative possibilities' (p.5) and whilst I have sympathy with this statement, it is clear that a directive approach may be less effective. Akcan and Tatar’s (2010) study of conversations between pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers in Turkey found that where advice was given without an opportunity for discussion, mentees often did not understand the rationale for a particular practice and so were not able to use this in a wider teaching context.

Many mentors agree that mentoring should be a ‘developmental activity, with the emphasis on empowering and enabling [mentees] to do things for themselves’ (Clutterbuck, 2004, p. 11) but often for wholly positive reasons, these mentors want to give their mentees support to the extent of telling them what to do. This was a common experience in my programme. Stanulis’ case study also exemplifies an illuminating example of the way in which mentors are often torn.

*I have to practice a lot, to not just tell. Because my way works so well for me! For me. You know, and I just think, oh, if I just told them how. I really don’t want to try to develop student teachers who are carbon copies of me. I really don’t.*

(Stanulis, 1994, p. 34)

This insight from ‘Barbara’ the cooperating teacher in this study illustrates an issue with an approach that is more mentor led and focuses more on support with pedagogy; that it is likely to reduce innovation, change or adaption – developing ‘carbon copy’ teachers. (Evertson and Smithey, 2000) warn that focusing on teaching advice and strategies reduces the possibility of implementing ‘reform based philosophies (p.303) and Sundii, (cited in Bradbury and Koballa, 2008) reported interns mimicking the exact body language and vocabulary of their mentors, potentially leading to reduced professional development.

There are innumerable reports of mentors who dominate the relationship and do not allow space for mentees to develop autonomously, or to co-construct information with their mentees. There is also evidence of this in the data in Chapters 5 and 6 and talk domination was the most common issue that I saw amongst the mentors on the programme. Achinstein and Athanases (2006) also suggest that practising mentors also often resort to a ‘reductive’ approach with mentees offered development in the form of resources or workshops but not given space to reflect on their personal practice with their mentor. As with the tension between emotional support and a teaching role, the way that this balance is actualised is not necessarily a conscious choice. Mentors are often unaware of this facet of their interactions and are surprised when confronted with their dominance of the conversations. This was shown in the literature review and confirmed in my data. Donaghue (2020) acknowledges
that some mentors’ style of feedback contradicts their mentor beliefs, but also points out that some mentors are ‘intentionally dominant, typically control the floor, have longer turns, and initiate talk and topics’ (p.402). As has been noted, many of the mentors on my programme came from backgrounds where teacher educators represent authority and this may exacerbate the challenge. In either case, I feel that any mentor training programme, including this one, needs to make mentors aware of the limitations for mentee development if they are not allowed to be involved in the process and of their own propensities to dominate talk by reflecting in a data-led manner. I feel that this was effectively achieved with many of the mentors on the programme.

One way to help mentors to move towards a more reflective approach is the use of video as stimulated recall. There are multiple studies which have shown this to be useful (Baecher and McCormack, 2015; Nilsson and van Driel, 2010) and there is also evidence in my data from a number of mentors that this reduced mentor domination and allowed for greater reflection (e.g. see Magdalena’s data in Chapter 5). As it was a technique that was novel for most of the mentors, I would suggest that it was a useful addition to the programme but as with all innovations, introduced with an awareness of its potential pitfalls. As an example, Stegman (2007) found that the use of video allowed pre-service mentees to have a greater awareness of and concern for the learning in the classroom but it is notable in this study, that much of the interaction shown as data, shows rather low level display questioning on the part of the cooperating teacher. An example is shown below:

M1: And what do you do when you have a pupil who wants to talk all the time?

ST1: Well, if he is not disturbing the others it is OK. But he is disturbing the others and he does not raise his hand.

M1: Yes, but it is a question of democracy in the classroom. You have a responsibility as a pedagogue to invite everyone to participate in the discussion. It is very difficult to judge if a pupil should be allowed to talk or not. When is it OK to talk and when is it not?

(M1 and ST1, Stimulated-recall session #3, ST1 lesson #2

(Stegman, 2007, p. 75)

Although the mentor here is arguably eliciting reflection, the pattern seems closer to the filler and slot questioning that we saw was an issue for some mentors in Chapter 6. Engin (2013) points out that ‘the onus is on the trainer to use the appropriate scaffolding question or prompt at that particular moment with that particular trainee’ but also that the mentee also bears some responsibility and ‘scaffolding can only be such if the trainee demonstrates some reflection’ (p.18).
As has been stated, this tension is a cline and a balance is required. Pete Frazer, the eponymous ‘exemplary mentor’ in Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) paper, summarises this balance well in wanting to avoid “imposing his own style” but also not “sounding too laissez-faire.”(p.21). Whilst wanting his mentees to reflect and find a path that was wholly theirs, he also gives them an understanding of what research and experience can show about teaching and learning and not ‘give the impression that anything goes’ (Feiman Nemser, 2001 p.21). He considers his approach to be co-thinking with his mentees, that the thought process is theirs, but he brings his experience and knowledge to the process to allow them to take from it what is useful for the stage that they are at and the challenges they are currently facing. Bradbury and Koballa (2008) also recommend that in mentor development programmes, ‘discussions could explore ways to balance the need for mentors to provide direction while still allowing the intern to find his/her own teaching identity’ (p.2143).

7.5 Conclusion

Bradbury and Koballa (2008) suggest that more information is needed about mentoring relationships and call for investigations which ‘provide detailed inquiry into the day-to-day interactions that occur in these partnerships and the tensions that can interfere with the development of effective relationships’ (p. 2144). I feel that I have achieved this in the following ways:

- Developed and run a mentor development course in an environment in which had previously not been tried and shown that this can have beneficial outcomes for the mentors, the mentees and the department.
- Identified aspects of the programme which may be of wider application including guidelines and suggestions for a reflexive approach to mentor development.
- Identified from the data and my reading, a heuristic which I feel may be of use in identifying and discussing issues and practices of mentor pedagogy, again, for a wider application.

For teacher educators planning to develop programmes for mentor development, the two crucial aspects to consider are an awareness of these tensions, and work on establishing appropriate balances between emotional support and a pedagogic role, particularly with regard to developing rapport and delivering feedback with an awareness of face and politeness appropriate to the situation and between support with pedagogy and encouraging reflection; becoming more aware of tendencies to dominate as a mentor and working towards becoming a ‘co-thinker’ (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).
Chapter 8

8. Conclusion

8.1 Introduction
In this thesis, I have described and analysed the development of a mentor training programme in the context of a British university MA TESOL. I will conclude by considering the limitations of my research, the ways in which my findings have been and may be implemented and recommendations for further research.

8.2 Limitations
There are limitations to all research and in this section, I will identify those pertaining to this study. Practitioner Research, has long been considered a ‘second tier’ research methodology (McWilliam, 2004) and may not be considered to be rigorous. However, data collected over a five year period in a longitudinal manner in this programme, with multiple iterations of the programme perhaps allow conclusions to be drawn with greater generalisability (Robson, 2016). However, as has been shown in Chapter 4, there were several changes over the five year period, meaning that it is difficult to compare directly from year to year. The first year, 2016, was arguably a pilot study as few materials had been developed at this point and there could not be inclusion of mentor recordings from a previous iteration. In the last year, 2020, only assignment data was collected, and not recorded interactions as it was felt that sufficient data had already been gathered. Over different years, ratios of mentors to mentees varied from 1:1 to 1:4 and in some years, some mentors took a Teacher Education and Development Specialism, meaning that they were perhaps more motivated to work with a mentee than other participants were.

In the first four years, despite my best efforts, not all mentors provided me with a complete set of their recordings, as has been itemised in Chapter 3. As a researcher, relying on third party data collection will always have its limitations and these are acknowledged here. However, given the amount of data collected over the five year period, it is reasonable to assume that a saturation point was reached and that any extra would not have added significant insights. The difficulties of using (assessed) assignment data as a basis for analysis have already been noted and as completing the assignment on mentoring was optional, using these as a ‘path’ from which to explore the wider data potentially skews findings towards those mentors who were more motivated to participate. These mentors were also more likely to provide full sets of recordings, further biasing the data in their direction.
A further aspect of the data that has been touched upon previously (Chapter 3) was the amount of data collected and the length of time which it was collected over. These points are potentially strengths of the programme but they carry inherent difficulties. Although I was not able to obtain complete data sets for all participants, there was still a very large amount of data, largely in the form of audio recordings and it proved impossible to analyse all of this. Changes in my personal life over this time also affected the amount of time available for transcription on a year by year basis, and advancements in transcription technology also changed the way in which I approached the data. I have explained my approach to this in the Methodology chapter. I also feel that the close relationship that I had with the participants over each iteration meant that I had a ‘finger on the pulse’ of the important issues that arose. I remain aware that this would not have been unaffected by my personal relationships with them and that an element of confirmation bias of success in a programme that I instigated is difficult to overcome. I hope that my own reflexivity has gone some way towards mitigating this.

A final aspect of the project which could be seen as a limitation and is perhaps the elephant in the room for the mentoring programme is this:

- The programme ran for five years with good evidence that it was successful
- The programme did not run in 2021 (my final year at Warwick) or 2022 (after I left)

Considering these in turn; the programme can be seen to have been a successful addition to the MA TESOL. It received excellent feedback from the vast majority of the stakeholders (see Chapter 4 for evidence of this), particularly the mentors, with an appreciation of the practical nature of the activities and good evidence through their participation, their reflection and their feedback that they had found the experience both useful and enjoyable. It was also impactful on a wider level of the MA TESOL, acting, at least to some extent, as a bridge between the two cohorts of students; groups that are often quite separate otherwise.

The conflicting rejoinder to this is that the programme did not continue after 2020. In the academic year of 2020-21, Covid travel restrictions meant that there were no Hornby scholars and the TED module had only a very small number of experienced teachers. This made the ratios of mentors to mentees unworkable. In addition to this, the general disruption that Covid brought, with much of the teaching going online with little preparation time, made thoughts of any extra activities unattractive to all.
In April 2021 I took voluntary severance from the university and the programme did not run in 2022. Whilst not wanting to sound overly dramatic, this perhaps raises the question of the sustainability of such a programme without the enthusiasm of a founder. For a third and final time, I return to Edge’s (2011) questions, and in particular, the first of these:

‘What difference does it make to the teacher education that I offer that it is I who offer it?’

(Edge, 2011, p. 46)

Holliday uses the expression ‘tissue rejection’ (Holliday, 1992) as a metaphor for ELT innovations which fail to take root in host organisations and although his argument largely concerns aid programmes run by expat professionals, there can be seen to be a similar process at work in the case of this programme. Although there were good communication channels maintained between myself and other stakeholders within the department including my co-tutor on the TED module and tutors on the professional practice module, the control, organisation and day to day running of the programme were entirely in my hands. This meant that when my contribution was withdrawn, the accumulated knowledge about the programme was also lost to the department and although I attempted to provide my replacement with the information and systems needed to continue, the handover was insufficiently detailed or supported to allow uptake. There were two other factors that may have reduced the likelihood of this innovation bedding in. Firstly, whilst it was demonstrably useful for the participants, it was also time consuming for the tutor. In my case, enthusiasm for the programme that I had personally developed and nurtured, as well as the motivation provided by my PhD study of it easily overcame this barrier but these factors were not present for my successor. A second issue was that the programme was always, to some extent, a ‘bolt-on’ to TED; a co-habitation and not a marriage. The meetings for the mentors, both with their mentees and myself, were extra-curricula and the assignment questions associated with the programme were optional. The programme was therefore easily excised from TED and discontinued.

In retrospect, it is hard to see how this could have been organised differently and certainly the situation caused by CoVid was a part of the disruption which caused the programme to stop. It is also perhaps an inherent weakness of a programme which is the brainchild of a particular individual and is a consideration for anyone wishing to organise a similar project. However, elements such as two co-tutors working in tandem or an approach which involves greater integration into an existing module may encourage longevity for such an innovation. Comparisons could be made with other practical, project or action research based innovations within the department, which were more sustainable and which include the
professional practice modules for both experienced and pre-service MA TESOL students, the latter of which has been the subject of several publications (Brown et al., 2007; Ushioda et al., 2011).

This situation perhaps raises the question of the sustainability and generalisability of the programme, but on a more positive note, the programme, was well received by stakeholders over the five years I ran it, it was developmental for me in terms of research ability and learning about mentor pedagogy and has resulted in both an available blueprint for other tutors wishing to set up a similar programme as well as freely available online materials for mentors to access for their own development. It is also possible that it will continue to be run in the future (Mann- personal communication).

I feel that I have made a contribution to the existing body of knowledge on mentoring by designing, implementing and investigating a programme that is unique in the literature to the best of my understanding. From this, insights can be taken which may be more widely generalisable either for others wishing to establish a similar programme, or for those who may be interested in near-peer support or mentor development. This study, therefore, has had significant practical impact, with evidence that the programme was successful in allowing different cohorts of learners from the same MA TESOL to collaborate for mutual benefit. However, in addition to this, a necessary outcome of PhD research is that it provides a contribution to research and to theory. In the first chapter of this thesis (Section 1.4) I identified the gaps that I saw in this area. These included the fact that there are few studies which have investigated the practice of novice mentors (as opposed to their perceptions) in their interactions with their mentees. In doing so, this longitudinal study, comprising a large cohort has been able to add evidence to substantiate Mann and Walsh’s (2013) claims of the value of data led, collaborative reflection and also to demonstrate the power of this within a framework of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave and Wenger (1991). The participants in the study ranged from those who were completely inexperienced to those who already had already performed significant mentoring roles and this diversity also provides robust evidence that such methodology has general application for mentor development programmes. In addition to this, I hope that the triangle heuristic I have developed will have value in providing a starting point for novice mentors to consider the different aspects of mentoring and the relationships between them.
8.3 Implementation and recommendations for future research

Due in part to the length of this study, information and findings from the project have already been disseminated in a limited manner. The programme has been the subject of two talks I have given at the international IATEFL conference, the first describing the programme itself in 2019, was well received by an audience comprising lecturers from universities in a range of international settings. The second was at the online IATEFL conference in 2021, suggesting ways in which mentors could reflect on their feedback in a data led manner, as is the case in the mentoring programme. This was aimed at a wider audience including novice supervisors and senior teachers who may be asked to give feedback to other teachers. Slides for these are available to view in Appendix 3. In addition to these talks, the programme has been described in a chapter on ‘Mentoring’ in the *Routledge Handbook of Language Teacher Education*, (Gakonga, 2019) and the case study of a successful mentoring partnership published as an article in the *European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL* (Gakonga and Mann, 2022).

As described in Section 7.2.5, I have also produced a free resource on my website, ELT-Training.com, called ‘Mentoring Resources’. This showcases the findings from this research including recordings of mentoring practice where permission was granted by the participants and guidelines for how the course was set up and managed. It also includes the handbooks for any tutor wishing to develop a similar programme and instructional video based material that I hope will be of interest to a range of mentors. This can be viewed via the link in Appendix 2.

It is hoped that dissemination of the findings through these channels may inspire tutors on other university programmes where there are similar student demographics to put this to use. It is also possible that these materials may be useful for novice mentors or senior teachers conducting observations to access independently.

Further research in this area could include the development of a more ‘slim-line’ version of the programme which included some of the positive elements but which was less demanding of the tutor. This might involve group feedback sessions rather than one to one, or using TED input session time, rather than the Monday meetings to discuss issues related to the mentoring. As was discussed in Chapter 7, greater integration into a corresponding module such as TED may ensure a greater sustainability for the programme. Mentors could also be given more autonomy to arrange mentoring partnerships, perhaps through an online forum on the department website where mentoring help was offered and sought.
A further way in which elements of the programme could be propagated is in collaboration with other parts of the university. For example, the University currently runs a career mentoring scheme in which volunteer mentors who have experience in the workplace support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently, the mentors undergo only a short online training outlining the scope of the scheme and it is possible that further commitment in terms of training may deter volunteers but it would be possible and relatively easy to include elements of the mentor training programme developed here. These could include training units on creating rapport and balancing facilitative and directive approaches, taking a data led approach to reflection on these issues, possibly with optional discussion groups to offer support.

In addition to further work in developing the programme, there are other ways in which the research in this area could be extended. A large amount of recorded oral data was collected which could be further explored. Although the talk in the two case studies was examined in some detail, other case studies could be analysed and it may also be instructive to compare the data in this set with other scholars’ work in a quantitative as well as a qualitative manner. Options for analysis that were not explored for time and space reasons were comparisons of this data with that of other scholars who have categorised feedback interactions, for example (Farr, 2010) who considers areas of ‘Directional’ and ‘Reflective’ feedback or on greater focus on the written feedback of the mentors, where there is also an extensive literature (e.g. Arts et al., 2016; Hyland and Hyland, 2001; Lee, 2009).

8.4 Concluding statement

My PhD has been a long journey. Looking back over the course of the past seven years, I see how the research has shaped me in many ways. It has tested my resilience and my resolve on many occasions, but it has necessitated a depth of thought and engagement with the wider literature in a topic than I feel I would have achieved otherwise and it made me a better informed and more useful tutor when supervising MA dissertation research, a significant part of my work at the University. It has also reinforced in a visceral manner, the importance and value of experiential, cyclical action combined with collaborative reflection when learning practical skills and I have put this to use in further courses that I have devised and implemented. I feel that I have contributed to the field of mentoring in a small but significant manner by devising a near-peer mentoring programme in a university setting; something that had not previously been done to my knowledge. From this, I have been able to identify aspects of the programme that others may draw on in developing similar training
and I have developed a model that may serve as a framework and heuristic for mentors in their own development. Finally, I have been able use these lessons learnt to develop an online resource that is freely available and may be helpful to mentors in a range of situations. I would like to finish by stating that I am proud to have been part of the mentors’ journey – it was a privilege to work with them and as with all good teaching situations, I learnt at least as much from them as they did from me.
References


Better Together. Jo Gakonga


Appendix 1- Handbooks and Assignment questions

Two handbooks were written to clarify the process for the Mentors and Mentees respectively. These were distributed each year to the participants.

A further handbook was compiled to explain the programme and its processes to a potential other university tutor.

These can be viewed via this link.

Assignment questions can be viewed on the link here.

Appendix 2- Online materials

The online materials that the mentors had access to can be viewed in the free resource that is now available publicly called Mentoring Resources and can be seen here.

The materials used for my IATEFL presentation of this project are available at this link.

Appendix 3- Talk slides

The programme has been the subject of two talks I have given at the international IATEFL conference, the first describing the programme itself in 2019. The second was at the online IATEFL conference in 2021, suggesting ways in which mentors could reflect on their feedback in a data led manner, as is the case in the mentoring programme. Slides for both of these talks can be viewed here.