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The Mentoring Experiences of Early Career Teachers in Australia

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Declaration

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.

Human Ethics: The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007, updated 2018). The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00418), Approval Number #019059F.

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Abstract

Mentoring matters for Early Career Teachers (ECTs). As a practice in contemporary Australian schools, mentoring is used to support graduate teachers to assist them in their transition from university to the classroom. Teaching is one of the few professions where graduates move into positions of full accountability. Full accountability means that ECTs are not only responsible for curriculum delivery but also for the legal, social and emotional care of the students in their classrooms. ECTs also have the added responsibility of dealing with parent challenges. Added to the difficulties experienced by ECTs are their transition and socialisation into their respective schools, which includes crafting a professional identity, integrating into their schools' culture, establishing and maintaining networks, meeting curriculum demands, navigating short-term contracts and of course, teaching. With the increasing expectations and demands placed on ECTs in their initial years of teaching, mentoring is recognised as an important element of teacher induction to support teachers with their personal and professional growth.

Research has acknowledged that mentoring is an important strategy used to support ECTs yet on average only 22 per cent of graduates in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries report on having a mentor (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021). Similarly, the 2018 TALIS survey notes that in Australia, 37 per cent of graduates indicate that they have a mentor (OECD, 2019). Furthermore, there appears to be a variety of approaches of varying breadth and depth used in mentoring. In addition to inconsistent mentoring program design and implementation, mentor preparation and quality teacher support, is the reality that the benefits of mentoring seem to be inconsistent with some ECTs experiencing positive outcomes whereas the range of other mentoring experiences vary from mediocre experiences to challenges that have contributed to ECTs leaving the profession.

This research aimed to explore the mentoring experiences of ECTs from the perspectives of ECTs and mentors in Australia. Three research questions were addressed: What are the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia?; What are the perspectives of mentors about mentoring ECTs in Australia?; and, To what extent do the perspectives of ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs influence the personal and professional growth of ECTs?

A constructivist methodology was used to explore the unique experiences of 200 participants consisting of ECTs and mentors across Australia. Participants were invited to complete an online questionnaire and/or participate in an interview. Questionnaire data were gathered from 66 ECTs and 66 mentors. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 36 ECTs and 32 mentors. An instrumental case study was used in the research methodology to examine the mentoring experiences of ECTs.

Analysis of the data revealed four focus areas contributing to a growing body of evidence about mentoring and its impact on ECTs. First, the data showed that mentoring experiences were diverse and highlighted the importance of structured programs, intentional mentor selection, mentor training and expertise and school-level support for mentors. Second, mentoring provided interactions and feedback to support the development of confidence and resilience aligned with personal growth. Third, quality feedback about teaching led to professional growth by developing the teaching and learning capacity of ECTs and the professional support provided by mentors. Finally, this study highlighted the considerations of mentoring programs in the future, emphasising the quality relationship between ECTs and the mentors supported by appropriate human, physical and financial resources.

A mentoring framework and explicit criteria were developed, and eight recommendations were proposed. The newfound knowledge invites all stakeholders to engage in a national discussion on how best to support ECTs through mentoring programs in schools underpinned by a collective, coordinated and equitable process that facilitates quality mentoring experiences for the ECTs not only in Australia's education system but also within the global community.

This study makes significant that the ECTs and mentors had an opportunity to voice their mentoring experiences and insights into how mentoring programs could be better designed and implemented to support ECTs in Australia. ECTs and mentors could contribute to relevant practices, policies and procedures if schools and education sectors consider exploring further workplace development and the role that ECTs may have in this space. Learning about the mentoring experiences of ECTs within the school context may just be the insight required to support ECTs in the Australian national agenda of quality teachers and quality education.

Acknowledgements

"The journey of one thousand miles begins with one single step". Lao Tzu

I offer all the early career teachers and mentors who contributed to the research a heartfelt thank you for their incredible insight about their mentoring experiences. It has been a privilege to hear and learn from the hearts and minds of early career teachers and their mentors and it is my hope that the findings from the research can nourish the gifts of our early career teachers and support them to stay in the teaching profession.

I acknowledge funding from the Australian Government under the RPT scheme. A heartfelt thank you is extended to Professor Caroline Mansfield for her commitment to the journey. I am forever grateful to her for her encouragement, her faith and for her capacity to walk me through challenging moments. I also extend a warm thank you to Associate Professor Anne Coffey for her wisdom and guidance. I will certainly miss our Friday fortnightly meetings.

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Finally, I dedicate this research to my daughters Jacinta and Kascia. I hope that my journey gives you the courage to take the first step in whatever you wish to do and the fortitude to keep going.

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Definition of Terms

ABS **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

The ABS is a national statistical office. It informs decision making, research and discussion with governments and the community by providing high quality and objective national statistical service.

https://www.abs.gov.au

ACARA **Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority**

ACARA is a government body that develops the Australian curriculum and administers national assessments and aligned reporting on schooling in Australia.

www.acara.edu.au/about-us

AITSL **Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership**

AITSL is a government body that promotes excellence so that teachers and leaders have the maximum impact on learning in all Australian schools and early childhood settings.

www.aitsl.edu.au/about-aitsl

ECT **Early career teacher**

Teachers who are in their first five years of teaching (Manuel, 2003, p.140).

www.aitsl.edu.au/about-aitsl

Mentee A mentee is a person who is counselled, lead, enriched and coached by a mentor (Nakumara et al., 2009).

Mentor The mentor is someone who engages in counselling, leading, enriching and coaching the mentee (Nakumara et al., 2009). In the context of this thesis, a mentor may refer to a school leader, a member of the school leadership team, an experienced teacher and peer.

TRB **Teacher Registration Board**

The TRB is a government body responsible for the registration of teachers (kindergarten to Year 12) in Western Australia.

www.trb.wa.gov.au/aboutus/Pages/default.aspx

Chapter 1

Contextualising the Research

1.1 Introduction to the research

Educational leaders and researchers have acknowledged the need to support Early Career Teachers (ECTs) as they enter the profession (Bressman, 2018; Mayer et al., 2015). As part of an ongoing discussion about teacher quality, ECTs are sometimes known as the "early career teacher problem" (Mockler, 2018, p.262) and have become a focus of education policy. With the national education agenda focused on supporting the teachers in the Australian education system to be the best practitioners they can be, there is "broad agreement" about the value of supporting ECTs (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), 2016, p.3) and the role that mentoring plays as a strategy to bolster ECTs (Halsey, 2018; Kemmis et al., 2014). In this study, ECTs refer to newly appointed teachers in their first five years of service.

The focus of the study is to explore the mentoring experiences of ECTs (who are sometimes referred to as *novice teachers* and *beginning teachers* in their respective contexts) from the perspectives of ECTs and mentors. It seeks to understand the types of mentoring available (if any) to ECTs and how the experience of being mentored assists their personal and professional development as educators. The research also seeks to investigate the perspectives of mentors regarding the capacity of mentoring to support ECTs. Mentors and school culture are two key aspects that influence the mentoring experiences of ECTs (Sunde & Ulvik, 2014). Often, mentors are asked to work with mentees and school leaders are charged with implementing a transition program for ECTs that includes induction and mentoring (Scleicher, 2012).

Chapter 1 contextualises the research on the mentoring experiences of ECTs. It includes findings from national and international research on mentoring as a strategy for ECTs and the benefits the process offers newly appointed teachers to the teaching profession. This is followed by a statement of intent from the present researcher explaining the impetus for conducting the research. Next, the research aims and a brief outline of the methodology are provided and the significance of the study with the limitations of the research outlined. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the chapters to come.

1.2 Background to the Study

Supporting ECTs in a personal and professional development capacity is essential (Desimone et al., 2014). ECTs form approximately 19% of the teaching workforce across the OECD countries, and this proportion is not likely to decline in the future (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). With ECT attrition rates ranging from 8–50% (Kelly et al., 2019; Vukovic, 2015), it is important to understand the mentoring experiences of ECTs, and how these may support them in their journey as educators.

1.2.1 Mentoring and teacher retention

The current rate of attrition of ECTs in Australia can only be estimated (AITSL, 2016; Buchanan et al., 2013; Gallant & Riley, 2017). However, an OECD study suggested that 30% of Australian teachers leave the teaching profession within the first 5 years (Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2015). The Queensland College of Teachers (2013) estimates that ECT attrition ranges from 8% to 50% but cautions the findings from various sources. With projected national teacher shortages in various places around Australia (Shine, 2015) there are growing concerns about the need for interventions to support students' education needs within these locations (Kelly et al., 2019). For example, The *New South Wales Public Schools Report: Impact of Enrolment Growth on Demand for Teachers* by Adam Rorris stresses that in 2031, "it is predicted that NSW will require between 11, 100 and 13, 700 additional full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers above 2020 FTE teacher numbers". Furthermore, Education Editor, Jordan Baker from The Sydney Morning Herald (June, 2021) reported that in May 2021, there were 1,148 vacant teaching positions in the NSW Department of Education.

The attrition of ECTs does not only highlight the rate at which they leave the teaching profession; the loss is also measured by the number of quality teachers who leave (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Teacher attrition is costly (Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2015) and the resulting staffing shortages mean that children miss out on quality education (Kelly & Fogarty, 2015). No single factor explains teacher attrition or retention. Indeed, AITSL (2016) and Kearney (2018) suggest that there are a range of factors linked to the quality of support provided to ECTs that determine whether they stay in the profession. These factors are reflective of – but are not limited to – the management of wellbeing and the provision of career development opportunities. With the concern for attrition and the ongoing challenge of teacher shortages, the Australian Government actioned studies to explore how best to address the ongoing challenge.

A federal government inquiry in 2007, *Top of the Class*, recommended a series of strategies to enhance teacher education in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007). Feedback from surveys was obtained from teachers (including ECTs) and school leaders and included concerns about "the adequacy of their preparation and selection" (Commonwealth Parliament, 2007 p. xxi). The recommendations of the report included reviewing the distribution of teacher responsibilities; recognition of inadequate funding for research in teacher education; concern for the limited focus on practicum arrangements; and the need for a process of induction and aligned development in key stages of the teaching profession. The report also made a recommendation that newly appointed teachers be provided with an induction program that included a reduced teaching load, the allocation of a mentor and an appropriate mentoring program to facilitate professional learning. The recommendations were made to ensure the implementation of measures to support teachers in their preparation and transition into the teaching profession and sustain their retention. The report recommended that "a consistent set of teaching standards for new teachers across all education systems" (Heikkinen et al., 2018, p.4) needed to be considered. The teaching standards would assist newly appointed teachers in the transition from provisional to full registration (AITSL, 2016). Despite these recommendations, the strategy was not mandated.

1.2.2 National and International Research

While research has been conducted in some states in Australia, there is no national data that quantifies the number of ECTs who leave the profession (AITSL 2016; Weldon, 2018). The lack of Australia-wide data is attributed to limited data collection processes from within and across state jurisdictions and lack of coordination between the Catholic, government and independent school sectors.

The 2017 *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* commissioned by the Commonwealth of Australia (2017) identified three priorities, 23 recommendations and 17 findings to guide schools in improving education outcomes. Recommendation 15 outlines the importance of supporting ECTs, not only in the capacity of developing knowledge, skills and understandings but in inspiring and empowering them to be the best educators they can be. The review states that schools should "create the condition to enable teachers to engage in effective induction

practices aligned with the nationally endorsed AITSL *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession* and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the practices implemented by schools" (Department of Education and Training, 2018, p. xiv).

The full accountability experienced by teachers is something of a "reality shock", explained Dicke et al., (2015)) and Hobson and Ashby (2012) who referred to an earlier usage of the term by Gaede (1978). Reality shock occurs when ECTs transfer from a guided preservice program to being fully accountable for all they do. Thus, designing, planning and implementing effective mentoring programs may help ECTs establish clear goals and collaborate with mentors to manage the transition from university to the teaching profession (Mayer et al., 2015; Morrissey & Nolan, 2015). In addition, an effective mentoring program that enables regular debriefing opportunities and processes to explore best practices or gives them the chance to vent their frustrations may support the retention of ECTs in the profession.

The 2016 AITSL publication, *Induction of Beginning Teachers in Australia – What Do Early Career Teachers Say?* report on an Australian qualitative study of 54 ECTs from graduation in 2006. The findings suggest that quality support is vital in assisting ECTs to develop coping mechanisms to meet their job demands (Buchanan et al., 2013; Hudson, 2012). In addition, a quality induction process was identified as "a boost for morale" and a strategy to develop the knowledge, skills and understandings for ECTs to engage with their role (AITSL, 2016, p.6).

The need to support ECTs was explicitly stated in *The Queensland College of Teachers' Annual Report 2013* (Queensland College of Teachers, 2014), in which 398 graduate teachers in Queensland outlined their experiences as ECTs. The data showed that they wanted assistance from experienced teachers (face-to-face and online), preferred an allocated mentor, and needed access to online resources. It has elsewhere been found that ECTs who leave the profession reported that they may have been encouraged to stay if they had felt more supported in their respective schools (AITSL, 2016). Thirty per cent of the survey respondents rated heavy workload, inadequate professional support within the school, and the stressful nature of teaching as *very important* in their decision to leave teaching (Queensland College of Teachers, 2014, p.5). Providing ECTs with frameworks for support, such as effective mentoring

programs, may help ECTs develop and maintain effective relationships in schools, and professional development opportunities may support them in refining their teaching practice (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Mansfield et al., 2016). A practical orientation process, accompanied by strategies to maintain wellbeing and develop professional identity and practice, would be supported through an effective mentoring program (AITSL, 2016; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

Research about the attrition and retention of ECTs varies widely. While ECTs enter the profession with the best intentions and have a strong desire to be good teachers (Buchanan et al., 2013), retention data highlights their perceived capacity in their role as being linked to their desire to stay (Mayer et al., 2015). Furthermore, Mason and Poyatos Matas (2015) point to personal factors and issues that pertain to school cultures, training and skill development as influencing the attrition and retention of ECTs. With attrition of newly appointed teachers evident on the global agenda (European Union, 2013; Kelley et al., 2019; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2016; Weale, 2016), the drive to engage in research to best understand how to support teachers in their first few years of teaching increases.

International and national research findings have provided educational institutions with a range of recommendations for supporting newly appointed teachers through mentoring. In addition to those previously mentioned originating from the Recruitment and Retention Strategy by the UK Government (2019), the Institute of Education Centre for Teachers and Teaching Registration brings to the fore what needs to be considered to train teachers more effectively via *The Early Career Framework: A Guide for Mentors and Early Career Teachers* (Daly et al., 2021). Similarly, the OECD's *Teacher Education and the Teaching Career in an Era of Lifelong Learning Working Paper* by Coolahan (2002) also emphasises the kinds of support that enable ECTs to flourish in their practice and workplace. When ECTs can participate in a quality mentoring program, research consistently shows gains in student achievement, increased job satisfaction and a sustained commitment to the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2012).

1.3 Researcher intention

I have fond memories of my first day as a teacher. I recall vividly feeling the butterflies in my stomach and my enthusiasm to be the best educator I could be.

However, unfortunately, my excitement soon turned to anxiety. With no formal induction process, let alone a mentor within the school, I was left to my own devices to sink or swim. Thankfully, swim I did.

As an educator in government schools for 8 years and Catholic schools for 16 years and now a consultant for 4 years, I have been blessed to work with many ECTs. I have observed them in the classroom, supported them with their planning and guided them to strengthen their resilience as teachers and build their capacity. Nevertheless, when I was asked to mentor ECTs in a school environment, my confidence level was very different. I always felt underprepared to mentor in the classroom and stumbled my way through an unclear, ad hoc mentoring process.

In recent times, in my role as a leadership consultant, I have travelled the length and breadth of Western Australia delivering ECT programs in each of the Dioceses for Catholic Education WA, using my research to support the design, implementation and evaluation of state-wide programs. During this time, I have produced several resources to support schools develop and deliver their mentoring programs. As an active member of several ECT social media sites, I have also contributed ideas and resources to support ECTs.

With this research, I am privileged to have explored and found insights from the hearts and minds of our novice teachers and their mentoring experiences in metropolitan, rural, remote and regional locations working in government and non-government sectors across Australia. At times, I have found that ECTs during their mentoring process, have felt overwhelmed, lonely, desperate to impress and stifled by an intense fear of failure. From my conversations with ECTs, I have learned how difficult it feels for them to share their insecurities about their craft with the very person who will decide whether they will be transitioned from graduate to proficient teacher, to fulfil the teacher registration board requirements in their respective states. Nevertheless, I have also shared in the joys of ECTs who have found their mentoring experiences emotionally nourishing, psychologically fortifying and professionally encouraging.

My passion for this area of study also challenges me to learn about the mentoring experiences offered by various education systems across Australia. For me, the impetus for this research has been to understand the disparity that exists in

the mentoring experiences of ECTs and explore what can be done to reduce the gap in the inconsistent mentoring approaches that are implemented in schools of various sizes, structures and sectors across Australia. With ongoing challenges of attrition, retention and quality teaching, my desire is to ensure that as a country, we grow the next generation of teachers. I believe that we are not just charged with the responsibility of supporting our newly appointed teachers with the knowledge, skills and understandings they need to fulfil their role but develop in them the capacity to be confident, global citizens who will inspire a younger generation of children to be creative, innovative, critical thinkers who embrace lifelong learning as a way of being, doing and relating.

1.4 Research aims and approach

This study explores the mentoring experiences of ECTs working both in primary and secondary schools from the perspectives of ECTs and mentors. The research investigates the extent to which the mentoring experiences of ECTs influence their personal and professional growth. The context for this research is that mentoring is currently used as a strategy in schools to support ECTs – including those who have had a previous career – transition from university to the school environment. The perspectives of ECTs and mentors about mentoring are influenced by knowledge from within and external to the school environment. Understanding what mentoring is and how it is used as a strategy to support ECTs in the education context is critical in exploring the mentoring experiences of ECTs. The study will provide insight into the mentoring factors that work well in schools and those that do not, and it will investigate what further support may be needed for mentoring processes and programs to be successful. Additionally, the research findings will provide insight into how to address ECT attrition and enhance retention.

This study explores the mentoring experiences of ECTs from the perspectives of ECTs and mentors in schools across Australia. Three research questions are addressed:

1. What are the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia?
2. What are the perspectives of mentors about mentoring ECTs in Australia?
3. To what extent do the perspectives of ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs influence the personal and professional growth of ECTs?

1.5 Data Collection and Analysis

This qualitative study followed an epistemological constructivist approach with a specific lens of symbolic interactionism. An instrumental case study was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the mentoring experiences of ECTs. Data were gathered through an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. There were a total of 200 participants, 102 ECTs and 98 mentors. The online questionnaire was completed by 132 participants (66 ECTs and 66 mentors) and 68 interviews were conducted, 36 with ECTs and 32 with mentors. The semi-structured interviews were guided by seven questions for both ECTs and mentors. The questionnaire findings were used to increase the validity of the interview data and identify gaps that may have been missed in analysing the questionnaire and interview data.

The analysis of the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews and surveys was conducted in three stages. Punch (2009) identified these stages as integral to an interactive model: data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions. The process is ongoing throughout the research. Additionally, the questionnaire and qualitative data were analysed using NVivo software. The software enabled the data to be analysed and categorised into key themes and produced various diagrams to showcase some of the findings.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is significant for three reasons. First, the existing research on mentoring highlights the importance of mentoring in ECT retention, effective teacher preparation and student outcomes when effectively planned and embedded in a program (Hudson, 2013; Mayer et al., 2015). The challenge is that mentoring programs vary from school to school and from system to system (Morrissey & Nolan, 2015). For some, mentoring is informal – with the allocation of a *buddy* – while for others, mentoring involves a formalised program with evaluative components (Kidd et al., 2015; Mayer et al., 2015). Equally, some ECTs cannot access mentoring programs for distance and insufficient resources, whereas others access them inconsistently (Latifoglue, 2016; Mayer et al., 2015).

Second, surprisingly, given the large volume of research available about the mentoring of ECTs, there is no formally accepted definition of mentoring. Despite the investment of government funds into research with organisations such as AITSL, there

continues to be a range of approaches and understandings about mentoring. Furthermore, school implementation processes are so diverse that many mentoring programs do not fulfil the needs of ECTs (Sunde & Ulvik, 2014). The quality, design and implementation of mentoring programs significantly differ in their perceived effectiveness by ECTs (Bradley-Levine et al., 2016). For example, researchers such as Kemmis et al. (2014) argue that mentoring in NSW reflects a form of supervision. In NSW, mentoring is used as a strategy to support new teachers during their probation period so that they can fulfil registration requirements. As a result, the graduates develop as compliant individuals who meet the appropriate professional standard. In Sweden, however, the researchers indicate that mentoring is perceived as a strategy for support underpinned by a quality induction program with the allocation of a mentor. In Sweden, mentoring supports professional development and invites collegial discussions. In Finland, mentoring is a collaborative self-development process that focuses on professional conversations led by mentor facilitators in safe environments (Kemmis et al., 2014, p.161). In this professional environment the graduates' perceived experience is that the mentoring process encourages individuals to develop their teaching and professional identities as wise practitioners.

The mentoring experiences of ECTs vary. For example, in Australia, research conducted by AITSL notes that while ECTs who received mentoring reported positive benefits from their mentor relationship, only 58% responded positively to the statement *my mentor/coach modelled good practice* (AITSL, 2016, p.11). AITSL study found that fewer than half (43%) of ECTs reported that there were regularly scheduled times set aside for mentoring-related discussions and activities, and only 30% of mentors were provided with training in how to support ECTs (AITSL, 2016). More consultation and research is required to determine how mentoring programs may be tailored to meet ECT needs because of the variability of mentoring programs available and the complex paradigm encompassing teacher support, primary and secondary school contexts and student outcomes.

Finally, this study will contribute to the broader national and international discussions about teacher induction and mentoring. The study is significant insofar as gathering data from the lived mentoring experiences of ECTs will inform schools and systems regarding the type and quality of mentoring experiences that most fully support ECTs. Recommendations have been made about how best to provide these

experiences at an individual, school and system level. These results may have specific implications for the sector and inform the development of mentoring programs (practice) and policy.

1.7 Limitations of the research

Potential limitations to the research will be discussed more fully in Section 7.10. There are four factors that may limit the scope of this study.

The first is that the bulk of the data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher recognises that regular school approaches were altered to cope with a global pandemic that required schools to transform their teaching practice from face-to-face to online learning. With the challenges that this brought, the mentoring experiences of ECTs during this time may not fully reflect the standard practices because of the need to adapt quickly to rapidly changing circumstances.

The second limiting factor was that some ECTs and mentors may not have been forthcoming with the depth of responses provided in the questionnaire and or in their interview. Some ECTs and mentors were concerned that there would be a negative impact on their respective sectors. Participants and respondents were at all times reminded of confidentiality and were also invited to withdraw from the study if they did not feel comfortable.

The third limiting factor exemplifies the data collection challenges due to limited ECT and mentor questionnaire responses in 2019. To mitigate these challenges, a review of the methodology was conducted, and social media (Australian teacher sites) was adopted as a recruitment tool in 2020. Using social media as a tool meant that the researcher was unable to identify the states or educational jurisdictions in which the questionnaire respondents were employed. As a result, the findings should not be generalised into the educational context of every state or territory in Australia.

The fourth limiting factor relates to the researcher being an educator and facilitator responsible for coordinating ECT programs for Catholic Education WA at the time of undertaking the research. The researcher is aware that being in this role might influence the interpretations of the data. To mitigate this potential bias, the researcher regularly engaged in reflective practice by journaling key ideas and triangulating the data using NVivo software and spreadsheet summaries. Equally, the

researcher regularly engaged in reflective practice with her supervisor as a mentor to mitigate any bias in her analysis.

1.8 Thesis outline and chapter summaries

The thesis is composed of seven chapters:

- Chapter 1: Contextualising the Research
- Chapter 2: Literature Review
- Chapter 3: Methodology
- Chapter 4: Presentation of Results – Early Career Teachers
- Chapter 5: Presentation of Results – Mentors
- Chapter 6: Discussion of Results
- Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations.

This first chapter, *Contextualising the Research*, introduces the topic, which is the mentoring experiences of ECTs. The chapter outlines the purpose of the study and the researcher's intention. Next, the three specific research questions are outlined, and the data collection processes and strategies adopted are explained. The methods used to analyse the data are also described. Finally, the significance of the study is explained, and the limitations of the research are acknowledged and addressed.

Chapter 2, *Literature Review*, explores the literature regarding the mentoring experiences of ECTs. The chapter foregrounds how mentoring is defined and conceptualised as a concept and shows how this is applied in various contexts. In doing so, theoretical approaches and theories used to make sense of various mentoring experiences are examined, as are examples of the types of mentoring available. The chapter also provides insight into the differences between mentoring and induction and between mentoring and coaching. It also includes a historical overview of the mentoring of ECTs, provides a review of the design and implementation of mentoring programs for ECTs and explores the architectures of mentoring. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of three mentoring frameworks: one from the Australian context and two from the United States.

Chapter 3, *Methodology*, presents the research plan designed to investigate the mentoring experiences of novice teachers. The research design is qualitative by nature. A constructivist approach formed the backbone of the study, while an interpretivist

approach – using an instrumental case study as the methodology – provided the pathway to understanding the lived experiences of ECTs and mentors. An explanation of epistemology is provided, methodological concerns are addressed, and a defence of the case study methodology, including generalisability, subjectivity, methodological rigour and volume of information is outlined. The chapter also outlines the study's rigour, including establishing trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and confirmability, transferability and authenticity.

Chapter 4, *Presentation of Results – Part One*, presents the findings from the analysis of the survey and the semi-structured interview responses from novice teachers about their mentoring experiences. Four categories emerged from the analysis: mentoring experiences, personal growth, professional growth and considerations for mentoring programs in the future.

Chapter 5, *Presentation of Results – Part Two*, presents the qualitative and survey data analysis that is reflective of the perspectives of mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs. The findings are categorised into four areas: mentoring experiences, personal growth, professional growth and considerations for mentoring programs in the future.

Chapter 6, *Discussion of Results*, discusses the study's findings using the critical themes identified about the perspectives of the mentoring experiences of ECTs. While there is a degree of overlap with the discussion that relates explicitly to the research questions, the key findings provide a pathway to answering the three research questions from the perspectives of the ECTs and mentors in schools.

Informed by this discussion, a framework design for implementing mentoring programs in education systems is proposed, with the mentor and mentee at the centre of a four-phase cyclical process. The design reflects the essential understandings that have emerged from this research and may be considered to support a mandatory mentoring framework for schools and education systems in Australia and within the global education community.

Chapter 7, *Conclusion and Recommendations*, explicates the responses to the research questions. The implications for all stakeholders in education are outlined, and eight recommendations are presented for consideration. The chapter also outlines the benefits and limitations of the research and closes with a conclusion and a personal impact statement.

1.9 Conclusion

While the breadth and depth of literature on the mentoring of ECTs makes for a rich discussion, there is so much variation in its conceptual understanding of what mentoring is and entails that it influences the quality and design of mentoring programs. Mentoring is a key element of the induction process. This study may assist in clarifying the roles and expectations of ECTs and those of their mentors during the mentoring process and guide effective induction practices (AITSL, 2016) and framework designs to support the programs in education systems. With the high attrition of ECTs (Kemmis et al., 2014), an effective mentoring process may assist school communities in decreasing the rate of attrition and increasing retention to meet all students' needs.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the literature regarding the mentoring experiences of ECTs. The chapter presents a discussion on the conceptual understandings of mentoring from a range of contexts and includes a focus on education. In doing so, the characteristics of mentoring are discussed as are the theoretical approaches and learning theories used to explain different perspectives aligned with mentoring. The chapter also examines the differences between mentoring, induction and coaching. In addition to providing a historical account of mentoring in relation to ECTs, the chapter explores the different architectures of mentoring that influence the design and implementation of mentoring programs. Three examples of mentoring frameworks are explored.

In conducting this review, relevant literature was identified through an online search of EBSCO, Google Scholar, SAFE, ProQuest and A+Education databases using the terms "mentoring" and "early career teachers", "novice teachers", "newly appointed teachers", "newly qualified teachers", "beginning teachers" and "probationary teachers". The various terms to describe the ECTs were included to ensure that relevant literature was found from the United States, Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, as well as Australia.

2.1 Defining and conceptualising mentoring

In order to conceptualise mentoring, it is important to understand the origins of the word. The etymology of the word mentor dates to ancient Greece. Its root word, *men*, means to think, and as an agent noun of *mentos*, its meaning refers to intent or purpose (Pennanen et al., 2016, p.29). A review of the literature highlights the mentor's thinking and reflective process that forms the basis of their guidance, resulting in mentoring (Attard Tonna, 2019; Murray, 2001; Ong et al., 2017; Shar, 2017).

As intimated above, the term mentoring has been in existence for thousands of years (Clutterbuck et al., 2017, p.1). The practice of mentoring has gained increasing momentum with many and varied mentoring programs designed and implemented in organisations worldwide. The mentoring process continues to evolve and is influenced by trends and practices in learning and work environments existent at the time (Mullen & Klimatis, 2021).

Mentoring may be viewed through multiple theoretical, philosophical, cultural and sociological concepts (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). The theoretical constructs of mentoring "help determine the way in which mentoring is conceptualised and implemented" (Dominguez & Hager, 2013, p.171). Philosophical mentoring constructs, however, are influenced by the beliefs, values, ideas and assumptions that people hold (Kochan & Pascarelli, 2003). Peoples' assumptions of the mentoring process may influence the quality and quantity of resources provided to support it within an organisation. Furthermore, cultural mentoring constructs may be viewed through a lens that distinguishes the type and quality of the mentoring activity and the environment in which it occurs (Janssen et al., 2016; Chandler et al., 2011). For example, an organisation with a poor workplace culture may not value the benefits of a mentoring process. Alternatively, a sociological construct of mentoring may be influenced by power diversity in the workplace. This may in turn influence the way in which intergroup power relations influence workplace behaviours, policies and practices. Other researchers propose the value of viewing mentoring through the lens of practice, which showcases the individuals and the expected outcomes of the mentoring process (Ghosh & Reio, 2013). The theoretical, philosophical, cultural and sociological constructs of mentoring, although very different in perspective, provide insight into how mentoring is understood and used in the workplace.

Although there are many lenses through which mentoring may be viewed, there is little doubt about the diversity and complexity of the concept and its application in various contexts. In the context of this research, education is no different. Mentoring is influenced by many perspectives and therefore "mentoring practices are shaped by their ontological specificity" (Pennanen et al., 2015). What is noted in the research that is common to mentoring in education is the socioconstructivist and sociocultural perspective of learning (Pennanen et al., 2015; Richter et al., 2013; Tynjala & Heikkinen, 2011; Yoon & Kim, 2019). Mentoring finds its strength in social interaction, that is, in the quality of the relationship that exists between the mentor and the mentee (Kochan, 2017; Yoon & Kim, 2019). In the context of this research, it refers to the relationship between the mentor and the ECT. A quality relationship between the mentor and mentee enables the learning of knowledge, skills and understandings through a process of guided experience (Murphy et al., 2005).

Given the multiple conceptual frameworks within which mentoring can be understood and investigated, perhaps it is unsurprising that there is no universal definition of mentoring, yet there are various understandings of mentoring, as Aspfors and Fransson (2015) have suggested. It has been argued that mentoring processes and practices often lack clear boundaries, roles and responsibilities (Mullen & Klimatis, 2021; Stanulis et al., 2019), making mentoring as a concept difficult to define. Kochan (2017), like Aspfors and Fransson (2015), goes as far as to suggest that given the diverse understandings of mentoring and the disparate values and belief systems upon which mentoring is based, it would be inappropriate to provide a single definition. Despite the lack of a global definition of mentoring, the practice continues in multiple forms and is generally identified as a strategy to support people's personal and professional growth (Clutterbuck et al., 2017; Dawson, 2011).

Traditional definitions of mentoring emphasise the two roles in the mentoring process. The first is that of the mentor, who acts as the trusted guide to support the mentee's growth over time (Sunde & Ulvik, 2014). The second role is that of the mentee who seeks advice from the mentor to develop themselves personally and/or professionally (Mullen, 2005; Myers & Anderson, 2012). The one-way learning approach is often reflective of a senior, more experienced person matched to a subordinate (Mullen & Klimatis, 2021, p.21) who supports the mentee's career progression. Mentoring in this context is viewed as "an investment in the younger generations" (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012, p.8).

Other definitions of mentoring emphasise a psychosocial focus that foregrounds the relational aspect of mentoring through a process known as *befriending* (Mullen & Klimatis, 2021). Befriending is about assisting an individual to grow and develop with the support of peers in a helpful and friendly way, while staying within the confines of a professional relationship. The befriending definition includes an understanding that personal dimensions are used to facilitate collegial practices (Mullen & Klimatis, 2021).

There is broad agreement that mentoring is determined by "the manner in which it is conceived and practiced" (Kochan, 2017, p.11). The diverse perspectives on what constitutes mentoring make it difficult to establish one formal definition. However, researchers in the field broadly agree that mentoring involves a relationship

that is developmental, reciprocal, dynamic and often process-driven (Dominguez, 2017; Gordon, 2020). The mentoring process is also influenced by the various phases and transitions that take place as part of the experience (Kochan, 2017). The mentoring experience is likewise defined by activities that are used to fulfil set goals and outcomes (Johnson et al., 2007). The common aspects of mentoring are linked to theories that form the basis for designing and implementing mentoring programs (Dominguez & Hager, 2013).

Contemporary understandings of mentoring are reflective of developmental relationships. There is broad agreement that mentoring "is relational and developmental" (Kram, 1983, p.11) and focuses on the growth of the whole person. In contemporary contexts, mentoring usually includes factors such as regular interactions and feedback (Brewer, 2016; Clutterbuck et al., 2017). In this way, developmental relationships offer a multi-dimensional support system that guides individuals' development (Kochan et al., 2014).

In education, mentoring consists of a blend of traditional and contemporary definitions and practices. Some researchers argue that mentoring is a social practice guided by characteristic actions, discourses and relationships between the mentor and the mentee (Kemmis, et al., 2014). Other researchers, such as Aspfors and Fransson (2015, p.76), emphasise that mentoring in education is "an activity, a process and a long-term relationship between an experienced teacher (mentor) and a less-experienced, newly appointed teacher". The researchers also argue that mentoring supports the personal and professional growth of ECTs as educators within their respective school contexts. Even though there is no universal definition of mentoring generally nor specifically in education, the practice is underpinned by varied theoretical approaches.

2.1.1 Theoretical approaches to mentoring in Education

The purpose of this literature review is not to provide all the theories aligned with mentoring, but rather to recognise the role those theoretical frameworks play in allowing researchers to explain phenomena by linking key ideas and practices (Kemmis, et.al., 2014). Theoretical approaches and the theories themselves provide pathways and/or blueprints that enable researchers "to build upon that which can be advanced using verifiable practices" (Dominguez & Hager, 2013, p.172), however the focus of this literature review is to understand mentoring from the perspective of both

the mentee and the mentor. The three theoretical frameworks from the perspective of the human person are learning theories, developmental theories and social constructivism (Dominguez, 2017, p.71).

2.1.1.1 Learning theories

In learning theory frameworks, mentoring is construed as a learning partnership (Dominguez & Hager, 2013, p.175) that focuses on the behavioural aspects of engaging in personal growth. Here, the mentor is seen as a facilitator who engages in the application of various learning theories, including behaviourist, constructivist and adult learning approaches. Because learning theories derive from developmental theories, the mentee is not a recipient of knowledge so much as someone who learns through repetition and reinforcement of behaviour and engages in reflective practice (Dominguez & Hager, 2013).

Mentoring programs designed within a learning theory framework are diverse. Some are designed to create pathways for meeting the mentees' mentoring needs and goals; others may be designed to reflect the tasks and activities associated with the teaching profession as well as organisational culture and innovation. For effective mentoring to take place, the matching of mentor with mentee needs to be considered, as well as whether the mentoring environment provides spaces that enable growth opportunities and reflect problem-solving and social interaction (Dominguez & Hager, 2013).

Mentoring practices that have a constructivist focus are based on the notion that knowledge is created and actioned from experiences (Murphy et al., 2005). Constructivist practices of mentoring presuppose that the mentee learns by building on cognitive approaches that facilitate meaningful learning through the accumulation of knowledge. Opportunities for reflection enable prior knowledge and newfound knowledge to be reframed so that mentees become self-aware and are able to modify their practice to reflect real and relevant teaching and learning experiences (Baker & Lattuca, 2010). Self-awareness facilitates learning as mentees compare their experiences with those of others, resulting in a review or reconstruction of key concepts.

Learning through imitation is the premise of the social learning theory. Bandura's social learning theory (1979) proposes that human functioning is aligned with reflective

thinking that is self-referential by nature (Domingues & Hager, 2015). In a mentoring context, this may mean that the premise of the relationship between the mentor and mentee may occur subtly or via conscious modelling (Chao, 2007). The learning process involves the reframing of prior knowledge, it occurs through consideration of the diversity of participants in the social learning process (Dominguez & Hager, 2013). Therefore, mentoring brings to the fore "multiple realities co-constructed through lived experiences and interactions with others" (Creswell, 2013, p.36).

2.1.1.2 Developmental theories

Mentoring as a developmental process focuses on the decisions that a mentee makes as they transition through various stages of their personal life and/or career. Moving from a given stage in one's life to another is also influenced by the relationships that support mentees in this growth. The transitions begin with the entrance point of the mentoring relationship and continue until an endpoint is determined and reached. Three key theorists are identified with developmental theories and the frameworks based on them. Levinson (1978), Kram (1983) and Kegan (1982) all propose that mentoring occurs in cyclical stages supported by mentors in hierarchical relationships with their mentees.

Levinson's life stage theory (1978) proposes that life is defined by two phases. The first is a stable phase where life decisions are made and the second is a transitional phase defined by changes to those life decisions (Dominguez & Hager, 2013, p.172). Together, these guide the individual's life journey. From this theoretical context, the mentoring process is a strategy used to support individuals through those transition phases. The mentor's role is pivotal to the mentee in their transition through consistent, structural learning stages that facilitate personal and professional growth. For example, in the context of Hale's (2018) work the development of mentoring relationships where the mentor adopts the role of sponsor and teacher is important for men in early adulthood. Equally, mentoring programs are just as accessible by women. For example, in the Peer Mentorship Program for Entrepreneurs pilot program for female students in engineering or computer science, female mentors were recruited to develop and support the "entrepreneurial spirit and self-efficacy" of the female participants (Elliott, Mavriplis & Anis, 2020, p.51). With a focus on professional identity, this theory gives rise to mentoring programs that are designed to achieve the dream

(Dominguez, 2017) and focus on how the mentee chooses to progress in their career (Dominguez & Hager, 2013).

Kram's (1983) theory of mentoring acknowledges Levinson's career stages as a way of understanding professional mentoring relationships (Hale, 2018). As with Levinson's theory, Kram's mentoring phases (1993) focus on mentoring relationships and programs designed around career stages. Established as a workplace model, Fletcher and Mullen's (2012) framework emphasises that mentorship in this context focuses on learning and knowledge construction. Guided by three levels – initiation, cultivation and separation – mentees are provided with opportunities to develop their professional skills within a structured format. The three levels assist mentees to develop their professional competencies, including social and emotional growth (Hale, 2018).

Mentoring as facilitating a transition from dependence to independence (Dominguez, 2017) is the premise of Kegan's work (1982). In this social-determined context, the mentor and the mentee work together to frame the mentoring experience. Their relationship does not change, however the learning at each of the respective career stages differs because it is influenced by the knowledge and understandings required for that context.

Although traditional by nature, the three theories discussed above give rise to developmental frameworks of mentoring in which a mentee is guided by an expert over a period of time (Dominguez & Hager, 2013). Levinson (1978), Kram (1983) and Kegan (1982) offer traditional top-down insights into mentoring that are bounded by two foci. In the first, mentoring consists of a passage through developmental stages and transitions, and in the second, mentoring is defined by the quality and nature of personal and professional relationships (Dominguez & Hager, 2013). Through a developmental lens, the practice of mentoring emphasises the many and varied roles that the mentor might play in supporting the mentee's career goals and trajectories and the development of psychosocial dimensions of their relationships.

2.1.1.3 Social constructivism

Mentoring from the perspective of social theory maintains a strong focus on the mentor and their role in supporting the growth of their mentee (Dominguez & Hager, 2013). The mentor's contribution is human capital (Herholdt, 2012), which is the sharing of their knowledge, skills and understandings that support the mentee in their

role (Zachary, 2005). Supporting the growth of mentees may include understanding how they communicate and modelling certain kinds of learning to enable them to assimilate in the workplace (Dominguez, 2017). The process of assimilation into the workplace includes elements such as understanding the rules and procedures aligned with workplace expectations, all of which are influenced by the collaborative experience between the mentor and the mentee. Mentors are viewed as role models who share their best-practice experience and become connectors for mentees by introducing them to networks. Mentors are also known as key agents who provide mentoring support to facilitate workplace satisfaction and career advancement (Dominguez, 2017). The social exchange between the mentor and the mentee is reciprocal, with benefits gained by the mentor, the mentee and the workplace (Mullen, 2017).

Vygotsky's theory of proximal development illustrates that learning occurs when an individual interacts with their environment. The learning results in developmental processes that contribute to newfound knowledges, skills and understandings (Vygotsky, 1978). In the mentoring context, Vygotsky's theory may be used to underpin mentoring practices in which mentors are provided with strategies to promote the learning of mentees (Dominguez, 2017).

Strategies to promote learning involves a scoped and sequenced mentoring process that is scaffolded by the mentor to support the mentees in their growth. With great emphasis on relationships, Yoon and Kim (2019) conclude that it is the richness in the connection and trust between the mentor and the mentee that enables the mentee to explore aspects of their role, experiment with key ideas and engage in effective risk taking.

Various conceptualisations of mentoring have formed the basis of different mentoring programs in organisations. In the education context, Martinez (1993, p.134) argues that there is a mismatch between the historical view of mentoring that endorses the practice through an apprenticeship lens and the current view of mentoring as a sustained opportunity for reflective practice. Viewing mentoring through a partnership lens where all stakeholders work collaboratively to engage in a practice that is mutually beneficial offers a greater support mechanism than that offered by an apprenticeship model (MacCallam, 2007). To this end, MacCullam (2007) argues that mentoring should be conceptualised based on the important role those mentoring

relationships have on reflective practice. It is only when opportunities for reflection and growth are conceptualised as an integral part of mentoring that programs to meet the needs of all parties can be designed and implemented.

2.1.2 Common characteristics of mentoring programs

There are many and varied characteristics of mentoring programs. Mentoring programs for ECTs require a shared vision for growth and development (Ewing, 2021). This shared vision goes beyond professional socialisation and emotional support because it encompasses a professional relationship between the mentor and mentee (Hairon et al., 2020). In education, mentors are typically professionals in their field with excellent knowledge of their subject and who may also be models of exemplary classroom practice (Bradley-Levine, Lee & Mosier, 2016; Carter, 2015; Mullen & Klimatis, 2021). Mentors must have a level of interpersonal skill that allows them to engage and maintain an ongoing relationship with the mentee (Dawson, 2018; Long et al., 2012, Topliss, 2017) and, in doing so, to facilitate what Stanulis and Bell (2017, p.61) refer to as "attentiveness in action". Attentiveness in action refers to the mentor's capacity to provide the appropriate personal and professional support for the mentee while encouraging them to explore their teaching craft and develop as individuals (Arnold, 2006; Stanulis & Bell, 2017). The support process is ideally embedded in an induction practice (discussed later in this chapter), classroom observations, constructive feedback and the provision of quality resources (Arnold, 2006; Wang et al., 2008). While it is acknowledged that mentoring may assist in the professional development of ECTs, the context in which this mentoring occurs must be conducive to the learning process. The process of learning and the workplace culture and priorities vary globally (Desimone et al., 2014).

There are examples of how mentoring has been used in other professions. For instance, in the UK, postgraduate medical training programs use mentoring to support junior doctors in their personal and professional growth (Buddeberg-Fischer & Herta, 2006). The practice of mentoring is traditional, with the mentor (an expert) sharing their learning and experiences with a mentee (non-expert). The emphasis is on the quality of the relationship between mentor and mentee, as this is crucial to the mentoring process. Similarly, in a meta-analysis of 12 articles on the impact of mentoring on practising engineers, Wong, Cross and Nueller (2018) found that engineering companies in the

USA, India and China provide structured mentoring programs with mentors who work with and support the growth of practising engineers. The practice of mentoring is embedded into various professions as a strategy to develop employees' skills and capacities, enhance career pathways and integrate minority groups into workplaces personally and professionally (Dominguez & Hager, 2013).

In the nursing profession, mentoring has been used as a strategy for the personal and professional growth of nurses. In Texas, mentoring is used to support nurses with work-related knowledge and transition to new roles (Hale & Philips, 2019). Identified as *mentoring up*, (Hale & Philips, 2019, p.162) the five-stage process supports nurses to engage in mutually beneficial, reciprocal mentoring relationships. Guided by a blend of traditional and contemporary mentoring practices, nurses are encouraged to aspire towards their desired area of specialisation. The mentoring process also supports nurses to develop their self-belief and professional competence (Davey et al., 2020).

In Australia, the mentoring of newly appointed teachers has been described as ad hoc and informal (Beutel et al., 2017). While the mentoring process is recognised as necessary to transition beginning teachers to their school environments (Crosswell & Beutel, 2012), there continues to be gaps in the design and implementation of programs within schools and the system as a whole (Beutel et al., 2017). Hobson (2016) emphasises that if mentoring is to be successful, several conditions must be in place. The conditions include understanding the characteristic traits of mentees, being clear about relational trust between mentors and mentees, identifying common strategies, strategically selecting and preparing mentors for their role and designing programs that include regular and consistent opportunities for the mentor and mentee to meet.

2.2 Mentoring and coaching

As the concept of mentoring continues to develop and be applied in diverse contexts, there is often confusion about what distinguishes it from coaching (Irby, 2018). Clutterbuck (2008) asserts that historically, mentoring and coaching were designed for different purposes and took place between different participants. With their respective conceptual evolution, mentoring and coaching are embedded in practice and the mentor and coach employ similar processing skills (Stokes et al., 2021). The processing skills shared by both mentoring and coaching include active listening, quality questioning and reflective feedback (Clutterbuck, 2008; Stokes et al., 2020).

The practice of mentoring involves mutually accountable long-lasting relationships that provide the mentee with a deeper understanding of their role and place within their organisation (Mullen, 2017). Mentoring is a holistic process and provides support with career guidance (Clutterbuck, 2008). In a mentoring relationship, the mentee often chooses the mentor. Similarly, the teaching framework of the Welsh Government (2014) emphasises that mentoring is a structured process of giving guidance to individuals to support them during career transitions.

Coaching on the other hand may be viewed as a structured process that focuses on developing a specific skill set and is often linked to establishing goals to address performance issues (Clutterbuck, 2008). The organisation decides whom to appoint as the coach (Irby, 2018) to best guide the development of the coachee's skill set. In the education context, the Welsh Government (2014. p.3) highlights the focus of the coach on the development of a "specific aspect of a professional learner's practice". Identified as a secondary function to mentoring, coaching allows for "regular, necessary interventions for success" (Mullen, 2017, p.39).

Notwithstanding the support provided by mentors and coaches, Stokes et al., (2020) argue that practices of mentoring and coaching can be differentiated by the learning context. The learning context may be reflective of performance or growth, economic timeframes, or sociocultural boundaries. Although the mentoring and coaching contexts may be agentic by nature, considerations must be given to the multifaceted approaches that underpin the respective processes. For example, mentoring is a transformative process that includes "the construction and negotiation of experience; communities of membership; and active, transformative learning" (Mullen, 2017, p.39). Coaching, however, relies on "practitioner experts" who support the growth of individuals using strategies that are "amenable to quick results, skill development and instrumental learning" (Mullen, 2017, p.39).

Despite the differences, practices of mentoring and coaching share many key characteristics (CUREE, 2005). In education, mentoring and coaching both involve a learning conversation that takes part in a thoughtful relationship and is bounded by a learning agreement (Clutterbuck, 2004; Irby, 2018). Both practices include the collaboration of colleagues to support new approaches and practices that enable the mentees to take responsibility for their learning. The practices of coaching and

mentoring also focus on setting challenging personal goals using approaches that are appropriate for the context. These involve observation and experimentation and time is allocated and embedded into the practice of learning.

Researchers in the field of mentoring and coaching bemoan the fact that there continues to be a great deal of confusion regarding what distinguishes mentoring from coaching (Mullen, 2017). This confusion may stem from mentoring and coaching being viewed as interchangeable practices (Mullen, 2013) that are defined by a variety of models (Stokes et al., 2020). It is beyond the scope of this literature review to consider in depth the ongoing discourse about the differences between mentoring and coaching. However, given that the focus of this present study is mentoring, a description of different types of mentoring is outlined in the following section.

2.3 Types of mentoring

Various epistemologies and ideologies inform the types of mentoring to be found across different professions, specifically in the field of education (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). The knowledge and ideas or beliefs aligned with mentoring are linked to how mentoring is perceived. Some researchers argue that the dynamics within a mentoring relationship are pivotal to understanding the practice of mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2004). Other researchers emphasise the quality of conversations themselves that determine the mentoring experience (Brockbank & McGill, 2012). Martinez (2004, p.102) argues that mentoring in the current educational context offers "much potential, but no magic". Consideration must be given to investing in quality mentors if mentoring is to be successful. Notwithstanding these differences of opinion, it is the design and implementation of the mentoring program that influences mentors and mentees' experiences (Cranwell-Ward et al., 2004). Mentoring programs must be specifically devised to meet the needs of ECTs. Inconsistent, ill-defined processes and practices and programs not always fit for purpose, may cause more harm than good (Beutel et al., 2017).

In their empirical analysis of educational mentoring literature, Mullen and Klimatis (2021) propose nine types of mentoring. These types include formal and informal collaborative and group, diverse, electronic, peer, multiple-levelled and cultural mentoring. Mullen and Klimatis (2021) follow Mullen (2017) in identifying mentoring types used in various contexts, as outlined below.

2.3.1 Formal and informal mentoring

Mentoring in education may be formal or informal or use a blend of both approaches. Formal mentoring programs are phase-specific and have reflective processes that are goal-oriented (Buddeberg-Fischer & Herta, 2006; Myers & Anderson, 2012). For example, formal mentoring programs are designed, implemented and evaluated by school systems or educational institutions (Bressman et al., 2018). With their mode of delivery being undertaken by experts (Efron et al., 2013, p.343) or a co-teacher (Bressman et al., 2018, p.165), school leaders and their teams are often responsible for the mentoring programs and assign mentors as part of the induction process of newly appointed teachers (Desimone et al., 2014). In this instance, induction programs may include mentoring practices to help ECTs adapt to their school communities (Wang et al., 2008). Often, induction programs include interactions between mentors and ECTs, lesson observations and collaboration opportunities. With great emphasis on quality feedback, "keeping an eye on learning" (Wolf et al., 2015, p.68) and navigating student behaviour, mentoring programs are critical in supporting the personal and professional growth of ECTs (Puttick & Wynn, 2021). The literature indicates that when embedded as part of the school's social, cultural and organisational context, the induction process can be used to facilitate professional growth (Wang et al., 2008).

Unlike formal mentoring programs, informal mentoring approaches are organic and voluntary by nature, and happen naturally as professional relationships form. Mentees who have a strong collegial connection to a colleague may feel more comfortable to approach them for support than a formal mentor (Desimone, et al., 2014). In education, informal approaches have "little or no formal evaluative assessment role" (Bressman et al., 2018, p.163). The literature notes that informal mentors can "provide in-the-moment feedback" and formal mentors are most likely to provide "follow-up" at a particular point in time (Desimone et al., 2014, p.103). Interestingly, there is a gap in the research literature about formal and informal mentoring.

Pollock (1995) emphasises the difference between formal and informal mentors: with the former, the organisation selects its mentors and are therefore known as formal mentors; the latter, informal mentors, are chosen by mentees. Not all mentoring occurs between two people; there are various forms of mentoring used to support mentees with their personal and professional growth (Ewing, 2021). The

various forms, as expounded in the literature, reflect a shift from traditional methods of mentoring bound up in power hierarchies and rigid modus operandi, to diverse, collaborative models of mentoring that are organic and dynamic by nature (Mullen & Klimatis, 2021).

2.3.2 Collaborative and group mentoring

Collaborative mentoring is used in education to facilitate structured inquiries and shared leadership in schools (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012; Mullen, 2017). Collaborative mentoring may include the pairing of individuals to enable classrooms and curricula to be studied, to provide a voice to stakeholders and to promote the formation of alliances (Mullen, 2017). The collaborative mentoring process may consist of teachers reviewing student data to address student learning challenges by revisiting pedagogical strategies aligned with classroom practice (Clauset, et al., 2008). The process may be formal and/or informal, however collaborative mentoring requires relationships to be ethical, "inclusive, fair and just" (Mullen & Klimatis, 2019, p.27). A democratic process for mentors and mentees that reflects mutual respect and accountability is pivotal in uniting individuals and groups (Mullen, 2017).

Group mentoring, like collaborative mentoring, provides guided conversations for key groups of people. In education, for example, groups of newly appointed teachers may engage in collegial networks that not only support their learning but provide them with a sense of belonging (Green & Nolan, 2011; Nolan et al., 2013). The focus for collaborative and group mentoring is learning in a safe environment that embraces diversity and encourages active participation (Limbert, 1995).

2.3.3 Diverse mentoring

Diverse mentoring occurs when a mentor and mentee who differ demographically are invited to work together (Mullen & Klimatis, 2021). In the education context, Mullen et al., (2017) and Johnson (2017) argue that diverse mentors can support individuals' personal and professional growth. In their research, Mullen and Klimatis (2021) noted the satisfaction that female mentees reported about working in groups led by male mentors. They further outline that mentoring and workplace context were also defining factors in understanding diverse mentoring. Key benefits attributed to diverse mentoring include mutual accountability and reciprocity (Kadji-Beltran et al., 2014).

Diverse mentoring can also support the learning of individuals in specific contexts, for example, in which religious diversity is prominent. Teachers of religious education may engage in networks to share their craft and their experiences in the role and may be mentored by religious specialists to assist them with their personal and professional understanding of critical religious concepts (Jackson & Everington, 2016). The mentoring process may occur face-to-face and/or online (Mullen, 2017).

2.3.4 Online mentoring

With the ongoing growth of technology, online mentoring is an alternative to face-to-face mentoring (Johnson, 2016). Online mentoring may help ECTs in isolated communities engage with online networks that foster collegiality and provide them with support for their teaching practice (Ozcinar et al., 2020). For the process to be successful, mentors and mentees must be given appropriate training in information technology tools so that they become enablers of conversations and not a source of frustration (Mullen, 2016). Equally, they must be given access to the appropriate resources and be supported to minimise information technology challenges so that their online conversations run smoothly (Huizing, 2012; Mullen, 2019).

2.3.5 Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring can be formal or informal and may occur in a face-to-face setting or in an e-mentoring capacity. As a mentoring process used to support teachers, particularly those who are newly appointed (Geeraerts et al., 2015), peer mentoring consists of dialogue and knowledge sharing between support teacher quality and student attainment. With professional learning at its core, peer mentoring encourages openness and trust and aims to support teacher wellbeing, which may impact the retention of ECTs in the profession (Mullen & Klimatis, 2019).

2.3.6 Multilevel mentoring

Multilevel mentoring is defined as co-mentoring that takes place within schools (Kochan, 2002). Co-mentoring refers to school leadership teams, middle leaders and curriculum teams working together on projects to fulfil a particular goal (Mullen, 2017). The process of multileveled mentoring enables participants to engage in conversations that facilitate change, and it provides opportunities for teachers to share in dialogue about planning and implementing programs in schools (Baker, 2017).

As another classification of mentoring, a multilevel approach empowers teachers to effectively work in their respective faculty areas to address school improvement and its impact on student learning (Geeraerts et al., 2015). Given that this form of mentoring has its roots in interacting with others, research in multilevel mentoring emphasises the importance of understanding workplace culture (Kochan et al., 2014).

2.3.7 Cultural mentoring

Cultural mentoring brings to the fore awareness of and action pertaining to "cross-cultural, transcultural and transnational relationships" (Mullen, 2017, p.45). The value of cultures and traditions enables teachers to support one another and work together to teach students how to embrace their personal identity, as well as global equality and justice. As such, cultural awareness and mindfulness of workplace dynamics is critical in understanding how to best to engage with all stakeholders. Broadening one's perspectives by learning about, understanding and respecting other people's cultures is critical to cultural dialogue. In culturally diverse neighbourhoods, feedback to ECTs as part of a cultural mentoring program assists them in understanding the nuances of their context and provides them with the knowledge, skills and understandings that may contribute to their retention (Smith & Ulvik, 2017).

2.3.8 Summary

Despite being in existence for thousands of years, mentoring has only become a topic of academic research in the last 35 years (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). Mentoring as a concept is a vast landscape that appears to have many definitions and classifications. However, there is a broad consensus that mentoring is influenced by theoretical, sociological, cultural and philosophical constructs. These constructs form the basis upon which mentoring has evolved mainly in the design of mentoring programs. Mentoring as a practice is used globally in various professions (Mullen & Klimatis, 2019) and at the heart of mentoring is the mentee's personal and professional growth.

In education, mentoring is understood in a multitude of different and conflicting ways. Mentoring is highly situational, influenced by the way that the mentor and mentee conceive mentoring, and that while the generic roles and important variables are well known there is much that remains to be understood about how these different types of mentoring relate to supporting mentees. Despite this, some researchers argue that

mentoring is more than induction and/or coaching (Mullen & Klimatis, 2021). The researchers argue that at its core, the mentoring process is underpinned by relationships that develop over time and the provision of quality feedback. If mentoring is to be understood and applied, consideration must be given to the mentor and mentee relationship (including the appropriate selection of mentors), frequency of meetings and the quality of programs that foster the development of teachers, particularly ECTs (Hobson, 2016; Shanks et al., 2020). The focus of this literature review now turns to a consideration of the mentoring of ECTs.

2.4 Mentoring ECTs

Mentoring is a dynamic practice that has been used as a strategy to support newly appointed teachers to transition from university into the school workplace and to fulfil the demands of their role. The practice has also been used to facilitate the integration of ECTs into the school community (Kemmis, et al., 2014). However, there are different perspectives on mentoring, and it is therefore important to understand the historical roots of the practice and how it came to be.

2.4.1 A brief overview of mentoring

The origins of mentoring novice teachers can be traced back to the time of the Industrial Revolution in England. Capital grants were used to support the education of the poor, the construction of schools and later, the creation of teacher training colleges (Edwards, 2000). During this period, teachers were trained through an apprenticeship model of learning where they were provided with practical, kinaesthetic experiences under the guidance of experienced educators (Topliss, 2017). An example of this is Kay-Shuttleworth's pupil-teacher scheme, documented in 1846, in which specifically selected students were "apprenticed at the age of 13" (Edwards, 2000, p.5) and mentored by chosen headmasters for 5 years. Pupil-teachers taught during the day and received instruction from their respective principals after school. Once they had completed their 5-year mentoring, the pupil-teachers were required to sit an examination, which enabled them to attend teachers' college where they trained for a further 2 years (Edwards, 2000).

Similarly, in Finland, "a strict, quasi-monastic training for elementary schools" (Kivinen & Rinne, 1994, p.518) was used in the formation of teachers. In this system,

the mentor's role was critical to developing the knowledge, skills and understandings of the mentee. According to contemporary standards, some of these practices seem informal and ad hoc, however the apprenticeship model developed into a more systematic approach in the 20th century (Colley, 2000).

In the 1980s, researchers such as Kram (1985; 1988) created workplace models underpinned by mentoring (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012). Steeped in theory that fostered skills development and goal-focused learning, mentoring was used to support the development of individuals. In education, mentoring was viewed as a critical strategy to support graduate teachers' transition into the teaching profession (Beutel et al., 2017). With this focus, a review of the literature highlights the one point in time in which all teachers are beginners (AITSL, 2016), and "transitioning from initial teacher education to the classroom is one of the most critical phases of a teaching career" (Heikkinen et al., 2018, p.1). While ECTs may engage in learning about educational concepts and pedagogy as part of their university training (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, (TEMAG) (2014), ECTs have little professional understanding and low-level skills compared with experienced teachers (AITSL, 2016; Du & Wang, 2017). With extensive research undertaken in the experiences of ECTs, particularly in their first years, factors such as managing relationships (Fetherston & Lummis, 2012; Mansfield et al., 2016), adjusting to intense teaching demands (AITSL, 2016) and understanding the cultural contexts (Buchanan et al., 2013) were noted as being significant challenges.

In the 21st century, the increased attention on mentoring as a concept and practice to support ECTs has expanded to include many elements. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2019) conducted global research on how best to support ECTs. This research found that on average across the OECD, 78% of ECTs felt they could manage disruptive classroom behaviour as opposed to 87% of experienced teachers. Equally, although most principals valued the importance of mentoring, only 22% of ECTs in OECD locations had a mentor. The OECD also found that an unsupportive working environment challenged ECTs and undermined the enthusiasm and passion they brought to the profession. The findings revealed the importance of mentoring to help ECTs transition into the classroom and recognised the role that key stakeholders have in this process. Additionally, the findings noted that consideration needed to be given to reducing the ECT workload (OECD, 2019).

Mentoring preparation programs that train mentors on how to be mentors are imperative if quality support is to be provided to ECTs (Pennanen, et al., 2016). In addition to effective mentoring preparation programs, consideration must be given to mentoring as part of the induction process. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) argue that for an effective transition to take place, an induction process is critical. High-quality induction practices that strengthen the skills of teachers as part of their professional identity, professional practice, wellbeing and orientation are key elements of induction (AITSL, 2016). Other researchers such as Beutel et al. (2017) emphasise the necessity of mentoring preparation programs as essential to the practice of mentoring in addition to induction.

2.4.2 Summary

The origins of mentoring for teachers are based on an apprenticeship model characterised by an experienced mentor providing training to a mentee (Boreen et al., 2019). With its evolution, mentoring as a concept has gravitated from being an ad hoc process to one that is reflective of a supportive goal-setting and skills development (Beutel et al., 2017) practice. Equally, mentoring programs are frequently part of broader induction practices that are deemed to support the growth of ECTs.

2.5 Mentoring and induction

Mentoring and induction are standard terms used by researchers in the education field to describe processes that support the personal and professional growth of ECTs. Researchers draw attention to some circumstances where mentoring is viewed as one element in a larger process of induction (Shanks et al., 2020; Wong, 2004). Here, mentoring is embedded within a set of formalised and specific practices that provide a one-way approach to mastering best practice (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Mullen, 2017). Induction is sometimes viewed as a component within a broader process of mentoring (Mullen, 2017). In this context, mentoring is considered to be a developmental process that is not "unidirectional or limited to one-way development" (Mullen, 2017, p.40). Instead, this kind of mentoring encourages quality relationships between the mentor and mentee that foster self-learning (Beutel et al., 2017; Sikma, 2019). An exploration as to whether mentoring is a part of induction or induction a part of mentoring is beyond the scope of the research. The quality of induction offered to ECTs in their respective contexts impacts their mentoring experiences (Ingersoll & Smith, 2011; Kelley, 2016).

AITSL (2014) undertook a review of induction processes and practices in Australia, and findings indicated no consistency in the quality and design of mentoring programs for ECTs across school contexts, resulting in the implementation of a wide variety of induction policies, practices and professional learning opportunities (AITSL, 2014). Similarly, Hudson and Hudson (2016) found that school size, location and resources also impacted the content and quality of induction processes. Inconsistent design of mentoring programs with a lack of consideration for school context is not the only factor that may affect an ECT's mentoring experience. The OECD *Teaching in Focus: Supporting New Teachers* publication highlights the variability of access to induction programs. Twenty-two percent of teachers work in schools that have formal induction programs for ECTs. The findings indicated that "70% of teachers with less than 3 years' experience work in schools where principals report access to induction programs, however only about 50% report participating in such programs" (OECD, 2015, p.3). Equally, the data also indicated that the participation in school mentoring programs was lower than accessed (OECD, 2015). Attard Tonna (2019) argues that school leaders must do all they can to ensure the personal and professional growth of ECTs, and that includes implementing effective mentoring programs.

Purposefully designed mentoring programs and their successful implementation of them is critical to supporting newly appointed teachers. In their study, Richter et al. (2013) investigated whether the quality and frequency of mentoring predicted the professional development identity and capacity and wellbeing of ECTs in their first two years of teaching. Their findings indicated that ECTs who engage in an active and contextualised mentoring process demonstrated higher efficacy levels after 12 months. Similarly, Shanks et al. (2020) showed that providing ECTs with opportunities to enhance their professional practice – particularly in pedagogical understanding and competence – is necessary for their professional development. Having quality conversations with their mentors about lesson planning and classroom observation amongst other elements supports ECTs to build their professional capacity (Attard Tonna et al., 2017). With an emphasis on collaboration and collegiality, researchers such as Heikkinen, Jokinen and Tynjala (2012) emphasise that mentoring is not only mutually beneficial for the mentor and mentee but enables teacher practice that is reflective of learning and is lifelong.

2.5.1 Purpose of mentoring programs for ECTs

Research about mentoring in education often reveals that the mentoring process has two key functions (Beutel et al., 2017). The first is to provide personal support for ECTs, especially in situations of exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment that focused on building teacher capacity (Coldwell, 2016; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019; Lindqvist, 2019) and the second is to offer ECTs guidance for professional learning (Coenders & Verhoef, 2019; Hudson, 2013; McIntyre & Hobson, 2016).

2.5.1.1 Building Teacher capacity

Mentoring programs are more likely to be effective when they explicitly aim to build teacher capacity with a focus on resilience (Mansfield, et al., 2016). Research reveals that if ECTs are to feel confident and competent in their teaching capacity, they need to engage in positive, mutually beneficial and supportive relationships (Colin & Perry, 2019; LeCornu, 2013; Trevethan, 2018). Tan (2013), in her research on the mentoring experiences of ECTs, argues that mentors play a key role as "educational companions" to assist newly appointed teachers to transition from the university to the school environment (Tan, 2013, p.123). The researcher also highlights mentors as educational companions who also act as "brokers" that assist ECTs in developing collegial relationships with other colleagues (Tan, 2013, p.123). The capacity of ECTs to connect with other members of staff through informal conversations and aligned networks are important factors in developing a sense of belonging and connectedness (Colley, 2003; Gu & Li, 2013; Shanks et al., 2020), as well as confidence in their teaching capacity.

2.5.1.2 Professional Learning

Supporting newly appointed teachers' skill development is also critical to their craft (Trevathan, 2018). In two Australian studies, student behaviour and engagement (Buchanan et al., 2013; Hudson, 2012) were identified as key challenges for newly appointed teachers. Similarly, in a large-scale survey of teachers in Scotland, Spencer et al., (2018) emphasised that newly appointed teachers needed support in keeping up to date with pedagogy and practice, understanding curriculum to best meet students' needs and managing the varied behavioural challenges posed by students. The question is whether one single mentoring program can meet the needs of ECTs (Tan, 2013) and the challenge is to select the right mentors to guide ECTs. Without doubt, the mentor's

role is critical, and the onus is on the mentor to commit to and assist the newly appointed teacher to navigate through challenges. However, this does not always happen (Mullen, 2017; Shanks, 2020; Sundhi, 2007). MacCallam (2007, p.135) argues that "at the heart of development of a mentoring relationship that creates possibilities for reflection and growth is how mentoring is conceptualised and how this conceptualisation is translated into implementation". Where mentoring programs are evaluative by nature, these may result in judgemental or negative experiences that challenge building quality relationships (Hobson, 2016). The *judgementoring* approach, that is, where mentors "adopt the role of judge" (Hobson & Malderez, 2013, p.2) may have a negative impact on the mental, social and psychological health of mentees (Beltman, et al., 2020).

2.5.1.3 The role of mentors

A review of international research indicates the need for an effective mentoring program to support ECTs and highlights the importance of the mentor's role as part of this process (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). ECTs who were allocated mentors who had been trained and were provided time and financial compensation to support them, felt valued in their contribution to the classroom and the mentoring process (Holloway et al., 2017; Topliss, 2017). Broadening their views of teachers and themselves within the profession, gaining a deeper understanding of teaching and learning and cultivating leadership qualities by supporting communities of practice (Hanson, Moir & Kappan, 2008) enhanced mentors' roles. The social dimension of the relationship formed between the mentor and mentee encourages ECTs to seek assistance in instructional learning and to look to their mentor for social and emotional support (Margolis, 2008; Topliss, 2017).

In a Singaporean study tracking the mentoring experiences of ECTs and their mentors over six months, Tan (2013) found that for some ECTs the experience was emotionally assuring and gratifying. In these instances, the mentor and mentee relationship was built on trust and provided a pathway for sharing "embarrassing things" that happened in the classroom (p.126). For other newly appointed teachers, the experience was professionally unfulfilling because the mentor and mentee rarely met, and the lack of presence and proximity created an emotional distance that precluded ECTs from connecting with their mentor (Tan, 2012).

Latifoglue (2016) highlights the inconsistent nature of the mentor's role and mentoring program design across school communities even though the support required for ECTs is relatively standard. AITSL (2016), in their survey of stakeholders, found that 30% of experienced teachers had received training to guide and support ECTs. Fifty-eight per cent of the ECTs surveyed indicated that their "mentor modelled good practice" (AITSL, 2016, p.11) and 43% accessed regular and timely meetings with their mentors. Similarly, the OECD (2019), in their TALIS research in 2018, found that while principals considered mentoring a worthwhile strategy to support the growth and development of ECTs, only 22% of ECTs, on average, had been assigned a mentor.

Beutel et al. (2017) outline a qualitative case study of 17 mentors and their journey as part of a large-scale preparation program in Queensland in which mentoring is a collaborative inquiry process that focuses on three key elements: reflection, dialogue and criticality (Shanks, 2017). A focal point of the findings is that "the personal and professional impacts of mentoring for the mentor teachers" (Shanks 2017, p.160) and the elements that require consideration if mentoring programs are to be successful. Evidence from the literature showcases the important roles of mentors and the support required by school leaders to ensure that the newly appointed teachers' needs are met (Sunde & Ulvik, 2014).

2.5.1.4 Role of school leaders

A school's organisational culture and the principal's role also influence the mentoring experiences of ECTs (Sunde & Ulvik, 2014). Storhaug and Sand (2011) argue that newly appointed teachers are sometimes seen as resources that contribute to the school's greater good and its community. Elsewhere, newly appointed teachers are viewed as inexperienced individuals who require lots of assistance (Sunde & Ulvik, 2014). Given the responsibility of school leaders to ensure the professional development of their staff members, it is clear that mentoring programs and practices can be pivotal for providing this for ECTs. Research shows that school leaders need to take an active role in implementing mentoring programs by providing well-resourced programs and by encouraging mentoring practices that are embedded in a collaborative and supportive workplace culture (Mansfield & Gu, 2019, p.656).

AITSL (2016), in their paper *Induction of Beginning Teachers in Australia – What Do Early Career Teachers Say?* acknowledge that school leaders recognise the need to support ECTs in their school contexts. However, in a survey of 1,287 school leaders and 2,268 teachers, AITSL (2016b) found that school leaders and beginning teachers have different perspectives on the availability and quality of induction for ECTs. Fifty-eight per cent of ECTs indicated that the induction process had not focused on professional identity and teacher wellbeing. On the contrary, 78% of school leaders indicated that professional identity and teacher wellbeing were embedded in the induction program. Furthermore, 91% of school leaders believed that ECTs received mentoring and/or coaching as part of their induction, while only 73% of ECT respondents indicated this to be the case. Also, 78% of school leaders indicated that their ECTs were receiving targeting professional learning opportunities, while only 55% of ECTs responded that this was so.

Research conducted by Sunde and Ulvik (2014) in Norway in 2011 explored the perceptions of nine school leaders regarding the support they believed was required by ECTs. The study found that some school leaders believed that ECTs needed to learn information about the school context: the rules and routines of the school and how to do their job. Other school leaders expected that ECTs would navigate their own way in the school. Sunde and Ulvik (2014) indicated that mentoring was not compulsory and found that it was not a focus for some school leaders. More research is being undertaken globally regarding the perception and role of school leaders with regards to mentoring programs (Milton et al., 2020).

Research consistently shows that mentoring plays a role in building quality professionalism, increasing job satisfaction and developing teaching expertise (Hobson et al., 2009; Langdon et al., 2015; Sowell, 2017). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) believe that mentoring is essential to teacher professionalism and suggested that mentoring influences the professional growth of the teacher in terms of human capital (knowledge base), social capital (support and collaboration) and decisional capital (professional agency). Nolan and Molla (2017) suggest that a quality mentoring program addresses ECTs' capacity to acquire knowledge and skills to engage in, communicate their reflective practice and develop confidence in their capacity.

2.5.1.5 Summary

The section above has focused on mentors and school leaders. Mentoring programs vary widely across schools and are influenced by the respective school context and school leaders' perspectives of what mentoring entails. Kent et al. (2012) argue that mentoring programs must be well designed and comprehensive if the short-term and long-term needs of ECTs are to be met. The reality of the mentoring experiences of ECTs brings to the fore challenges with the design and implementation of mentoring programs.

Additionally, consideration needs to be given to mentors' and school leaders' roles. Mentors need to be selected and be given the appropriate training to support ECTs within their care. School leaders are required to support the mentoring programs with appropriate time and funds, and actively engage with ECTs in a caring, compassionate and supportive manner (Mansfield & Gu, 2019).

2.6 Mentoring practice architectures in education

Many theoretical considerations are relevant to schools' mentoring programs (Heikkinen et al., 2018). Given that school sites vary in size, structure, location and culture, it is unsurprising that mentoring exists in different forms. The different forms of mentoring may be explained by what Kemmis et al. (2014b) refer to as "practice architectures". The theory of practice architectures derives from a site ontological practice perspective (Schatzki, 2002) that postulates school sites as social places where practices take place (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). Given that schools are social phenomena, mentoring can be understood in two contexts. Researchers such as Kemmis et al., (2014, p.155) believe that social phenomena are described by "sayings, doings and relatings that hang together". The first context is that which locates the social phenomena, in this instance the learning environment in which mentoring takes place. The second describes a context reflective of the quality of the relationship forged between the mentor and mentee (Bristol & Wilkinson, 2014). This theoretical lens therefore assists in making meaning of "how and why particular conceptions of mentoring practices may be taken up in very distinctive ways in differing sites of practice" (Pennanen et al., 2016, p.31).

Understanding the various forms of mentoring of ECTs helps to identify the conditions conducive to effective learning (Hobson et al., 2009). Learning about the conditions in which mentoring occurs promotes a discussion about what arrangements

can be established to facilitate a successful mentoring process. Once the practices are determined, insight is acquired into the various dispositions of the ECT that effectuate meaningful learning.

The first, cultural-discursive arrangements (sayings), consider the language used for communication. Sayings reflect cognitive thought and the articulation of various ideas and may be revealed in observations and debriefing interviews (Kemmis et al., 2014). With regard to mentoring, sayings refer to how mentoring is spoken about, and lends itself to conceptions of mentoring as supervision, mentoring as support, or mentoring as collaborative self-development (Pennanen et al., 2016).

The second, material-economic arrangements (doings), focus on the work activity completed by an ECT. The focus on doings reflects spatial arrangements and objects found within the workplace and may consist of meeting spaces or classrooms used by the mentor and the ECT (Kemmis, 2014). In mentoring, discussion about doings is in terms of the location in which it takes place. Examples include the principal's office, the staffroom, or the mentor's office (Heikkinen et al., 2018).

The final context, social relations arrangements (relatings), highlight the role of power and solidarity within the social space (Dominguez & Hager, 2013; Kemmis, et al., 2014b). Relatings refer to the quality of the relationships between mentor and mentee and may be noted in formal and informal interactions and professional development opportunities (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015).

As Kemmis et al. (2014) describe, practice architectures show that mentoring is "enabled and constrained" (p.155) by standard international practices that are simultaneously influenced by national and local approaches, also known as practice landscapes. The practice landscapes give rise to differences in mentoring practices within the global education community (Dominguez & Hager, 2013), defined by time, school context and school leadership support (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015; Kemmis & Heikkinen, 2012). Practices that are created within specific boundaries may reflect conceptual archetypes.

2.6.1 Mentoring archetypes

Mentoring archetypes are also known as *ideal types* (Kemmis, et al., 2014). These types are used to describe mentoring from an empirical perspective. The

archetypes are mentoring as supervision, mentoring as support and mentoring as collaborative self-development (Kemmis, et al., 2014). Mentoring as supervision refers to the practice of induction used in Australia, specifically NSW. Guided by government policy, the process of mentoring is more about how mentors work with ECTs to ensure that they complete their registration requirements (AITSL, 2011; AITSL, 2016). In this context, mentoring practice forms part of a formal probationary period where ECTs must meet professional standards. As such, mentoring as supervision is a surveillance approach to ensure that ECTs fulfil vital compliance requirements (Pennanen et al., 2016).

The practice of mentoring as support can be identified in the Swedish system where for 40 years it has been the dominant model by which ECTs are guided to develop their craft (Government Inquiry, 1978). This mentoring practice supports ECTs in their first years by pairing them with experienced teachers who nurture their personal and professional growth. Welcomed into the profession, ECTs are encouraged to be autonomous while still engaging in open and regular conversations about their craft with their colleagues (Kemmis et al., 2014).

The final mentoring practice is identified as mentoring as collaborative self-development. As a common form of mentoring practice in Finland (Sahlberg, 2012), it frames ECTs as "wise practitioners" (Kemmis, et al., 2014, p.163) who collaborate with more experienced teachers to plan, design, implement and evaluate lessons and programs to meet the needs of their students. The collaborative, self-development archetype empowers teachers to ask questions, take risks and refine their craft (Heikkinen et al., 2018).

Kemmis et al. (2014) emphasise that educational leaders and policymakers need to make informed choices about the mentoring practices offered to ECTs. Basing mentoring programs on a particular archetype can influence the ECTs' perspectives of their profession. If *mentoring as supervision* is employed by education systems, an ECT may experience teaching as a bureaucratic profession; however, if *mentoring as support* is adopted, an ECT may experience mentoring as a guided process. Similarly, if mentoring is perceived as a process for *collaborative self-development*, then the ECT may experience mentoring as a democracy (Kemmis et al., 2014).

2.6.2 Summary

The concept of practice architectures may help bring to the fore an understanding of the mentoring experiences of ECTs in school contexts and explain how their experience may or may not influence their personal and professional growth. From this perspective, schools are not seen in isolation but rather as proper places where cultures are developed, relationships are nurtured and new patterns are established (Dominguez & Hager, 2013; Kemmis et al., 2014). The notion of practice architectures also frames power as a collaborative element that facilitates enhanced leadership with the strategic allocation of time and resources (Schatzki, 2002).

2.7 Mentoring frameworks

A variety of theoretical frameworks guide the design and implementation of mentoring programs in schools globally. Three examples of mentoring frameworks are outlined in the sections that follow. All three frameworks place the role of the mentor at the forefront of the mentoring process. The mentor's role involves supporting the personal and professional growth of the ECT. The emphasis is placed on the mentor's professional skill set and capacity to develop a positive, professional relationship with the ECTs.

2.7.1 Mentoring framework exemplar 1: Mentoring beginning teachers (Australia)

Mentoring Beginning Teachers (MBT) was developed in Queensland in 2017. The program's purpose was to pair a "high-performing experienced teacher" (Beutel et al., 2017, p.166) with a newly appointed teacher to support their personal and professional growth. The experienced teachers received accredited mentor training and 72 hours of release time to support their respective ECTs in the way they required. Based on a constructivist approach to mentoring, the program relied on the development of a quality interpersonal relationship between the mentor and mentee. This process was complemented by a collaborative inquiry model that facilitated ongoing reflection on the part of the mentee. The mentor's role was to assist the ECT to assimilate into their school community and to engage in mutually respectful conversations with them about their teaching and learning experiences (Beutel et al., 2017).

Mentor training – conducted over 2 days – was a critical element of the MBT program. The mentor's understanding of self and how they related to their assigned ECT was crucial to the success of the program. Time was allocated to develop mentors. The MBT program consisted of eight components: self-awareness and skill development for mentors, building and maintaining the mentor/ee relationship, establishing the mentee's needs, developing a needs-based mentoring program, implementing the mentoring plan and evaluating the mentoring plan (Beutel et al., 2017). Mentors were also provided with access to readings and an opportunity to complete assessments towards a university credit in a master of education program.

Findings associated with the implementation of the MBT model revealed that the mentoring preparation program enabled mentors to be clear about their role and to understand and facilitate a collaborative inquiry approach. Mentors reported developing in their personal and professional growth through their ongoing self-reflection (Beutel, 2017). They also developed an awareness of school contexts and the roles that leaders play as part of the mentoring process. While the study was small in scale, the data showed that the framework used supported the development of mentors and heightened their sense of responsibility and commitment to the support of ECTs (Beutel et al., 2017).

2.7.2 Mentoring framework exemplar 2: Attentive, targeted mentoring (USA)

The attentive, targeted mentoring (ATM) framework focuses on three key criteria that support mentors' work in mentoring ECTs. Being attentive is one of the essential roles of a mentor. They are required to establish and maintain a trusting and mutually respectful relationship with their ECT. In doing so, they actively listen to and are open to the voice of the ECT, encourage them to share their ideas and opinions about teaching and regularly provide constructive feedback (Stanulis & Bell, 2017).

The process of constructive feedback can be used in ATM to target the development of a specific skill. Information from various data sources may be collated to assist the ECTs in reflecting on the desired skill. The mentor may use the art of questioning to explore further the learning required for the development of the skill set by encouraging the ECT to reflect on the data. By setting goals that are strategic, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART), mentors and ECTs can ensure that goals are pursued while addressing any challenges and/or

nuances that arise in the process (Stanulis & Bell, 2017). Mentoring in action requires that the mentor frequently debriefs planned observations with the newly appointed teacher. Taking the time to meet and sharing in open dialogue are critical components of the ATM framework.

2.7.3 Mentoring framework exemplar 3: Educative mentoring (USA)

Educative mentoring is a conceptual and temporal framework used to describe mentoring practices that occur *inside* and *outside* the action of teaching (Gardiner, 2017). Gardiner, (2017) explains that inside mentoring practices are aligned with the action of teaching with students (p.54). These include the mentor "stepping in" to facilitate collaborative teaching and/or lesson modelling, and often occur in real time (p.54). The mentoring practices that occur outside are those that occur before and/or after instruction (Gardiner, 2017, p.54). These often take the form of debriefs, reflective practice and viewing video recordings. Unlike other mentoring frameworks that position mentoring as a short-term practice, the educative mentoring model places mentoring on a continuum of professional learning (Gardiner 2011; 2012; Stanuls, et al., 2019). Both the inside and outside spaces of mentoring are important for the professional growth of ECTs. As Gardiner (2017) points out, mentoring is collaborative and focused on the art of teaching instruction. However, great emphasis is also placed on developing the knowledge, skills and understandings of the mentor about their role and how they can support the personal and professional growth of the ECTs in their care (Stanulis, et al., 2019).

2.7.4 Summary

As a strategy that has no formal definition, mentoring is a complex process. While it lives in the confines of relationships between mentors and mentees, mentoring is interactive and, when done well, provides opportunities for learning. Social capital is therefore gained through the interactions and friendships formed between the mentor and the ECT (Dominguez, 2017). Similarly, the design, implementation and evaluation of mentoring programs are influenced by ontological understandings. An ontological understanding of mentoring is reflected in the work of Kemmis et al. (2014, p.155) who argue that mentoring is underpinned by "sayings, relatings and doings". These mentoring arrangements provide the conditions that influence the quality of the mentoring process and experience.

2.8 Conclusion

Theoretical approaches aligned with mentoring have been, and continue to be, influential in designing various mentoring programs in schools and systems. The developmental theories, although giving rise to traditional forms of mentoring, offer formal and direct learning plans for ECTs (Mullen, 2017). The focus is on developing the individual for the benefit of the organisation. By contrast, learning theories enable mentoring program designers to consider the needs and goals of the ECTs (Dominguez & Hager, 2013). The mentoring program's design is based upon specific tasks and activities to ensure the personal and professional growth of the ECT. Unlike developmental and learning theories, social theories give rise to co-directed, self-paced learning plans. When embedded as part of a mentoring program, the ECTs engage in multiple mentoring interactions that are mutually and individually beneficial (Mullen, 2017).

This chapter presented a review of the literature on mentoring. First, it explored various mentoring perspectives and practices and how these have been influenced by theoretical approaches and learning theories. A historical lens was then used to explore mentoring and its journey from the 1800s to the present day, noting the influence of changing global perspectives. The chapter examined various mentoring programs and considerations of building teacher capacity, the role of mentors and explained mentoring architectures and archetypes. The literature review concluded with the presentation of three mentoring frameworks, including one from Australia that provided examples of mentoring in action.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter 2 demonstrates the range of ways mentoring has been examined and understood in the literature, particularly the mentoring experiences of ECTs in the global community but specifically in Australia. The ECTs' voice has had limited recognition in the Australian mentoring literature, as have the ECT insights into what they believe they require from mentoring programs. The gaps also included defining the concept of mentoring within the Australian education context, how and why the mentoring process is employed in different settings and the consequences that ill-defined or poorly executed mentoring programs have on ECTs compared with well-designed mentoring programs. Equally, the gaps noted in the literature also highlight the limited data available that compares formal and informal mentoring programs.

Three questions guided the research:

1. What are the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia?
2. What are the perspectives of mentors about mentoring ECTs in Australia?
3. To what extent do the perspectives of ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs influence the personal and professional growth of ECTs?

This chapter presents the research design to investigate the mentoring experiences of ECTs from the perspectives of ECTs and mentors. A constructivist approach underpins the study. Based on the assumption that an individual's social reality is constructed by their interpretation of it (Gall et al., 2007), the research sought to listen to the voices of ECTs talking about their current mentoring experiences and learn how mentoring may have assisted them in their personal and professional growth. Equally, the research explored the voices of mentors and their perspectives about mentoring ECTs and how mentoring processes may have supported the personal and/or professional growth of ECTs in their care. Thus, the research design enabled an interpretivist approach to be used as part of this study's methodology.

Additionally, an instrumental case study permitted the mentoring experiences of ECTs and mentors to be heard. These are explored, making connections with their importance in learning about the mentoring experiences of ECTs. The chapter also outlines key information about the research participants, discusses the study's

validity, outlines ethical considerations and presents an analysis of the data processes used in the study.

3.1 Theoretical frameworks

Lederman and Lederman (2015) stipulate that theoretical frameworks are critical to researchers' work because they provide clarity in research design. The clarity is evident through the blending of theory and practical inquiry to gain insights into the research. Similarly, Crotty (1998) outlines that meaning and perspective in the research process can be gained using four interconnected components. These are epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods, as shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

Theoretical Framework for the Research

Note. Adapted from Crotty, 1998, p.4

Epistemology could be described as "how we know what we know" (Crotty, 1998, p.8). It focuses on the philosophical grounding that determines the type of knowledge available and its legitimacy. The theoretical perspective, "being able to put ourselves in the place of others" (Crotty, 1998, p.7), enables the researcher's philosophical perspective to be understood in light of the context. The methodology is also the evidentiary basis for the study (Kemmis et al., 2014) and depicts the plan of action that specifies the methods adopted and why. Methods are the "concrete techniques and/or procedures" (Crotty, 1998, p.6) to gather and analyse data. With qualitative research focusing on language, the theoretical framework "connects the individuals' experiences of the world and the role that language has in that" (Peck & Mummery, 2018, p.389).

3.1.1 Epistemology

With its origins from the Greek words *episteme*, meaning knowledge or understanding and *logos,* meaning account or reason (Steup & Neta, 2005), the concept of epistemology allows researchers within a given discipline to set the parameters of available types of knowledge. It offers an assurance of its adequacy and legitimacy (Maynard, 1994). Crotty (1998), like Bryman (2008), suggests that understanding knowledge, and all that it entails, allows us to ascertain what can and cannot be determined and to explore and investigate how it is acquired and communicated to others.

The epistemological approach chosen for this study was constructivism. The constructivist theory builds on cognitive approaches that facilitate meaningful learning with the accumulation of knowledge (Maynard, 1994). In this current study, opportunities for reflection enable prior knowledge and newfound knowledge to be reframed so that individuals can increase their self-awareness and modify their practice to reflect real and relevant teaching and learning experiences (Baker & Lattuca, 2010). Consideration was given to the diversity of participants in the mentoring process and the social learning processes in their respective environments (Dominguez & Hager, 2013). Social constructivist theory gives rise to approaches that build upon knowledge through experience and time and enable learning through observation, role modelling and imitation (Kemmis, et al., 2014). Social constructivism brings to the fore "multiple realities co-constructed through lived experiences and interactions with others" (Creswell, 2013, p.36).

A researcher's epistemological assumptions may influence how research is undertaken (Bryman, 2012). The constructivist approach, reflective of qualitative research methods, governed the way the text-based data in this present study was gathered, organised and presented (Flick, 2014) so that it brought to the fore the perspectives of ECTs about their mentoring experience as well as the perspectives of mentors about their experiences of mentoring the ECTs.

This study explores the mentoring experiences of ECTs who can make meaning of events through their lived experiences. As a result, ECTs are best placed to provide insights into their contexts. Equally, mentors of ECTs were invited to share

their perspectives on their experiences of mentoring ECTs. Their constructed views and meanings contribute to understanding the mentoring experiences of ECTs.

3.1.2 Constructivism

Constructivism is an approach used to understand phenomena through the perspective of participants. The participants' perspective is made up of their personal stories and is reflective of their social interactions and experiences with others (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Adopting a constructivist approach reflects significantly on the research. It defines how a researcher conducts the research and views the data (Crotty, 1998). A qualitative research approach acknowledges that "each individual experiences the world in fundamentally idiosyncratic ways" (Peck & Mummery, 2018, p.389). Therefore, the researcher must undertake a theoretical inquiry that explores the relationship between the individual, the world and reality. According to Crotty (1998, p.58), constructivism refers to an "individualistic understanding" that focuses on "the meaning-making activity of the mind". This is a good and worthy process that reflects the "instrumental and practical function of theory construction and knowing" (p.57). It brings to the fore the participant's experience and how they make sense of the world.

Qualitative researchers seek to discover the "true" nature of reality and how it "truly" works (Guba, 1990, p.19). The researcher's responsibility is to discover the participants' perspectives validly and reliably. They must be aware that this process is interactive by nature and must take "maximum advantage of the personal insight, inner feelings and life perspective to understand" (Neuman, 2011, p.168). Being sensitive to their assumptions, perceptions, personal views and influences is essential. The social setting and the associated mentoring interactions were critical to learning the experiences of ECTs. With a focus on personal meaning, understanding the social context and the processes used to engage in mentoring, insight was gained into the "doings, sayings and relatings" of ECTs and their mentors (Kemmis, et al., 2014, p.155).

3.2 Theoretical perspective

The theoretical perspective establishes the context for the research and then embeds it into a system of principles to support crucial criteria (Crotty, 1998). Its focus is to connect with the research and the established criteria within the bounds of

ethical conduct. The theoretical perspective adopted for this research was an interpretivist approach, which offers insight into "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998, p.67). This meaning-making process (Crotty, 1998) supposes that individuals construct their actions based on their interpretation of events. In this study, it was essential to understand *why* ECTs and school leaders felt the way they did about their mentoring experiences. The context was critical in understanding if mentoring was successful, how it was designed and how it impacted personal and professional growth, if at all. The interpretivist approach also enabled the study to investigate why there were no mentoring programs in some schools.

3.2.1 Interpretivism

Interpretivism is an example of a theoretical perspective that guides some research methodologies (Ryan, 2018). Based on Weber's concept of *verstehen,* its focus is to "provide culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world" (Crotty, 1998, p.67). That is, it seeks to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen et al., 2011).

The interpretivist approach acknowledges the existence of these interpretations, understands the respective contexts in which they arose in this case – those of ECTs and mentors – and then rebuilds them without making any changes to develop appropriate theories (Bryman, 2012; Goldkuhl, 2012). The exploration of identified patterns of meaning and critical themes regarding the mentoring experiences of ECTs allowed the respondents' interpretation and understandings to be gleaned. Equally, clarifying how the mentoring experiences of ECTs facilitated their personal and professional growth would add to the culturally and contextually rich learnings of the study.

3.2.2 Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective from sociology that explains how communities are created and sustained via meaningful interactions between the people within them (Carter & Fuller, 2016). Symbolic interactionism is an example of interpretivism. Its inquiry model enables human action to be understood by exploring how people make meaning from their participation in the social world

and how the social world derives its meaning from the "subjective and shared meanings" (Goldkuhl, 2012, p.138) of the people within it. This theoretical perspective is based on three assumptions (Bryman, 2008). First, human beings respond to situations based on the meanings they make from them (Cohen, et al., 2011). Second, that meaning comes from social interaction and, third, that meanings are dealt with using an interpretive model as adopted by the person (Smith, 2008). Crotty (1998) acknowledges that people's interactions enable meaning to be made about the context of a situation. This meaning is framed by one's culture and interpretation of the situational context and one's perception of the situation and the chosen course of action (Crotty, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Within the frame of qualitative inquiry, symbolic interactionism provides a grounded approach to understanding how people make sense of the world around them (Bryman, 2012).

Reflective of its symbolic interactionist approach, the present researcher explored the mentoring experiences of ECTs and how they and their mentors made sense of these processes and practices in their day-to-day doings, sayings and relatings (Kemmis, et al., 2014). Kemmis et al., (2014) emphasise that mentoring practices are shaped by the local environment that exists in a specific school; therefore, learning about the mentoring experiences and perspectives from both ECTs and mentors is a form of human activity (doings) embedded in the context of discourse activities (sayings) while underpinned by the quality of relationships (relatings). In the context of this study, a symbolic interactionist approach allows meaning to be made about how mentoring is used in education. For example, a symbolic interactionist approach enables the researcher to see how ECTs interact with their school environment. Influenced by meaning, the quality of the interaction is framed by the researcher's interpretation of the communication and commitment between mentor and mentee, the type and quality of mentoring programs available and the call to action to develop personally and professionally.

3.3 Research Methodology

A research methodology is a plan of action or a focused strategy that underpins selecting research methods to meet specific outcomes (Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 1998). The plan of action is guided by logical reasoning used to guide the steps required to complete the research (Kothari, 2004). Despite having many dimensions, the research

methodology seeks to find answers to questions such as what, when, why, where and how data may be explored, collated and analysed. The strength of a good qualitative research methodology lies in its purposeful design, which enables multiple realities to be researched and explored (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

In this study, the research methodology seeks to explore the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia and learn from the mentoring experiences of ECT mentors. To respond to the research questions, the methodology adopted a case study approach.

3.3.1 Case study

A case study design facilitates the exploration of a "real-life phenomenon in-depth and within its environmental context" (Ridder, 2017, p.282). This methodology foregrounds the kind of questions that provide insight into "making meaning" of mentoring (Yin, 2011) by focusing on individuals and/or groups of participants (Bryman, 2008). Case studies explore the genuine experiences of people through an interactive process to gain a rich understanding of the relevant phenomenon (Halkius, et al., 2022). There are three broad categories of case studies (Punch, 2009). The first, intrinsic case studies, provide a greater understanding of a particular case; the second, instrumental case studies, explore a particular issue; and the third, collective case studies, enable the researcher to learn more about the phenomenon in general (Punch, 2009; Ridder, 2017; Stake, 2005).

All case studies share four common characteristics: the researcher is bound to identify and describe the boundaries of the phenomenon being researched (Gaikwad, 2017), the case itself must have a clear identity of being "a case of something" (Punch, 2009, p.120), the integrity of the case must be at the fore of the research, and multiple data collection approaches may be used mainly in naturalistic settings.

Consistent with the typical characteristics indicated by Punch (2009), the chosen case study methodology exemplified an explicit parameter that defined an ECT as someone within their first to fifth year of teaching and established a clear case by explicitly highlighting the investigation being about the mentoring experiences of ECTs. An instrumental case study was used in this research to explore further the mentoring experiences of ECTs (Ridder, 2017).

3.3.2 Instrumental case study

An instrumental case study was chosen to provide insight into the mentoring experiences of ECTs so that the lived experience of being mentored could be captured and contextually understood (Willig, 2013). Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to interact with the ECTs and mentors to learn about their respective mentoring experiences. If there were mentoring approaches and/or programs in the given schools, their design and capacity to meet the personal and professional growth of the ECTs were explored (Ridder, 2017; Stake, 2005). An instrumental case study approach enabled contextual subtleties and complex ideas about the mentoring experiences of ECTs to be noted during interactions with ECTs and mentors.

Instrumental case studies use a research strategy that focuses on description, aggregation and interpretation (Ridder, 2017). In developing new constructs and relationships, the researcher elicited real-life cases to explore the mentoring experiences of ECTs further. Cohen et al. (2011, p.182) emphasise that events and/or situations must "speak for themselves"; in other words, eliciting "the lived experiences and thoughts and feelings" is pivotal to understanding what it may be like to be in a situation. This approach enables general insights to be made, acknowledging what is evident in the findings and inviting the art of questioning and reflection to determine what is not (Gaikwad, 2017).

In adopting an instrumental case study design, the area of interest must be explained and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon are provided to facilitate a greater understanding of it. The constructs of how and why and the relationship between them must be explored for the mentoring experiences of ECTs to be understood (Ridder, 2017). Gathering data from the lived experiences of ECTs being mentored and the perspectives of mentors about their experience of mentoring ECTs, provided insights into schools and systems and the type and quality of mentoring experiences occurring in education. The recommendations made about how best to support ECTs at an individual, school and system level may have specific implications for the sector and may inform the development of mentoring programs, practice and policy.

3.3.3 Concerns and defence of case study methodology

There are strengths and weaknesses to using a case study as part of the design methodology (Cohen et al., 2011). Identified as "misunderstandings" by Gaikwad (2017), potential areas of concern include generalisability, subjectivity, methodological rigour, quality of research and information volume (Bryman, 2008), as addressed below.

3.3.3.1 Generalisability

Generalisability refers to the extent to which research results can be found in settings other than those utilised for the current research (Cohen et al., 2011). Nisbit and Watt (1984), cited in Qi (2009, p.27), argue that using a case study as part of qualitative research may produce results that "may not be generalisable". However, Punch (2009) proposes that case studies can produce generalisable results using the critical strategies of conceptualising and developing propositions. The first, conceptualising, refers to how concepts are used to explain what is being studied, and the second, developing propositions, enables the hypothesis that links key concepts of facts with the case to be put forward. Punch (2009) further argues that these strategies can be viewed as outputs in the qualitative context instead of inputs in the quantitative context. The researcher's responsibility is to collect enough data to understand key themes from multiple perspectives. The large amount of data collected from the ECT and mentor questionnaires and interviews provided "rich data for readers and users of research to determine the transferability of information" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.109). Generalisations about the mentoring experiences from a single ECT interaction were made and relevant links were identified to essential theoretical understandings.

3.3.3.2 Subjectivity

A concern about subjectivity in a qualitative study is that the data interpretation relies on the researcher and the lens through which they understand the information (Burns, 2000). Indeed, Smith (2008) concedes that "all qualitative research dependent upon participant accounts of situations is vulnerable" (p.48). He further states that the way the research is conducted may be influenced by the researcher's subjectivity, leading to results that may be biased, selective and personal. The notion of the researcher's subjectivity is highlighted by Nisbit and Watt, cited in Cohen et al. (2011),

who believe that the practice of cross-checking data may be influenced by this form of subjectivity and result in researcher bias.

Countering the suggestion that subjectivity is entirely negative, Ratner (2002) argues that researchers' subjectivity may assist them in understanding the realities of the world. Equally, the very concern about subjectivity allows the researcher to specifically reflect on whether the research impedes objectivity. To mitigate the challenges of subjectivity in this study, reflective listening when interviewing the participants was critical.

Data produced were verbally summarised, and clarification questions were asked to ensure that the participant accounts of their mentoring experiences and perspectives of the mentoring experiences of ECTs were accurately captured. A critical step in qualitative research is a process known as member checking (Cope, 2014). In the study, participants were provided with a copy of the transcripts to ensure the content of their recorded interview was correct and accurately reflected their sentiments. This process allows the researcher to validate their interpretations of the data and then use these to draw the appropriate conclusions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

3.3.3.3 Methodological rigour

The demonstration of sound theoretical conclusions is pivotal to methodological rigour (Lipton, 2004). In qualitative research, conclusions are made based on the results obtained and the techniques used to make inferences or engage in process reasoning (Harley & Cornelissen, 2020). For this reason, trustworthiness, "the transparency of the conduct of the study [that] is crucial to the usefulness and integrity of the findings" (Cope, 2014, p.89), is essential to rigour. The research design ensured that the interview questions for the ECTs and the mentors were tested. The testing process enabled the researcher to ensure the interviews were appropriately designed and clear. Also, it enabled the researcher to reflect on the conduct of the process, again to ensure that all aspects of the interviews fulfilled the requirements of being trustworthy. Four ECTs (two from regional areas and two from metropolitan areas) were asked to provide feedback on the ECT interview questions. Three mentors (two from regional areas and one from the metropolitan area) provided feedback on the school leader interview questions. Both cohorts received the questions before their

interviews so that they had time to adequately plan for their responses and offer prepared insights into their respective experiences of the mentoring process.

3.3.3.4 Quality of research

The quality of qualitative research, particularly when it uses a case study methodology, must be tested to ensure that it fulfils validity and reliability requirements (Gaikwad, 2017). Yin (2014) argues that case studies produce large amounts of data from multiple sources and outlined the importance of triangulating the data. Therefore, consistent findings can be considered robust data despite the qualitative approach used.

In the study, various measures were adopted to determine the mentoring experiences of ECTs and the perspectives of the mentoring experiences of ECTs by mentors. Adequate time was planned to collect the data. The process also enabled the researcher to connect with the participants to ensure the information gathered reflected "an understanding of the people" (Cope, 2014, p.90). Internal validity measures were also undertaken to ensure that the method adopted accurately obtained the required information. Consideration was given to fairness, authenticity, plausibility, reliability and credibility to ensure that the necessary steps contributed to the accuracy of findings.

3.3.3.5 Volume of information

Concern about the case study approach is the time taken to engage in the process and the large volume of information collected (Cohen et al., 2011). To address this, the study of the mentoring experiences of ECTs established clear boundaries. Also, the data collection process was made to comply with necessary research protocols (Creswell, 2009). To reach a saturation point, the research design required a minimum of 30 interviews to be completed for ECTs and school leaders to provide enough breadth and depth in understanding the mentoring experiences of ECTs. Following Creswell (2005), the data collection steps ensured that there was not an excessive collection of data. The interviews were semi-structured in design and did not exceed 24 minutes despite an allowance being made for 30-minute slots. They were completed by telephone or using the Microsoft Teams platform at a convenient time for the participant. The researcher kept a research journal as a personal recollection of interviews without any intention of using the data. The content noted in the journal was used to confirm understanding of data, scoping impressions and emotions. The researcher later found that the notes were

supported by the transcripts and did not engage in a formal analysis of the content in the journal. The data received was rich and detailed and enabled the researcher to gain an insightful understanding of the mentoring experiences of ECTs from the perspective of ECTs and mentors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

3.4 Method

Qualitative methods of data collection were used in the study "to focus on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings" (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p.11). In this study, qualitative methods were used to learn about the lived experiences of ECTs as they naturally occurred in their respective contexts. While the study is not based on a mixed methods approach, quantitative data has been included in parts to emphasise the analysis of the findings. In addition, to the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview as described below; a reflection journal was also used.

3.4.1 Methods of Data Collection

Data were collected from ECTs and mentors via a questionnaire (Appendices A and B) and semi-structured interviews (Appendices C and D). While the research was qualitative by nature, a questionnaire was used to gather a broader range of experiences from more participants. Arguing for the reliability of questionnaires as research tools, Cohen et al., (2011) propose that they allow for authentic feedback yet be economical and efficient. A questionnaire gathered information from ECTs and mentors about their mentoring experiences in their respective contexts. The blend of the semi-structured interview and the questionnaire enabled data to be triangulated (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011).

3.4.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire enables respondents to answer both open and closed questions and return them anonymously to the researcher (Creswell, 2013). While conceding that they are commonly associated with quantitative research, Neuman (2011) outlined that this form of data collection may also be integrated into qualitative research and can provide reliable and valid data for exploratory, explanatory and/or descriptive research.

Electronic questionnaires are used to collect data using an electronic device. This study employed a web-based surveying tool, SurveyMonkey, as the online

platform (see Appendices A and B), and a link was provided so that all respondents could access the questions. A web-based survey tool was chosen because it offered an efficient, valid and secure platform and provided an alternative to traditional approaches (Neuman, 2011). The question design followed a three-step process as indicated by Creswell (2005). The first highlights the varied questions that may be closed and/or open-ended questions. The second explores the strategies used for "good question construction" that includes the choice of language used and questions applicable to all participants and respondents (Creswell, 2005, p.362). The third step refers to piloting the questions in a test with small groups so that feedback can be sought about the quality, number and purpose of the questions. In this study, Creswell's three steps were applied in the question design process. Firstly, closed questions were used to obtain demographic information from respondents. These questions were practical and enabled the researcher to compare the responses collected. Next, open-ended questions were used to invite respondents to share their perspectives and/or understandings (Newby, 2010; Roberts, 2020). With regard to question design, the researcher's focus ensured that the questions were not wordy or jargonistic but clear about the information being sought. Finally, a test group was created to ensure that the questions reflected the principles of question construction.

Two questionnaire instruments were designed: one for ECTs and one for mentors. Each included demographic-type questions, and the ECT questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended questions about their teaching experience. Mentors were asked about their mentoring experiences and nature and type of mentoring programs. These are detailed in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2.

The recruitment of participants posed a significant challenge for the researcher, and this had implications for the distribution of the questionnaires and the conduct of the semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires were distributed first in 2019 and because of a low response rate, were redistributed in 2020. The same process occurred for the semi-structured interviews. Further information is given in Section 3.4.3 on semi-structured interviews and Section 3.5.2 on recruitment.

Table 3.1

Summary of the Early Career Teachers Questionnaire

Question Category	Questions
Personal/Demographic	Age
	Gender
	Level of formal education
	Qualifications
	Tertiary institution attended
	Location - state/territory
	Type of school at which they are employed
Teaching experience/Employment	First or second career
	Length of time teaching
	Employment status
	Year levels currently teaching
Mentoring experience	In your teaching career, have you ever had a mentor?
	Provide details of the mentor's role?
	Describe in detail the mentoring program at their school
	Describe in detail the best mentoring experience that you have had
	Describe your most challenging mentoring experience
	Does the mentoring program at your school meet your needs as an ECT?
	What mentoring would you like to see in schools?
	Describe how your mentoring experiences influenced your personal growth
	Describe how your mentoring experiences influenced your professional growth

Table 3.2

Summary of the Mentors Questionnaire

Question Category	Questions
Personal/Demographic	Age
	Gender
	Location
	Level of formal education
	Length of time teaching
	Type of school employed

Question Category	Questions
Experience of mentoring ECTs	In your experience, have you ever mentored an ECT?
	Is there a mentoring program at your school?
	If you could have an ideal mentoring program in your school, what would it look like?
	Describe in detail the mentoring program for ECTs at your school. This may include the structure of the program
	Describe the best mentoring experience that you have provided your ECTs
	Describe in detail the most challenging mentoring situation that you have experienced with an ECT
	Describe how the mentoring experiences of ECTs support their personal growth
	Describe how the mentoring experiences of ECTs support their professional growth

3.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

The primary source of data collection for this research was a single semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to "draw the participant more fully into the topic under study" by using a number of related, open-ended questions (Galletta & Cross, 2013, p.45). It offered a versatile method of collecting and interpreting the ECTs' and mentors' perspectives, emphasised the true nature of reality, and thus provided rich insights into the mentoring experiences of ECTs (Guba, 1990, p.19). It is important to note that even though there were two phases of implementation for the questionnaire, the semi-structured interview questions remained the same for 2019 and 2020.

Interviews are widely used to collect data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Yin, 2018). Shared meanings and understandings can be determined by learning from others through the interaction, reflection and reconstruction of content (Roberts, 2020). There are three types of research interviews (Gill et al., 2008): structured, unstructured and semi-structured. Because of its flexible nature, a semi-structured interview was chosen for this research. Semi-structured interviews provide vital questions that encourage the interviewee to stay within the study scope to be explored (Newby, 2010). It offered "a way to attend to lived experience and pursue questions from extant theory" (Galletta & Cross, 2013, p.72). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to have guided conversations using the designed questions to invite the interviewees to engage with the topic. Opportunities for reflective listening and probing for clarification

enabled the "unpacking of meaning" to contribute to the interview's validity and accuracy (Roberts, 2020, p.85).

Interviews may be conducted individually or with groups (Newby, 2010). For this research, individual interviews were selected because they provide "opportunities for participants to describe situations in their terms" (Stringer, 2008, p.69), enabling real, relevant and reliable data to be obtained and analysed (Roberts, 2020). Participants consented to be interviewed. Equally, they were prepared for their interview because they were able to determine the time and date of the interview and were given the questions ahead of time (see Appendices C and D). All participants were again invited to consent to the interview before recording began. The opportunity enabled them to withdraw from the research without adverse consequences if they chose. More details of the interview guide process follow.

3.4.4 Interview guide

Qualitative researchers must ensure that interview questions are open and detailed enough to allow respondents to share information comfortably (Charmaz, 2008). Given that this research sought to explore the mentoring experiences of ECTs and the perspectives of mentors on their experiences of mentoring ECTs, two interview guides were used. One interview guide was designed for ECTs (Appendix C) and the other for mentors (Appendix D). The interview guides provided the key questions (Roberts, 2020). The interviewees were "given assurance about ethical principles such as anonymity and confidentiality" (Roberts, 2020, p.3191). Using interview guide questions provided consistency in the approach, enabling critical reflection between data and theory. The link between the research questions and the ECT and school leader questions are presented in Table 3.3. The semi-structured interviews were deliberately conducted in a quiet space, and emphasis was placed on establishing a rapport with the participants before the interview was conducted (Roberts, 2020). All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim using an online transcription service.

Table 3.3

Links between the Research Questions and the ECT and Mentor Interview Questions

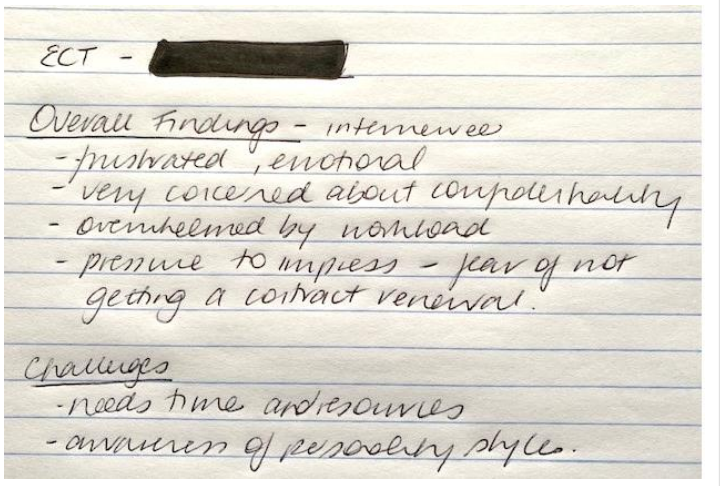
Research question	Interview Group	Guide
What are the mentoring experiences of ECTs?	ECTs	Questions: 1,2,3,4,5, 6 & 7
	Mentors	Questions: 2.2a, 5, 6 & 7
What are the perspectives of mentors about mentoring early career teachers?	ECTs	Questions: 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7
		Questions: 1, 2, 2a, 3,4,5,6, & 7
To what extent do the perspectives of ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs influence the personal and professional growth of ECTs?	ECTs	Questions: 1, 2, 3 & 7
	Mentors	Questions: 2a, 4, 5, 6 & 7

3.4.5 Reflection journal

Reflective practice provides transparency of thought and process and is a strategy that enables researchers to clarify their thinking and aligned subjectivities when conducting qualitative research (Ortlipp, 2008). Creswell (2005) postulated that reflective journaling can be used to reflect upon primary and secondary data. The researcher completed a journal entry after each of the interviews, reflecting upon any nuances such as gaps in respondents' answers, thoughts and feelings, and used these reflections to ensure accurate and reliable understanding of the information provided by the interviewees (Cope, 2014) (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2

Sample journal notations



3.5 Research Participants

A total of 200 participants (132 ECTs and 98 mentors) were involved in this study. Of the 132 questionnaire respondents, 66 were ECTs and 66 were mentors. In addition to this, there were 68 interviews conducted, including 36 with ECTs and 32 with mentors. There was no pairing of ECTs with mentors. The respondents for both cohorts were predominantly female (Table 3.4 and Table 3.5).

Table 3.4

Demographic Details of Mentors

Mentor Age/Gender	Female	Male	Total
21–25 years of age		1	1
26–30 years of age	2		2
31–40 years of age	9	7	16
41–50 years of age	23	4	27
51–60 years of age	15	3	18
61+ years	2		2
Total	**51**	**15**	**66**

Table 3.5

Demographic Details of ECTs

ECTs Age/Gender	Female	Male	Total
21–25 years of age	25	7	32
26–30 years of age	15	1	16
31–40 years of age	7	1	8
41–50 years of age	6	1	7
51–60 years of age	3		3
Grand Total	**56**	**10**	**66**

Thirty-two of the ECT respondents and 29 of the mentor respondents worked in primary schools. Thirty-eight ECT respondents indicated that they were first career teachers. Only 22 of the 66 ECT participants indicated that they had a mentor, and 5

of these were involved in a formal mentoring program. (Chapter 4 will discuss this data in further detail.) Forty-seven of the 66 mentor respondents indicated that they had mentored ECTs. The mentor participants comprised assistant principals, deputy principals and vice-principals and a range of non-school leadership team personnel. Experienced classroom teachers with no administrative responsibility, heads of learning areas and lead teachers were also identified as mentors. All participants were employed in Australian schools at the time of data collection.

3.5.1 Sampling

Moser Korstjens (2018, p.10) emphasise the importance of accessing quality potential participants and recruiting those "who can provide the richest information". In qualitative research, sampling is a deliberate process of selecting participants who have expert knowledge and are willing to share their wisdom (Etikan et al., 2016; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Two key sampling strategies were adopted as part of the research component. The first, purposive sampling, was used to select participants based on the researcher's judgement of who would be most informative (Polit & Beck, 2017). Purposive sampling ensured the breadth and depth of feedback was provided from participants from various geographical backgrounds. The second strategy (referencing) was used to determine essential criteria for participant selection (Etikan et al., 2016; Polit & Beck, 2017). There were two cohorts of participants in the study gathered from around Australia: ECTs and mentors. The criterion used to determine an ECT was that they had to be in their first 5 years of classroom teaching practice. The criterion for distinguishing mentors was anyone involved in the mentoring process. This included principals, assistant principals and deputy principals, directors of mission heads of learning areas, year group and pastoral coordinators and experienced classroom teachers in primary, secondary and composite schools around Australia.

3.5.2 Recruitment

The recruitment of participants posed a significant challenge for the researcher. A low response rate to complete the questionnaire and participate in an interview and the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant lockdowns and border closures resulted in the modification of the data collection process. The original study focus sought to understand the mentoring experiences of ECTs in non-metropolitan Catholic schools in Western Australia. Unfortunately, with only 14 ECT questionnaires and 12 mentor questionnaires completed, there was insufficient data to continue the research. Equally,

only 2 ECT and 5 mentor interviews were completed. Thus, despite regular reminders, there was not enough data to fulfil data saturation requirements.

The focus of the study changed direction. While the study continued to focus on researching the mentoring experiences of ECTs, the location of the study changed from regional, rural and remote Catholic schools to mentoring experiences of ECTs in Western Australia. With continued low response rates, the research focus remained, and another amendment was submitted to collect data from ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs across Australia. On this occasion, however, the data collection pool broadened to include participants found via education-based social media sites. These changes were made to extend the study participant pool for both cohorts. With the changes made, the original questionnaire needed to be amended. The first ECT questionnaire comprised 28 questions and was completed by respondents between May 2019 and July 2020. The second ECT questionnaire consisted of 25 questions and was completed between July and September 2020. The questionnaire for mentors was also amended to reflect the data collection process. The first mentor questionnaire consisted of 21 questions and was distributed between May 2019 and July 2020. The second mentor questionnaire consisted of 22 questions and was disseminated between July and September 2020. Data saturation, that is, "the point at which no additional issues are identified" (Hennink et al., 2017, p.592), occurred by 30 September 2020.

3.6 Trustworthiness

The rigour of a study must ensure that there is confidence in the process of data collection and interpretation (Pilot & Beck, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability are essential components of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Table 3.6). In this study, the researcher promoted trustworthiness by taking the time to understand the people interviewed in the context of their mentoring experiences. The researcher also allowed time to collect the data and invited the participants to set the time, date and medium of contact (by phone or Microsoft Teams).

Table 3.6

Establishing Trustworthiness

Quality Criteria	Research Techniques
Credibility	Prolonged engagement
	Triangulation Member checks
	Descriptive strategies
Dependability & confirmability	Audit-trail
	Questions
	Descriptive strategies
Transferability & authenticity	Descriptive strategies
	Triangulation

3.6.1 Credibility

Confidence in the "truth of the study" (Connelly, 2016, p.435) is an essential criterion for research. Confidence can be achieved in various ways, including the length of time the researcher spent in the field and the triangulation of multiple data sources (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The researcher has worked in the education sector for 25 years as an educator, school administrator and leadership consultant working with ECTs. The researcher's qualifications and experience helped to facilitate an exploration of the mentoring experiences of ECTs and mentors' perspectives about the mentoring experiences of ECTs.

The credibility of research is also critical, and "conducting an audit trail is a key strategy" (Cope, 2014, p.90). This consists of three essential components. The first consists of collecting materials and making notes. In this study, the researcher's reflections were noted in a journal as well as any understandings and assumptions made about the learning process. The second component consists of member checks (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In this study, the researcher provided participants with an opportunity to review a copy of their transcript to ensure that their views had been correctly captured. The third component involves capturing key concepts as expressed by the participants. In this study, the researcher included vivid quotes from the participants that accurately reflected the identified themes. Cope (2014) highlights the substantiation of critical ideas and themes to ensure that a study's credibility is maintained.

3.6.2 Dependability and confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that for data to be dependable, it needs to be stable during the study period. Dependability ensures that the process followed was logical and documented (Miles & Huberman, 1994). An audit trail was used to ensure that all records were kept, and the appropriate research design steps followed.

Confirmability requires that the researcher be aware of any bias or theoretical assumptions they are holding (Cope, 2014). In addition, qualitative researchers must keep detailed notes of their ideas and decisions (Connelly, 2016). In this study, a reflective journal that included responses to open questions was used to document the sentiments of the participants. Refer to Figure 3.2 for an example of the notes taken by the researcher.

3.6.3 Transferability and authenticity

A key criterion of a qualitative study is to ensure that the results have meaning beyond the study and that readers can understand the results regarding their own experience (Cope, 2014). This phenomenon is called transferability. With a focus on participants' narratives, qualitative researchers can transfer rich information by being transparent about how the information gathered follows a scoped and sequenced process and understanding how the data is analysed. This is often identified as a vivid picture by which the researcher helps readers understand the object of study (Amankawaa, 2016), in this instance the mentoring experiences of ECTs.

According to Polit and Beck (2017), it is the quality of authenticity that allows a researcher to present the depth of meaning of a study that assists the readers' understanding of the phenomenon. As a criterion of trustworthiness, this includes the rich, detailed descriptions of the phenomenon accessed from multiple sources and the narrative it presents that provides insight into the research subject. Triangulation is the process of corroborating accounts from multiple perspectives (Smith, 2008). The researcher kept a research journal as a personal recollection of interviews without any intention of using the data. The content noted in the journal was used to confirm understanding of the data, scoping impressions and emotions. The researcher later found that the notes were supported by the transcripts and did not engage in a formal analysis of the content in the journal. Together, they enabled a rich understanding of the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia.

3.7 Data analysis

In this study, the Qualitative Data Reduction Process outlined in Figure 3.3 (Adu, 2019) was used. The model was chosen because it involved a scaffolded approach to make meaning of the data. In making meaning of the data, the researcher was able to read and listen to key understandings of the experiences of both ECTs and mentors and was then able to decide the key aspects that required further investigation.

Mayer (2015) maintains that "data analysis is of vital importance within qualitative research". It is how the researcher systematically examines, compares and contrasts critical findings. Punch (2009) identifies three major components of qualitative analysis that, when unified as part of a logical process, form an interactive model. These are data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions. Similarly, Adu (2019) observes that data transformation from raw to relevant data is influenced by the researcher's understanding of the information. The data is then labelled to form chunks of information which are called codes. The codes are then used to determine the data categories, which then inform the themes aligned with addressing the research questions. A diagrammatic representation of this process is presented in Figure 3.3, and the process is exemplified in Table 3.7 and Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.3

Qualitative Data Reduction Process

Source: Adapted from Adu, 2019, p.26

3.7.1 Data reduction

Data reduction is a process that is ongoing during the whole phase of data analysis. Its purpose is "to reduce data without losing information" (Mayer, 2015, p.58) from its context and consists of "simplifying, abstracting and transforming" the data that appears in transcriptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10). As a part of the analysis process, data reduction reflects "analytic choices" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.11) on the researcher's part. The selection and transformation process begins before

data collection and reflects the researcher's conceptual framework, questions and decisions on how to collect the data. In this study, the researcher summarised the data by converting specific details into general concepts that reflected the questionnaire responses and the feedback from the interviews.

The coding of research data is a form of analysis (Miles & Hubermann, 1994, p.57) and refers to how data is differentiated and combined. Decisions are made based on the reflections of the findings (Mayer, 2015). Tags and labels, also known as codes, are used to make meaning of the information that has been collated and may be identified as "chunks" of words, sentences and/or paragraphs (Miles & Hubermann, 1994). These are organised so that the findings can be clustered into components related to each question, which allow the researcher to form their conclusions.

In this study, the initial data coding had the purpose of breaking down "qualitative data into discrete paths" (Saldana, 2013, p.100), which were analysed and compared for similarities and differences. This open-ended approach enabled the researcher to reflect and look for nuances that assisted in the formulation of pathways for further exploration (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). NVivo software was used for this process. Hierarchical coding was then used to determine the "parent" concepts and the "children" concepts that were hierarchically beneath them (Richards, 2021). Clustering key ideas enabled the researcher to investigate the data further, make appropriate comparisons and refine the key elements found in the data. Finally, theoretical coding, also known as selective coding, was used to identify relationships between the pieces of coded information. Coding was thus used to make links between categories to identify themes (Saldana, 2013) that emerged from participants' responses to the open questions in the questionnaires for ECTs and mentors, as well as the semi-structured interviews with individual ECTs and mentors. An example can be found at Table 3.7. Finally, the themes were analysed and triangulated to address the research questions regarding the mentoring experiences of ECTs

Table 3.7

Examples of Initial Coded Themes

Content Coding	Themes	Categories	Examples[1]
Sample responses from ECT Interviews			
Description of mentoring experiences	Support required	Teaching and Learning	"I was a bit surprised at the start of the year when I found out that somebody who had very little experience would be required to write an assessment." (EI01)
		Leadership Support	"For leadership to be on board… Leadership needs to support the mentor and therefore the mentor can support us beginning teachers." (EI02)
		Professional Development	"And that could help me in terms of my professional development, without me being afraid of it affecting my job or getting fired, because I haven't done something correctly, like teaching me more than telling me what I've done wrong because I'm still in my first year." (EI20)
		Workload	"One thing I did notice going from a prac student to a full-time teacher was that I never really was told about the extra things and by that I mean, I knew the marketing would be huge. I knew the prep would be huge. I knew there'd be behaviour management, but I was never really told about, "Hey, on a weekly fortnightly basis, you'll be required to do..." (EI14)
		Work-life balance	"And I suppose, even just another need would be how to put systems in place that can help me create a sustainable work/life balance." (EI22)
	Structured program	Formal Program	"Definitely having something that is more structured between the early career teacher and the mentor. So having some sort of guide as to the things that you might be discussing or the things that maybe make teaching a little bit easier. So helping them plan more effectively, maybe things that they can do for self-care and wellbeing. I think they would definitely help. (EI15)

Content Coding	Themes	Categories	Examples[1]
		Informal Program	"Coming into the school at the end of last year coming into term four, I found that quite hard because I didn't go through the normal or full induction to the school compared to other early career teachers. [crosstalk 00:07:26] I suppose it was advantageous for me being a former student of the school and previously doing lots of casual work there earlier on in the year, but there was still lots of processes and systems that I was unaware of that I had to sort of learn of other teachers on the run [crosstalk 00:07:43] that was no problem with my mentor teacher just towards the whole school and just guessing." (EI21)
	Personal growth	Personal awareness	""you need to actually stop and take time for yourself because you will burn out". And I got to about halfway through last term and I did have a bit of a burnout and I just sat back and went, "I can't keep doing this. If I keep doing this at this level, I will not be able to come back next year." (EI14)
	Professional growth	Learning on the job	"It's all about your professional growth and it's all positive and in my experience, that's how it has been, I guess, with people getting over that initial fear of someone else being in their classroom." (EI09)
	Mentor relationships	Mentor and mentee connection	"I think the challenge would be the mentor and the beginning teacher to get along." (EI02)
		Mentor Selection	"And then currently, I'm working and I haven't been assigned a mentor, but my head of learning area and I regularly have chats and he's very open to it." (EI07)
		Confidant	"Having someone to trust. Someone you can talk to. Yeah, really just knowing that you're not kind of, I know it sounds pretty cliche, but know that you're not doing it alone type thing. That's pretty important and I've never once felt alone, but it's just having someone extra [crosstalk 00:14:17] that you can sit down and have one-on-ones with. That's pretty important." (MI18)
		Mentor training	"It's not a policy, but basically, guidelines. Things that every person who is a mentor has to follow and I feel not just in words, like "you are agreeing to be a mentor... And you need to be a mentor (EI05)

Content Coding	Themes	Categories	Examples[1]
Sample responses from Mentor Interviews			
Mentoring experiences of ECTs	Feeling supported	Quality mentors	"Just knowing that they've got the supports there; that they feel supported; that they know that they can go and talk to someone." (MI32)
		Wellbeing	"I think a significant one is the staff wellbeing. I really think that if you do have a great mentoring program that goes through various levels of leadership, it's that opportunity for those staff as well to feel empowered to work with younger staff." (MI19)
		Regular meetings	"making everybody sort of getting more attuned to co-teaching, co-planning, that side of things." (MI07)
		Role of Leadership	"It needs to be supported by the principal. It needs to be supported by the leadership team, because if they're not valuing the mentoring program, then you'll find that the quality of it will fall away, because it's not seen as a priority of the teachers involved and therefore it won't continue." (MI04)
	Structured program	Formal program	"I meet with them each week on a Monday afternoon for an hour." (MI22)
		Informal program	"And I think formalising has to be a formal process. I don't think it can be informal in the way that it has been, because I haven't seen a lot of success in an informal process." (MI25)
	Mentor relationships	Quality relationships	"But I think the biggest thing for me with early teachers and even to an experienced teacher coming to a new school, is the relationship side of thing and a greater understanding of the context of the school." (MI32)
		Choice of mentor	"…The mentors, we try and have the mentor in the classroom next door, because that's a natural bond that happens there…" (MI24)

Content Coding	Themes	Categories	Examples[1]
	Importance of time	Regular meetings	"…it really needs to be regular and timetabled and organised, so that they know they can... If they can't get to the leadership team, they know that they can get to somebody regularly…" (MI21)
		Release for mentors and mentees	"Time is always a challenge with an implementing, anything like that, because it requires opportunities for mentors and mentees to meet and discuss…" (MI10)
		Classroom Observations	"I think observation is such an important thing that all teachers should do and doesn't really happen very much." (MI18)

[1] EI = ECT interview followed by the number of the interviewee; MI = Mentor interview followed by the number of the interviewee

3.7.2 Data display

The process of analysing the data is illustrated in Figure 3.4. Data displays "range, condense and assemble information through graphs, charts or different diagrams" (Mayer, 2015, p.59). They assist the researcher to look for patterns and gain insights into the information presented so that it can be used as a basis for further research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Like data reduction, data display is a part of the analysis and vital to drawing and verifying conclusions (Mayer, 2015). In this study, the data displays reflected key areas related to mentoring experiences, perspectives of mentoring and the influence of mentoring on personal and professional growth.

Figure 3.4

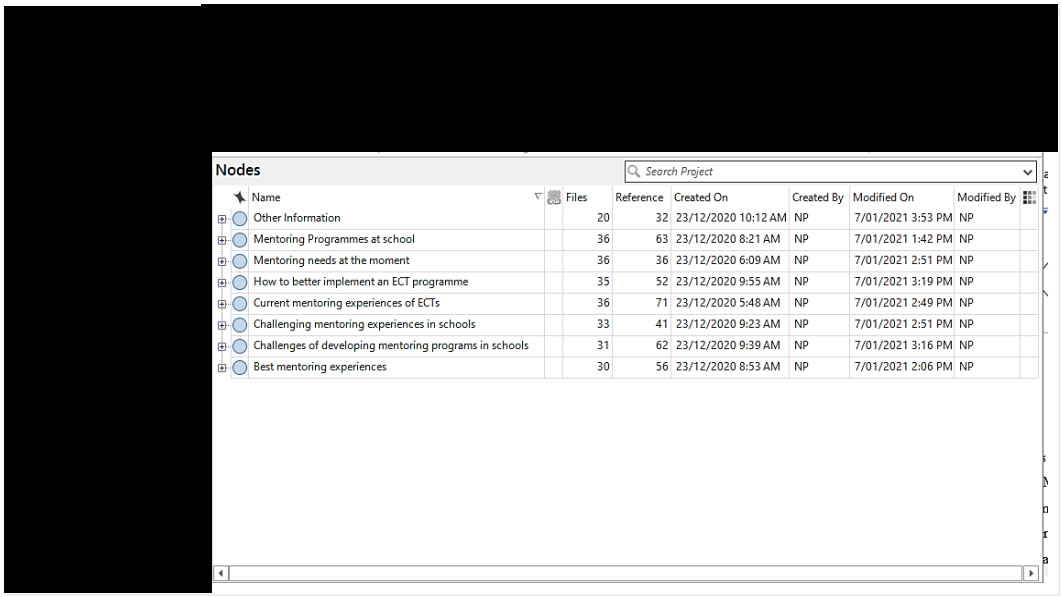
Process of Data Analysis

Source: Adapted from Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2020, p.10

In the example of the initial coded themes (below), the researcher adopted a sorting strategy to examine the codes. The codes were grouped to address the research question (Adu, 2019). Once grouped, the codes were examined, compared and categorised according to similarities. Examples for each of the categories were sought and themes were created (Figure 3.5 to Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.5

Example of NVivo– ECT Interview Responses



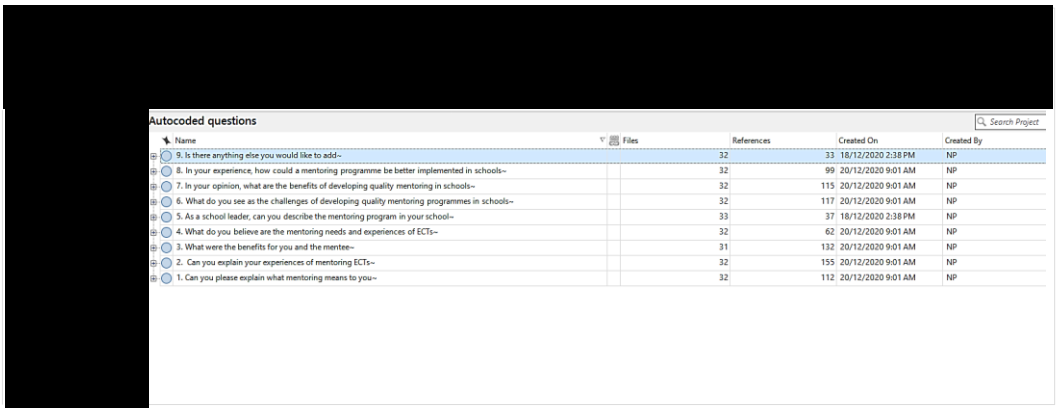
Nodes

Search Project

Name	Files	Reference	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Other Information	20	32	23/12/2020 10:12 AM	NP	7/01/2021 3:53 PM	NP
Mentoring Programmes at school	36	63	23/12/2020 8:21 AM	NP	7/01/2021 1:42 PM	NP
Mentoring needs at the moment	36	36	23/12/2020 6:09 AM	NP	7/01/2021 2:51 PM	NP
How to better implement an ECT programme	35	52	23/12/2020 9:55 AM	NP	7/01/2021 3:19 PM	NP
Current mentoring experiences of ECTs	36	71	23/12/2020 5:48 AM	NP	7/01/2021 2:49 PM	NP
Challenging mentoring experiences in schools	33	41	23/12/2020 9:23 AM	NP	7/01/2021 2:51 PM	NP
Challenges of developing mentoring programs in schools	31	62	23/12/2020 9:39 AM	NP	7/01/2021 3:16 PM	NP
Best mentoring experiences	30	56	23/12/2020 8:53 AM	NP	7/01/2021 2:06 PM	NP

Figure 3.6

Example of NVivo – Mentor Interview Responses



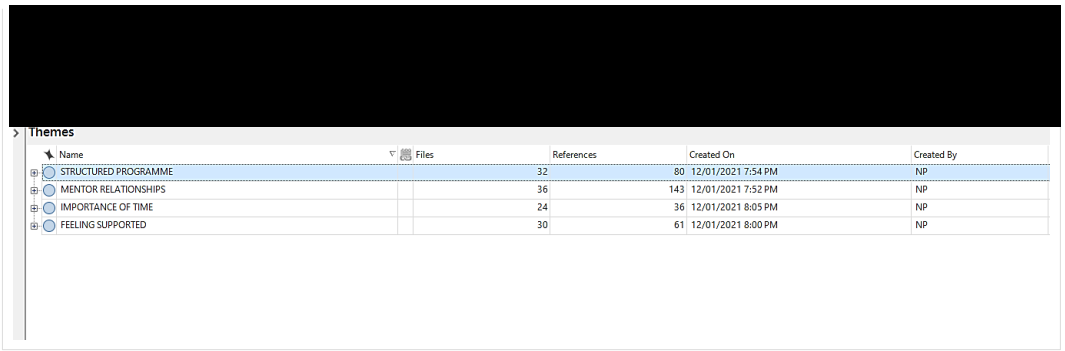
Autocoded questions

Search Project

Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By
9. Is there anything else you would like to add~	32	33	18/12/2020 2:38 PM	NP
8. In your experience, how could a mentoring programme be better implemented in schools~	32	99	20/12/2020 9:01 AM	NP
7. In your opinion, what are the benefits of developing quality mentoring in schools~	32	115	20/12/2020 9:01 AM	NP
6. What do you see as the challenges of developing quality mentoring programmes in schools~	32	117	20/12/2020 9:01 AM	NP
5. As a school leader, can you describe the mentoring program in your school~	33	37	18/12/2020 2:38 PM	NP
4. What do you believe are the mentoring needs and experiences of ECTs~	32	62	20/12/2020 9:01 AM	NP
3. What were the benefits for you and the mentee~	31	132	20/12/2020 9:01 AM	NP
2. Can you explain your experiences of mentoring ECTs~	32	155	20/12/2020 9:01 AM	NP
1. Can you please explain what mentoring means to you~	32	112	20/12/2020 9:01 AM	NP

Figure 3.7

Example of NVivo – Mentor Interview and Survey Data Combined (Theme Set 1)

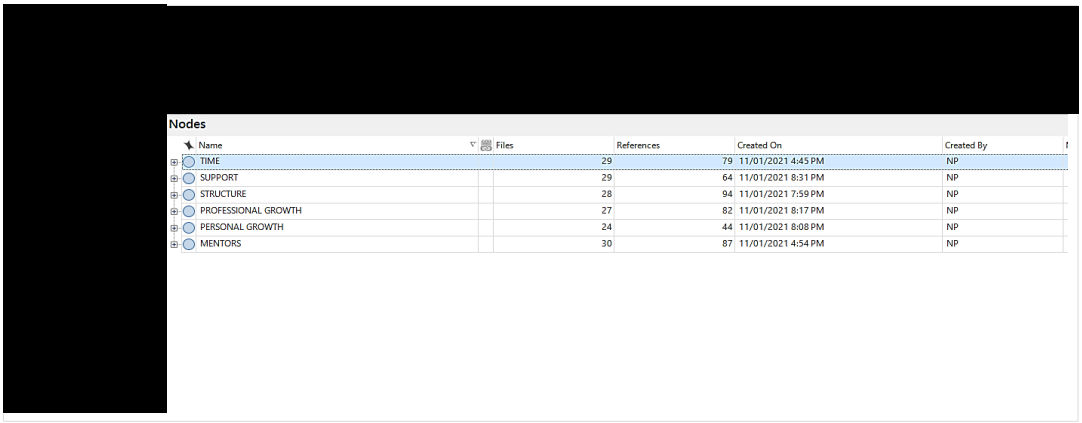


Themes

Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By
STRUCTURED PROGRAMME	32	80	12/01/2021 7:54 PM	NP
MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS	36	143	12/01/2021 7:52 PM	NP
IMPORTANCE OF TIME	24	36	12/01/2021 8:05 PM	NP
FEELING SUPPORTED	30	61	12/01/2021 8:00 PM	NP

Figure 3.8

Example of NVivo – Mentor Interview and Survey Data Combined (Theme Set 2)



3.7.3 Drawing verifications and conclusions

Drawing verifications and conclusions is the third component of the interactive model of data analysis presented by Miles and Hubermann (1994; Miles et al., 2020). During this process, meaning making enables the researcher to note patterns and explanations and make appropriate links. Once all the data has been analysed, conclusions are formed and verified (Mayer, 2015). The verification process enables the data to be tested for its "plausibility, sturdiness and confirmability" (Miles & Hubermann, 1994, p.11). In this study, the researcher compared the key ideas, beliefs and mentoring experiences identified by the ECTs and mentors. This involved noting themes and patterns and assessing their plausibility. The themes and patterns were clustered and compared, and the findings were collated to form a methodical, "logical chain of evidence" (Miles et al., 2020, p.274). In this study, the researcher specifically focused on noting the similarities and differences between:

1. each of the ECT SurveyMonkey and semi-structured interview responses
2. each of the mentor SurveyMonkey and semi-structured responses
3. ECTs' and mentors' SurveyMonkey responses
4. ECTs' and mentors' semi-structured interview responses.

The researcher engaged with the data and themes for a significant period to ensure that the relationships within the data made sense (Miles et al., 2020). An evidence trail was created to ensure that the main factors related to the identified logical relationships were continually compared to the retrieval of ongoing data. The practice of "progressive focussing" (Miles et al., 2020, p.287) through constant comparisons enabled the researcher to ensure that the data were analysed with a non-biased lens.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Conducting ethical research "requires balancing the value of advancing knowledge against the value of non-interference in the lives of others" (Neuman, 2003, p.119). This study complied with the *Australian Code of Conduct for the Responsible Conduct of Research* and the *University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA) Policy for Research.* Each participant gave consent before responding to the questionnaire and/or participating in a semi-structured interview.

The ethical obligations for the research are:

1. Formal approval from The University of Notre Dame Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (Appendix E).
2. Formal approval gained from Catholic Education Western Australia (Appendix E).
3. Formal approval gained from Catholic Education Canberra and Gouldburn (Appendix E).
4. School participation invitation and consent letter, and participation and information sheet (Appendix F).
5. ECT participation invitation, consent and information email (Appendix G).
6. ECT participants provided consent to partake in the semi-structured interviews.
7. Mentors provided consent to partake in the semi-structured interviews.
8. All records of interviews are stored electronically on the password-secured computer of the researcher.
9. All recorded data is to be destroyed after five years following the final submission of the research.

3.8.1 Respect for people's rights and dignity

All participants were provided with information outlining the research procedures in the UNDA Policy for Research. A commitment was made to participants about the privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of the research process. Confidentiality was always maintained and documentation was secured on the researcher's password-protected computer in password-protected cloud-based storage. Participants' identities were protected by separating the information from the participants' names (Neuman, 2011). All participant names were de-identified and assigned with a code, for example, MI01 (mentor interview, participant 1), MQ07 (mentor questionnaire, participant 7), EI01 (early career teacher interview, participant 1) and EQ14 (early career teacher questionnaire, participant 14).

3.8.2 Informed consent to research

To help participants make an informed decision to participate, they were provided with detailed information about the study (Neuman, 2003). Then, participants indicated their consent for the questionnaire via an electronic signature or an attachment response to an email. In this study, participants in the semi-structured interviews provided two forms of consent. The first involved contacting the researcher in writing to express their interest in being interviewed, and the second required participants to give verbal consent after the researcher had read the instructional script before the interview began. Participants also reviewed the transcript interview to confirm that the researcher had created an accurate account of the interview.

3.9 Design summary

The design summary for this study is provided in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8

Chronological Summary of the Study

Month/Year	Achievement
November 2018	Confirmation of Candidature
December 2018–March 2019	Ethics Submission via UNDA and (Catholic Education Office WA)
March 2019	Preparation of Materials – Online questionnaire developed and piloted – Letter of invitation, research, information guide and participation consent form sent to schools. Semi-structured interviews developed, piloted and implemented Interview dates established
March 2019–February 2020	Data Collection Phase 1a – Questionnaire Questionnaire implementation for ECTs and mentors
July 2019	Preparation of Materials – Semi-structured interviews developed and tested – Letter of invitation, research, information guide and participation consent form sent to schools. Semi-structured interviews developed, piloted and implemented Interview dates established
July 2019–February 2020	Data Collection Phase 1b – Semi-structured Interviews – Semi-structured interviews conducted
July 2020–September 2020	Data Collection Phase 2a – Questionnaire – Questionnaire implementation for ECTs and mentors
July 2020–September 2020	Data Collection Phase 2b – Semi- Semi-structured Interviews – Semi-structured interviews conducted
October 2020–April 2021	Analysis – Drafting of chapters
April 2021–August 2021	Revision of thesis
December 2021	Work Submission

3.10 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the research plan for the study, which focused on the mentoring experiences of ECTs from the perspectives of ECTs and mentors who have mentored ECTs. The research plan described why the interpretivist approach was adopted within the framework of constructivist qualitative research. It also specified why an instrumental case study design was chosen. The methods of data collection were outlined, as was the process for data analysis. The chapter also discussed trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and confidentiality as critical components of the data collection process. Finally, methodological rigour and ethical considerations were outlined and the chapter closed with a design summary. The following chapter will provide the analysis of the findings from the

survey and the semi-structured interview responses from novice teachers about their mentoring experiences.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Results – Early Career Teachers

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the study that explored the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia. The thematic analysis of the data resulted in four categories: "mentoring experiences", "personal growth", "professional growth" and "considerations for mentoring programs in the future".

The first theme, mentoring experiences, presents the ECTs' perspectives of their mentoring experiences in schools. This section describes the current mentoring programs in schools and discusses what ECTs need from their mentor or mentoring program. It also presents findings on valuable and challenging dimensions of mentoring as ECTs experienced them in their respective contexts. The second theme, personal growth, discusses how ECTs perceive the process of mentoring to support their personal growth. The third theme, professional growth, presents findings on how ECTs believe they have grown professionally from their mentoring experience. The final theme, considerations for mentoring programs in the future, presents what ECTs perceive mentoring to be and the considerations they believe need to be addressed when designing and implementing mentoring programs in schools and systems.

The data from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews reported here responds to two of the research questions: "What are the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia?" and "To what extent do the perspectives of ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs influence the personal and professional growth of ECTs?"

4.1 Overview

The data presented in this chapter is from two sources: the ECT questionnaire responses and the semi-structured interviews with ECTs. Sixty-six ECTs completed the questionnaire, and 36 semi-structured interviews were conducted as part of the data collection process. A summary of the ECT questionnaire can be found in Appendix A and a summary of the questions used in the semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Study participants were de-identified and assigned a code, denoting questionnaire (Q) and a number (1) and ECT (E), interview (I). For example, EQ07

indicated that the data gathered came from the ECT questionnaire and the respondent was number 7. Equally, EI07 indicated that the information came from an ECT interview and the interviewee was number 7. An outline of the ECT interview questions can be found in Appendix C. Note that in the results reported in the following sections, the term "respondents" relates to people who responded to the questionnaire and "participants" relates to those who were interviewed.

4.1.1 Demographic Profiles of Early Career Teachers

Sixty-six respondents completed the ECT questionnaire. Fifty-six respondents were female and 10 were male. Thirty-two of the 66 respondents were aged between 21 and 25 years and 34 of the 66 respondents worked in a primary school.

Twenty-two of the 66 respondents (33.3%) indicated that they had a mentor. Nineteen of the respondents were female and 3 were male. The highest level of education of the respondents was a Bachelor of Education. Fourteen of the 22 respondents were first-year career teachers and 12 of these were female. Overall, 18 of the 22 respondents who indicated they had a mentor were engaged in full-time employment, with 13 respondents teaching in primary schools and 9 teaching in secondary schools.

Of the 22 respondents who reported having a mentor, 18 of them responded to the question about the number of mentors, with the vast majority of ECTs indicating at least one mentor. One exception was a respondent who had four mentors, three of whom were assistant principals and one of whom was an experienced classroom teacher. In addition, the findings showed that the mentors of ECTs had various school roles. The most common school roles of mentors were curriculum coordinator (1), vice/assistant principal (2), graduate teacher mentor (1), head of learning area (4), lead teacher (1), experienced classroom teacher with no administration duties (1), peer (4) and level 3 classroom teacher (1).

The findings revealed that within mentoring, the roles and responsibilities of mentors were diverse. Thirteen of the 22 respondents indicated that the mentor's role involved providing support and guidance. Their tasks included checking in on the ECT to see how they were progressing, addressing any questions they may have had and discussing issues the ECT was facing. The frequency with which mentors met with their ECTs also varied. Six respondents stated that they had scheduled meetings with their mentors. Two of the 6 respondents reported that they met with their mentor

once per term and 2 other respondents met with their mentor as often as was required. One indicated that they met weekly with their mentor and one reported that they met monthly.

4.2 Mentoring experiences

The ECTs provided insight into their lived experiences of mentoring. Their mentoring experiences varied in frequency, policy and practice and were brought to the fore in the questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews. These findings will be discussed through the concepts of current mentoring experiences of ECTs, general mentoring experiences of ECTs and specific mentoring experiences of ECTs.

4.2.1 Current mentoring experiences of ECTs

The questionnaire included open-ended questions designed to elicit information about the mentoring program in the ECT's school. Five of the 22 questionnaire respondents who indicated they had a mentor reported being part of a formal mentoring program. Their descriptions of the program differed.

- One respondent explained that the formal mentoring program at their school consisted of weekly meetings with a mentor and a rotational schedule of meetings with the principal.
- Another respondent indicated that their mentoring program consisted of an orientation process with an allocated buddy overseen by a graduate mentor.

Mentoring programs also consisted of regular, scheduled meetings with mentors that focused on developing professional goals. Another respondent indicated that their program involved selecting two mentors and inviting them to engage in classroom observations and offer advice.

- One participant indicated that their mentoring program involved "in-school mentoring" (EQ28). In-school mentoring referred to support provided by senior members of staff within the school community.

Six of the 22 respondents (27%) indicated that although they were not part of a formal mentoring program, they did engage in some form of mentoring process. Again, the experiences described were varied. Two respondents indicated that the process involved regular meetings with their mentor/s and 4 respondents reported that meetings were organised as required. The respondents indicated infrequent mentor meetings with the onus placed on ECTs to connect with mentors to seek assistance as required.

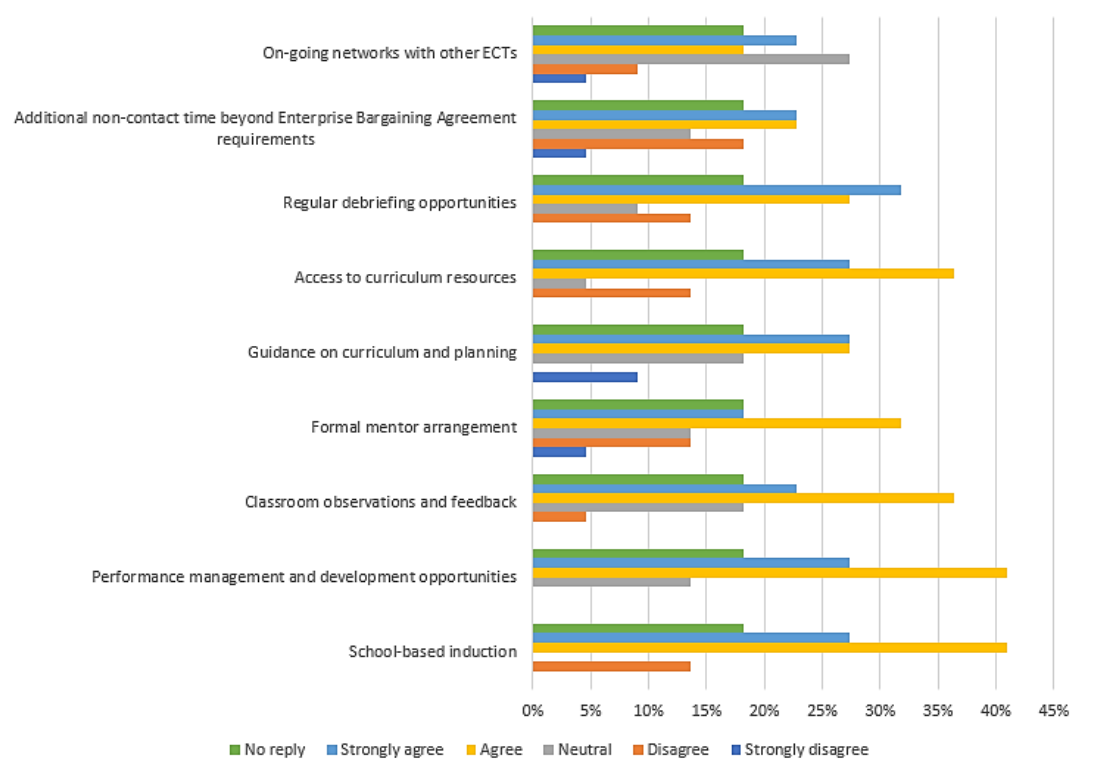
Respondents were asked to rate to what degree (if at all) various activities were part of their experience of being mentored. The various activities included:

- engaging in networks with other ECTs
- exceeding Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (The School Education Act Employees' General Agreement, 2019) work hours
- regular debriefing opportunities
- access to curriculum resources
- guidance on curriculum and planning
- formal mentor arrangements
- classroom observations and feedback
- performance management and development opportunities
- school-based induction.

The Likert scale specified a five-point level of agreement: *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neutral* (0), *agree* (3) and *strongly agree* (4). Responses are reported in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Mentoring Experiences of ECTs Rated According to Activity



The questionnaire responses reflected some dominant activities that formed part of the ECT mentoring experiences. For example, based on the *strongly agree* response, regular debriefing opportunities were identified by 32% of respondents as activities that occurred as part of their mentoring experiences. Similarly, 27% of participants *agreed* that debriefing opportunities played a role in their mentoring experiences. In addition, by combining the *strongly agreed* and *agreed* responses it was shown that over 60% of ECTs experienced school-based induction and performance management and development through the mentoring process.

Furthermore, 36% of respondents *agreed* that they had access to curriculum resources and 27% *agreed* that they were given guidance on curriculum and planning. Only 23% of respondents indicated *strongly agreed* to classroom observation and feedback, ongoing networks and receiving additional time beyond the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (The School Education Act Employees' General Agreement, 2019) (EBA) as part of the mentoring process. Perhaps this data draws attention to how the quantity and quality of resources available in the school context may impact the mentoring experiences of ECTs. Similarly, while 18% of respondents *strongly agreed* to being part of a formal mentor arrangement, 32% *agreed* that this formed part of their mentoring process.

For some respondents, some of the identified activities did not form part of their mentoring experience. Eighteen per cent of respondents indicated *disagree* and 4.5% of respondents marked *strongly disagree* to not receiving additional non-contact time beyond EBA requirements. In addition, 14% of respondents indicated that they did not receive school-based induction, access to curriculum resources, or regular debriefing opportunities based on the *disagree* response. Interestingly, 14% of respondents also provided a *disagree* response and 4.5% indicated *strongly disagree* with having a formal mentoring arrangement.

4.2.2 Mentoring programs in school contexts

As indicated in Section 2.1.2, school mentoring programs vary in size and structure, and they are often influenced by a school leadership team's understanding of mentoring. In understanding the mentoring programs in schools, this section will explore the general mentoring experiences of ECTs in light of the types of mentoring

programs accessible to them. Similarly, the process of allocating mentors and mentees will be highlighted as well as an examination of concepts such as induction, orientation and onboarding.

4.2.2.1 General mentoring experiences of ECTs

ECT mentoring programs and experiences differed, as did their reported capacity to assist ECTs to transition into the classroom and the school environment more broadly. The mentoring programs described included formal and informal programs.

Mentoring programs were most frequently described as formal and included allocating mentors, induction and/or orientation component, regular meetings and classroom observations. The programs were also described as supportive even though there were aspects of support – albeit reported to be present – that were less frequently provided and consisted of support with portfolios, general feedback and networking opportunities.

The process of allocating mentors to mentees was described in almost half of the responses. The connection between mentor and mentees was pertinent for ECTs who relied on the relationship with their mentors to develop their teaching and learning skills and grow on a personal level. One participant attested to the professional growth facilitated by mentors as: "From my day one, my mentor [was] very hands-on and very patient with me in terms of guiding me how she recommends, how we should be as teachers" (EI02). This aspect of professional growth was also discussed by another participant who described the importance of "just having a mentor, having someone that's gone through the same things" (EI18). The role of the mentor in facilitating not only professional growth but also personal growth was attested to by a participant who reported that their mentor "provided … excellent tips" (EI21) and was "always supportive … not only just as a teacher, but … also as a person" (EI21). Some mentoring programs enabled participants to select their mentors, and in one case, this was described as

> almost like a speed dating session where we see mentors from other departments. We have a chat, see if we like them and felt comfortable with them, and then we would have to approach the mentor to ask them to be our official mentor (EI14).

Some participants had mentors who held leadership positions, with one noting that: “the only mentors are members of the leadership [team]” (EI27). One participant reflected on their mentor in these terms: “Our Deputy of Students would observe a couple of lessons and then provide feedback in a very, very informal way, [a] very supportive way” (EI32). Other participants had mentors appointed for them: “We went through a process of having a mentor appointed for us” (EI29). Colleagues holding a variety of positions took on the role of mentor. In some locations, the mentor was a peer teacher. For others, it was the teacher in the next classroom or a school leader.

Just under a third of participants indicated that they had taken part in some form of induction, orientation and/or onboarding as part of their mentoring experience. These three terms – “induction”, “orientation” and “onboarding” – were used synonymously in the feedback from the participants. All three terms were used to describe aspects of an introduction day at their respective schools, where ECTs were gathered and given information about the school’s relevant practices, policies and procedures. These information days also provided a contextual understanding of the school and its history. For example, one participant explained the induction process as occurring “in the week before the first week of term one … before the school went back” (EI04). Another participant described this induction as “an orientation for newcomers” (EI20), during which they “were given a laptop and … shown the systems and how to run everything” (EI20). Finally, another participant conveyed that the process was multifaceted, involving “one full-day session where we went through just about everything in the college” (EI31) and another day “within our department itself where we went through quite a bit of information” (EI31).

Regular meetings were identified as critical components of formal mentoring programs. These varied in frequency and focus. Meeting with mentors, for some participants, took place “kind of fortnightly to every 2 to 4 weeks” (EI27) and for others, involved “a meet-and-greet session in Term 1 with follow-up meetings in Term 2” (EI04). The content of the regular meetings consisted of “check-ins” (EI04), “goal setting”, “online learning” and “pedagogy” (EI26). Classroom observations were also part of this process, during which the mentor provided feedback about the teaching and learning practices of the ECT and supported them to access literacy and numeracy instruction from specific coaches. These were available to ECTs “on a needs basis” (EI13).

In addition to formal mentoring programs, participants also reported informal mentoring opportunities. Often the term informal indicated that the mentoring process was unofficial, with no formal allocation of a mentor or participating in a set program. This was evident in one participant's statement: "I've been very lucky to be involved in a team where it's probably been unofficial … People were not focused as much on mentoring me rather than just letting me be a part of their processes and letting me learn off them" (EI08). Other participants defined their informal gathering as: "It just means you meet on a needs-by-needs basis" (EI15) or "informal mentoring [meant] I would go and look for people who I felt comfortable with and people who I thought I would like to have a similar teaching style to them" (EI36).

Inconsistency of support to ECTs was also noted. This was demonstrated by mentors who offered support infrequently, cancelled meetings or listen to their mentee. For instance, one participant said: "I was assigned a mentor who in the last 6 months has asked me five times if I'm going okay" (EI01). Another, after asking their mentor to catch up, received the reply, "I'm busy. Let's reschedule" (EI05). Participants also questioned whether mentors had received training for their role, with one participant stating, "Mentors need to be sent off to go and learn how to mentor from successful mentors" (EI05). Many participants were informed that mentors would meet with them. However, one communicated their hesitation to initiate such meetings, because they "felt guilty by asking for time" (EI36), and others expressed concern about their mentors not being approachable.

The data from the questionnaire also revealed the diversity of both the mentoring experiences and the needs of ECTs. Twelve of the 22 respondents (54%) indicated that their mentoring experiences met their needs. One of the respondents reported that their support enabled them to celebrate wins and work through challenges. Another respondent indicated that their mentor's emphasis on work-life balance enabled them to enjoy the teaching and learning experience. Five respondents (23%) indicated that their mentoring experiences did not meet their needs due to their inability to approach the mentor and fear of judgement as to the reasons for their negative mentoring experience. One respondent stated, "I felt like I'd been thrown in the deep end in my first full year of teaching. At that time, I felt alone, lost and judged poorly". (EQ40). Another respondent reported, "the mentor that I had during this time was difficult to contact, and I did not feel comfortable approaching them with my concerns" (EQ23).

In addition to the various approaches to mentoring, some ECTs indicated that they were not offered mentoring due to the lack of an established mentoring program at their school. The absence of an established program was attested to by one participant who explained: "There was a promise for mentoring, but it didn't happen" (EI05). Other participants indicated: "there's no real program or structure" (EI19) and "there was actually nothing official put in my school" (EI33). The data revealed that despite the absence of mentoring programs in their schools, some ECTs were able to connect with their principal. One said: "He's really interested in looking at where you want to be in 5 years". Another responded: "It was mainly the deputy and the Year 1 teacher. They went through and explained what happens at the school" (EI19). One participant indicated that although there was no mentoring program in their school, they were able to attend the system support program. One participant identified this form of support "as part of the Catholic education system" (EI10), and others referred to learning opportunities provided by their respective sector employers.

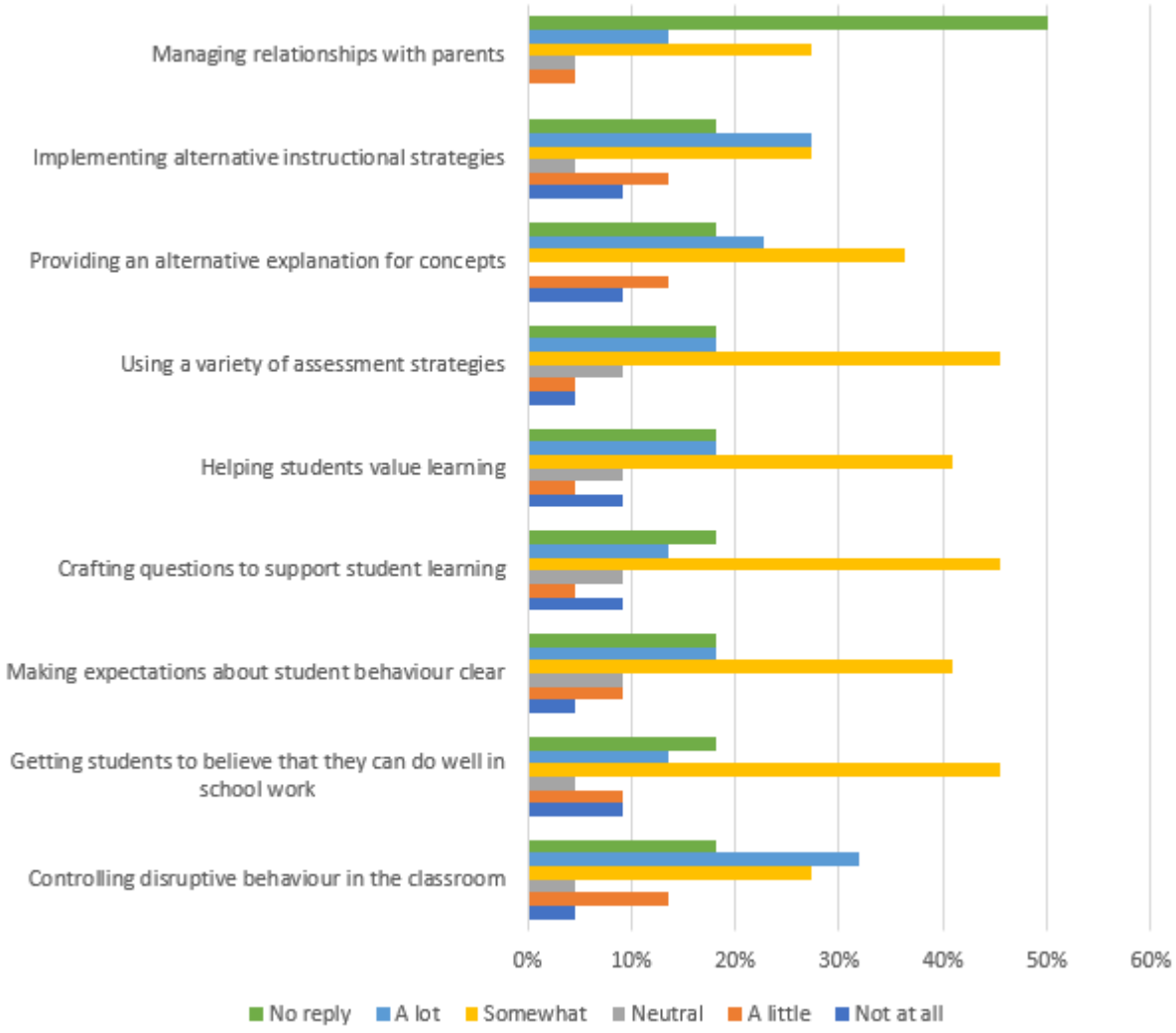
ECT respondents were asked to rate the degree to which specific activities formed part of their mentoring experience that supported transitioning into the classroom. Some of the statements ECTs were asked to rate included:

- mentoring relationships with parents
- implementing alternative instructional strategies
- providing an alternate explanation for concepts
- using a variety of assessment strategies
- helping students value learning
- crafting questions to support student learning
- making expectations about student behaviour clear
- getting students to believe they could do well in school work and
- controlling disruptive behaviour in the classroom.

The five-point psychometric response scale gave respondents the option of stating their level of agreement with those statements as *not at all* (1), *a little* (2), *neutral* (0), *somewhat* (3) and *a lot* (4). Results are shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2

Mentoring Experiences of ECTs



The frequency of responses indicated that 32% of ECTs believed that the mentoring support offered to them guided them *a lot* in controlling disruptive behaviour in the classroom, but 27% *somewhat* agreed that this helped them with their student management. Interestingly, the support provided to ECTs that involved implementing alternative instructional strategies was reported by 27% of respondents (equally) as helping them *a lot* and *somewhat* in the course of their work. The low-level percentages suggest that there may be gaps in the mentoring experiences offered to ECTs. In addition, the findings illustrate that 18% of respondents reported their mentoring experiences supported them *a lot* in making expectations about student behaviour clear, helping students value learning and use a variety of assessment strategies. Furthermore, 45% of respondents indicated *somewhat agree* that the

mentoring experiences included: getting students to believe that they can do well in schoolwork, craft questions to support learning and use a variety of strategies. Interestingly, 27% of respondents reported that their mentoring experience *somewhat* supported them in controlling disruptive behaviour in the classroom, implementing alternative instructional strategies and managing relationships with parents.

For some ECTs, their mentoring experience did very little if anything to provide the support they required. Fourteen per cent of respondents reported that the mentoring experiences provided them with *a little* support in controlling disruptive behaviour in the classroom, providing an alternative explanation for concepts and implementing alternative instructional strategies. Notwithstanding, 9% of respondents did not receive any support in designing questions to support student learning or help students value learning. Equally, 9% of respondents did not receive support with alternate explanations for concepts or implementing alternative instructional strategies.

4.2.2.2 Specific mentoring experiences of ECTs

The questionnaire and interview findings reflected an abundance of mentoring experiences that impacted ECTs in different ways. However, it was evident that the examples provided were specific to the context and, when shared in an interview, were reflective of rich stories.

The findings from the open-ended questions showcased the depth and breadth of the mentoring experiences of ECTs. For some ECTs, the support provided with classroom management was pivotal, whereas for others guidance with teaching and learning enabled ECTs to develop the skillset they needed to refine their craft. For example, one respondent stated that "working with [the] Teaching and Learning Coordinator to rewrite the Year 8 Design 7 Technology booklet" was good. (EQ29) and another explained that "being observed was very valuable" because the process provided better teaching practice (EQ30).

Like the respondents, the participants also shared their mentoring experiences. For example, one participant described the process, saying: "I would say it [has] been a positive impact on my teaching so far" (E103) and another described the experience as "quite positive if a little bit limited" (EI29).

4.2.2.3 Specific ECT mentoring experiences

Thirty of the 36 interviewees reported having had a mentor and discussed their experience of the mentoring process. Some participants said that regular meetings were established, including one who mentioned that mentoring took place in formal group gatherings. Meetings differed by frequency and timeframe, as highlighted by one participant: "it was once a week" (EI04) and conveyed by another: "it mainly involves having a check-in with my mentor every fortnight" (EI22). Another participant explained that "we generally have [a meeting] once a term" (EI23). ECTs considered that their mentoring experiences involved sharing their ideas with their mentor and reflected on this as a positive experience, as conveyed by one participant: "We have chats before school, during school, at recess [or] lunch and in the afternoons; she's always there so we can debrief" (EI03). They further explained, "We've gotten along really well. We just bounce off each and other and yeah, [it's] really positive" (EI03). Two participants indicated that their mentors assisted them to set SMART goals as part of a growth plan and goal approach. This was evident in one participant's statement that "the whole point … is for the mentee to have some goals – something achievable" (EI32).

Many of those who reported positive experiences also said they had supportive relationships with their mentors, who were both officially allocated and unofficially sought. One participant shared that their unofficial mentor was "instrumental in [their] development as a teacher" (EI08). For others, mentoring consisted of having a buddy: "I was allocated a buddy teacher" (EI09) and being encouraged to set goals: "We're using the SMART goal system with mentoring in place" (EI18). Another participant described themselves as "part of the personal growth plan program … and the whole point about it is for the mentee to have some goals" (EI32).

Many participants indicated that they were part of an informal mentoring process. Although they had been assigned a mentor there was no formal program in place to structure the process. One participant described this informal mentoring process, saying: "[There's] nothing formal at this point. It's basically more ad hoc … so I guess that when we get new teachers through, the way the school is set up, there's not many solid systems or formal systems of mentoring" (EI10). The findings also indicated that a lot of the informal support given to ECTs was either driven by the

ECTs themselves seeking out support – "I adopted my own mentor of sorts" (EI27) – or provided by the goodwill of individuals working in their school. Another participant in reflecting on their informal mentoring experience commented: "The informal mentoring I received was from members of the staff community – both teaching and non-teaching. I was very fortunate to feel very included and supported in my first year here" (EI32).

The mentoring experiences for some ECTs were inconsistent. ECTs found that some mentors, while seemingly approachable, often did not have the time to meet with them. One participant communicated that they "started at the beginning of this year and was allocated a mentor who is [at] the level of deputy, [but] that has a slightly different title. We met twice, earlier in the year, and since then there's been less contact" (EI17). Another said that although they "currently [had] an assigned mentor [I] do not receive any mentoring from [them]" (EI17).

No official or organised mentor support was available to some ECTs. This lack was attested to by one participant who stated, "I didn't feel I had much support. I went to teachers in the department for support" (EI35). Another participant reflected on their own mentoring experience as: "I was trying to seek out support and mentoring in the roles but was never provided with anything" (EI33). Inconsistent approaches to mentoring identified by ECTs included irregular or infrequent opportunities to meet with their mentors, which one participant referred to as a "one-off event" (EI35) and by another participant as "a couple of meetings at the beginning of year one … and then nothing further" (EI36). An additional participant stated that "as the year has progressed, we do not have set meetings anymore" (EI15).

4.2.3 ECTs' perceived mentoring needs

When mentors had a good understanding of the needs of ECTs, their mentees tended to have positive experiences of mentoring. The data revealed themes of teaching and learning, support with classroom management (as well as more generally), structure and processes, and relationships were significant mentoring requirements of ECTs.

4.2.3.1 Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning included the importance of receiving feedback, specifically from mentors, about the ECTs' progress in the classroom. The participants

were focused on learning how they were developing in their role and establishing what needed to be addressed to better meet the needs of students in their care. One participant highlighted the need for "feedback on lessons, observations … because I haven't really had that" (EI17) and another identified the importance of "more feedback on the programs or the resources" (EI24) that they created. Feedback also included learning more about subject-specific information, especially for those unfamiliar with content requirements. This was affirmed by one participant who divulged a need for "help with the projects that [they were] teaching" (EI04). Additionally, the need for support in writing assessments was attested to by one ECT who communicated their "little experience … [in writing] assessment[s]" (EI01).

4.2.3.2 Classroom management

ECTs also called attention to the need of mentoring support with classroom management. Being able to positively address students' behaviour and follow the school behaviour policy was important to participants. One participant reflected: "It is more about classroom management strategies and low-level techniques" (EI09). Another participant's description of their biggest need was "support with practical strategies for behaviour management" (EI12). A mentoring need identified by an additional participant was "just coming up with strategies to deal with challenging behaviours in the classroom and students that have additional needs" (EI22).

The participants also indicated that general support was a current mentoring need. General support included planning, having a mentor acknowledge what the ECT was doing well and what required improvement and accountability. In addition, participants described general support as also incorporating "moral support" (EI12), "support with using SEQTA [a teaching and learning management system]" (EI11) and "some form of guidance" (EI10). ECTs also indicated that another mentoring need was support with their daily workload. This included a focus on wellbeing: "I suppose, even just another need would be how to put systems in place that can help me create a sustainable work/life balance" (EI22). Another participant discussed the need of an emphasis on planning for incidentals without feeling overwhelmed:

> I am given reliefs … so that is something I wasn't totally aware of and something I have had to overcome in my efficiency of not just leaving everything to my DOTT [duties other than teaching] periods because they may be taken away from me for supervision (EI14).

4.2.3.3 Structured mentoring process

Another area of need identified by some ECTs was a structured, consistent process for receiving timely advice, direction and/or guidance. ECT participants indicated that regular, focused meetings to discuss in-class situations were pivotal to the mentoring process. In addition, collaborative lesson planning and program reflection and modification opportunities were also integral to the mentoring process and program structure. For example, one participant explained: "We could sit down and talk. … Sometimes you get so caught up in what [you] are teaching in maths this week – 'Have we done that assessment, have we done the rubric?'" (EI15). Another participant emphasised the need for a regular check-in to receive "some guidance as to what needed to be done" (EI33) and ensure that they were doing their work correctly.

ECTs also identified processes of induction and orientation as crucial to their mentoring needs. Ongoing induction practices that fostered more connection with mentors and allowed the ECTs to follow up on any outstanding teaching aspects were important to some participants. For example, one interviewee highlighted the importance of "sessions set aside to chat and make sure that everything is okay" (EI15). Other participants stressed the importance of learning about the operational components of the school. Most acknowledged that not knowing the operational processes caused frustration and at times affected the ECTs' ability to engage with aspects of their role. One ECT explained: "Like even just certain things like wearing hi-vis vests while on [yard] duty, or even figuring out, like, where the different duty spots are" (EI07). Operational processes also included administrative requirements such as entering data on SEQTA and what to do when taking on roles such as leading a committee; as one participant said: "maybe … laying out some clear roles [would be helpful]" (EI33).

4.2.3.4 Building relationships

Building relationships with all stakeholders was another mentoring need identified by participants. Equally significant was learning to deal with parents using communication strategies such as "how to include the parent into SEQTA" (EI11). Opportunities to connect with other staff and develop a strong relationship with one's mentor were also deemed important for building relationships. The significant role of such connections was established in one participant's reflection: "Had I come into

the school without knowing anyone and not … having a relationship with any of the other teachers, choosing a mentor … would be difficult [and] to [trying to] build an instant relationship" (EI12).

The importance of trusting someone was also identified as a critical need of mentees. Mentees wanted to feel that they could be open, honest and comfortable in sharing their challenges with their mentors. Being able to "just have a second opinion" (EI32) was important. One participant noted that building relationships takes time and stipulated that "I couldn't go to someone and say … I'm struggling with this" (EI12). Another participant indicated that mentor personality mismatches and lack of trust from their mentor caused challenges that influenced their capacity to teach, saying: "It's thinking that us beginning teachers might not have the knowledge or the skills to do a successful job in their classroom" (EI02). Another participant said, "I didn't feel comfortable approaching [my mentor] with my concerns" (EQ23).

4.2.3.5 Portfolio

The perceived mentoring needs were not restricted to classroom practice. Many participants shared the pressure for ECTs to submit a portfolio of evidence for registration. With the lack of a unified model for teacher registration in Australia, ECTs needed to fulfil numerous requirements for registration within their respective states. Accessing support to help the ECT fulfil the criteria for teacher registration was also a pertinent need of participants. For some, creating their portfolio to fulfil teacher registration was a frustrating experience when they felt left alone. One participant indicated: "At the moment, I'm working towards my proficient accreditation. … It would have been really great to have had some meetings with my mentor about that and what needed to be done" (EI22). Support in this sense necessitated classroom observations, professional development and reflective feedback. For another participant, the burden of fulfilling religious accreditation requirements added to the support they needed: "I think for me, understanding my renewal for accreditation [was where I needed support]. I feel like it's a grey area and I don't know who to turn to, to ask those questions" (EI35).

4.2.3.6 Employment Contracts

Additionally, participants on limited contracts also expressed their need for support. For example, in addition to requiring assistance with their teaching role, one

participant on a temporary full-time contract indicated that support with the accreditation process would assist with applying for future teaching positions (EI02). Another participant communicated that they needed guidance and support to fulfil religious education accreditation requirements in their context (EI35).

4.2.4 ECT perspectives of valuable mentoring experiences

Participant responses varied in their reflection of the perceived value of their mentoring experiences. The most valuable dimension of mentoring experiences for ECTs that the data revealed was in feeling supported and building relationships.

As part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to share their valuable mentoring experiences. Sixty-four per cent reported that some of their valuable mentoring experiences included working with a mentor who provided them with the guidance and support required to engage with their role. One participant stated: "I have been lucky to have mentors that have been open to listening, let me trial my own ideas and offer support that has been invaluable" (EQ01). Others reported that they appreciated the support they received that was teaching- and learning-specific. For example: "Feedback from observations were pivotal in helping me gain confidence with my teaching style" (EQ30). Others valued the social-emotional support given to address professional challenges. One participant was grateful for "advice on a difficult professional relationship" that enabled them "to respond [with an] optimum outcome for all parties" (EQ19).

4.2.4.1 Support

Feeling supported in their development as teachers was important to the participants. This included receiving specific attention regarding their teaching and learning practices in the classroom and engaging with various forms of pedagogy, such as learning intentions and success criteria. Such support involved "working together" (EI08) and receiving assistance "with classroom management strategies" (EI09). ECTs who were provided with constructive feedback about their teaching and learning processes welcomed the opportunity to learn how to refine essential aspects of their teaching. One participant described this as "learning the right things to do and how to do them" (EI28).

The data also indicated that the valuable mentoring experiences of ECTs, even though supportive in their own right, particularly required mentors to act as quality role models who provided frequent connections and opportunities to collaborate. One participant reflected: "I think that the best mentoring experiences have been in formal conversations in the office, collaborating on resources and strategies for engaging students" (EI30). Another participant indicated that their mentor "moulded" (EI14) how they taught in the classroom, and an additional participant stated that great learning occurred from the "good tips" (EI18) that were shared. The importance of feedback was further affirmed through a participant's reflection on their mentor's comment: "I like the way you've moved into the centre of the room and you are getting them to sit around you rather than being at the front" (EI34).

4.2.4.2 Wellbeing

A focus on wellbeing support provided the best mentoring experiences for a small group of ECTs. This included accessing "support to get you over burnout" (EI18), receiving guidance on how to work effectively so that ECTs were "not taking things home all the time" (EI18) and discussions about "self-care" and "making time for yourself" (EI32). One participant who had worked in previous industries reported being "pleasantly surprised by the teaching industry, just how focused it is on things like staff wellbeing – it's different to other industries, I've found" (EI30). Overall, feeling supported was represented in other ways, such as being given greater flexibility to work collaboratively – "We've been able to work with what works depending on the scenario or situation" (EI12).

4.2.4.3 Quality mentor relationships

Just over one-third of participants indicated that the quality of the mentoring relationship depended on their connection with their mentor. This relationship required "trust" (EI02) and someone to "come in, … observe and provide feedback" (EI15) and to return later "to see how that feedback was implemented" (EI15). In addition, mentor relationships that were open and authentic assisted the ECT to develop personally and professionally to become quality educators. The importance of having an open and approachable mentor was highlighted through one participant's reflection: "From an approachability standpoint, [my mentor is] always more than happy to answer questions; [they are] … extremely proactive … [and] always willing to have a

conversation" (EI31). Mentors who were gentle in manner and structured in their approach provided great learning for some participants, especially when reviewing student work samples, and this facilitated quality learning opportunities for the ECT. One participant recounted: "She sat down with me, we opened up the previous things on SEQTA and then she's gone through and said … 'Well, this is a really good example and this is a poor example'" (EI34).

Informal mentoring experiences were also identified to have provided some of the best learning opportunities for ECTs. The provision of support at times of need and casual conversations and connections offered more of a relaxed support model than a program. One participant attested to this relaxed support approach as valuable, saying: "Informal conversations … when you just happen to have a chat about something – a unit, a course, a class, a student – I just found that really valuable" (EI30). Another participant conveyed that their experience had involved "times when [they were] struggling and went to people and asked … 'Can you help me with this?'" (EI36).

4.2.5 Challenging mentoring experiences of ECTs

The mentoring experiences of ECTs included both positive and negative experiences. Some participants indicated that they did not have any challenging mentoring experiences, stating "my mentor is my biggest motivator" (EI02) and others felt that "my department was supportive and very helpful" (EI04). However, several participants reported challenging mentoring experiences that included not receiving the support they needed to mitigate some of their classroom management issues and/or guidance with program planning.

4.2.5.1 Lack of knowledge about mentoring

Some of the challenges aligned with the mentoring experiences of ECTs were attributed to their lack of understanding about mentoring. Not knowing much about mentoring or what to expect from the mentoring process meant they came to the experience with no expectations. As one participant said: "I have not got much to compare [it] with" (EI11), highlighting the experience of some participants who had no basis for comparison of what best-practice mentoring might look like. Another participant was unsure as to what a challenging mentoring experience might have been and posed the question: "Sorry, just on that question – what is an example of a challenging mentoring experience? – if you don't mind me asking" (EI04).

Just under one-third of participants reported experiencing challenges with the mentoring they received. In some cases, this reflected interpersonal issues with their allocated mentor, but challenges also arose from structural issues such as unclear expectations and infrequency of meetings. Some mentors were felt to be unapproachable and not committed to the mentoring process. One participant confided, "sometimes you feel a bit like it's a bit of a chore for them" (EI01) and another admitted to "feeling like if you'd go and approach your mentor for a meeting, you're taking up their time" (EI17). For others, a challenge they faced involved the lack of clarity of expectations and a lack of structured conversations between them and their mentor. This was attested to by one participant's lack of a clear understanding about the process: "I thought that there might be particular things we would work on or times that we would work together … like I would go into her class and observe, things like that" (EI22).

4.2.5.2 Insufficient time

Insufficient time and inadequate program structure were identified as challenges for some ECTs in their mentoring experience. These factors influenced both the quality and implementation of the programs in schools. References were made about the participants and their mentors not being given time to engage in classroom observations collaboratively or having quality conversations. One participant outlined that one of their significant challenges was "having time and having something set down where you have lots of specific periods during the week or every fortnight, or whatever … to sit down [with your mentor] and look at questions" (EI01). Often, participants and mentors had to meet in their own time, adding to their workloads. One participant spoke of one of their challenges as "the time that they want you to put in, in terms of giving up your recess" (EI24). Another participant reflected upon the difficulties relating to insufficient time for the process, saying: "If the mentor is a teacher, they've got their own classes they need to look after and … if they still have to look after another teacher and [look] after their classes … I think time is a factor" (EI28).

4.2.5.3 Impact of COVID-19 on the mentoring experiences of ECTs

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns and disruption to face-to-face teaching caused an unanticipated series of hardships across the education

community in 2020 and 2021. This negatively impacted existing mentoring programs and restricted the opportunities ECT had to connect in and across schools. Five participants shared their experience of dealing with COVID-19 and how it influenced the kind of mentoring support they required. One participant stated, "When COVID happened, I was doing something different, but then the whole school leadership stepped in and created a timetable" (EI20). Another participant attested to the disruptions caused by COVID-19, articulating the way in which "things got pushed aside" (EI22). One participant voiced how they missed ongoing mentoring experiences because of the pandemic, saying: "Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, we haven't had our introduction into the college community through our parish, so we've missed out on that" (EI31). This, combined with the inconsistent school attendance and the need to produce reports, meant that ECTs were forced to work even harder during school holidays. One participant reported "it was chaos" (EI34). For those schools that had mentoring programs, those programs suffered because the staff were required to move to online learning. One participant indicated that this process was delayed, reporting: "We didn't start it until the end of Term 2 [or the] beginning of Term 3" (EI24).

4.3 Personal growth: Mentoring to support ECT personal growth

Some ECT respondents and participants acknowledged that they experienced some form of personal growth because of their mentoring experiences. Seventy-seven per cent of respondents reported increased confidence to set goals and make decisions as part of this personal growth. One respondent conveyed that the mentoring process "built confidence in [their] own decisions and helped [them] to identify when [they were] overthinking things" (EQ19). Another respondent reflected on their experience and how it helped them to "believe in [themselves]" (EQ55). Increased confidence was further attested to in another respondent's description of how their experience assisted them to "expand [their] knowledge [and] grow in confidence as a person and as a teacher" (EQ02). Respondents also indicated that the personal growth attained because of their mentoring experiences enabled them to develop their knowledge, skills and understandings. In addition, such learning "provided [them] with opportunities … different roles and experiences" (EQ42) that not only developed their self-belief as an ECT but also enabled them to contribute to the school in other ways.

The respondents also highlighted the guidance given to them as part of the mentoring process, which enabled them to set short-term and long-term personal goals. One respondent said that their mentor guided them "through the development of future goals and helped [them] envision where [they] wanted to be in several years" (EQ58). In addition, the respondents acknowledged the comfort that they derived from this support; one reported: "Someone always has my back and that they believe in me and want me to succeed" (EQ36). One respondent also described the personal growth achieved through mentoring as "[making] me feel a part of my school community and [leading] to an understanding of the staff dynamics in a school community" (EQ23). The confidence and skills gained throughout the mentoring process enabled the ECTs to feel comfortable seeking their required support. As one participant expressed it, "Having mentors has made me really reflect on my practice and helped me be open to ask questions" (EQ01).

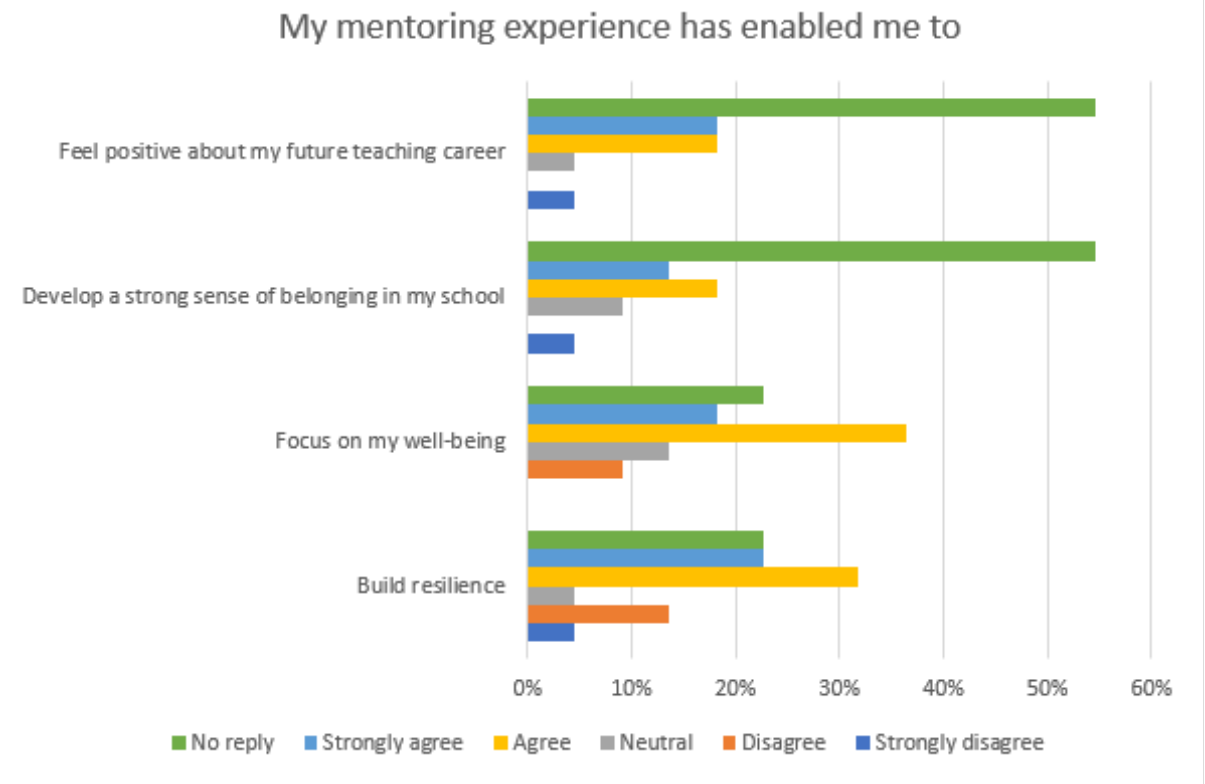
Respondents were invited to provide their insight about the personal growth experienced because of mentoring. The five-point Likert scale enabled the respondents to specify their level of agreement as *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neutral* (0), *agree* (3), or *strongly agree* (4). In addition, the Likert scale enabled ECTs to express how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements "my mentoring experience has enabled me to:

- feel positive about my future teaching career
- develop a strong sense of belonging in my school
- focus on my wellbeing
- build resilience.

Responses are shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3

Mentoring Experiences of ECTs: Personal Growth in the context of the profession



The findings reflected that just over half of the respondents believed their resilience and focus on wellbeing had increased because of their mentoring experience. Equally, just over one-third of respondents indicated that they had developed a strong sense of belonging in their school and felt positive about their future teaching career. Thus, the data may suggest that even for those who experience mentoring in their respective contexts, perhaps consideration needs to be given to the strategies that enhance the personal growth of ECTs.

Most participants interviewed emphasised the importance of feedback as critical to their personal growth. They attributed their personal growth to the degree of support provided to them as part of their mentoring experience. For example, feeling supported by engaging in discussions enabled one participant to develop an open mind – "I've been learning as I go" (EI11) – and another to find the courage to ask questions like, "I'd like more assistance with dealing with that" (EI17).

Developing an awareness of the importance of self-care was described by several participants as part of their personal growth throughout the process. For

example, one participant indicated, “This job is quite taxing on us and if we don’t look after ourselves, we’re not going to be able to be there in that role for the students” (EI30). Another participant highlighted the need to be aware of “factors that I think are building up on my personal anxiety of perfectionism and fear of failure” and also to have the necessary support – “someone that I can vent to and know that I’m not alone” (EI12).

Reflecting upon and planning for a sustainable work-life balance assisted some participants in focusing on their wellbeing and enabled them to transition from university into the classroom effectively. Working with a mentor who could support and guide them enabled another ECT to relax into their role: “I just feel like it’s a reduced pressure working with my mentor” (EI03). Having the confidence to move forward enabled one participant to “start my own stride as a kind of independent teacher” (EI16).

Developing the capacity to interact with peers was another aspect of growth experienced by some participants. One person stressed the vulnerability of some ECTs – “I still think now, 3 years in … that I don’t know all the questions that I need to ask” (EI05) – and said that engaging with their peers, both formally and informally, meant that they were able to discover key learnings that were unfamiliar to them – “If that was never brought up, I’d never think about it” (EI105). In addition, another participant indicated that being able to “reflect on the year with somebody else” (EI36) enabled them to learn more about what they did well and what they needed to focus on.

4.4 Professional growth: Mentoring to support ECT professional growth

Most respondents and participants reported that mentoring contributed to their professional growth. Professional growth referred to aspects of the teacher’s role that included teaching practice, behaviour management and building relationships.

Thirty-six per cent of respondents emphasised that the mentoring experience helped them to grow in their teaching practice. The development of the teaching practice of ECTs broadly included enhancing practical skills in their respective subject areas, receiving guidance to improve their teaching and planning process and being equipped with skills to produce quality programs. For example, one respondent said that their professional growth “allowed [them] to build a repertoire of teaching and behavioural management strategies” (EQ58) and another indicated that the mentoring

experience "allowed [them] to constantly improve [their] teaching and planning and become a better version of [themselves]" (EQ57). One respondent who also identified professional growth indicated that working with others provided an alternate perspective on teaching practice and was "very useful for ECTs who feel isolated in the classroom and who doubt themselves" (EQ30). Another respondent shared that their professional growth enabled them "to rewrite entire parts of [their] programs, so they are more structured, more scaffolded and include opportunities for success" (EQ29).

The data also revealed that the mentoring experiences of ECTs furthered their professional growth by providing them with the knowledge, skills and understandings to address parents and explore pathways to engage with them. One respondent's reflection affirmed this: "I think it has influenced me by making me more aware of the importance of student-to-parent relationships and how it aids in the child's development" (EQ42). Another respondent indicated that the skills acquired through dealing with "tough situations with parents" (EQ39) were invaluable in enabling them to have challenging conversations with students and colleagues when necessary.

One respondent reported how being mentored had inspired professional growth, mainly through enabling them to "grow in confidence as both a teacher in the classroom and find [their] voice with other more experienced teachers" (EQ01). In addition, the mentoring process encouraged ECTs to engage in "different roles and responsibilities within the school" (EQ42) and provided them with the courage to "debrief with and bounce ideas [off their mentor]" (EQ01) about "differentiating activities, … [and] understanding behaviour in the classroom and how it can be influenced by home life" (EQ46).

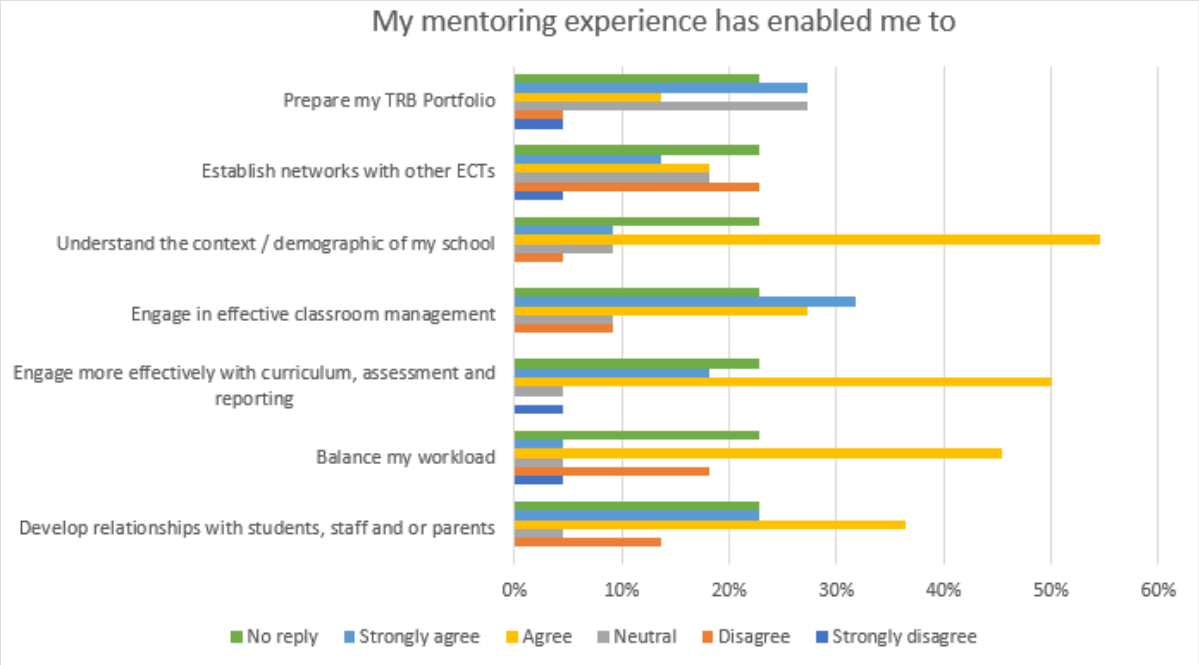
Respondents were asked to rate on a scale the degree to which their mentoring experience provided them with professional growth. The five-point scale let them determine their level of agreement as *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neutral* (0), *agree* (3) and *strongly agree* (4). The statements included:

- preparing their teacher registration portfolio
- establishing networks with other ECTs
- understanding the context and or demographic of their school
- engaging in effective classroom management
- engaging more effectively with curriculum, assessment and reporting
- developing relationships with staff, students and parents.

The responses are shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4

Mentoring Experiences of ECTs: Professional Growth in the context of the profession



Approximately 60% of respondents combined *strongly agree* and *agree* responses, indicated that their mentoring experiences enabled them to develop relationships, engage with the curriculum, understand the context of the school and engage in classroom management respectively. When respondents' responses to *strongly agree* and *agree* were combined, approximately 50% agreed that their mentoring experience enabled them to balance their workload. Equally, just over one-third of respondents stated that they were able to establish networks with other ECTs and prepare their portfolio for teacher registration indicating that there may be more support required in this element to better foster professional growth.

Overall, most interview participants indicated that their mentoring experience provided them with professional growth in many and varied aspects of their role. Participants reported that accessing feedback about best practices in teaching and learning contributed to professional growth. Having the opportunity to be observed in their classrooms was also important to ECTs. Discovering more about the teaching and learning process, refining the selection and implementation of strategies and

gauging student learning progress were likewise central to the professional growth of ECTs. One participant noted that working with their mentor "has really moulded how I teach and how I deliver and my efficiency" (EI14). Another participant stated, "I wanted some feedback on the way that we do our word work session … and I just wanted to make sure that what I was doing was aligned with the other classroom teacher" (EI15). In addition to this, accessing support to engage with appropriate pedagogy contextually enabled one participant to "structure learning" (EI13), allowing them to facilitate the learning of challenging students. Another participant indicated that engaging in using a "learn and grow framework" (EI09) as part of instructional rounds contributed to their professional growth. They found the process "encouraging" (EI09) because it enabled them to celebrate their strengths and identify areas that required improvement.

Other examples of professional growth noted by one participant included using the SMART structure to set professional goals, which allowed them to develop their classroom practice. Developing communication skills was also an aspect of professional growth that guided ECTs in "wording emails" (EI25) and enabled them to become more confident in providing feedback about students. During the COVID-19 restrictions, one participant reported that they were allowed to "determine a game plan" (EI05) for the entire school that included what needed to be done to support students, staff and parents from a technological perspective.

4.5 Considerations for mentoring programs

Sixty-three per cent of the questionnaire respondents provided ideas for consideration for future mentoring programs. Two key themes were evident in the findings. The first emphasised the importance of mentor selection and engagement. The other referred to the design of mentoring programs.

Of the 63% of respondents, 43% indicated that mentors needed to fulfil key criteria to ensure that they would meet their mentees' needs. Both teaching experience and personal attributes such as being understanding and having a "good temperament" (EQ40), were deemed necessary for mentors to support the growth of ECTs. One participant indicated that "a mentor should be someone passionate about catering for different abilities in a learning environment" (EQ46). There were mixed responses about the best way to select mentors. One questionnaire respondent suggested that

"schools [should] choose the appropriate mentors for their staff" (EQ37) and another indicated, "I would like to see graduates being allowed to pick their mentors rather than being allocated someone that you are not compatible with" (EQ56).

Five per cent of respondents said that more consideration should be given to the quality of the mentoring programs. One participant suggested that a "clearer, more thorough introduction to the programs and expectations of the school" (EQ54) be provided. Another participant indicated that "a list of ideas" (EQ55) be explored instead of engaging in "needs-based interactions" (EQ55). The content selection for the mentoring programs was also recommended for consideration, with one participant suggesting that "program writing" (EQ58) be included. Another participant expressed the view that "mentoring is an extremely valuable practice" for supporting ECTs with "tools they need to build their confidence and grow into the role" (EQ30).

Interview participants also indicated that mentoring programs could be better implemented if more consideration was given to the design of structured programs. Structured programs that included induction (introducing the ECT to the school community) and orientation (enabling an ECT to become familiar with their role and environment) were important. For example, one participant suggested that an induction program allowed the ECT to become familiar with both the "day-to-day" (EI07) running of the school and "the expectations of how things should be run in the classrooms" (EI07).

The effective selection and training of mentors were considered an important component of implementing a quality mentoring program. Participants indicated that mentors needed to be familiar with mentoring and be clear about the planning required to mentor an ECT effectively. One participant described "the mindset of the mentor, the experience of the mentor and being able to cope with the extra workload" (EI13) as necessary attributes and qualities required of mentors. Participants also indicated that mentors needed to be both committed to the process and focused on "having the opportunity to develop a relationship with the ECT" (EI01). Another participant expressed that a mentor had to be "someone who is in tune with the school-wide approach to things" (EI13) and one who "was not looking at retirement in the [near] future" (EI13).

Participants reported that consideration needed to be given to the approach used to select mentors. It was noted that some schools appointed mentors whereas others provided mentees with the opportunity to select their mentor. Forty-two per cent of the interview participants who had a mentor expressed the importance of mentors needing to be trained. In addition, the data revealed that ECTs felt that mentors needed to want to be mentors, as attested to by this participant's revelation: "It's all about the input and the enthusiasm of the mentor" (EI14). The participants considered this desire to be a mentor more important than other factors such as "the school's socioeconomic status or the students" (EI14). Additionally, clarity of expectations, processes and practices were critical in ensuring the mentoring experience was optimal. This was supported by a participant's suggestion of the need to "talk about different rules, … expectations and questions" (EI20) and "what the program will be during the year" (EI22).

The data highlighted the importance of the frequency of meetings between mentor and mentee. Reference was made to the need for regular meetings to discuss day-to-day challenges, acknowledge celebrations or just plan. Participants suggested regular meetings – "at least once a fortnight initially, maybe for the first month or two" (EI07) – and appropriate time releases that would allow mentors and mentees to engage in the process thoroughly. These were both considered important for the implementation of successful mentoring programs. Participants suggested the need for a mentor and mentee to "find a DOTT time where we both aren't teaching, to be able to sit down and catch up" (EI09) and to observe the lessons of others "so you can kind of watch someone else … teaching and then … amalgamate that into your own strategy and practice over time" (EI16).

Regular focused conversations between mentees and mentors were deemed essential in establishing successful mentoring programs in schools. Participants suggested that mentors be given time to view lessons and then partake in a regular debriefing process with the ECT. One participant explained,

> If a mentor program and meetings for that program were structured – even it was once a term, but some frequent timeframe – I think it [would provide] an opportunity for reflection, … planning and looking at alternative approaches for teaching and learning (EI29).

Flexible mentoring programs were another consideration offered by the interview participants. Five participants indicated that flexibility needed to be considered if mentoring programs were to be better implemented in schools. All individuals and schools are different; as one participant said, "everyone is different and everyone's going to respond to different things and [have] different needs" (EI08). To address this, another participant suggested that school leaders may wish to take the opportunity to connect with ECTs and to work with them to determine their needs. One participant expressed the opinion that "[school] leadership need to be on board" (EI02) in support of both ECTs and the mentors if they are to grow professionally.

Implementing mentoring programs in rural locations requires additional considerations. One participant explained that "there probably needs to be something, or an additional layer of that mentoring for rural teachers in rural schools" (EI32). Supporting rural teachers who were teaching outside of their learning area was essential in establishing mentoring programs in rural schools. It was essential to have someone available to support them with program design and guide them with classroom management challenges. Equally, given that rural communities were challenged by human resources, often ECTs were given leadership roles earlier than their counterparts in the city. This resulted in ECTs becoming "overloaded" (EI36).

Participants regularly talked about the importance of networks, relationships and the school leadership support for the mentoring programs. Such considerations were reflected in the response of one participant: "I would think that there would have to be some form of a networking between ECTs, not just in the school but in the wider community" (EI31). Another participant explained that the "leadership needs to support the mentor and the mentor can support us ECTs" (EI02).

4.5.1 Challenges of developing mentoring programs

The majority of participants indicated that time, the quality of mentor and mentee relationships and resources and program design were challenges that needed to be addressed when developing mentoring programs. Providing participants and mentors with scheduled opportunities to be released from class to engage in classroom observation and have meaningful conversations were pivotal to the relationship between the mentor and mentee. One participant stated, "For me, a quality mentoring program would be being able to observe and watch our mentor in practice and then

reflect on the lessons [and] have feedback both ways" (EI03). Additionally, meeting with mentors without impinging on DOTT time and/or committing to hours outside of school time was deemed essential. One participant articulated the challenge of trying to "fit [mentoring] into the actual school day or just into the working week when there are so many other demands on staff and teachers" (EI25).

Mentor training and selection were identified as challenges of developing mentoring programs. Participants believed that consideration needed to be given to training mentors and providing them with the resources required to support ECTs as part of the mentoring process. One participant explained that "having mentors that are willing and wanting to be mentors" (EI15) was critical. Another said, "I think you have to be careful of the people that you choose to be a mentor, to make sure that they're going to be the right fit, [and] make sure that you have a good relationship with that person" (EI24). One participant conveyed the importance of having a trained mentor: "If they've never really mentored before or they don't know how to mentor effectively, they might need some coaching and/or mentoring themselves on how to be an effective mentor" (EI18). Similarly, one participant suggested that it would be better if the mentors were not members of the same department. They believed that more could be learned when "we can get an opinion from an outside person" (EI04).

Resources of time and funding were also identified as a challenge for developing mentoring programs. One participant said, "if there was a more structured or rigid process in place" (EI15), these components "would really help new graduates" (EI19). The challenge of time was also noted for regional communities, mainly because insufficient resources were available to enable scheduled opportunities to occur. As one participant explained it: "In regional areas, you'd have smaller schools, or you'd have schools that have less opportunity to employ from a wider pool of people" (EI17).

Program design and value were also identified as challenges in developing mentoring programs. For some participants, "developing a flexible program which works for all situations" (EI05) and that is "casual and not too structured" (EI23) was considered important. However others preferred "a consistent actual program" (EI26). Likewise, one participant indicated that consideration needed to be given to professional learning opportunities to learn and connect with other ECTs. One

participant voiced the need for "more professional development sort of days" (EI06). Two others highlighted the importance of including wellbeing as part of its development focus, "to create a safe, trustworthy environment where the ECT feels like they can have open, honest conversations and receive feedback in a supported way" (EI33). Finally, a small number of participants indicated that the mentoring program was important to be valued within the school. One participant communicated that "recognising its worth is a challenge" (EI01) and another went as far as to say that this was because not all "staff or educators would be on board" (EI35). One participant indicated that one obstacle to developing a mentoring program was the school's lack of research and understanding, which prevented them from recognising "that we need to do this for our ECTs" (EI01).

4.6 Conclusion

The data drawn from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews indicated that the mentoring experiences of ECTs ranged from informal to formal programs with an assortment of activities that were contextually influenced. Overall, one-third of the respondents to the questionnaires indicated that they had a mentor, and only 5 of these respondents indicated that they were part of a formal mentoring program. The mentors worked in different roles within their respective school contexts and engaged with the ECTs in various ways. The data also revealed significant variety between the mentoring programs and suggested that the structure and success of mentoring programs were strongly influenced by the resources available to the school.

Most of the interview participants were involved in a mentoring program and had an allocated mentor. However, being matched with the right mentor was a challenge for many participants, as was having sufficient time to meet and engage in relevant conversations. Those who indicated they were not part of a mentoring program relied on the support of colleagues to guide them in their early years of teaching.

School-based induction, performance management and development opportunities were examples of the mentoring experiences offered to ECTs in schools. Interview participants and questionnaire respondents indicated that the two components that assisted ETCs in their role were clearly articulating expectations about student behaviour and crafting questions to support student learning.

Overall, the mentoring experiences of ECTs did indicate some form of support that contributed to their personal and professional growth, despite the variation in mentoring program design and implementation. The findings suggested that the heterogeneity in both program design and school context influenced the professional development of ECTs. Where there were programs in place, however diverse they might be, the data indicated that overall, support was successfully provided to develop ECTs in their teaching practice. This included enhanced curriculum knowledge and application, resource creation and behaviour management strategies. Additionally, the support provided to ECTs in such programs enabled them to develop confidence in their capacity to engage in relationships with stakeholders and make decisions about teaching and learning in the classroom.

The suggestions and challenges provided by the interview participants and questionnaire respondents signalled the importance of affording sufficient time and funds to mentoring programs. Without quality time, mentors and mentees cannot engage in focused classroom observations or reflect on their personal and professional growth, resulting in limited support available for ECTs. The challenge of limited time also impinges on the opportunities available for the selection and training of mentors.

Chapter 5

Presentation of Results – Mentors

This chapter presents the results of investigating the mentoring experiences of ECTs from the perspective of their mentors in general. The quantitative and qualitative data collected from mentors via a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews will be presented. A summary of the mentor questionnaire can be found in Appendix B, and a summary of the questions used to interview mentors can be found in Appendix D.

The results of the findings are presented under four key themes: mentoring experiences, personal growth, professional growth and considerations for future mentoring programs. The first theme, mentoring experiences, presents the mentors' perspectives of the experiences of ECTs being mentored in schools. It describes the current mentoring programs in schools and discusses the valuable and challenging experiences of mentors who have mentored or continue to mentor ECTs. The second theme, personal growth, presents the findings on how the process of mentoring supports the personal growth of ECTs and mentors, as perceived by the mentors. The third theme, professional growth, presents the results on the professional growth of ECTs, as perceived by their mentors and highlights the suprising finding that mentors experience professional growth as a result of mentoring ECTs. The final theme, considerations for future mentoring programs presents findings on what mentors perceive mentoring to be and what issues they believe need to be addressed to design and implement the ideal ECT mentoring program in schools and educational systems.

Two of the research questions will be addressed: "What are the perspectives of mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia?" and "To what extent do the perspectives of ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs influence the personal and professional growth of ECTs?"

5.1 Overview

This chapter presents the findings from two data sources: the mentor questionnaire and 32 semi-structured interviews. Sixty-six questionnaires were completed by respondents and 32 interviews were conducted.

Note that in the results reported here, the term respondents relates to people who responded to the questionnaire and participants relates to those interviewed.

5.1.1 Demographic profiles of mentors

Sixty-six respondents completed the mentor questionnaire. Fifty-one of the 66 respondents were female and 15 were male. Twenty-seven of the 66 respondents were aged 41–50 years and 29 worked in a primary school.

Forty-seven of the 66 respondents (71%) indicated that they had mentored an ECT during their career. Of these 47 respondents (aged 41–50), 37 were female and 10 were male. Twenty of the 47 were employed in primary schools, 17 in secondary schools and eight were employed in composite schools. The remaining two respondents worked in their state's education system and were engaged in a mentoring capacity in schools.

The findings from the respondents fall into two categories. The first relates to the respondents who have mentored ECTs as part of their professional life, some of whom have mentored in the context of formal programs and others who have mentored informally. The second relates to those mentors, or their delegates, who are involved in or have played a role in a mentoring program during their professional life, but who have not themselves been mentors. For the purpose of the study, both categories are combined and are referred to as mentors.

Of the 47 respondents, only 22 specified their professional roles. Six were principals, eight were heads of learning area and five were deputy principals. Two of the 22 respondents were classroom teachers and one was a year level coordinator. Eleven respondents reported that while they had previously mentored ECTs, there was no formal mentoring program in their school but mentors were provided for their ECTs. Four of the 11 respondents indicated that the mentors in their school were experienced classroom teachers with no administrative experience and four indicated that mentors were heads of learning area. Of the three remaining mentors, one was a vice-principal and two were peers of an ECT.

Thirty of the 47 respondents indicated that there was a mentoring program at their school. Fourteen of these 30 respondents indicated that the mentors were experienced classroom teachers with no administrative experience. Six respondents

indicated that the mentors were vice/assistant principals. Three respondents noted that the mentors were other school leadership team members (e.g., director of mission). The remaining seven of the 30 respondents worked in schools where mentors were heads of learning areas, highly accomplished and lead teachers.

The ECT and mentor meetings varied in frequency. Fourteen of the 47 respondents met with their ECTs once per term. In addition to connecting with them, 5 mentors indicated that their ECTs met with a leadership team member once per term, whereas 4 mentors indicated that they met with the ECTs once per semester. One mentor indicated that they met with their mentee fortnightly and 2 mentors met with their mentee monthly. Four of the mentors revealed that they met with their mentees as often as required.

5.2 Mentoring experiences

The mentoring experiences of mentors varied considerably and were influenced by the sector and mentor's understanding of mentoring as well as the school context. This variation was also evident with the data from the respective questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

5.2.1 Current mentoring experiences of mentors in schools

The questionnaire included an open-ended question where respondents could describe the mentoring program in their school. Eight of the 30 respondents provided an overview of the mentoring program at their school. The type and structure of the mentoring program varied. One respondent indicated that the program consisted of ad hoc conversations driven by the ECTs. Another respondent said the mentoring program in their school was part of an induction process that provided ECTs with information on a "need-to-know basis so as not to overwhelm [them]" (MQ02). On a similar note, another respondent indicated that their program included an orientation process, and they acknowledged that it was "information-heavy and overwhelming" (MQ63). Performance appraisal formed the basis of one mentoring program, which focused on "clear agreed targets and checkpoints" (MQ55). Professional learning was the focus of another, which included "classroom observation [and] feedback from staff and students" (64MQ). One respondent also reported goal setting as a focus of support for the mentoring of their ECT.

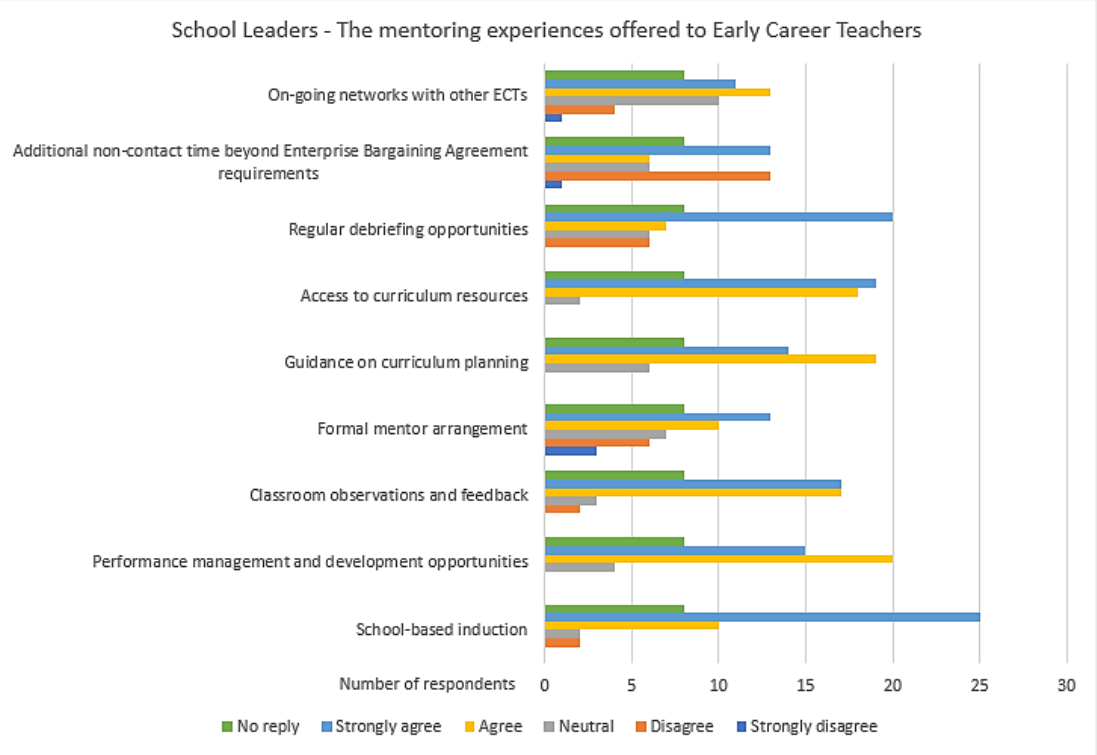
Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which the activities listed in the questionnaire formed part of their mentoring experiences with ECTs in their respective schools. The activities included:

- ongoing networks with other ECTs
- additional non-contact time beyond EBA requirements
- regular debriefing opportunities
- access to curriculum resources
- guidance on curriculum planning
- formal mentor arrangement
- classroom observations and feedback
- performance management and development opportunities
- school-based induction.

Results for this question are reported in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1

Mentoring Experiences Offered to ECTs



Of the mentoring experiences offered to ECTs, over 50% of respondents *strongly agree* that school-based induction was provided as part of the mentoring process. Perhaps this data showcases the importance of helping ECTs adjust to their new contexts. Additionally, mentors *strongly agreed* they offered regular debriefing opportunities (42% of respondents) and access to curriculum resources (40% of respondents). In addition, of the mentoring experiences offered by mentors, approximately 40% said they *agree* that their ECTs were provided with performance management and development opportunities, guidance on curriculum planning and access to curriculum resources.

Twenty-eight per cent of mentors indicated *disagree* to offering ECTs additional non-contact-time beyond EBA requirements. Perhaps this finding may have been influenced by sector agreements. Interestingly, 19% (3 *strongly disagree* and 6 *disagree*) mentor respondents did not provide their ECTs with a formal mentor arrangement. The formal mentor arrangement may be impacted by several factors, including the allocation of resources.

As with the questionnaire responses, the 32 interview participants provided insight into the varied mentoring experiences offered to ECTs. The participants identified the mentoring experiences offered to ECTs in their schools as either informal or formal programs. In some cases, those schools that did not have mentoring programs relied on their sector education system to provide ECTs with such a program. One participant acknowledged that support was provided by their local education institution, saying: “I know the government sector [has] graduate modules” (MI22).

The majority of the programs were described by questionnaire respondents and interview participants as formal, with a significant focus on induction, mentors and practice-based mentoring. Less-frequently reported elements of formal programs included having a buddy system, system program and/or networking opportunities.

The study found that where induction was used as part of the mentoring program, it generally took place on the first day of the school year for teachers, but its implementation depended on school context. For the most part, induction was conducted by the school principal and/or a leadership team member. The induction process included inviting ECTs to peruse school policies and handbooks and assigning

mentors and/or buddies. One participant described the process as "pretty much involv[ing]an induction process of about four or five hours before school commencing or prior to [the pupils] arrival" (MI09).

The allocation of mentors for ECTs was common practice; however, the way it was done varied by school and location. For some schools, it was "a buddy, who is a senior member of that department" (MI31) or "it might be a head of community, which is [the case] at the school I am at… but generally the head of department is their mentor" (MI06). For others, it involved the allocation of a member of staff who had the task of managing all the ECTs in the school. The role of the mentor was predominantly to engage in classroom observations – "they'll watch their classes; they'll get them to submit lesson plans … or planning documents" (MI06) – and to work with ECTs to determine their strengths and needs.

Despite the clear articulation of mentor activities, time was not always scheduled for them to occur. The data indicated that there was a gap between supposed and actual meeting frequency. In an apt summary of this finding, one participant stated, "if there's not time actually allocated for it, it's hard to have that process maintained" (MI18) and another said, "it's a meeting they have after school. … I think it is every 3 weeks, from memory" (MI28). Furthermore, significant heterogeneity existed in the structure of the mentor meetings. For some, it allowed the ECT to ask questions in what was referred to as "an open-door policy" (MI06), however for others it was more specific and involved "writing IEPs [individual education plans], [and discussing] behaviour management and general issues" (MI16).

Practice-based mentoring focuses on developing the knowledge, skills and understandings of ECTs in the classroom. Reviewing pedagogy and engaging in regular classroom observations was a vital feature of some programs. One mentor interviewee specifically emphasised the importance of "high impact teaching strategies" as part of the process (MI19). Overall, the data indicated that classroom observations, goal setting and networking were crucial elements of the in-school mentoring program.

Ten of the 47 questionnaire respondents and eight of the 22 interview participants indicated there was some form of informal mentoring programs at their school. The school context influenced the way these were set up and the nature of these programs. Some determined the mentoring process for their mentees once informal

mentors were allocated. As one participant said, “It is up to the heads of department to look after their new teacher … so [there are] very different experiences for graduate teachers across the school” (MI01). Another described the process as “haphazard, … incidental and … certainly not structured or reported on in my experience” (MI10) despite having mentors who “are people with goodwill and a good nature” (MI10). One participant indicated that despite the informality of the mentoring process, the deputy principal organised information sessions specifically for “portfolios” (MI23). In these cases, schools relied on the respective education sector graduate programs to provide support, as explained by one participant: “We get the in-class coaching program that’s offered by the department” (MI23). In this context, portfolios refer to the evidence required to illustrate a teacher’s teaching practice addressing AITSL standards. In Western Australia, this process is specifically used to support the transition of ECTs from provisional to full registration as required by the state’s Teacher Registration Board.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews about the mentors’ mentoring experiences of ECTs differed in design, implementation and evaluation and were highly context-specific. For example, some participants spoke about the practical and positive nature of the mentoring programs that supported their mentoring experiences, while for others, the lack of structure and/or support for mentors resulted in challenging experiences for mentors.

The practical nature of the mentoring experiences of ECTs described from the mentors’ perspectives included being part of programs that consisted of regular meetings, induction, allocation of a mentor and focus on teaching and learning.

Regular meetings were identified as part of both formal and informal programs. As part of formal programs, consistent meetings involved an allocation of DOTT lessons or time during which ECTs (with the support of their mentors) were required to “do some reflective work, looking at the practice-focused mentoring model” (MI04). Often this was followed by goal-setting activities. Some of the participants indicated that the regular meetings involved lesson observations and feedback. As one participant said, “I meet with them [ECTs] formally, [on a] weekly [basis] and discuss a variety of areas including management, teaching and learning and anything they wish to talk through” (MI15).

In cases where there was an informal approach to mentoring, regular meetings did occur between some of the ECTs and their mentors, but they were more casual than structured in their content. For example, a participant reflected on their mentoring experience as informal: "I wouldn't say it's a 'program', where I meet with the graduate every Thursday, or once a week. … It happens to be on a Thursday because that's the only time I've got free" (MI03). Informal mentoring was also described as "regular check-ins, seeing how things are going" (MI07). Participants acknowledged that regular meetings enabled them, as mentors, to provide opportunities for their ECT to plan their professional journey and to act as a "sounding board" to facilitate "a conversation about how [ECTs] are feeling and where they think things are going" (MI31).

Participants identified induction as a process embedded in ECT mentoring programs. The induction process not only involved introducing ECTs to the school community; it also meant providing them with information about school policies, practices and procedures. Induction was usually offered at the beginning of the school year, and many school leaders indicated that mentors were allocated to ECTs during this time. One participant described induction as involving the allocation of "a mentor who's not a member of a leadership team, [and who] works with [the ECT] on a fortnightly basis" (MI09). Some participants indicated that the role of mentoring ECTs was undertaken both by school leaders and by an allocated non-leadership team member of the school community. These individuals were not necessarily trained but became the "go-to person" for the ECTs, as explained by one participant: "We've actually given them a mentor. So that person really, without any formal training, is the person that they go to for [their] day-to-day running of whatever it is they need" (MI03).

Other mentors indicated that in allocating a mentor for their ECT, they tried to focus on a "best fit" model. Following the allocation of mentors to ECTs, the members of the leadership team would then consult the ECT about this decision. Mentors also recognised that the matching process between mentor and mentee was necessary because poor working relationships created challenges that were not conducive to the growth of either the ECT or the mentor. One participant attested to the adverse impact of having a poor working relationship: "I've … found that when there's been a personality mismatch, it can be a little bit awkward and uncomfortable" (MI26).

Responses by other interview participants detailed additional elements of the induction process, including the introduction of ECTs to the operational components of the school and its context. For example, one participant described this process as "navigating those things [ECTs] didn't know they needed to know" (MI10).

Some mentors reported that the mentoring they offered had a specific focus on teaching and learning. Providing ECTs with opportunities to reflect on classroom practice and the standards published by AITSL was deemed necessary. One participant's explanation of practice-focused mentoring was that it "look[s] at five [sic] elements: … goal setting, … feedback and … professional conversations" (MI04). For other participants, sharing resources and texts formed part of the teaching and learning focus. One participant indicated that focused conversations, with emphasis on teaching and learning enabled them to "collaborate on tasks" and "assessment questions" (MI18), thereby empowering ECTs to engage in "collaborative decisions" (MI18) effectively. In addition to this, the data showed that the ECTs' teaching practice was an important part of teaching and learning and was often delivered as part of "regular moderation team meetings" (MI18).

Contributions by participants about their experience of mentoring ECTs provided insights into the positive and challenging aspects of their encounters. Positive mentoring experiences, from the mentors' perspectives, were characterised by encouragement, empowerment and support of ECTs. In addition, some of the participants indicated that the mentor's experience of mentoring ECTs provided them, as mentors, with an opportunity to learn, "because they're coming with young and fresh ideas, they've often showed me a new pedagogy and methodology in the classroom" (MI08).

Conversely, negative mentoring experiences were reported as stemming from time constraints, limited funds, poor preparation and ECT attitudes that were not conducive to their growth. Many participants identified a lack of time and funds as crucial factors that undermined the mentoring process. For example, having money to pay relief teachers to meet with ECTs to assist them in the way they needed or take lessons for mentors to engage in classroom observations with ECTs are important considerations for supporting ECTs. One mentor indicated that they "endeavoured to try and get the mentor to go into their classrooms, however, [the

mentors are] time poor" (MI09). Further barriers encountered included "time constraints, funding, relief etc." (MI09). Another participant conveyed that "the ECT would go around and take up a lot of DOTT time of the other teachers … and then I had to sort of pull him aside and go, 'Look. They don't have a lot of time on their hands.'" (MI25).

The study found that a small number of mentors were challenged by ECTs who had limited growth mindsets and resistance to feedback. One comment about this aspect was: "[ECTs are] not open to growth" (MI01) and another participant expressed that an ECT "resisted feedback" and "often indicated that [they] knew better – and that was hard to change" (MI08). An additional participant indicated that their ECTs came into the school "expecting everything [to be] handed to them" (MI25).

Regional and rural mentors also acknowledged the challenges that isolation posed to the mentoring of ECTs. The challenges confronting ECTs working away from home was attested to by a participant's explanation of the difficulty of "getting suitable housing" (MI12). Mentors working in these locations emphasised the importance of ensuring that ECTs in regional and rural areas were provided with opportunities to socialise and establish friendship groups as part of their mentoring experiences. Such experiences were essential to the wellbeing of ECTs, according to mentors who worked in regional and rural areas, with one saying they were "living sometimes on their own for the first time or living with another teacher they might not know very well" (MI14). Another participant said that regional and rural mentoring programs needed to recognise and address the specific challenge of isolation – "that layer of being away from home played a really big part in that mentoring program, and about connecting into the community they had moved to, on top of those professional and compliances aspects of mentoring" (MI27).

5.2.2 The perceived value of mentoring experiences of ECTs

The data from the mentors' questionnaire highlighted the varied perspectives of mentors about the value of the mentoring experiences for ECTs. For example, some respondents believed that the most valuable aspect of their mentoring experience of the ECT was the opportunity to connect with other ECTs. This included visiting surrounding schools, engaging in a system program and/or meeting with other ECTs in their current schools. For example, one participant said that they sent their ECTs "to

feeder primary schools, to observe other phases of learning in action" (MQ11) and another said they created opportunities such as "morning tea[s] and regular get-togethers for ECTs to … talk to each other" (MQ16).

The respondents also deemed ongoing support and development in teaching and learning practices as the most valuable of the mentoring experiences provided to ECTs. Support by way of "practical assistance with planning and learning activities and assessments" (MQ01) and "observation feedback … which … resulted in students being engaged in learning" (MQ30) was emphasised. In addition to offering support with teaching and learning, respondents indicated that setting goals and providing ECTs with guidance on preparing their teacher registration portfolio or other evidence needed for registration was important to the ECTs in their mentoring experience. One respondent reported: "working with [ECTs] to reflect on their practice and set goals [was valuable to them]. I also feel that supporting them with their term-to-term preparation and portfolios for registration has been successful" (MQ39).

5.2.3 The challenges of mentoring ECTs: A mentor perspective

Questionnaire findings indicated that some mentors experienced challenges in their mentoring relationships with ECTs. The challenges included: ECTs failure to listen to feedback, no desire to participate in the mentoring process and a lack of awareness of areas in need of improvement. One respondent told of "an ECT that completely lacked self-awareness of their lack of skills and never responded to feedback and advice" (MQ44) and another responded mentioned an ECT who "used technology well but did not respond to suggested changes that would have improved the students' understanding of the concepts" (MQ64). One respondent indicated that "a lack of readiness to grow" (MQ02) meant that the ECT engaged in defensive behaviour when given constructive feedback and that this, combined with a lack of social acumen, "reduced the spirit of generosity in senior staff" (MQ02).

The sub-standard performance of some ECTs resulted in mentoring experiences that were challenging for mentors. As observed by one respondent, mentors were required to engage in some form of "performance management after a 6-month period" (MQ36), a process that they described as "time-consuming" (MQ36). For others providing ongoing targeted feedback added to the work of mentors, specifically those who needed to have ongoing difficult conversations. One respondent

communicated that despite receiving feedback from mentors, "the problem was that [the ECT] could not see any issues with the behaviour in class, even though it was dangerous" (MQ07).

Two respondents who oversaw the mentoring in their school indicated that their challenges with mentoring did not come from the ECTs themselves but from the mentors they had been allocated. One respondent felt that a mentor was not effectively engaging in mentoring but instead "looked for opportunities to catch the ECT out [and] verging on bullying and harassment" (MQ26). Another respondent became aware that an allocated mentor at their school was "actually a poorly trained classroom teacher passing on bad habits and negative viewpoints" (MQ27). As a result of these experiences, the respondents acknowledged the need for ethical conduct.

Similarly, some interview participants indicated that some challenges involved ECTs who were ill-prepared for teaching and the profession. For example, one participant conveyed the view that "we are getting people through that should not have been allowed in the course" (MI24) and another participant who spoke of an ECT who "didn't really have the ability to connect with kids" (MI01).

5.3 Personal growth: Mentoring to support ECT personal growth

Forty of the 47 questionnaire respondents (85%) commented on the personal growth acquired by ECTs from being involved in a mentoring program. Nineteen of the 40 respondents (47%) attributed an increase in confidence to the personal growth the ECTs had experienced through mentoring. One participant described mentoring as an experience with the potential to "aid in supporting [the ECT's] self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy" (MQ60) and help them to learn about their strengths and weaknesses. Another participant explained that the "boost in confidence" (MQ63) provided by effective mentoring enabled new teachers to develop their skills; to flourish "instead of being left to flounder" (MQ63).

Quality mentoring programs that empowered ECTs to embrace challenges and build resilience contributed to ECT confidence. One respondent indicated that the mentoring process "gives [ECTs] the opportunity to have someone [with whom] they feel safe to discuss their concerns, giving them confidence to [try], fail and succeed"

(MQ43). Another respondent conveyed that the mentoring experience "provides opportunities to develop self-confidence and quality reflection" (MQ66).

Developing and maintaining relationships was described by 10 questionnaire respondents as a benefit of the personal growth of ECTs. Flourishing personal relationships fostered confidence that enabled ECTs to "always perform better and be in a position to grow than someone who is not" (MQ07). One participant pointed out that "mentoring provides opportunities for personal and professional growth within the boundaries of a safe, committed, trusted relationship" (MQ26) and another acknowledged that the process "develops [the ECTs'] capacity to engage in mature conversation and reflection with experienced professionals" (MQ40). Having a relationship with a mentor who acted as a champion to affirm the work of the ECT and who empowered them "to have another go and be [their] cheerleader" (MQ09) was also deemed to have facilitated the personal growth of the ECTs.

Respondents indicated that they believed the mentoring experiences of ECTs enabled them to develop relationships with all stakeholders. One respondent said that "mentoring provides [ECTs with] opportunities for personal and professional growth" (MQ26). Connecting with mentors provided ECTs with opportunities to develop knowledge, improve their teaching practice and take positive risks. A respondent explained that "new teachers need to be provided with the tools to succeed. … They need high-quality resources … and a collaborative work environment based on sharing" (MQ63). Developing better self-awareness enabled ECTs to discover more about their personal and teacher identity. One respondent indicated that self-awareness enabled the ECT in their school to understand their "strengths and set goals for further development" (MQ41) and another said it contributed to accountability and the experience of a "sense of accomplishment in doing a good job and seeing progress" (MQ04).

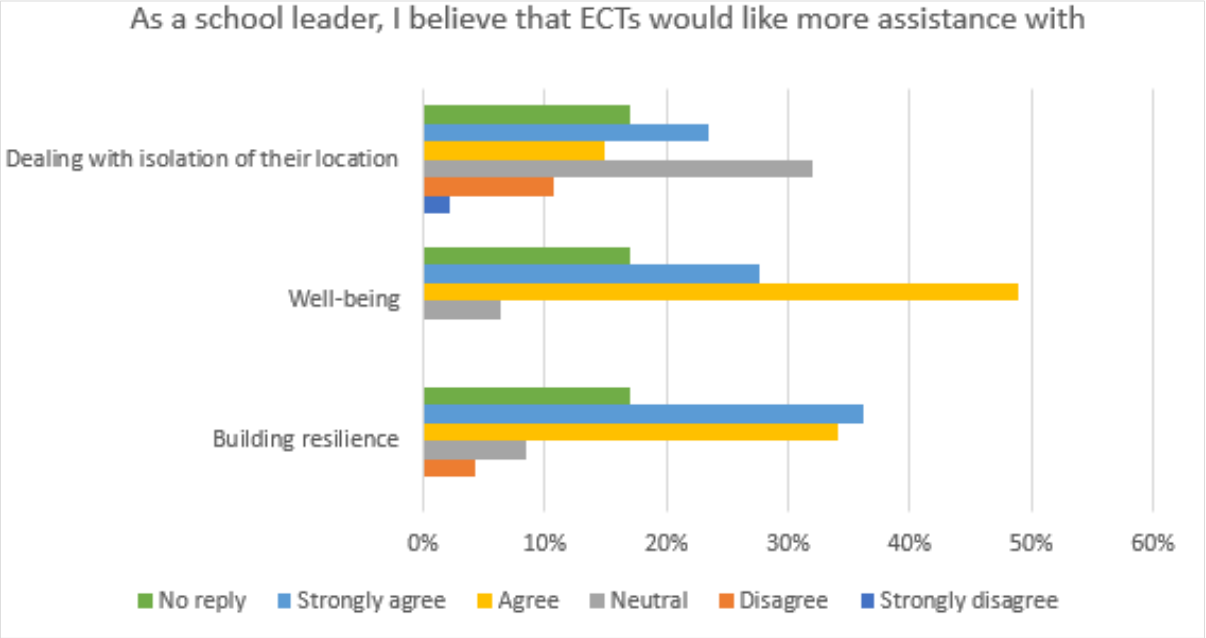
Respondents were invited to share their insights about their perspectives of the personal growth required for ECTs in the context of the profession. A five-point scale enabled the respondents to specify their level of agreement: *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neutral* (0), *agree* (3) and *strongly agree* (4). In addition, respondents were invited to share how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "As a school leader, I believe that ECTs would like more assistance with:

– dealing with isolation of their location
– wellbeing
– building resilience".

Results for this question are reported in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2

Mentoring experiences provided to ECTs: Personal Growth in the context of the profession



Respondents shared their beliefs about what ECTs would benefit from personal growth. Overall, 77% of respondents (49% *strongly agree*, 28% *agree*) acknowledged that ECTs would like more assistance with wellbeing. Interestingly, building resilience was another focus area for ECTs, with 70% of respondents (36% *strongly agree*, 34% *agree*) highlighting the possible need of personal growth to be considered a core component of mentoring programs. Although not as high scoring as wellbeing and building resilience, 38% of respondents (23% *strongly agree*, 15% *agree*) also indicated that supporting ECTs who feel isolated in their respective locations may be a consideration to assist ECTs. Notwithstanding this finding, 13% of respondents (2% *strongly disagree*, 11% *disagree*) did not believe that ECTs required support in dealing with the isolation of their locations.

The data also indicated that participants believed that ECTs attained personal growth due to their mentoring experiences. Participants appointed to regional locations revealed that living away from home for the first time was an opportunity for ECTs to be supported by mentors. This included working with ECTs to develop their resilience and foster networks so that ECTs did not feel isolated. One participant indicated that "constantly checking that [ECTs are] not unhappy or lonely is a key element of the role because, if they're not happy living here, then they're not going to be doing their best work" (MI12).

5.3.1 Mentors' perspectives of the personal growth of ECTs

The personal growth perceived by mentors for their mentees was varied. One participant defined the personal growth of ECTs as an outcome that could "build capacity" and "make people confident in their ability to do their job and make sure that student outcomes are met" (MI29). Another participant described personal growth as gaining "the skill set to move onto the next position" (MI20) confidently. Developing self-awareness, in particular, with regards to health and wellbeing, was also identified by one participant as an important factor of personal growth. Having the courage to be vulnerable, to acknowledge self-doubt and to share their feelings openly was identified by one participant as necessary for ECTs. Another mentor interviewee expressed an opinion that the day-to-day challenges of teaching "can be quite overwhelming" (MI05) and being able to have someone "to debrief with, blow off steam with … is really useful and helpful" (MI05). Finally, another participant explained that feeling supported and viewing the mentoring opportunity "as a growing experience" (MI15) was important in negating feelings of loneliness.

Developing confidence in communicating with all school stakeholders was another aspect of personal growth identified by participants. One participant emphasised that the mentoring experiences enabled ECTs to "learn how to communicate with someone else and relay information" (MI17). Another explained that developing communication and social skills enabled ECTs to form "close relationship[s]" (MI27) with their peers.

A focus on wellbeing was also a benefit of mentoring identified by participants. This was especially noted for ECTs who felt vulnerable when waiting for contract renewals or experiencing self-doubt or burnout. Quality conversations

and regular meetings were deemed to be important in the mentoring process. Mentors maintained that pivotal to supporting ECTs was encouraging ECTs to share openly, that "it's okay to have these feelings" (MI04) and "giving them the right or leading them to the right point at the right time" (MI26). Encouraging ECTs to grow personally, celebrating what they were doing well and acknowledging areas for improvement were noted by participants as developing ECTs' confidence and courage. This served as a platform to "start allocating extra-curricular tasks to them … and [helping them to] work toward being a leader with the school and upskilling them as well" (MI09).

5.4 Mentors' perspectives of the professional growth of ECTs

Thirty-eight of the 47 questionnaire respondents (81%) indicated that the ECTs they mentored in their school community experienced professional growth from their mentoring experiences. The data highlighted the two key areas of professional growth as being professional efficacy (30 respondents) and building relationships (16 respondents).

Thirty of the 47 respondents (64%) indicated that professional efficacy enabled ECTs to develop knowledge, skills and understandings aligned with their role. Support involving teaching and learning advice, information about resource creation and use and guidance on behaviour management, meant that ECTs were able to "be reflective about their practice and refine their craft" (MQ56). In addition, ECTs were able to "learn the tricks of the trade" (MQ40) and were able to "receive assistance with programming [and] interpreting data and [were given] networking opportunities" (MQ25). One participant conveyed the view that mentoring facilitated professional growth by enabling ECTs to "be upskilled, challenged and developed in terms of their content and pedagogy" (MQ63).

Professional relationships were also highlighted as a beneficial outcome of the professional growth acquired through ECTs' mentoring experiences. One participant believed that engaging in reflective practice enabled ECTs to understand the importance of building positive relationships. Another participant explained that professional growth meant that "they [were able to] learn from others and with others" (MQ35). The development of professional relationships was also facilitated by ECTs having to "[work] in a team" (MQ34) and for some having to work collaboratively

with mentors to produce a portfolio for teacher registration. One participant explained that "the portfolio is huge and without a mentor to help gather evidence, etc., it would be an almost impossible task" (MQ20).

The questionnaire findings also revealed that some mentors perceived professional growth as enabling ECTs to "feel empowered to be the best they aspire to be and to take on challenges beyond those they ever imagined" (MQ11), while another respondent indicated that "these experiences support the ECTs to build capacity across all of the standards" (MQ24). One mentor deemed mentoring experiences that fostered professional growth as "mak[ing] them [ECTs] more competitive when job searching" (MQ04).

Seventeen of the 32 interview participants (53%) revealed that mentoring programs greatly benefited ECTs' professional growth. Working with ECTs to "identify [their] strengths and weaknesses" (MI02) was important to help them fulfil their potential. In addition, providing ECTs with opportunities to build their "professional identity" (MI04) and gain awareness of their professional responsibility and conduct would "set themselves up for a long career in education" (MI04).

Developing the teaching and learning capacity of ECTs was identified by participants as a benefit of the mentoring program. Developing their skill set, learning from "observing and absorbing practical guidance" (MI08) and having access to "a consistent source of feedback" (MI12) were important to the professional growth of ECTs. Additionally, employing strategies to explore good pedagogy, along with having "an awareness of students … and [the school] culture and what the expectations are" (MI30), provided a holistic understanding of teaching and learning. One participant recognised the power that such strategies could have in changing "[ECTs] for their whole career" (MI30).

5.5 Gifts of mentoring ECTs for mentors

5.5.1 Personal Growth

Twenty-four of the 32 participants (75%) interviewed noted that the personal growth acquired from being involved in a mentoring program did not just benefit the ECTs. Mentors said that it provided them with occasions to engage in their reflective practice. One participant expressed it this way: "it is an opportunity to stop and reflect

as educators in schools" (MI27) and another outlined as well as acknowledged the "privilege [it is] to be able to encourage and build the teaching industry" (MI27). The notion of personal growth was further emphasised by a participant who explained that mentoring an ECT enabled them "to learn and grow" (MI06). For another, the opportunity to model teaching standards and provide advice to ECTs "gave them something that helped them" (MI26), which contributed to their own feeling of self-worth. Mentoring ECTs provided mentors with opportunities for personal reflection. This was highlighted in one participant's description of the mentoring process as "a revisit of self-learning and growth" (MI06).

The opportunity to engage in reflective practice with ECTs enabled mentors to support the growth of resilient teachers, consequently facilitating the development of the teaching profession generally. As part of their "regular scheduled meetings" (MQ09), one participant explained that their ECTs were able to ask "silly" questions "without judgement or ridicule" (MQ66) and were able to be vulnerable and acknowledge the times when they were "in need of emotional and/or academic support" (MQ66). The contribution of such mentors was attested to by one of the participants who depicted the mentoring process as an opportunity to reflect and affirm ECTs on "the good that is happening both inside and outside the classroom" (MQ25).

5.5.2 Professional Growth

Nineteen of the 32 mentor interview participants (59%) reported that engaging in the mentoring program resulted in professional growth for the mentor. Working with ECTs to develop their craft was an important contributor to professional growth. One participant explained that "for [the ECT], it's been about observing and absorbing the practical guidance, helping them to grow and again to develop a skill set" (MI08). Another participant emphasised that ECTs needed "some consistent source of feedback" (MI12) and that this needed to be delivered in a way that met the "different needs" (MI13) of ECTs. One such need included support with "classroom management" (MI13). Another participant observed that "building subject knowledge" (MI02) and understanding "the best ways to teach" (MI02) was pertinent to their professional growth. Engaging with stakeholders and being able to have challenging conversations was identified as another key area of growth by one

participant who sat with their ECT "in conversations that might be a little bit on the challenging side" (MI07).

Being able to explore challenging situations was identified by one participant as an element of professional growth. Using coaching strategies enabled another participant to work alongside an ECT during a challenging situation, reporting: "it's a matter of getting them to … talk out what they see as being the issue, [and] focus on what they believe is a possible solution that can work for them" (MI15). Scaffolding a problem-solving process enabled the ECT to learn how to think about problems in a productive manner and ask the right questions.

The interview data revealed that the professional growth experienced by mentors as a result of mentoring their ECTs reminded them of how challenging the early years are for ECTs. One participant explained that working with ECTs helped them to:

> stay relevant …because you don't lose sight of how busy it is to be a full-time teacher in the classroom, to understand the pressures of reporting periods when things are busy, when you're trying to mark tests and create them (MI04).

The process enabled some of the participants to reflect upon their empathy for the challenges faced by classroom teachers. It also led participants to be inspired by "the enthusiasm [ECTs] bring" (MI31) and by learning about how ECTs viewed teaching and learning. Exposure to the contemporary understandings of ECTs likewise enhanced the mentors' professional growth and appreciation for "different points of view, … different ways of looking at things" (MI32). Another participant emphasised that "you don't want to lose that empathy for context when you're working as a leader" (MI04) and reported that conversations with ECTs reminded them about the real and relevant challenges faced by classroom teachers.

Inspired by the enthusiasm of an ECT, one participant explained that the experience of being a mentor enabled them to "spark up more enthusiasm" (MI06) which included "more studying or just changing some of [their] own practices based on what ECTs have brought with them" (MI06). In addition, the process of ongoing

reflection enabled participants to "recheck the basics of teaching and learning" (MI07) so that they could offer a mentoring experience that was mutually beneficial.

The positive experience of giving back to the community was another benefit gained through participation in a mentoring program. One participant affirmed this in their reflection: "I've got something to put back and to feed back into the system" (MI05). The benefits of participation in a mentoring program also extended to a sense of responsibility, with participants indicating that supporting ECTs was more than just teaching. For many, "it's about their mental wellbeing as well" (MI09). Communicating effectively with ECTs was also identified as an opportunity for professional growth by participants. One such participant emphasised that being a mentor enabled them to learn "how to communicate with someone else" (MI17). The data showed that participants often forged long-term connections as a result of their newfound communication skills. One participant identified the "really positive relationships" (MI21) these connections developed.

5.6 Considerations for ECT mentoring programs

All questionnaire respondents and interview participants communicated their views on considerations for ECT mentoring programs in the future. Mentor considerations for ECT mentoring programs included: understanding mentoring and the role that mentors have as part of the process; discerning the perceived needs of their ECTs and their mentoring experiences; brainstorming the ideal ECT mentoring program and its implementation; sharing their recommendations; and highlighting the benefits of ECT mentoring programs. Each of these considerations will be expanded below.

5.6.1 Mentors' perspectives of mentoring and their role

The findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed that the concept of mentoring was understood in different ways by different people. Over half of the participants believed that mentoring involved guidance and support and was likened to "walking alongside someone [to] support their learning" (MI03). Also, the work of mentors in "passing on experiences" (MI06) and "seeing the potential in [ECTs] and helping them to develop that potential" supported the mentees "to be the best they can be" (MI16). The development was not just restricted to the learnings correlated to their

role as a teacher, but also included the "social and emotional aspects … [and] helping them manage that sense of responsibility" (MI27).

The importance of sharing knowledge and experiences was central to many participants' responses about their understanding of mentoring. With the mentoring process strongly rooted in teaching and learning, participants attested to the value of and need to "spend time in the classrooms, observing, viewing and then meeting with [the ECT] after school or at another time to discuss areas of strength, areas of weaknesses and how to further develop these" (MI09). In addition, the provision of quality support by "somebody who is not judgemental but is interested in investing in your growth and development" (MI10) and who offers "constructive feedback" (MI20) was identified as a defining characteristic of a good mentor.

The participants also noted mentoring as a process to encourage the holistic development of individuals. The broad notion included "everything from wellbeing, through their professional identity" (MI04). Equally, a holistic focus enabled the "balancing of work demands with … ensuring that their wellbeing is looked after because you can't have one without the other" (MI12). One participant described mentoring as "a balance of support and pressure to challenge and yet nurture that other party" (MI18). The mentoring process was viewed as mutually beneficial for both mentor and mentee, as "through mentoring, both parties can experience improvement and growth" (MI18).

Participants indicated that the relationship between mentor and mentee was also identified as an important theme within the mentoring process. Being able to connect with someone and feeling comfortable to share inner fears and general experiences, were factors that underpinned a successful mentor-mentee relationship. The relationship was perceived as an opportunity to "develop with someone who is looking to become a better educator, wanting to improve as someone who's aspiring to different roles" (MI07). Also, "building a relationship with that person, that takes time so that you can trust each other and so that you can help that person with feedback and also help that person to grow" (MI08). In addition, mentors considered their role, in part, as being "sounding boards" for ECTs – providing constructive feedback, emotional support and reflective listening. One participant's understanding of mentoring and the

mentor's role was explained as: "You just need to be there … sometimes [as] a sounding board for ideas … having somebody [for them] to talk to" (MI21).

The data also revealed that mentors believed that mentoring empowered ECTs to "work through … issue[s]" (MI26) and provided them with the confidence and skills to make effective decisions. One participant conveyed a thought that "sometimes, people just need to feel empowered that it is okay for them to make a decision" (MI22). Another participant said that mentoring enabled ECTs to set goals, especially in areas that required further development. The concept of goal setting was supported by one participant who believed that establishing "short-term goals, KPIs and pretty much reviewing them on a fortnightly basis" (MI09) was an important part of the mentoring process. Another observed that the mentoring process was not just about guiding ECTs in their professional journey but also offered opportunities for holistic development. A participant's reflection described the concept of self-growth in the mentoring process: "It's about seeing the potential in them and helping them to develop that potential" (MI08).

5.6.2 Mentor perspectives of the mentoring needs and experiences of ECTs

The majority of the mentor respondents recognised that ECTs experienced some form of professional growth due to their mentoring experience. However, they also recognised that there were perceived ECT needs that necessitated consideration in order to develop ECTs professionally.

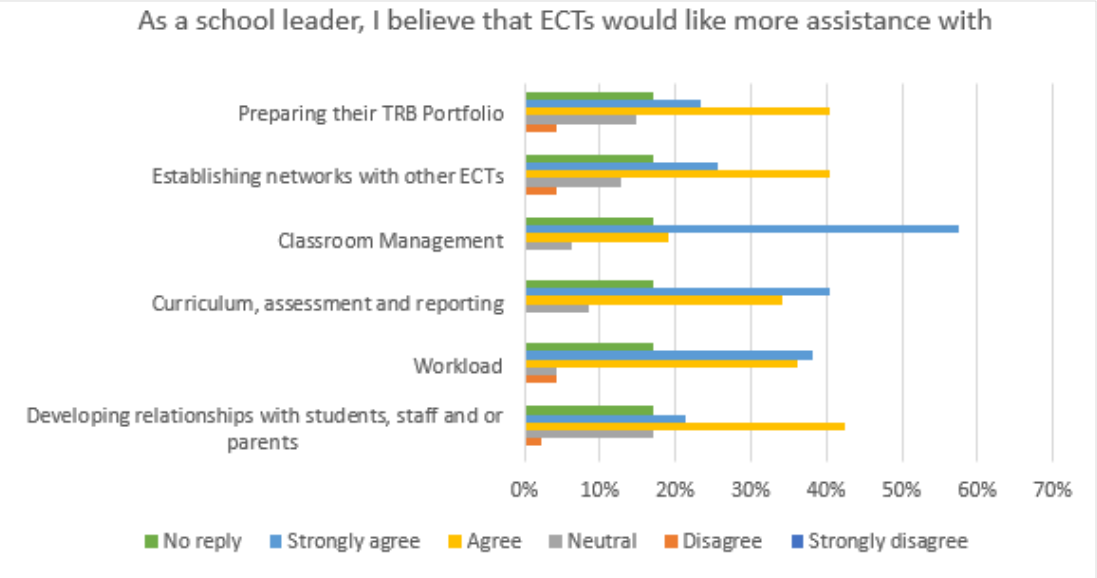
Respondents were asked about their perspectives of the professional growth required for ECTs and rate their level of agreement on a five-point scale: *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neutral* (0), *agree* (3) and *strongly agree* (4). Respondents were invited to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "As a mentor, I believe that ECTs would like more assistance with:

- preparing their TRB portfolio
- establishing networks with other ECTs
- classroom management
- curriculum, assessment and reporting
- workload
- developing relationships with students, staff and/or parents.

Figure 5.3 shows compelling evidence that mentors believe ECTs required more assistance with managing their workload, curriculum, assessment and reporting and classroom management of the items listed. This is evidenced when the responses of *strongly agree* and *agree* are combined and score over 70 per cent. Perhaps the combination of factors indicated in Figure 5.3 exemplifies how mentoring may be used to support the professional growth of ECTs further. In addition, 64% of mentor respondents (21% *strongly agree*, 43% *agree*) indicated that developing relationships with all school stakeholders was important for ECTs to learn more about in the context of their role. Equally, 66% of mentor respondents (26% *strongly agree*, 40% *agree*) shared that establishing networks with other ECTs was another area of focus for the professional growth of ECTs. Interestingly, the mentor data findings showed that mentoring ECTs is not limited to their development in the classroom but also how they connect with staff, parents and other ECTs.

Figure 5.3

Mentoring experiences provided to ECTs: Professional Growth in the context of the profession



The mentor perspectives about the mentoring experiences of ECTs highlight four key focus areas. teaching and learning, choice of mentor, forming relationships and wellbeing.

Understanding the role of the classroom teacher and knowing content and being able to teach it effectively, were identified by participants as some of the

mentoring needs of ECTs. Engaging in conversations about best practice, selecting "good pedagogy" (MI03) and developing the courage to try new strategies were identified as key mentoring needs. One participant noted: "There are some staff that were very nervous about teaching content that they'd never done before" (MI04) and another indicated: "I think [the ECTs'] focus is teaching and learning; they want to be in the classroom" (MI25). Mentors indicated that engaging in the effective application of critical concepts and learning how to best support students in their classroom contributed to understanding the mentoring needs of ECTs.

Behaviour management was also identified as a key mentoring need of ECTs. Participants indicated that ECTs required support when dealing with students exhibiting difficult behaviour. One participant expressed a view that "it's hard enough being an experienced teacher and dealing with challenging classes, let alone [being an] ECT with a challenging class" (MI06). Another participant highlighted the difference of behaviour management strategies appropriate in some rural and remote locations from those needed for metropolitan areas, precisely because of the degree of trauma present in some regional and remote communities. ECTs teaching in those locations needed extra support in their classrooms because dealing with trauma requires a specific skill set. As one participant said: "There are some tough classes, tough kids there. If [the ECTs] haven't been exposed to trauma kids or challenging kids, their first year … in our community can be quite difficult" (MI13).

The mentor findings exemplified that developing practical skills in organisation was an important part of the mentoring process of ECTs. Similarly, skills to support standard program and lesson planning were also identified as mentoring needs of ECTs by mentors. Time was needed to support ECTs and mentors and allow them to engage in "common programming" (MI08) and planning so that ECTs did not feel overwhelmed. One participant believed that a positive and open relationship between the mentor and mentee was crucial. In addition, the importance of the ECT forming relationships with their students was also remarked on; as one participant said, "Let's build the relationships first; then we catch up to the teaching later on" (MI32).

Some mentors believed that the choice of mentor was a key contributor to the success of the mentoring process for ECTs. While most participants indicated that a mentor was a pivotal part of the mentoring experiences of ECTs, there was variation

in the responses as to how this selection process should occur. Some participants believed that ECTs should select their mentor, as evidenced by one response: "They need to be able to have the option to say, or to choose someone that they feel comfortable with" (MI11). Others believed that the selection of a mentor and/or buddy was the decision of the school leadership team: "They might be allocated a buddy who is a senior member of that department, but then they would also be allocated a mentor" (MI31). Some mentors were assigned from outside the ECT's learning area and others were assigned because of their location; that is, they were in the classroom next door: "We try and have the mentor in the classroom next door" (MI24).

Forming relationships was identified as a mentoring need of ECTs by mentors, and indeed for many, relationships are the heart of the very role of a teacher. One participant, reflecting on the importance of relationships in teaching, said

> If you think about the world of teaching, it kind of falls into some natural areas: relationships – building relationships. That's building healthy relationships with students, productive relationships with parents and relationships with your peers (MI05).

The relationship between mentor and mentee was noted to assist ECTs in their work: "I think having somebody who is able to have two-way conversations with [ECTs], to share information so that it's asking questions, but also offering advice" (MI10). Both the presence of a mentor in whom they could confide, and the development of trust, were often described by participants as pivotal to the process of building a successful mentor-mentee relationship. One participant said, "I think having a good trusting relationship and establishing what those boundaries look like, … what they can say to their mentor without feeling … they're going to be judged [is so important]" (MI26). Participants indicated that developing a trusting mentor-mentee relationship enabled ECTs to feel more comfortable having difficult conversations with stakeholders such as parents and students. One participant explained that "having a mentor is really valuable to help ECTs know how to deal with parents, to know how to deal with difficult students" (MI10). Another reflected, "I think for ECTs, sometimes the biggest challenge is around managing parents and the parent expectations" (MI22). Equally, a focus on building relationships was deemed necessary, particularly encouraging ECTs to engage in relationships with other staff members in the school. One participant said: "The other aspect that tends to come up

quite often is managing relationships with other staff, particularly staff who may have had a lot more experience or … been in a particular school for a length of time" (MI22).

Managing their wellbeing was identified by mentor participants to be a need of ECTs that could be met through successful mentoring. For example, one participant expressed how important it is for ECTs to stay well and resilient, particularly in situations where ECTs needed to engage in difficult conversations: "they need to be able to feel safe whoever they are talking to" (MI11). In addition, concerns about ECTs feeling overwhelmed revealed another significant mentoring need to manage stress effectively. One participant reflected, "I think [ECTs] are overwhelmed by resources and information" (MI30) and it was suggested that support with managing time and stress were critical factors in ECT wellbeing.

Some participants also identified location-specific considerations as contributing to the mentoring need of ECTs. The transition from home to a regional, rural or remote location was seen as posing particular challenges. One participant felt the importance of ensuring that ECTs smoothly transitioned from metropolitan to regional locations, relating that "the first thing before we even worry about their teaching is making sure that they've got suitable accommodation" (MI12). Another participant stated, "We've had some of our staff that were ECTs, that not only were starting in a new profession, but they were away from home for the first time" (MI13). It was acknowledged that rural and metropolitan areas differed in terms of role, expectations and degree of support. One participant expressed it this way: "you're going to find differences between country and city; so I suppose we [who work in country schools] tend to have a lot more of a handle on what's going on across the school" (MI23). Mentors believed that connecting with other ECTs was important, as was the capacity to engage with a support network, particularly in regional locations. One participant emphasised the significance of networking amongst ECTs – "I think definitely networking with other ECTs is really important, just to get some perspective about other peoples' experiences" (MI14).

Many participants indicated that induction was also a mentoring need of ECTs. Providing information about the school's policy, practices and procedures was important not just from a compliance perspective but also so ECTs could understand something of the overall running of the school. One participant observed: "There's the standard stuff that happens in the induction, which is knowing your professional duties,

… processes, policies, procedures etc." (MI18). Equally important in the induction process was providing ECTs with timetables for mentoring so that they could organise themselves and engage in effective planning. One participant emphasised the need for the mentoring program "to be timetabled, regular and organised" (MI21), highlighting the importance of having a structured approach to mentoring.

5.6.3 Summary: Mentor perspectivess of the mentoring experiences of ECTs

Overall, the mentoring experiences of ECTs reflected positive and challenging encounters. Some participants felt that the mentoring experiences offered in their schools were positive because they believed ECTs were supported and heard. For example, one participant conveyed the importance of "having someone [ECTs] can go to, someone they can ask about concerns" (MI28). On the other hand, another participant indicated that providing career guidance also offered ECTs a plan "where they could see their future" (MI02). In addition, a participant indicated the importance of providing ECTs with a "holistic" (MI04) focus that exceeded teaching and learning and was inclusive of the "short, medium and long-term aspirations of the teacher" (MI01).

The interview data also revealed that mentors believed there were some challenges associated with the mentoring processes and practices experienced by ECTs. The challenges were often linked to the mentor having insufficient time to meet with the ECT or engage in classroom observations. Insufficient time was attested to by one participant who indicated that "the biggest issue" was "the allocation of time to be able to sit with them regularly, to discuss how they're travelling, to see them in action, having instructional walks in the class and spending time with them" (MI09). Other participants noted that insufficient trust and relatedness in the mentoring relationship between the mentor and the mentee, in some circumstances, impeded the progress of ECTs. For example, one participant expressed an opinion that mentors being physically unavailable was a hindering factor in the development of a positive mentoring relationship, saying: "The only time I've known [the relationship] not to be positive, [has] been sometimes where the mentor might be a little bit busy" (MI11).

The heavy workload facing ECTs and mentors, heightened by a lack of time, was identified as a significant challenge to the success of the mentoring experience. Engaging in classroom observations often meant the mentor had to produce relief lessons for their class to observe ECTs and engage in a debrief without the mentor

being given adequate support. ECTs had the similar constraint of needing to be released from their class to observe a mentor's lesson. One participant indicated that this process required "dedicated time" (MI28) and was often the reason for mentors and mentees not meeting regularly.

5.6.4 Ideal mentoring program for ECTs and their implementation

The questionnaire findings revealed two key factors necessary for implementing the ideal mentoring program from the perspective of mentors. One was the good fit of mentors for mentoring – this required the careful selection and training of mentors – and the second was adequate time for mentors and mentees to engage in mentoring. For example, one respondent explained that there needed to be "a range of people mentoring ECTs, from experienced classroom teachers through to [heads of learning areas]" (MQ15). Another believed the timeframe needed to be "one-on-one mentoring allocated from the start of the year with meetings twice a term" (MQ47).

The quality of mentors was identified as important in the implementation of an ideal mentoring program. Training mentors with the skills to provide effective feedback and engage in quality conversations was identified as important. In addition, one respondent indicated that mentors needed to be "screened" (MQ60) because "sometimes mentoring falls to the [head of department] or other experienced teachers who may have the time, but … may not necessarily be a good role model teacher" (MQ60). Another respondent suggested that mentors be rotated from year to year. They highlighted the need to "swap mentors so that ECTs get different ideas and opinions" (MQ07). Finally, one respondent indicated that stepping into the role of a mentor did not merely involve training a teacher for success but additionally involved a responsibility to "prepare them for future opportunities in other schools and domains" (MQ11).

When invited to explore what an ideal mentoring program would look like in schools, questionnaire respondents indicated that time was a critical consideration. Time was needed for the mentor and mentees to meet regularly, engage in classroom observations and plan for effective learning. A respondent emphasised the need to "have sufficient time to support them well, … time to run through [their] program and strategies" (MQ20) and another attested to the importance of having "enough time to properly invest in a coaching relationship with regular meetings scheduled for this to take place" (MQ58).

Funding was also noted as an important consideration in implementing a mentoring program in schools. Respondents indicated that schools would not have the resources required to support the growth of ECTs. The resources would include funds to pay relief teachers so that the mentor and mentee could meet regularly or engage in classroom observations and funds to pay for professional learning opportunities away from the school. One respondent specifically stated that in a busy school setting, funding would enable "time for mentor and mentees" (MQ06) to connect and would additionally provide the "in- and out-of-classroom support" (MQ06) required to meet the needs of ECTs.

The majority of responses from the semi-structured interviews indicated that the appointment of quality mentors and adequate training for them were essential to implementing a successful mentoring program. Participants believed that mentors needed to want to be mentors and, as such, to be committed to the process. One participant indicated that schools needed to be "a little bit prudent in vetting the kinds of people" (MI10) who expressed an interest in the role. Some of the participants outlined that to support this process, "mentors need training" (MI01) and needed to be given the appropriate "time" (MI07) and program to support the growth of the ECTs in their care.

The data suggested that mentoring programs would be better if more consideration were given to the program's design. For example, mentors believed that mentoring programs needed to include time for selecting and training mentors, regular mentor-mentee meetings, lesson observations and professional learning. One participant referred to the design of a mentoring program as "the infrastructure" (MI24) that needed to be put into place. For another participant, it was important for mentoring programs to be designed as "a formal process" (MI25) and to allow for "goal setting and reflection … and a list of general topics that all ECTs need to cover…" (MI16).

Funding was also highlighted by participants as a key consideration for implementing a mentoring program in schools. Many of the participants indicated that time was pivotal in enabling activities of the mentoring process to occur. One participant affirmed this notion in their statement, "time is money" (MI15). Another participant expressed the view that "with some funding, you could actually provide better training to the mentors" (MI11). Another participant suggested that having an allocated budget for each ECT in their first three years would better support their mentoring process. The budget would, for example, consist of a travel allowance to

attend professional learning opportunities – particularly for ECTs in regional locations for whom travel is a barrier. One participant emphasised that the responsibility of funding lay with the education systems and not the individual schools. The funding would need to provide "time in schools … to release a mentor teacher a day a week to go and spent time with the people they are mentoring" (MI29).

5.6.5 Recommendations for developing quality mentoring programs

The considerations for developing quality mentoring programs could be classified into six focus areas: time, mentor selection and training, program design, support from leadership, financial considerations and quality relationships.

The majority of participants indicated that one of the most prominent challenges of developing quality mentoring programs was time. Time was often referred to as a challenge because the opportunities for the mentor and mentee to meet during school hours were restricted. One participant expressed that "the challenge is finding the time for a mentor and they're obviously time poor" (MI06). Data findings indicated that mentors and ECTs needed time to be released from their respective classes and produce lessons for others to take on their behalf. One participant stated, "we can't always give an ECT the time they need because they take extra time to do their lessons or extra time to mark that test" (MI08) and another participant maintained that "time is always a challenge … because it requires opportunities for mentors and mentees to meet and discuss" (MI10). In addition, mentors had "other duties" (MI11) and "many competing factors" (MI22) that needed to be considered when thinking through meeting frequency for a quality mentoring program.

Participants also identified mentor selection and training as a consideration in developing and designing quality mentoring programs. Having a clear definition of mentoring and what it entails was also crucial to implementing a mentoring program. One participant indicated, "there are many people that have perceptions [of] what mentoring is" (MI04). For another participant, mentoring was not just a conversation or an ad hoc process but instead required a reflective process linked with a "focus and [was] scoped and sequenced with a goal" (MI04). Most mentors required "professional learning" (MI14) and needed to have the appropriate "capabilities for being a good mentor" (MI06). Most importantly, mentors needed to be "committed to doing it in the best interests of ECTs" (MI28).

The emphasis on quality relationships between mentor and mentee was highlighted in the data. One participant expressed the view that ECTs needed "somebody who is able to have two-way conversations with them, to share information so that [they] could ask questions" (MI10) as well as offer and take advice as essential to a successful mentoring relationship. Similarly, another mentor indicated that relationships were important to provide a "connection with someone the [ECT] trust[s]" (MI26). Equally, one mentor emphasised that ECTs "need someone to listen to or listen to them" (MI28).

A quality program design was also crucial for successful mentoring programs. In particular, the participants drew attention to the need of a program to support the work of the mentors by providing "clear and explicit … expectations and [setting out] what … best practice looks like" (MI05) and "a clear program to deliver" (MI23). In addition, it was important to clarify that "there's no one size fits all model" (MI16) by considering the various personalities of individuals and a design that reflected the context of the school. Finally, program design also needed to consider including a quality induction process with the possibility of an "induction pack" (MI20).

Financial considerations were also important factors in developing quality mentoring programs. For a mentoring program to be implemented, mentors need to be trained and funds were required to free up mentor and mentee to meet regularly and engage in collaborative discussions. Therefore, an interview participant identified a critical element to have the financial support "to put those processes in place" (MI03).

Establishing and nurturing support networks were also identified as a consideration in developing a mentoring program for ECTs. Unfortunately, travel and accommodation costs precluded many schools from forging networks, especially in regional locations. One participant indicated that "it's very expensive to fly [ECTs] down and have a combination of relief teachers" (MI14). Time was also a challenge even for those schools located nearby. One participant reflected upon the challenge of releasing ECTs as "a logistic nightmare" (MI15). Another participant explained that "resources are a big challenge – the physical and social support" (MI24).

Limited support from leadership was also noted as a challenge to developing quality mentoring programs in schools. Participants indicated that mentoring programs for ECTs "need to be supported by the top … by the principal" (MI04). Great emphasis

was placed on the role of the principal and the strategic direction and culture of the school in support of mentoring ECTs. One participant highlighted this, saying: "it comes down to what the principal actually is hoping to achieve, too" (MI07).

5.6.6 Benefits of developing quality mentoring programs in schools

The data revealed there were many benefits in developing a quality mentoring program in schools. The majority of responses indicated that ECTs (mentees) would greatly benefit from quality mentoring programs that supported their transition to the classroom. Findings suggest that the benefits for ECTs included developing their knowledge, skills and understandings as part of their teaching and learning planning, implementation, evaluation processes and developing relationships.

Translating university-learned knowledge to practical application in the classroom was a key focus for ECTs. Most mentor participants indicated that engaging in effective teaching and learning practices was critical to their role. One participant described the conversations they had with their mentees as exploring "professional practice" and "wellbeing" (MI02). In addition, exploring "shared pedagogy" (MI16) and reflecting on their lessons were noted by participants to benefit ECTs. One participant observed that addressing specific curriculum challenges, such as exploring a differentiated approach for students in the classroom, would enable ECTs to share their thoughts and fears with their mentors and then "work out what kinds of strategies" (MI15) would best meet the needs of the students. Another participant expressed an opinion that developing a quality mentoring program would facilitate the professional growth of ECTs because their mentoring experiences would enable them to become more "accomplished and competent in their craft" (MI17).

The building and continuance of a whole range of positive relationships were also identified as a key benefit of a quality mentoring program. Establishing a safe environment that was built on trust would enable an ECT "to confide in a mentor and have a strong relationship" (MI26). Good relationships were seen as allowing the ECT to "get the appropriate support without judgement" (MI26) to refine their teaching practice further. Additionally, an effective mentoring program would enable ECTs to develop the skills required to have difficult conversations with different stakeholders. The capacity to have difficult conversations would provide ECTs with the confidence to share their ideas and concerns without feeling fearful.

The data indicated that another benefit of an effective mentoring program would be that ECTs develop practical communication skills, which are essential to their ability to engage with students, parents and colleagues. One participant argued that the mentoring experience would enable ECTs "to learn great communication skills, great networking [and] great ways of connecting" (MI08). A quality mentoring program would also benefit the broader community. One participant commented that supporting the growth of the ECT (mentee) would provide "continuity for the community" (MI04) and reduce teacher attrition. Another participant observed that "initially [the mentor-mentee relationship is] a practical relationship; after that, it develops into a friendship and it develops into growing together in different aspects along your professional journey" (MI08). The ultimate benefit of a quality mentoring program was described by another participant as "the ongoing effect to benefit the kids and to make for a better environment" (MI16).

5.6.7 Summary

The findings about the mentor perspectives of the mentoring experiences of ECTs were produced from the analysis of data generated via the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews completed by mentors. Seventy-one per cent of respondents indicated that they had mentored an ECT during their career. The mentors worked in various capacities, with roles varying from classroom teacher to principal.

Most respondents and participants acknowledged that there was some form of a mentoring program offered to ECTs. However, the mentoring programs varied in size, structure, policy and practice. Additionally, respondents and participants reported that the perceived value of mentoring experiences for ECTs included focusing on teaching and learning, quality feedback and concern for wellbeing. The challenges aligned with mentoring consisted of time constraints, limited funds, untrained mentors and, in some instances, misaligned attitudes of ECTs.

Overall, the mentors indicated that mentoring programs provided ECTs with some form of personal and professional growth. The extent of the personal growth included developing resilience and focusing on wellbeing, while professional growth focused on all matters that pertained to teaching, including developing relationships with all stakeholders.

Respondents and participants agreed that there were many considerations for future ECT mentoring programs. Of importance was the desire and need to share knowledge, skills and understandings aligned with the profession to foster the holistic growth of ECTs. The findings also drew attention to the role of the mentor and quality mentoring relationships that underpinned the personal and professional growth of ECTs and that more work needed to be done to embed this into an all-encompassing and financially supported mentoring program.

5.7 Comparison of ECT and mentor perspectives

The ECT and mentor respondents and participants provided valuable insights into their perspectives of the mentoring experiences of ECTs. The valuable insights have been categorised into mentoring experiences of ECTs, personal growth, professional growth and considerations for mentoring programs in the future.

5.7.1 Mentoring experiences of ECTs

Mentoring experiences of ECTs is a collective term used to explore the ECT and mentor perspectives of the experiences of ECTs being mentored in schools. In this study, ECTs and mentors agreed that the mentoring programs in schools were defined by context and physical, financial and human resources. One-third of ECTs were allocated a mentor and just under a third of ECT participants indicated that they had engaged in some form of induction, orientation and onboarding. While 49% of school leader respondents indicated that they had provided mentors for their ECTs, 19% had not. Overall, it was found that while most ECTs acknowledged they received different levels of support, mentors had a high perception of the mentoring experiences they provided ECTs.

The data findings from most ECT respondents and participants highlighted concerns about mentors' limited selection and training processes and practices. Lack of training and poor processes for mentor selection impacted the capacity of both mentor and mentee to engage in a positive, mutually beneficial relationship. Analysis of the ECT data also found school leaders had a vital role and responsibility to support a mentoring program in their respective schools.

5.7.2 Personal growth

ECT and mentor respondents and participants agreed that the personal growth of ECTs was enhanced when mentoring programs worked well. Resilience and wellbeing were identified by both groups in the study as pivotal to personal growth. In addition, for ECTs, developing self-awareness was an important element of personal growth, mainly when supported by a positive mentoring relationship. Interestingly, some mentors stressed that personal growth also included the increased confidence to apply for promotional positions.

5.7.3 Professional growth

Most of the ECT and mentor respondents and participants agreed that professional growth was a positive outcome of the mentoring process. Both groups agreed that professional growth was evident in teaching and learning processes and practices and developing quality relationships with all stakeholders. For mentors, organisation and time management capabilities were elements of professional growth that needed further development for ECTs.

5.7.4 Considerations for a mentoring program in the future

ECT and mentor respondents and participants offered several considerations for mentoring programs in the future. For ECT respondents and participants, there were two key areas for consideration: the importance of mentor selection and engagement (as explained in the section, Mentoring experiences of ECTs) and the design of mentoring programs. Most ECTs preferred mentoring programs that were structured with quality induction and orientation. For mentors, mentor selection and training were important. Interestingly, mentors wanted clarity about mentoring as a concept and its implementation. Notwithstanding was the consideration for the appropriate financial support to design, implement and evaluate mentoring programs for ECTs.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented an instrumental case study from which four themes were identified. The four themes addressed two of the three research questions: What are the perspectives of mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia? and To what extent do the perspectives of ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs influence the personal and professional growth of ECTs? ECT and mentor respondents and participants provided insight into the mentoring experiences of ECTs about what was valued and what offered challenges. Personal and professional growth were examined with each group identifying the key aspects that reflected their mentoring experiences. Additionally, considerations for mentoring programs in the future by both ECT and mentor respondents and participants were presented. The chapter concluded with a brief comparison about the similarities and differences in the data findings of ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs.

Chapter 6

Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction

This research aimed to explore the mentoring experiences of ECTs from the perspectives of ECTs and mentors. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study using the key themes identified in the questionnaire and interview data. Using the research questions as a broad guide, the chapter is structured in four sections: mentoring experiences, personal growth, professional growth and considerations for mentoring in the future. Findings are discussed in light of existing literature, identifying similar themes and new perspectives. The chapter concludes by proposing some guiding principles and a framework for ECT mentoring.

6.2 Mentoring experiences of ECTs

This section discusses the mentoring experiences of ECTs and is divided into five parts. The first part explores the general mentoring experiences of ECTs in which the mentoring programs (formal and informal) implemented in schools, as is the selection and appointment of mentors. The second part focuses on the level of support provided to ECTs and the third discusses their wellbeing. The fourth part explores the valuable mentoring experiences of ECTs and the final part discusses the challenging mentoring experiences of ECTs.

6.2.1 General mentoring experiences of ECTs

The general mentoring experiences of ECTs were addressed in two parts. The first identified the mentoring needs of ECTs and the second addressed the overall mentoring experiences of ECTs.

6.2.1.1 General mentoring needs of ECTs

Researchers in the field of mentoring agree that the mentoring experience of ECTs in their "first years of teaching can make or break their desire to remain in teaching and their potential to impact student learning" (Stanulis & Bell, 2017, p.59). The mentoring needs of ECTs in the study varied greatly and included self-development, developing positive professional relationships with colleagues and other stakeholders, a focus on best practice and mastering their teaching craft in their school context.

The perspectives of ECTs about their general mentoring needs reflect both similarities and differences to those expressed by mentors. In the current study, the findings of both the ECT and mentor questionnaires and interviews indicated that feedback, building relationships, structured programs, selection and training of mentors and level of support were identified as key mentoring needs of ECTs.

6.2.1.2 Feedback

ECTs and mentors consistently identified feedback as a significant need in the context of ECTs and their mentoring process. The feedback itself is a broad concept and includes a critique of lesson plans, programs and teaching and learning practices; advice on building personal capacity; and strategies for contributing to the school community (Puttick & Wynn, 2021). Participants offered numerous responses when asked about the mentoring needs of ECTs concerning feedback. Most ECT respondents and participants indicated that their mentoring needs included receiving feedback about their classroom practice to ensure that they fulfilled the requirements of their roles. Reviewing their classroom practice meant that their mentors observed their lessons and offered constructive feedback and specific suggestions on ways to improve their craft and develop their capacity to be "more independent in [their] teaching and programming" (EI16). While mentors agreed with this, they specifically referred to the importance of feedback in the context of classroom practice and classroom management. Both ECT and mentor interview participants highlighted the importance of receiving feedback on report writing and classroom management, which was necessary for supporting the ECT to develop greater confidence. Indeed, most ECTs acknowledged that they required ongoing support with classroom management. This was evidenced by one participant who outlined the need to explore "strategies to deal with challenging behaviours in the classroom and students that have additional needs" (EI22). Wolff et al. (2015) assert that classroom management is a critical element of teaching expertise and claim that this could be considered "fundamental practical knowledge" (p.70). Equally, most of the mentors agreed that classroom management was a significant concern for their ECTs. A mentor summed this up this way:

> I think definitely the behaviour management has got to be one of the main [areas of feedback the ECTs need]. It is hard enough being an experienced teacher and dealing with the challenging classes, let alone being an ECT with a challenging class (MI06).

The findings of the current study mirror those of researchers who have also identified that feedback is critical to building capacity in the knowledge, skills and understandings of novice teachers (Fleming, 2014; Puttick & Wynn, 2021). The literature examined in the mentoring context showed that one of the four principal responsibilities of mentors was to provide professional and pedagogical support and feedback, particularly in classroom management and discipline (Bettini et al., 2018; Gourneau, 2014; Hairon et al., 2019; Shatz-Oppenheimer, 2017; Sowell, 2017).

6.2.1.3 Building relationships

Establishing and maintaining quality relationships is critical to the interactions between ECTs and their respective stakeholder groups present (Sikma, 2019). In this present study, the questionnaire respondents and interview participants (both ECTs and mentors) emphasised the need for ECTs to learn how to build good professional relationships. One obstacle to this was the lack of confidence many ECTs expressed concerning connecting with their colleagues. For example, one ECT participant reflected: “I am insecure about how I interact with other teachers” (EI32). Mentor participants emphasised that building healthy relationships with students, productive relationships with parents and connections with their peers, was critical for ECTs (MI32), (MI08). These findings are in line with the research in this field, demonstrating that when ECTs feel safe and supported, they forge a positive identity, are mentally stronger and meet daily life challenges (Gu, 2014), which in turn gives them the confidence and resolve to connect with colleagues and be forthcoming in their relationships generally. Having “connections with someone they trust” (MI26) and “someone to listen to them” (MI28) were expressed as critical elements in assisting ECTs to develop strong professional communication skills.

Other research also highlights the importance of building relationships through trust and respect (Engvik & Emstad, 2017) and links this to ECTs having contact with experienced colleagues who can act as “sounding boards” (Sowell, 2017, p.130). Researchers also note that relationships are not always easy to build. Challenges reflective of personality type, attitudes and ECT perspectives may inhibit relationships in some cases (Shields & Murray, 2017; Sowell, 2017). The challenges of the mentoring experiences of ECTs will be further discussed in Section 6.2.5.

6.2.1.4 The structure of mentoring programs

Mentoring programs are sometimes described as formal programs in their own right, and sometimes they form part of other, broader programs that support individuals transitioning into their new careers (Desimone et al., 2014). Some researchers state that formal programs reflect specific structures and criteria and are designed to increase teacher efficacy, support instruction and encourage retention (Bressman et al., 2018; Desimone et al., 2014). Similarly, Pollock (1995) emphasises that many mentees (ECTs) draw support from colleagues who are not formal mentors. When asked about the current mentoring programs in their schools, ECTs and mentors offered various responses. ECTs reported a range of mentoring programs, including formal programs that included formal induction, regular meetings with an allocated mentor and classroom observations. In addition, some ECTs reported mentoring programs involving fortnightly meetings, whereas others indicated that they had scheduled meetings with their school leaders once a semester as well as meeting with their mentors informally. Researchers such as Abetang et al., (2020) and Desimone et al., (2014) noted the significant variation in the structure of mentoring programs.

ECTs who were part of a mentoring program reported that it consisted of a process of induction that focused on school policy and procedures; for others, the process involved observing classes delivered by more experienced teachers on a scheduled basis. The mentors' data confirmed what ECTs relayed about the nature and scope of mentoring programs in their schools. Some mentoring programs consisted of a form of induction, the allocation of mentors and different forms of practice-based mentoring. In some schools, the mentoring program involved 4 hours of induction over 3 weeks, including providing instruction on operational components. Following the induction, it was the responsibility of the head of department to look after the new teacher. Some mentor participants indicated that a mentoring program in their school consisted of their ECTs being assigned to a mentor, while others described the mentoring process at their school as "a step-by-step" process where mentors met regularly with ECTs to address a variety of issues (MI16).

Variations in mentoring programs of ECTs in Australia, such as those found in this research, were similar to those noted in other mentoring studies (Bressman et al., 2018; Desimone et al., 2014). For example, induction was often a part of a broader

orientation at the beginning of the school year (Kearney, 2017). The allocation of a mentor to the ECT was typical for school programs (Sunde & Ulvik, 2014) with a small number of schools providing beginning teachers with the option of selecting their mentor (van Ginkel et al., 2016) and meeting when convenient. Research has shown that school leadership teams often devise and implement formal programs (Bressman et al., 2018; Gaikhorst et al., 2014).

Mentors confirmed the variation in meeting frequency for ECTs and mentors with a myriad of reasons for the variation. For example, one mentor interview participant indicated that their staff expressed concern about having to use their DOTT time to support a graduate (MI06), while another explained that, given the busyness of the school day, there was little time to provide the ECT with appropriate support (MI18). This led to a gap between supposed and actual meeting frequency. The review of literature (Chapter 2) affirmed the importance of schools and their respective leadership teams providing an induction process to support ECTs. Researchers such as Marent et al., (2020) and Walker and Kutsyruba, (2019) confirmed that school leaders are responsible for the mentoring programs for the effective transition of ECTs from university to employment. School leaders are also indirectly responsible for establishing a school culture that promotes professional relationships, teacher morale, policies and practices aligned with administrative duties (Pogodzinski, 2015).

As found in research elsewhere, this present study noted formal programs existed in some schools and some ECTs and mentors observed that in other schools informal arrangements (programs) were used to support ECTs (Desimone et al., 2014; Mullen, 2017). Other research examining mentoring has found that informal mentoring arrangements tend to be organic by nature (Bressman et al., 2018; Desimone et al., 2014). ECTs reported that the informal mentoring programs within their school contexts often reflected the goodwill of a peer who met with ECTs on an as required basis. Meetings were voluntary and informal, which Desimone et al., (2014, p.102) characterise as in-the-moment feedback. Thirty-two of 36 ECT participants (89%) recognised that although the informal mentoring served some purposes, their preference was for a structured process.

The perspectives of some mentors towards the informal mentoring programs that existed in their school contexts was influenced by the reasons for those informal programs being adopted in the first place. These reasons were almost universally given

as “lack of time” and “lack of funds”. Other schools offered mentors to ECTs and delegated the responsibility of meeting with, and supporting, the ECTs to those mentors. Furthermore, others offered an ad hoc program of themed presentations such as creating portfolios. Transitioning their teacher registration from provisional to full is critical for ECTs. For example, in Western Australia, graduate teachers have three years to develop their craft and engage in relevant professional practice, which goes towards their professional portfolio that illustrates their professional growth and development (MI17). In addition to supporting ECTs to create their portfolios, mentors also provided support with how to have difficult conversations with parents and assisted their ECTs with their role’s time management and organisation components.

The ECT participant findings also revealed that informal programs included opportunities for conversation-focused teams with senior teachers and/or to share learnings with their peers. A standard feature of informal mentoring processes was identified as an ECT simply accessing support from their supervisor on a needs-by-needs basis. Informal programs were noted to be as simple as the strategic location of their mentor teacher’s classroom (next to their own). The opportunity to “pop in” and get assistance when required formed the basis of the program.

The findings of this study support other research that mentoring programs exist in many forms (Desimone et al., 2014; Gershenfeld, 2014; Kochan, Kent & Green, 2014; Sowell, 2017; Spooner-Lane, 2017). Mentoring programs to support ECTs are not implemented by all schools and are sometimes structured as formal and sometimes offered in an ad hoc and informal way. In terms of the diversity of their practices and elements, mentoring programs that support ECTs exhibit great diversity (Abetang et al., 2020; Desimone et al., 2014; Willis et al., 2019).

6.2.1.5 Absence of ECT mentoring programs

Where ECTs are unable to access a formal or an informal program, they are driven to find a mentor to support them in their role (Whalen et al., 2019). However, Desimone et al. (2014) found that no research simultaneously compares formal and informal mentoring of ECTs. What is known is that the relationship between formal and informal mentors differs. Formal mentoring is quite structured and is guided by set expectations, whereas informal mentoring occurs on a needs basis and is often directed by the mentee. Equally, the frequency and quality of connection influence

formal and informal programs. Formal programs tend to have structured meeting times with planned outcomes, whereas informal programs have no structure and tend to be ad hoc (Desimone, 2014).

With the lack of clarity about the elements that comprise informal programs/approaches and their role in supporting ECTs, this study's findings also reveal a complete absence of mentoring programs in some cases. Interviews with 25 mentors revealed that their school did not have a mentoring program. The findings suggest that the school's size, location and financial resources influenced the decision not to have a mentoring program and to rely instead on collegial support for ECTs. Interestingly, some ECTs indicated that they did not access much mentoring support. One participant working in a secondary school reported seeking assistance from teachers in their department, stated: "I just took it upon myself, I guess, to ask the question if I needed anything" (EI35). Another participant indicated that while they did not have a mentor, they found a "go-to person" (EI30) to assist them with their role. Similarly, Buchanan's (2012) study with 22 former teachers indicated that some participants said they "regretted a lack of mentoring teachers" (p.210). Buchanan (2012) highlighted the importance of working with colleagues to share ideas about best teaching practices and resources in a culture of collegiality. This present study found that some junior staff members sought one another as buddies in the absence of a program, but they did not necessarily follow through with regular check-ins. Some mentors acknowledged the goodwill of colleagues who gave their time to support ECTs in the absence of a formal program. Recognising that a mentor program puts schools under pressure, some mentors believed that implementing an ECT mentoring program was the responsibility of the sectoral education system, with one stating: "I do not think necessarily the [education] system that I work in provides enough structure in that regard" (MI22).

6.2.1.6 Selection, appointment and training of mentors

In line with other research, the study's findings make evident the importance of the selection, appointment and training of mentors for mentoring programs to meet the needs of ECTs. Mentors need to have the appropriate mindset and commitment to supporting ECTs in their personal and professional growth. Additionally, mentors must not only be effective practitioners, but they must have the relational capabilities to interact with ECTs, and must be afforded training in mental health first aid to

support the development of resilience and overall wellbeing of the ECTs in their care (Gu & Li, 2013; Mansfield et al., 2016).

The importance of the mentor-mentee relationship was a critical insight that emerged from this study. Beutel et al. (2017, p.165) indicated that "when [a mentoring program] is fit for purpose" and reflects the needs of ECTs, it is an effective way of supporting novice teachers. In this study, ECT participants stated that it was important that their relationship with their mentor was positive and reflected learning from a great teacher willing to share their knowledge. Similarly, all mentor participants confirmed that mentor-mentee relationships required a "genuine connection" (MI22) for effective learning to occur. The research has consistently shown that to engage in the role of mentor, individuals need to possess "personality-related qualities, qualities based on professional knowledge and practice-based skills" (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017, p.277). These skills are used in mentoring to support the developmental stages of ECTs (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). While the importance of the mentor's role was reflected in this study, the findings also brought to the fore several factors contributing to this, including the selection and appointment of mentors.

ECTs and mentor survey and interview findings highlighted the importance of selecting appropriate mentors and their training to assist them to engage with their mentoring role. For many, the professional role held by their mentor and the relationship formed with their mentor varied. The findings indicated that some ECTs reported that their mentors provided great support by making regular connections, observing classroom lessons and taking the time to listen to their frustrations. ECTs often referred to these experiences as supportive and encouraging. Other ECTs indicated that they had scheduled regular meetings to ask questions and share concerns and strategies to address any challenges they were experiencing. Most ECT respondents and interview participants emphasised that many graduate teachers did not know what they needed to know when they were new in the job. Having opportunities to connect with someone with experience was greatly valued by ECTs because they could share their experiences, concerns and ideas, which helped them learn and master their craft. With this in mind, it is clear that the mentoring role and relationship with the mentor is critical. Mentors echoed similar sentiments, and this aligns with research done by Willis et al. (2019), which states that "mentors have long been proposed as a policy solution to support beginning teachers" (p.334), and yet their role is not often acknowledged and/or researched.

There was broad agreement from ECTs that mentors needed to want to take on the role and that mentoring was more than merely helping someone. ECTs believed that mentors needed to be experienced as teachers and open to ECTs being contributors to the relationship. While some ECTs' perspectives of the mentor role reflected a view that "mentors sometimes just get thrown into it [and] don't really know what to do" (E120), mentor participants confirmed that sometimes staff members were asked to become mentors without any guidance, due to a shortage of resources. In some cases, staff with leadership responsibilities were allocated to ECTs. All ECTs reported that the mentors in their respective schools had different work arrangements, which influenced the support these individuals offered. One mentor participant indicated that the practices and activities that comprised the role as mentor influenced the mentoring outcomes and structural aspects, such as the frequency of meetings in their school. For example, part-time employed mentors were not able to meet as frequently with an ECT. Likewise, if mentors were members of the executive leadership team, they were often caught up in the busyness of the day and were noted to arrive late to meetings. Sometimes, even if these mentors did schedule and come to meetings, ECTs noted that they seemed distracted. Another interview participant reported that some mentors frequently cancelled meetings, and the ECTs were forced to find another support person.

According to ECTs, in cases when mentors were "thrown into the role", it was less likely that a strong and positive mentoring relationship could be formed. Several ECTs indicated that having a mentor in a position of power influenced their capacity to be genuinely vulnerable. ECTs emphasised that being the right fit and having a good relationship with their mentor was critical to the process. For this reason, some ECTs indicated a desire to have more of a say in selecting their mentor. For example, one commented that "it would be good if the graduate teacher could choose their mentor" (E136). Other researchers also acknowledge that the mentoring process is complex, specifically the relationship between mentor and mentee (Johnson, 2006, 2007; Langdon, 2017). The relationships are often influenced by non-linear and multi-layered approaches that form the basis of the various school programs (Ewing, 2021).

People in leadership positions are critical to the support provided to ECTs (Hobson et al., 2009). School leaders "give preference to and legitimise certain practices" (Sunde & Ulvik, 2014, p.286). In some cases, mentor participants indicated that including quality practices and activities in a school's mentoring program reflects an understanding of the nature, processes and benefits of mentoring. School leaders and

their teams often discuss questions such as “Who will be selected to be the mentor of an ECT?” and “Is that a voluntary position or is it a director position?”. Other leaders consider which person in the school would be a great fit for a particular ECT. This study revealed that the design of the mentoring program was influenced by the resources available to the school. Under-resourcing was particularly evident in regional, rural and remote locations where school leaders had more inexperienced than experienced staff. The lack of experienced staff meant that mentors were in short supply. Sunde and Ulvik, (2014, p.286) argue that “school leaders’ choices concerning who shall be mentors and who are to be mentored” may affect the mentoring process and therefore impacts the mentoring experiences of ECTs in their respective schools.

Mentor training was an area of concern for both mentors and ECTs. The personnel who are put into the mentor role are so diverse that it is impossible to ascertain what knowledge, skills and understandings they share (Bullough, 2012; Hobson et al., 2009). However, the literature highlights two perspectives that may shed light on what is needed for mentor training. The first recognises the informal learning that mentors experience as they navigate the various activities with mentees that constitute the mentoring process, such as conversations and teaching observations (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015, p.76). The second emphasises the organised, professional learning opportunities that exist to develop mentors’ skill sets (Wang, 2001). One of the critical skills that should guide the selection and training of mentors is the capacity to develop positive relationships (van Ginkel et al., 2016). A review of the research shows four key findings that schools need to take into account when creating the context for mentoring. First, that principals need to recognise the time and moral support needed by mentors (Kim, 2019); second, that mentoring enables a pathway to be forged between “the experienced theory and the practice gap” evident between mentors and mentees (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015, p.81); third, that mentor preparation should consider the development of analytical skills and opportunities for reflection as part of the process (Koballa et al., 2010); and fourth, that relationships are of the utmost importance (Beutel et al., 2017). Mentor training should include strategies for dealing with the dilemmas and issues mentees frequently face, including confidentiality, specialised knowledge and the like (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017).

It is evident from the mentoring research that there are varied approaches to understanding the mentors’ role, often referred to as “tensions and complexities” of the mentoring process (Shields & Murray, 2017, p.328). For example, some ECTs in this

study believed that their need for support felt like a "burden" for the mentor, who gave the impression that mentoring the ECT was "a bit of a chore for them" (EI01). Feeling concerned about taking up the mentor's time was also expressed by other ECTs (EI30). However, most of the ECTs recognised that the mentoring process was "a big-time commitment on the part of the mentor because ECTs do need much support" (EI27).

The review of the literature concluded that having teaching experience does not necessarily mean that a mentor will be effective in this role (Alhija & Fresko, 2014). Successful preparation is critical to ensure that mentors understand their role and the expectations that come with it (Beutel, et al., 2017), and that they have the required skills to support the personal and professional growth of ECTs (Shields & Murray, 2017; Willis et al., 2019). Researchers in this field found that mentors who participate in quality mentor training provided comprehensive mentoring (Alhija & Fresko, 2014), and this included being available for consistent and focused regular meetings.

Clear expectations about the mentoring program were important to ECTs. ECTs preferred a clear outline of scheduled meeting times, reminder dates and times for classroom observations. Equally, they wanted clarity regarding the mentor's role and the expectations of themselves as mentees. Findings from both ECTs and mentors indicated that the specifying criteria for the mentor role required much attention. Some mentors reported that they felt the upskilling of mentors was important, as was being able to provide the necessary support in terms of asking appropriate questions and knowing what to do when challenges arose. Other mentors spoke of wanting a training program for mentors and expressed that this would be greatly assisted if more funding were made available generally for mentoring programs. Suggestions were made for mentors to undertake courses that would improve the knowledge, skills and understandings required to engage in the role.

6.2.2 Level of support desired by ECTs

Researchers in the field have consistently found that mentoring is an effective strategy to support the personal and professional development of ECTs (Hobson & Malderez, 2013; Jackson, 2014; Langdon et al., 2019; Marable & Raimondi, 2007). The level of support may include a simple transition process from university to the classroom that reflects the needs of novice teachers and provides the contextual support they require in their respective schools (Hobson et al., 2009; Langdon & Ward,

2015). In addition to providing novice teachers with guidance in refining their craft, the support provided by mentoring can increase their self-efficacy and assist ECTs to better assimilate to their school's context (Burn et al., 2017; Milton et al., 2020).

When asked about their mentoring needs, ECT interview participants indicated that they required support to learn "the little things" (EI25). This included entering data into their school's learning management systems, becoming familiar with the context of the school and how it operates and being made aware of the practices and procedures relevant to their role. Other ECT participants explained that the induction process consisted of meeting with the principal and assistant principal, learning about the school and being allocated a mentor. The meeting was often held the day before school started, and ECT participants found the induction process "was far too policy and procedure heavy" (MI18). Nevertheless, the majority of mentor participants reported that their school provided an induction for ECTs. Induction from a school leader perspective included reviewing school policy and providing ECTs with a handbook.

The literature has previously noted the lack of clarity in understanding the difference between mentoring and induction. Kearney (2017) observed that the terms mentoring and orientation are used as synonyms for induction, and schools need to differentiate between programs applicable to all new staff and those specifically designed for ECTs. What has been established is that the "varying nature and perspectives of induction make the design of universal programs difficult" (Kearney, 2017, p.787). The complexity of school systems and the diversity of individual school contexts can create challenges for school leaders when designing and implementing induction policies and practices (Milton et al., 2020; Spooner-Lane, 2017). Researchers such as Ingersoll and Strong (2011) argue that ECT induction must consist of a comprehensive program that facilitates support and ongoing learning for 2 or 3 years. The induction program must also welcome ECTs as members of a professional community, provide a mentor and give ECTs professional learning opportunities to develop their capacity in teaching and learning, classroom observations and occasions for reflection (Gehrke & McKoy 2012; Whalen, 2019).

Common concerns evidenced in the literature also includes the notion that induction typically provides "inadequate mentoring and supervision [and] excessive responsibilities and fail[s] to [recognise] and [reward] professional growth" (Kearney, 2017, p.788). Research into school mentoring makes it evident that school leaders

influence the mentoring program for ECTs. Their influence includes the degree to which they provide support for the mentor/mentee relationship, the coordination of meeting times and themes for discussion and overseeing a quality mentoring program (Kidd et al., 2015; Walker & Kutsyruba, 2019).

6.2.3 Wellbeing

Concern about the wellbeing of ECTs has gained momentum, given the increased rate of ECT attrition. The inconsistent implementation of mentoring practices in education systems has been posited as contributing to poor ECT retention (Lloyd & Sullivan, 2012; Marshall, 2013; McKay, 2016; Squires, 2019). Some school leader/mentor and ECT respondents and interview participants discussed the importance of working with ECTs to improve their wellbeing. For example, in regional, rural and remote locations, creating an effective support system was critical in helping ECTs address their isolation, loneliness and feeling overwhelmed. Equally, the challenge of wellbeing was also acknowledged by some ECT interview participants. Early Career Teachers indicated that wellbeing challenges were evident in metropolitan and regional areas. In addition, mentors conveyed the anxiety that some ECTs had because of their lack of self-efficacy. Although mentors sought to provide support to address this need, they reported not receiving any relevant training.

Interestingly, researchers such as Squires, (2019, p.262) emphasise that "there has been scant attention on the crucial role that mentors could play in supporting the wellbeing of mentees". Seligman (2011) proposes that the concept of wellbeing includes the key dimensions of engagement, meaning, relationships and achievement. In the context of supporting ECTs, these dimensions serve as "guideposts" (Squires, 2019, p.257) that outline how best to support ECTs. Mentors need to have a clear understanding of mental health first aid and skills in non-therapeutic counselling. This understanding was particularly noted in the study by van Ginkel et al. (2013), where the adaptive qualities of 18 mentor teachers in secondary vocational education were investigated. Their findings indicated that those mentors who were more emotionally adaptive by nature tended to be more receptive to the emotions of their mentees. The emotionally adaptive nature of the mentor facilitated collegial discussions that were less formal and more compassionate while still maintaining the professional frame of the mentor-mentee relationship (van Ginkel et al., 2013). Developing relationships based on positive interactions and constructive feedback delivered in a supportive way are two

strategies that mentors can use to support the wellbeing of ECTs (Callahan, 2016; Squires, 2019).

6.2.4 The value of mentoring experiences for ECTs

The particular value of certain mentoring experiences was noted in Sikma's (2019) study of four graduate teachers. Findings indicated that the recent graduates especially valued the emotional support provided by their colleagues. Additionally, the novice teachers appreciated the contextual support provided that helped them resolve the "idiosyncratic issues they encountered on a regular basis" (Sikma, 2019, p.332). Researchers such as Ewing (2021) argue that the support provided to novice teachers benefits their teaching quality and improves retention.

6.2.4.1 Mentor–mentee relationships

While the perspectives of mentoring experiences for both ECTs and mentors varied, there was common agreement about the value they offered the respective parties. Having the opportunity to connect regularly with their mentees meant that some mentors were able to develop a positive and constructive relationship. When a strong mentor-mentee relationship developed, it allowed the mentors to understand the perspectives of ECTs and, therefore, to encourage them to explore other issues that may not have easily come to the fore, such as personal matters. The benefits of fostering positive mentor-mentee relationships facilitated "greater consistency across the school, in particular areas of need" (MI29).

Where the mentor-mentee relationship was successful, some ECTs found they developed greater confidence in their teaching practice. For example, one participant highlighted it this way: "Having someone come in and observe and provide feedback and then checking, later on, to see how that feedback was implemented [was] the best experience, the most valuable" (EI15). Another participant indicated that having their mentor as a role model who demonstrated the right things to do and how to do them was most valuable to their mentoring experience (EI28). In addition, another ECT interview participant emphasised that having mentors who were open and allowed them to work alongside them was immeasurably valuable to their mentoring experience (EI30). Other researchers have also noted the critical nature of mentor-mentee relationships to the mentoring process (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kearney, 2018; Pogodzinski, 2013). For example, providing emotional support, professional

guidance and modelling a workplace culture that is open, reflective and learner-centred is important to the valuable mentoring experiences of ECTs (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017; Stanulis & Brodynk, 2013; Squires, 2019).

6.2.4.2 Access to supportive networks

Some mentors considered access to supportive networks as pertinent to the value of mentoring experiences for ECTs. Providing opportunities for ECTs to connect with other newly appointed and beginning teachers and form professional learning communities significantly enhanced their mentoring experience. One mentor interview participant indicated that encouraging their ECT to attend system-level professional learning was a positive aspect of developing their knowledge, skills and understandings. Another mentor emphasised that encouraging ECTs to share their journey was important for them and gave them professional insight into other schools' teaching practices.

Data from the ECT questionnaire and interviews acknowledged that participating in face-to-face and online networks provided excellent support to ECTs. One ECT who cited a Facebook page established for novice teachers to discuss their experiences found that the platform provided an opportunity for ECTs to introduce themselves and "allow[ed them] to share good or bad experiences" (EI21). Other researchers' findings mirrored the importance of networks and/or professional learning communities to support the development of ECTs (Eshchar-Netz & Vedder-Weiss, 2020; Long et al., 2012; Sikma, 2019). Research has demonstrated that the school context is important to teacher self-efficacy, and the social environment supports collegial relations, including relationships with peers and quality relationships with external professional learning communities. Having opportunities to share their experience assisted the participants in Sikma's (2019) study to understand that the challenges they were experiencing were typical and not a reflection of their capacity as educators.

6.2.5 Challenging mentoring experiences for ECTs

The mentoring experiences of ECTs were not always positive. Some of the challenging mentoring experiences of ECTs included time constraints, heavy workloads and poor mentor relationships.

6.2.5.1 Lack of time

Mentoring is unlikely to be successful if there is insufficient time allocated to the various activities of the mentoring process (Abetang et al., 2020; Khasnabis et al., 2013). Similarly, this study likewise revealed that the design of the mentoring program and the subsequent experience for ECTs, was significantly influenced by the allocation (or lack thereof) of time. The majority of mentors said their program was limited to the distribution of an induction booklet and templates for reflection. This was a common strategy used to offset the challenge of being time poor. Several ECT and mentor interviewees indicated that the handbook was viewed as a "go-to resource" to answer frequently asked questions. Gordon, (2020) identify this strategy as a kind of "quick fix" support that promotes superficial induction while "masking the complexities and needs of the new teacher" (p.669).

6.2.5.2 Heavy workloads

The findings of this study point to the heavy workload of mentors that precluded them from spending much time with ECTs. Some mentors indicated that "the ECT would go around and take up a lot of DOTT time of the other teachers" (MI25) and said that some staff made a request not to mentor ECTs. ECTs acknowledged that mentoring required a considerable time commitment on the part of the mentor, and many reported feeling guilty about adding to the workload of mentors. For this reason, ECTs were often reluctant to approach them. Additionally, some ECTs perceived that mentoring was more a chore for the mentor than a mutually reciprocal learning process, which discouraged them from asking for assistance.

6.2.5.3 Poor mentor relationships

Researchers such as Whalen, et al., (2019) found that some mentors did not want to be mentors. Referred to as the "mentorship quandary" (Whalen et al., 2019, p.597), some mentors indicated that their priority was to serve the students in their care. They viewed supporting novice teachers as an additional task with insufficient time to spare (Jaspers et al., 2014). Despite research into this aspect of mentoring, there was limited information on implementing strategies to encourage a shift in mindset and encourage experienced teachers to engage in mentoring (Whalen, 2019).

Having sufficient time is critical for scheduling regular conversations, organising and debriefing classroom observations and creating opportunities to engage

in reflective thinking and planning (Hardman et al., 2020). Time is a significant issue evident in the data collected and the literature reviewed as part of the study (Kirkby, Moss & Godinho, 2017; Kochan, 2002). Without the allocation of sufficient time to engage in effective mentoring, ECTs are not able to reap the benefits of personal and professional development (Harju & Niemi, 2018; Kane & Francis, 2013), which has negative consequences on student learning (Demetrious et al., 2020; Ewing, 2021).

6.2.5.4 Challenging mentoring experiences for mentors

Research describes mentoring as a two-way process between the mentor and the mentee (Barrett, et al., 2017; Pennanen et al., 2016; Spooner-Lane, 2017). For the mentor-mentee relationship to work, the characteristics and traits of both parties are important. Hobson (2016) emphasises that "successful mentoring is partly dependent on the traits of individual mentees" (p.89) and their willingness to be open to learning.

The findings from some mentor questionnaires and interviews revealed concern about some of the attributes and attitudes demonstrated by the ECTs in their care. One mentor participant indicated that working with ECTs was "mostly, pretty hard work [and] sometimes a nightmare" (MI01). Others indicated that negative mentoring experiences were attributed to ECTs' lack of awareness of their weaknesses and their inability to take advantage of growth learning opportunities. Some mentors also observed that some ECTs did not clearly understand the expectations aligned with their role and had a "perception of what the job *should be* versus the reality of the job" (MI27). Interestingly, the study has shown that ECTs greatly valued the feedback given to them. However, some mentors felt that some ECTs did not take the advice or follow necessary procedures, despite having access to resources. Some ECTs engaged in defensive behaviours and one mentor reported hearing a comment from an ECT that stated, "old teachers do not get it" (MQ02).

6.2.5.5 Challenge for mentoring programs: Regional considerations

Encouraging ECTs to work in regional, rural and remote locations is an ongoing challenge for educational institutions around Australia (Beutel et al., 2011; Hazel & McCallum, 2016). Researchers have shown that teachers face particular challenges when working and living in regional communities (Cuervo, 2016; Haynes

& Miller, 2016). The mentor findings also indicated that circumstances outside the school context influenced the mentoring process in regional, rural and remote locations. Mentors reported that ensuring the ECTs had suitable accommodation was critical to their sense of safety and wellbeing (Cuervo & Acquaro). When ECTs did not have adequate living arrangements, this influenced their capacity to come to work. Equally, mentors acknowledged that living away from home was daunting for some ECTs. One consequence of personal isolation was that mentors needed to be more involved in supporting ECTs during this time. The impact of isolation was a noted significant effect on the professional life of the ECT and on the students in their care. The other challenge noted by mentors was that regional, rural and remote locations had few financial resources to establish a mentoring program because there were limited staff members available. The research in this area confirms that limited resources in regional, rural and remote locations contribute to the lack of available and relevant professional learning opportunities for teachers (Handal et al., 2013; Haynes & Miller 2016; Kline & Walker-Gibbs, 2015). The appropriate selection, matching and training of mentors to mentees in regional, rural and remote areas are ongoing considerations for mentoring programs.

6.3 Personal growth

The second theme to emerge from the research findings is personal growth related to ECT confidence and self-efficacy and mental health. Interestingly, mentors who engaged in the mentoring of ECTs also experienced personal growth. The personal growth experienced by the mentors of ECTs was a newfound enthusiasm for their professional role.

As noted earlier, successful mentoring relationships play a critical role in mentoring programs. Research has found that newly appointed teachers who have a quality mentor can survive in the profession and thrive in their initial years of teaching (Abetang et al., 2020). In addition, ECTs that develop a positive outlook are more likely to stay in the teaching profession (Long & Hall et al., 2012; van Ginkel et al., 2014). In this study, “confidence and self-efficacy” and “mental health” were two areas identified as contributing to the personal growth of graduate teachers. Mentors also reported experiencing personal growth as part of the mentoring process.

6.3.1 Confidence and self-efficacy

The ECT findings indicated that the ECT mentoring experiences increased their feeling of confidence. ECTs reported that it was important to have someone provide support to make them feel less alone and embrace being part of a team where their voice was heard and respected. The opportunity to connect with another enabled some ECTs to focus on developing themselves personally and professionally. Where some ECTs described being able to contribute to conversations and share ideas about teaching and learning, they found this important to engaging in best practice. Equally, they found this experience to be a reciprocal process of learning, which gave them the confidence to embrace challenges in their professional and personal lives. Mentor findings confirmed this as well. There was agreement that the mentoring experiences of most ECTs enabled them to develop the confidence they needed to step up and into their roles as educators and, in some cases, provided them with the courage to take risks with their learning. An increase in confidence enabled ECTs to establish and maintain relationships with their peers and meet the demands of the teaching profession within their respective school contexts.

Interestingly, mentor data revealed that the mentoring process also contributed to them developing confidence and increased their capacity to problem-solve with ECTs and have the courage to engage in challenging conversations with them. Researchers in the field emphasise that making a successful transition to the school community – including mitigating change, providing supportive personal and professional relationships and offering a strong sense of belonging – can support ECTs' personal growth (Day & Gu 2014; Gordon, 2020). The literature also demonstrates the link between self-efficacy and a sense of belonging in education and finds that it reduces anxiety levels and increases confidence, enabling ECTs to interact with their school and the broader community (Gordon, 2020; Mansfield, Beltman, Price & McConney, 2012; Waters et al., 2014). When ECTs feel that they are active contributors to their school community, they can engage more fully in professional and social relationships and feel affirmed about their capacity as teachers and human beings (Le Cornu, 2013).

6.3.2 Mental health

Mental health was noted in both ECT and mentor data findings. Regular conversations with mentors ensured that strategies were put into place before

emotional burnout occurred, and if these strategies were not working at a mentor-mentee level, further support was provided from other qualified personnel. Analysis of the ECT data found that some mentors of ECTs regularly asked questions about their nutrition and exercise and initiated discussions about prioritising their workload and finding ways to relax in order to promote wellbeing and a work-life balance. Like ECTs, mentors reported ensuring that the wellbeing of ECTs was addressed. Mentors reported feeling concerned when ECTs said they felt overwhelmed and inept. Although the mentoring process was challenging at times, some mentors found that the personal growth of ECTs was demonstrated in how they were able to mitigate some of their challenges. The mitigation strategies often took the form of dedicated conversations and recommendations for support services. For example, all staff in the Department of Education and Training in the state of Victoria can access employee, health, safety and wellbeing services. These services include the Employee Assistance Program and Principal Health and Wellbeing Services, designed to support school principals, which would be helpful for those principals who have a mentoring role.

Research on mentoring ECTs suggests that "a positive mentoring experience can make a great difference to ECTs' experience and wellbeing" (Daly et al., 2021, p.9). Positive mentoring experiences are founded on trust and rely on the commitment of mentors to engage in guided conversations with ECTs about specific situations (Ewing, 2021). While there is great emphasis on the importance of supporting ECTs, there is limited research about the mental health training required by mentors to support the ECTs in their care (Squires, 2019).

6.3.3 Mentor reflection

The findings from mentors revealed that the process of mentoring ECTs renewed their enthusiasm for teaching. Working with ECTs enabled some of the mentors to harness their social-emotional capacity. Mentors reflected on their skills and behaviours to reduce what Hobson and Malderez call "judgementoring" (2013, p.1). Establishing trust as the core component of mentor-mentee conversations and negotiating firm boundaries with ECTs enabled mentors to reflect on what was important to ECTs and their focus. Equally, understanding the power and delivery of the spoken word was critical to their reflection. Some mentors indicated that they carefully scripted their conversations with some of their novice teachers because they felt the conversation was

sensitive. In addition, placing emphasis on active, reflective listening skills contributed to the personal growth experienced by mentors during their experiences of mentoring ECTs. The findings from this study mirror those of others. For example, Abetang et al. (2020) found that the shared core skills required by the mentor and mentee include the capacity to build trust and engage in active listening, goal setting and the exploration of current realities. In doing so, mentors are able to provide the appropriate feedback to facilitate the personal and professional growth of ECTs.

6.4 Professional growth

The capacity of novice teachers to effectively transition from university to schools is linked to a range of skills and capabilities that, are described as professional growth. In this study, professional growth acquired during the ECT mentoring experiences was seen to occur in teaching and learning, developing relationships with others and participating in networks. Mentors also reported experiencing professional growth in their teaching practice.

6.4.1 Teaching and learning

ECT participants reported that their experience of being mentored contributed to their professional growth. For example, some novice teachers described how the opportunity to work with a mentor enabled them to build a repertoire of strategies for teaching and learning and behaviour management. In addition, having the opportunity to engage in open dialogue and sharing what worked and what did not work, encouraged ECTs to engage in a constant process of reflection. Interestingly, some ECTs indicated that they had little understanding of mentoring prior to being in the program and therefore did not know what to expect from a mentoring experience. Additionally, they were unclear about the roles and responsibilities of all involved with the mentoring program, including themselves. For this reason, many ECTs said that their feedback about professional growth was based on their classroom practice only.

Mentor respondents and interview participants indicated that the professional growth of ECTs was a natural consequence of their mentoring experiences in their respective schools. All mentors agreed with ECTs' sentiments that mentoring enabled them to refine their classroom practice and learn "the tricks of the trade" (MQ40). Other mentors explained that the mentoring experience of ECTs enabled them to build

their capacity to meet teaching standards and face typical daily challenges, using feedback as a frame of reference. Challenges included problem-solving effectively, addressing parents' concerns and applying knowledge of school policies and practices where appropriate.

Research has revealed that the practice of problem-solving to address student learning needs was critical to the professional growth of ECTs (Coenders & Verhoef, 2019). Likewise, engaging in "a continuum" of formal and informal learning experiences (Mansfield & Gu, 2019, p.641) improved ECTs' effectiveness (Schliecher, 2016) and competence (Kelly, 2016) in engaging with their role. Finally, it is evident from a review of the literature that the mentor's role is critical to the skillset development of ECTs (Wecler, 2019; Wexler, 2020).

6.4.2 Developing working relationships with others

Mentors working with mentees to intentionally build supportive working relationships is pivotal to their mentoring experience (Weiner, 2019). The research findings reveal that the qualities of connection and openness were important to building quality mentor-mentee relationships and developing relationships with other members of the school community. The connection and openness of ECTs were linked to their capacity to develop interpersonal skills, including the trust and confidence to share their experiences and their capacity to engage with staff and parents to address their concerns.

Mentors indicated that the professional growth of ECTs also enabled them to develop the confidence to work with the broader community. Some mentors also explained that having the confidence to work in teams enabled ECTs to be open to learning and applying critical ideas to their work, as well as sharing their experience with their respective teams. Unfortunately, all the ECTs did not share that sentiment in this study. Although ECTs focused on building relationships with their mentors, very few mentioned working with their teams. Instead, their need to survive in the classroom was uppermost, and their focus was entirely consumed by their teaching and learning practice.

6.4.2.1 Participating in supportive networks

Establishing and maintaining networks was also identified as an area of professional growth. The findings from mentor interview participants highlighted the important role of networks to enable ECTs to share their experiences. For example,

some ECTs were able to visit schools and learn about key focus areas for their respective teaching practices, and others described attending scheduled education system days where they could learn about the practical and governance dimensions of their role and connect with others ECTs. Some found this opportunity invaluable because it enabled them to learn from others and check-in. In this space, ECTs were able to share insights, experiences, celebrations and concerns. ECTs also explained that forging networks, whether face-to-face or using online platforms, was conducive to supporting their professional growth. Mentors confirmed the findings from ECT interview participants and mentioned that – where possible – they encouraged ECTs to visit other schools or attend education system networking events to develop collegial, supportive relationships with other graduates. In addition, mentors whose ECTs were in regional, rural and remote communities noted the importance of making connections with a professional network.

The research findings highlight the critical role of networks for ECTs in supporting their professional growth. Fox and Wilson (2009) argue that networks enable beginning teachers to be emotionally supported and seek advice about resources (Marz & Kelchtermans, 2020; Sikma, 2019). The ECTs also emphasised that networks could be used to extend their connections beyond their departments and school contexts. Therefore, consideration should be given to the design of the networks, including their fluidity, formal and informal nature and their capacity to support the various needs of ECTs over time (Marz & Kelchtermans, 2020; Turbaro, et al., 2016).

The findings of this study support those of Ewing (2021) who found that professional growth may indicate how novice teachers can effectively transition from university to the classroom. The researchers state that graduate teachers are required to "negotiate school and classroom culture" (Ewing, 2021, p.51), successfully manage various situations with students and their parents and fulfil the ongoing daily demands of being an educator (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014).

6.4.3 Professional growth for mentors

Questionnaire and interview data revealed that mentors also reported benefits from being involved in mentoring programs. Some mentor interview participants described the professional growth they gained during the mentoring process. The mentors outlined the way in which mentoring was a rewarding experience that enabled them to give back to the community. One participant noted that watching ECTs

develop their teaching expertise and take slow and calculated risks to facilitate student learning was a positive consequence of mentors' commitment to the program and was described as "really rewarding" (MI25). Mentors also indicated that ensuring the teaching profession had good quality teachers was pertinent to the support offered to ECTs. Some mentor respondents and participants felt that it was a privilege to help individuals grow and develop personally and professionally.

The participants in this study indicated that the mentoring experience was mutually beneficial. Hearing about up-to-date pedagogical and methodological approaches motivated mentors to apply the newfound knowledge in their own teaching and learning practices. Exploring new ideas also gave the mentors a renewed enthusiasm for teaching. The mentoring process enabled mentors to benefit from a rewarding experience, reframe their teaching practice, support the growth of others and appropriately foster networks (Grima, et al., 2014; Lunsmann et al., 2019).

6.5 Considerations for mentoring programs in the future

There is broad agreement among researchers that comprehensive induction programs with embedded mentoring are pivotal to supporting ECTs transition from university student to teacher practitioner (AITSL, 2016; AITSL, 2016a; Langdon, 2019; Spooner-Lane, 2016). The research findings confirm that effective mentoring programs that are properly designed and implemented support the teaching profession. Furthermore, by developing the professional identity and classroom practices of beginning teachers and focusing on wellbeing (AITSL, 2017), there is the hope of increasing graduate teacher job satisfaction and reducing ECT attrition (Gordon, 2020; Spooner-Lane, 2016; Whalen, 2019).

The ECT and mentor questionnaires and interviews provided several considerations for the future development of mentoring programs. They include developing a structured program, reviewing the mentor selection process and communicating teacher registration requirements more clearly.

6.5.1 Structure of mentoring programs

The ECTs and mentor questionnaire respondents and interview participants overwhelmingly recommended implementing structured programs for future ECT mentoring programs. They described the ideal structured program as being adaptable, consistent and contextually relevant, with clear expectations for the mentor and

mentee. Some ECTs indicated their preference for mentoring programs that followed an ongoing induction process with consistent, regular and purpose-based meetings with their mentors. In addition, ECTs maintained that an ideal mentoring program would incorporate various networking opportunities so that ECTs can share their experiences with peers and have a resource for support in the absence of a mentor. Interestingly, mentors agreed with the sentiments of ECTs. However, their recommendations of the mentors were often tempered by realism when it came to providing the necessary resources, saying there was little time, not enough funds and limited physical and human resources.

Creating a structured mentoring program as part of an induction process is the direct responsibility of the school principal (Walker & Kutsyuruba, 2019). The principal's role is thus critical in providing the necessary support for ECTs in their respective schools (Ewing 2021; Sunde & Ulvik, 2014; Zachary, 2005). Researchers such as Sunde and Ulvik (2014, p.285) argue that school leaders are "in a position to make decisions that influence beginning teachers' first year in school". Furthermore, investing in the school's culture to support the mentoring process strongly influences the growth of novice teachers (Sunde & Ulvik, 2014; Wynn et al., 2007).

6.5.2 Mentor selection

ECTs expressed a strong preference to be mentored by experienced colleagues who wanted to take on the mentor role and had the appropriate knowledge, skills, understandings and mindset to be influential mentors. Several ECTs indicated that their mentoring experiences were challenging because their allocated mentor had no desire to take on the role. In these situations, mentors did not schedule times to meet with their ECTs or seek to support them. ECTs expressed the desire for judicious processes to ensure that the appropriate people were selected and trained to be mentors. Researchers such as Smith and Ingersoll (2004) have shown that the careful selection of mentors is critical to the mentoring process. Similarly, Beutel et al. (2017) argue that there is a need for the professional development of mentors so they can be effective in their roles. The research indicates that in some circumstances, the mentoring process may not produce positive results and that certain perceptions and behaviours of mentors can have significant consequences on mentees (Hobson & Malderez, 2013; Maguire, 2001).

The flexibility of mentors is also evident in the findings that some mentors are "consistently overly prescriptive, directive and informative" (van Ginkel, et al., 2016, p.201), which leaves very little to support the individual growth of ECTs. Beutel et al. (2017) argue that mentors need to know how to work with ECTs. The ECT and mentor questionnaire respondents and interview participants overwhelmingly agreed that attention was needed regarding the selection and training of mentors. ECT data makes it clear that to be a good mentor, it is not enough to be an expert in the field of education. Mentors needed to be approachable, relational and non-judgemental in their approach to engaging with ECTs effectively. Other ECTs explained that having mentors as a go-to person to vent frustrations in a trusting and safe environment was pivotal to surviving and thriving in their early years of teaching.

Interestingly, some mentors were unaware of the power differential that impacted the mentoring process. These mentors assumed that their mentoring capacity was adequate to the task and were unaware of the impact that their lack of mentor training may have had on ECTs. Research confirms that mentors who are clear about their roles and who have the appropriate skillset and training are vital to the support of ECTs (Hardman et al., 2020). Ensuring that mentors are judiciously selected and provided with quality training as well as time and workload considerations to engage actively with their role is critical to implementing a mentoring program for novice teachers (Langdon, 2017; Whalen, 2019).

6.5.3 Support with teacher registration

ECT data from questionnaires and interviews revealed the pressure ECTs felt when fulfilling the transition to full registration requirements. While AITSL is not a registered state authority, it administers the national standards required for teachers to become registered. Given that all states and territories in Australia have their own registration processes, ECTs must fulfil the national requirements and meet the criteria for the legislative body that oversees their state or territory.

The pressure to complete specific professional learning modules, accreditation and portfolios within a set timeframe added significantly to the ECT heavy workload. Like ECTs, mentors indicated that being up to date with all registration requirements for the mentoring of ECTs also added to mentors' work. Ensuring that teachers were ready for full registration within a set time frame and making sure the principal had been informed was challenging.

Limited research has been conducted on the challenges faced by ECTs and mentors concerning teacher registration. Existing research focuses on developing instruction and curricula and supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of ECTs. This is an area of research that requires further exploration.

6.5.4 Challenges of developing mentoring programs

Novice teachers require support in their early years of teaching (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Whalen et al. (2019) argue that mentoring and mentorship theory and practice do not always align. This is attributed to the varied perceptions of what mentoring entails and how it should be implemented in schools and the obstacles to creating mentoring programs such as lack of funding and physical and human resources. Equally, there is little data about quality mentoring programs and their impact (Polikoff et al., 2015). The study findings highlight four key challenges in developing mentoring programs. These are time, program design and value, the mentor-mentee relationship and funding. They are discussed in the following sections.

6.5.4.1 Time

ECT questionnaire respondents and interview participants overwhelmingly acknowledged that the biggest challenge to developing effective mentoring programs was lack of time. This included time for the ECT to be released from classroom teaching commitments to meet with their mentor regularly and/or engage in classroom observations and/or conversations. Indeed, to be released from the classroom, some ECTs indicated that they also needed time to organise relief lessons, while other ECTs expressed the need of time to reflect on and plan lessons and be more proactive than reactive in handling the busyness of the school day.

The data collected from mentors in this study confirmed the perspective of ECTs. Some mentors felt that because of ongoing daily interruptions, there was limited time to connect with ECTs. Limited time meant it was difficult to check in to see how the ECTs were going and ensure that all the programs were correct and uploaded as per the school's policy. Neither was there was enough time to meet and chat with their ECT, even if it was scheduled. Often these interruptions to scheduled meetings precluded the mentors from keeping their scheduled appointments with ECTs. This study mirrors the findings from research elsewhere. For example, Sunde and Ulvik (2014) note that mentors recognise that staff workload within schools is overwhelming.

Given the various forms of mentoring programs and practices, participants and respondents acknowledged that time commitments involved a significant challenge in the mentoring experience of ECTs. The time commitment involved time for meetings and resourcing required to support timetabled opportunities for mentors and mentees to meet or engage in classroom observations and the impact of time on workload.

6.5.4.2 Program design and value of mentoring

A review of the research literature shows that mentoring as a practice should be adaptable to meet the needs of the respective ECTs (Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Shanks, 2017). Those beginning teachers who have just transitioned into the profession from the university or from other occupation may require mentoring programs with different learning intentions than ECTs in their second or third years of teaching (Shanks, 2014). Some ECTs indicated that the mentoring programs in their respective schools did not meet their needs. For some ECTs, the program design reflected a themed approach that did not suit what they needed at a particular point in time. Other ECTs were provided with group mentoring opportunities and felt uncomfortable sharing their more vulnerable feelings in an open setting. While mentors were often aware of the importance of mentoring their ECTs, they tended not to prioritise mentoring in the absence of a formal, mandatory requirement to provide a program. This trend was evidenced by the participants who considered the mentoring programs they were involved with to be ad hoc.

The program design of mentoring in schools is often reflective of school leader perspective of mentoring and the value they place on it (Sunde & Ulvik, 2014; Whalen, 2019). Research confirms that the school leader perception of mentoring is attributed to their various interpretations of mentoring, their understanding of the needs of ECTs and their views on how mentoring may or may not benefit their school. Also, school leaders are influenced by their own perceptions of ECTs. For example, some school leaders view novice teachers as the personnel who may contribute to the school's value or as inexperienced individuals who require work (Storhaug & Sand, 2011). Nevertheless, Jones (2012) argues that the role of the principal is to ensure that the mentoring program in schools is supported by the necessary time and funding and includes appropriate professional learning opportunities. Like Jones (2012), Whalen (2019) states that the principal is also required to oversee the mentorship process. Overseeing mentorship includes building and encouraging a school culture that supports ECTs as well as

providing training for mentors, which includes scientifically based research, understanding of curriculum, assessment and instruction (Whalen, 2019).

6.5.4.3 The mentor-mentee relationship

The mentor-mentee relationship was challenging for some ECTs. In this context, the ECT data revealed that their mentors had no desire to be mentors and did so at the direction of their school leader. Other ECTs shared that their allocated mentor had not the time or the inclination to engage in the process. Additionally, some ECTs indicated that mentors were willing to support them but did not have sufficient training to do so and often focused heavily on the curriculum aspect and not at all on the relational dimension of the role. These findings support evidence from research elsewhere. For example, in a study conducted by Kardos and Johnson (2010), 41% of mentors observed graduates in the classroom, 58% of first-year teachers had conversations about curriculum and lesson planning and 56% engaged in conversations about classroom instruction. However, in those contexts, mentoring only focused on the curriculum and gave little attention to the social and emotional challenges experienced by ECTs.

Interestingly, the mentor questionnaire respondents and interview participants agreed that the mentors allocated to ECTs did not always have a lot to offer. Limited funding and resources and, in some cases, remoteness of location were all significant with regard to who was appointed as a mentor. This study's findings highlight the challenges that resulted when mentor-mentee relationships were ineffective. ECTs who were courageous enough independently sought support elsewhere, but others isolated themselves. The data revealed that many of the mentors in schools were school leaders. Their perspective of the mentoring experiences offered to ECTs was that it was positive and growth-focused. However, some ECTs did not share this perspective. Equally, some mentors acknowledged that they had incorrectly appointed mentors who were ineffective teachers themselves and/or bullied ECTs.

Mentors have a significant role in supporting the personal and professional development of ECTs (Petrovska et al., 2018; Shanks, 2017; Weimer, 2019). Research affirms that there needs to be contextual support for mentors (Beutel, et al., 2017; Sunde & Ulvik, 2014), which includes providing mentors with the appropriate preparation and training that not only focuses on the mentoring process but also how mentoring is

expected to be undertaken within the school community (Ewing, 2021; Hobson et al., 2009). The effective matching of mentors with mentees is also critical to the mentor-mentee relationship (Kardos & Johnson, 2010) and consideration must be given to how this is to be undertaken so that the needs of novice teachers can be met. The literature also confirms that when mentors have clarity about the expectations and skills required as part of the mentoring process, mentees are more motivated to succeed and can manage the students in their care with greater confidence (Gordon, 2020: Hudson, 2013). It also means they are more able to fulfil their administrative requirements and are more receptive to accepting advice on teaching and learning practices (Ewing, 2021). Having mentors who are willing and want to be mentors is critical when designing programs that will support the needs of ECTs (Gordon 2020; Shanks, 2017).

6.5.4.4 Resourcing

This study has highlighted the importance of having sufficient resourcing to support the ECT mentoring program in schools. Resourcing includes the financial, physical and human resources allocated to programs. Financial and human resources enabled teaching staff to be appropriately selected and trained as mentors and allowed the release time required to support ECTs. Having sufficient human resources meant not only having the teachers ready and willing to take on the mentor role, but also having physical resources assigned to the spaces available for private conversations.

Some mentors explained that *leaning in* on the respective education system's mentoring program was the only way to support the ECTs with a program. Leaning in referred to liaising with personnel administering the generic programs from their respective educational institutions and supporting the ECTs to participate in them. This was relevant within the government, independent and Catholic school sectors. Many ECTs who reported accessing this form of support (rather than having a formal mentor) were based in regional, rural and remote locations.

Not surprisingly, ECTs did not indicate funding as a concern because they were unclear about how funding was allocated in a school context. ECTs did, however, acknowledge that lack of time was a significant challenge to the success of mentoring programs. In addition, researchers in the field acknowledge that although many education systems encourage the implementation of mentoring programs in their respective schools, few schools possess the financial resources to meet the needs of ECTs (Bickmore & Bickmore 2010a, 2010b; Ewing 2021).

6.6 Framework and guiding principles for mentoring programs

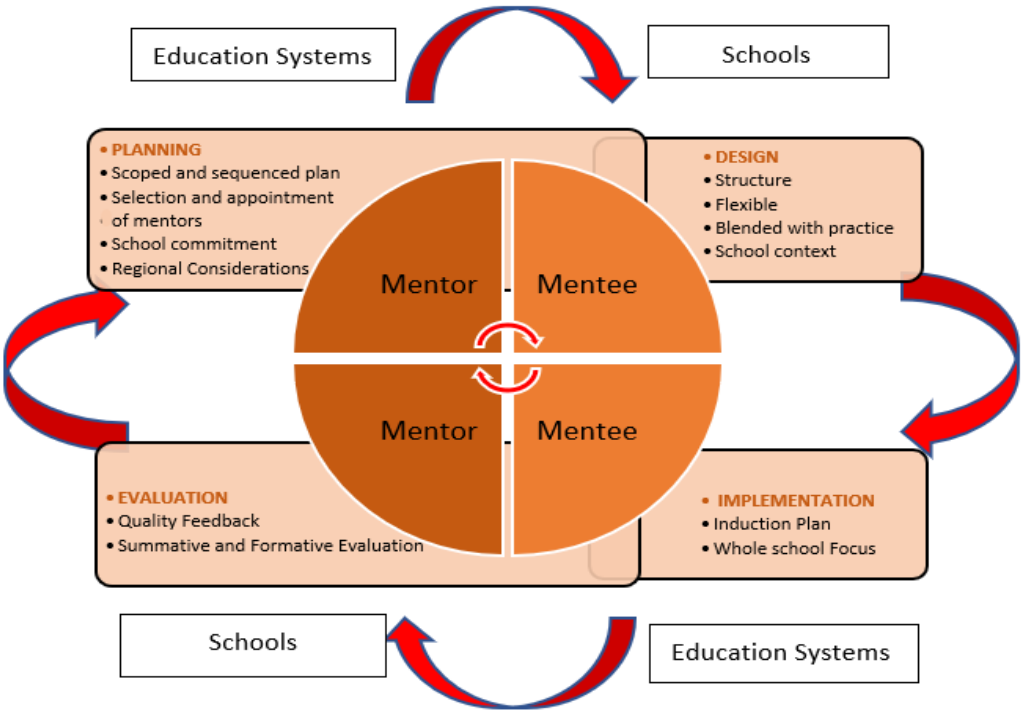
In the descriptions of mentoring programs given by participants in this study, there was no common approach to mentoring. The absence of a clear and consistent process was partly responsible for some of the issues found. Given the findings and the discussion, it is proposed that a framework and a set of guiding principles may assist in drawing together key concepts, suggesting a way forward.

6.6.1 Mentoring Framework: – A Framework for Establishing Mentoring Programs for Early Career Teachers in Systems and Schools

The proposed framework (Figure 6.1) embeds key guiding principles as found in the study. The framework is general enough to provide an intentional mentoring guide and flexible enough for schools and systems to determine what works in their context. Simple in design, the framework places the mentor and the mentee at the centre of the mentoring process. Schools and education sectors form the overarching boundaries within which mentoring occurs. The second aspect of the framework is the scoped and sequenced four-phase approach, with stated criteria that should be considered when designing mentoring programs to meet the needs of the ECTs within the relevant school context.

Figure 6.1

A Framework for Establishing Mentoring Programs for Early Career Teachers in Systems and Schools



Supporting the framework are key elements for consideration within each of the phases.

6.6.1.1 Understanding the mentoring framework

Figure 6.1 makes it clear that the mentor and mentee are central to the mentoring process. This study's findings highlight the importance of a positive relationship between the mentor and the mentee. Mentors must not only have knowledge, skills and understandings appropriate to the mentor's role in their school context, they must also be relational. The two central circular arrows (Figure 6.1) represent the mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationship between the mentor and mentee. Mentors have as much to learn from their mentees as mentees do from mentors.

The four guiding principles are a scoped and sequenced series of steps that affect all relevant stakeholders. These are planning, design, implementation and evaluation. Planning requires that attention be given to the context of the school and its commitment to the mentoring process. This phase requires a well-thought-out plan that includes selecting and training mentors, agreed roles, responsibilities and expectations of the principal, their school leadership team and beginning teachers and mentors. Design is the second element that must be a flexible, consistent structure that reflects the school context. The design element must consist of a process for induction and may be further complemented by a blend of formal and informal processes that may include, but are not limited to, decisions about scheduled meeting times, classroom observations and debriefing processes. The third phase involves the implementation process and addresses the question, How do we embed our mentoring plan and design into our school culture? The implementation process is not just a simple addition of key mentoring practices into the school program, but rather is intended to direct how the mentoring process will be embedded and valued as part of the school culture. It will need to address the question, How will the entire school commit to the mentoring process as a whole and to the personal and professional growth of the novice teachers in their context? The final phase is evaluation. This phase addresses decisions to be made as to how to gauge the program's success and requires the inclusion of all stakeholders, including students. It is recommended that the evaluation phase include a blend of formative and summative processes to capture all aspects of the program.

While this framework has emerged from the empirical study, it is worth noting that some concepts align with other research findings (Hobson & Malderez,

2013; Taylor et al., 2021). What is interesting is that there are ideas focused on teaching and learning, student behaviour management and professional behaviours (Taylor et al., 2021).

The framework is encompassed by the contexts of schools and education systems to reinforce the dual responsibility of schools and education systems working together to meet the needs of the beginning teachers in their care. Education systems have a responsibility to mandate mentoring in all education sectors. Together, education sectors and schools must work collaboratively to ensure that there is a process to guide the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of mentoring in the schools.

6.6.1.2 Guiding Principle 1: Preparation

Preparation of a mentoring program reflective of a statement of purpose and goals is critical to its success. In this phase, all the planning details that relate to what is required for a mentoring program are considered (Hobson, 2016). This includes a scoped and sequenced induction plan outlining system policies, resources and professional development opportunities available to ECTs over three years. In addition, the school commitment and time allocations for mentors and mentees are specified within this phase, with consideration given to the support requirements for regional, rural and remote mentoring programs.

Preparation is the first step in the creation of a mentoring program for ECTs. The considerations in the preparation phase include how mentors will be selected, appointed and trained for the mentor role (Beutel et al., 2017; Desimone et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2008). The mentor's instructional and curriculum capacity is critical, as are their relational communication capabilities. Their understanding of mental health first aid and awareness of external supports such as non-therapeutic counselling are also key considerations (Gu & Li, 2013; Mansfield, 2016). In addition, this phase invites the principal and the ECT to discuss their individual needs and ensure that these are included in the program.

6.6.1.3 Guiding Principle 2: Design

The design of a mentoring program should consider a structure that places the mentor and mentee at the forefront of the mentoring process, and the resultant design should be flexible and contextually relevant (Topliss, 2017). The design should

consider a series of modules and/or workshops that address the needs of the ECTs. The negotiation of content, including any contextually appropriate information, must be undertaken by the mentor in collaboration with the mentee. The structure should include regular fortnightly meetings between the mentee and the mentor and a continuous induction process that fosters opportunities for mentees to connect with other informal mentors.

A mentoring program offered in a given school may consist of a blend of a one-on-one school-based program and a group-based mentoring opportunity offered at a system level. The school-based program would incorporate the school's contextual focus and may include programs that assist ECTs in understanding the culture of the school and the culture of the surrounding community the school serves. The school-based program may include a fully-trained mentor who works collaboratively with the mentee to develop their classroom practice and build resiliency (Beutel et al., 2017). The system-based program may cover the governance aspects of the teachers' role and may add to the context-specific instruction by providing system-level guidance and an outline of expectations.

All mentoring programs must have a clear structure. Considerations for the design phase must offer a structure that includes induction, provides clear guidelines that may relate to classroom observations and associated debriefs, and specifies processes for meetings and the timeframe and locations. The structure may also include time for guidance on resources and curriculum planning, lesson preparation, for review and for opportunities to connect with other networks, either internal or external to the school community.

In the Australian context, AITSL specifies four areas that make a difference in induction programs (AITSL, 2016). These are:

- orientation
- professional identity
- professional practice
- wellbeing.

The induction plan needs to provide a scoped and sequenced outline of what topics will be covered with ECTs during the allocated timeframe. The topics for

induction may include reviewing policies and practices over critical periods, preferably close to a specific event to which they relate. For example, this may include how ECTs could engage with parents at parent-teacher evenings, such as strategies to facilitate positive communication with parents. Discussions may also include preparing, designing, and evaluating portfolios for teacher registration, and looking at curriculum guidelines from the respective national and state/territory education authority.

In the design phase, the considerations for mentoring programs must include clearly articulated expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of the mentor, the mentee and the school leader. The roles and responsibilities must reflect the school context and be based on the policies that relate to ECTs. This study's findings highlight the importance of ethical considerations that determine the norms for the participation of the mentor and mentee and the school leader and their leadership team as part of the mentoring process.

6.6.1.4 Guiding Principle 3: Implementation

The implementation phase outlines a step-by-step approach to what is expected to occur during the program's critical stages. The planned events are embedded into the school calendar and are written into the induction plan that mentors and mentees need to view regularly (Ingersoll & Strong, 2012). Every term, the implementation process should be reviewed to determine whether the plan needs to be amended to reflect any unexpected changes. The implementation process is the responsibility of the school leadership team (Milton et al., 2020; Sunde & Ulvik, 2014).

6.6.1.5 Guiding Principle 4: Evaluation

The evaluation phase provides opportunities for all stakeholders in the program to provide feedback about the program's success. Feedback may include summative data that includes survey results from students, colleagues and school leaders. It may also include formative data from anecdotal conversations and suggestions. Fostering a cycle of continuous improvement is also pivotal to the evaluation phase (Shanks, 2017). This process would enable the program's continual refinement to ensure that it reflects the needs of all stakeholders and contextual imperatives.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings of this study in relation to the research questions, key themes and literature in the field, and focused on the convergence of findings unique to the study. The literature review guided the interpretation of the data using the four key themes identified in the research, namely: mentoring experiences of ECTs, personal growth, professional growth and considerations for implementing mentoring programs in schools.

The first discussed the mentoring experiences of ECTs and was divided into five sections. It included the results about general ECT mentoring experiences and referred to the current mentoring programs (formal and informal) in schools and the selection and appointment of mentors. The second provided a general discussion on the level of support provided to ECTs. The third offered a discussion on the wellbeing of ECTs, while the fourth explored the identification and explanation of the valuable mentoring experiences of ECTs. The fifth discussed some of the challenging mentoring experiences of ECTs.

The second and third themes explored the personal and professional growth of both mentors and mentees because of their mentoring experiences.

The final theme presented the insights of ECTs and mentors into the guiding principles required for mentoring programs. A mentoring framework for implementation in systems and schools was also presented and discussed. The chapter provides the basis for the concluding final chapter of the study.

Chapter 7

Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the mentoring experiences of ECTs from the perspectives of ECTs and mentors in Australia. In addition to an in-depth exploration of the ECTs' perspectives on mentoring, the study also sought to examine in detail the mentors' perspectives of the mentoring experiences of ECTs. While the study's focus was to develop an understanding of the mentoring experiences of ECTs, the research also sought to determine if and how mentoring contributed to the personal and professional growth of ECTs.

In this chapter, the three research questions will be addressed based on the findings of the study.

1. What are the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia?
2. What are the perspectives of mentors about mentoring ECTs in Australia?
3. To what extent do the perspectives of ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs influence the personal and professional growth of ECTs?

Additionally, the knowledge added to the field by this study will be outlined and the significance of the study explained. Based on the study's findings, recommendations for mentoring ECTs will be made and the limitations of the study recognised. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an overall summary of the findings and the researcher's personal impact statement.

7.2 Design of the research

A qualitative approach underpinned the research design for the study. The study adopted a constructivist approach and took an interpretivist lens in addressing the questions. An instrumental case study approach was used to capture the mentoring experiences of ECTs and understand the nuances of those experiences, which were connected to their respective contexts. The data acquired from the questionnaire responses helped inform the questions that formed the basis of the interviews.

7.3 Responses to research questions

The overarching findings are that the mentoring experiences of ECTs were varied. The variation in mentoring programs experienced by ECTs was attributed to inconsistent conceptual understandings of mentoring, which influenced school program design and implementation. These findings demonstrated that mentoring is a dynamic process that requires a positive relationship between the mentor and the mentee and that to be successful, mentoring programs need to be supported by individual schools and education systems.

7.3.1 Research Question 1: What are the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia?

There was significant variation in the mentoring experiences of ECTs. The findings of the mentoring experiences of ECTs identified some factors that contributed to positive mentoring experiences, however other factors detracted from ECTs' mentoring experiences. These factors included the availability of quality feedback, structured mentoring programs in schools, positive perspective by school leaders, relationship with the mentor, mentor training, networks and a focus on wellbeing.

The mentoring experiences of ECTs were influenced by the availability of mentoring programs in their schools. ECTs overwhelmingly agreed that receiving quality feedback was a significant contributor to a positive mentoring experience. The quality, type and frequency of feedback varied in this study's findings. For some ECTs, feedback consisted of specific advice about managing student behaviour, while other ECTs indicated that feedback provided them with the knowledge and skills to develop their classroom practice. Equally, some ECTs reported receiving support to write reports and confidently manage conversations with parents and other stakeholders. The quality feedback provided to ECTs contributed to their positive mentoring experiences.

Another factor critical to the positive mentoring experiences of ECTs was the existence of mentoring programs. Some formal programs provided structures that facilitated an induction of some kind, the allocation of a mentor, regular meetings and classroom observations. Other formal programs included a short induction process and the allocation of a mentor. ECTs involved in these kinds of mentoring programs felt more comfortable exploring their craft, such as taking appropriate risks in applying

pedagogy and different classroom strategies because they were confident of the support of their mentors. The nature of the informal programs also varied. Some informal programs offered group catch-ups on an as-needs basis. Others were reliant on the ECT initiating contact with a colleague, not necessarily a mentor, for assistance. All these factors were critical to the mentoring experiences of ECTs and their capacity to transition from university to their respective school contexts.

Mentors' perspectives of mentoring and the sector to which the school belonged, (i.e., government, independent or Catholic) were critical to the mentoring experiences of ECTs. Where mentors supported the mentoring program in their schools, ECTs indicated that they felt more confident of meeting the challenges they encountered daily. Some ECTs greatly valued the opportunity to meet with their principal regularly for a check-in meeting. The check-in meeting assured ECTs that they were valued and supported as part of the process. Equally, mentors emphasised that the school leader role was pivotal to supporting the ECT mentoring program. Providing financial support that enabled time release for mentors to support ECTs as well as engaging in regular check-ins would support the commitment of school leaders to the mentoring experiences of ECTs.

Mentors' interest in mentoring also had an impact on ECTs' experiences. For some ECTs, support from mentors consisted of gauging how the ECTs were managing their role. For example, some ECTs indicated that knowing that their principal made the time to connect with them gave them more confidence to engage with their roles. Other beginning teachers mentioned that they would prefer school leaders to support them by developing a school culture where all staff supported ECTs. For example, in some schools, the team's commitment to developing professional dialogue and teaching practices enabled ECTs to feel supported in their work. Developing a mentoring culture within the school can enhance ECT perspectives about the quality of mentoring they receive.

Overwhelmingly, quality relationships between ECTs and mentors had a positive impact on ECTs' personal and professional development. ECTs conveyed the view that a critical element of the mentoring experiences was the need to have feedback about their teaching practice, and to do this effectively there needed to be quality relationships between the mentor and the mentee. For feedback to occur, most ECTs agreed there needed to be a program where mentors and mentees could regularly

meet to debrief trialled strategies and engage in classroom observations. Hence, the opportunity to have ongoing dialogue around a particular issue was noted. ECTs agreed that the mentor and mentee's capacity to connect and forge a positive working relationship underpinned the success of the mentoring experience. The importance of a positive relationship could not be underestimated. Some ECTs communicated that the support given by their respective mentors influenced their confidence, capacity to thrive and resilience to challenges to a high degree. All these factors were important in the perception of ECTs regarding the quality of the mentoring.

An analysis of the data from ECTs highlighted the importance of selecting, training and appointing appropriate mentors in mentoring programs to ensure the quality of the mentoring experience. There was broad agreement amongst ECTs that the mentor needed to want to be a mentor rather than being an unwilling participant in the process. Equally, the mentor needed to be clear about the concept of mentoring and to understand the mentor's role, expectations of mentoring and responsibilities as part of the process. There was also agreement that mentors also needed to be exemplary instructional and curriculum practitioners and have high-level relational skills.

ECT participants acknowledged positive relationships between the mentor and the mentee as the significant contributor to positive mentoring experiences. Some ECTs explained that working with mentors who demonstrated best practice and were generous in their approach provided them with the guidance they needed to be the best they could be. Other ECTs indicated that mentors who clearly understood the mentoring role were more targeted in their approach to supporting ECTs. Of great significance to the ECTs was accessing feedback from the mentor to master their craft of teaching. Similarly, the ECTs indicated that the qualities they valued were being able to connect with a mentor who would maintain confidentiality, allow them to vent without judgement and provide them with the social and emotional support required.

This study also found that mentoring programs that included the support of ECTs with networking opportunities contributed to positive experiences of mentoring. The ECT participants greatly valued experiences that enabled many and varied networking opportunities. For ECTs, the opportunity to engage with colleagues provided them with the relevant knowledge, skills and resources to support them in their roles. These networking opportunities also enabled ECTs to share their frustrations and concerns with non-school staff without fear of consequence.

Findings that supported the positive mentoring experiences of ECTs included wellbeing. All ECTs agreed that the process of transitioning from university to the classroom was stressful. However, mentors who provided ECTs with opportunities to take the time they needed to ensure they felt safe enabled some ECTs to better cope with their daily challenges. For example, some ECTs explained that they could take a "mental health day" when feeling especially anxious. Other ECTs indicated that their mentors made a point to check in with them to see if they were okay.

As can be discerned above, there were several ways in which different factors or aspects of mentoring led to a negative experience for ECTs. The first of these highlights the importance of the mentor role. The second refers to the physical, human and financial resources that influence the success of a mentoring program. The third examines the consequences of mentoring programs that are poorly designed and implemented, and the final aspect is the challenges that heavy workloads and isolation have on the wellbeing of ECTs.

Many ECTs acknowledged the challenging mentoring experiences they faced. ECTs overwhelmingly agreed that beyond the program's design, frequency of meetings or nature of mentoring activities, it was the relationship with the mentor that most significantly influenced ECTs' experiences. Some ECTs indicated a preference for mentors who were experienced classroom teachers with time available rather than members of the school leadership team. Often, ECTs felt compromised and uncomfortable sharing certain aspects of their practice for fear of adverse consequences. For example, some ECTs reported feeling concerned about allowing themselves to be vulnerable, perceiving that it may have consequences on the mentor's perspective of their capacity to do their job effectively, and therefore impact their contract renewal and tenure. A further issue was that even when mentors were approachable, their limited time and the constant interruptions they faced impacted their capacity to support the ECTs in their care.

Another significant factor negatively impacting the mentoring experiences of ECTs was insufficient access to physical, human and financial resources. Physical resources were a particular challenge in regional, rural and remote locations. For some ECTs, small schools did not have the means or the resources to support the development and growth of ECTs. For some ECTs, access to electronic devices and internet connectivity proved to be a challenge. Without adequate resourcing, mentors

and mentees could not engage in classroom observations and meet to discuss the day-to-day experiences of ECTs. Access to human resources such as quality mentors and face-to-face networks were a challenge with some ECTs in regional, rural and remote locations, who noted that travelling to meetings often involved long road trips or flights. Furthermore, ECTs revealed that their challenging mentoring experiences often included the cancelling of scheduled mentor-mentee meetings. Not having a place to meet, an opportunity to meet and a quality mentor to support the mentoring process were aspects that significantly impacted the mentoring experiences of ECTs.

Financial resources were another significant factor that challenged the mentoring experiences of ECTs. Time constraints due to lack of funding were noted to preclude ECTs from exploring their craft and accessing someone who could assist them in developing their personal qualities. Additionally, for some ECTs, time challenges included allocating time to engage in classroom observations and the opportunity to connect with mentors for regular debriefs. Some ECTs indicated that the busyness of the school timetable often precluded them from meeting with their mentors. Having to prepare relief lessons for their classes to observe other teachers in action also added to the workload of ECTs. For some ECTs, it was simply easier not to engage in observing others teach because the idea of preparing work for their class only added to their stress. Time constraints were formidable challenges in the mentoring process. Teacher workload impacted the time and energy of ECTs. For example, in education sectors where ECTs were given full teaching loads, mitigating their newfound experience and the pressures associated with this made engaging in the mentoring programs challenging. Likewise, the inability to meet mentors or receive necessary support caused great frustration for some ECTs who became disheartened with the process.

The study findings illustrated the important role of school principals in supporting the mentoring programs in schools. In schools where the mentoring program was not supported funds were directed to other projects, resulting in mentors not being able to support ECTs and ECTs feeling isolated and let down. Various sectors did not share standard mentoring or induction practices. Some sectors had better-established and more system-wide support than others. For example, in Western Australia, the Department of Education's Graduate Teacher Induction Program (GTIP) (Department of Education, 2016) provides all graduate teachers with a program to transition from training to the classroom. The 2-year mandatory program consisting of

8 days offers graduates tailored professional learning and enables them to select trained coaches to support their personal and professional growth.

Poorly designed and implemented mentoring programs contributed to the challenging mentoring experiences of ECTs. The mentoring programs of some ECTs were limited in scope, frequency of meetings and consistency. As a result, mentoring activities were often relegated to the side while other school matters took precedence. Some ECTs explained, for example, that the induction process was limited and drew heavily on complex written documentation that ECTs were required to read and put into practice without explanation or guidance. Similarly, school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused some mentoring programs to be postponed so that ECTs could prepare for online learning.

Interestingly, although some ECTs were concerned about their workload and the impact it had on their wellbeing, they were often even more concerned about the increased workload for their mentors. ECTs recognised that their mentors taught a full load (those who were experienced teachers) and had to make time for observing ECTs, engaging in debriefs about lessons and setting aside time to support them. Some ECTs also recognised that the added stress of being overloaded was evident in the demeanour of some mentors and was reflected in their way of being, doing and relating to them as mentees. It affected the ability of mentors to recognise the mentees' contribution to the mentoring process. The added workload for mentors often prevented ECTs from seeking further assistance, at significant cost to themselves.

7.3.2 Research Question 2: What are the perspectives of mentors about mentoring ECTs in Australia?

The focus of this study was the mentoring experiences of ECTs, but further insight was sought from the perspective of mentors. The mentors reported their perspectives on what they believed were the mentoring experiences of ECTs. For mentors, the positive mentoring experiences of ECTs included quality relationships with their mentors, opportunities to engage in reflective feedback and connection with other networks within their respective communities.

Most mentors agreed that providing timely and quality feedback was critical to the mentoring process. For example, some mentors reported that the mentoring activities ECTs were exposed to enabled them to access regular debriefing

opportunities, curriculum resources and performance development possibilities. Other mentors indicated that being part of a school-based induction process contributed to a positive mentoring experience for ECTs. Another finding was that mentors considered their role of assisting ECTs to master their craft and be the best teachers they could be contributed to the profession's future.

Another factor that mentors viewed as contributing to the positive mentoring experiences of ECTs was the building of a quality relationship between the mentor and the mentee. Most mentors agreed that ECTs were able to meet their daily challenges when the program enabled mentors to meet regularly with their mentees to debrief trialled strategies, engage in classroom observations and have time to converse about what the mentees needed. Mentors also agreed that without a positive working relationship, there would not be a successful mentoring experience. For example, some mentors explained that it was essential for them to have adaptive qualities to support the ECTs in trialling strategies in their classrooms. Equally, other mentors expressed that it was also important to be compassionate if quality relationships were to be sustained as part of the mentoring process. All these factors were deemed by mentors to contribute to the mentoring experiences of ECTs.

Like ECTs, most mentors strenuously advocated the importance of selecting, training and appointing the appropriate mentors as critical to the success of the mentoring experiences of ECTs. There was broad agreement that the mentor needed to want to be a mentor and to actively commit to the mentoring program for the process to be successful. In circumstances where appropriate mentors were assigned to mentees, the mentors noted that ECTs felt more comfortable and more open to sharing ideas and challenges.

The provision of clear guidelines and well-devised programs were factors that mentors believed contributed to the positive mentoring experience of ECTs. In addition, mentors agreed that having a clear understanding of the concept of mentoring and clarity about the role and expectation of mentors was pivotal to their planning for ECT mentoring opportunities.

Most mentors recognised that it was important for ECTs to have opportunities to participate in networks as part of the mentoring process. Mentors believed that networks provided benefits to ECTs, such as opportunities for developing collegial

connections, sharing resources and having insights into their respective school experiences. Equally, some mentors indicated that the social capital gained from the interactions with other ECTs enabled their mentees to transfer newfound knowledge to their teaching practice and be more proactively and positively present in the school. Finally, other mentors expressed the view that the opportunity to form lifelong friendships with other ECTs would hold them in good stead for the future.

For the most part, mentor participants viewed their mentoring of ECTs as a privilege. The opportunity to share their insights and career experiences with ECTs enabled them to contribute to their learning and, by extension, to support students' holistic development within their respective schools.

The findings emphasised time constraints as a significant challenge to the success of mentoring programs. For mentors, time challenges included lack of time to engage in mentor training and program design, lack of consideration of mentor workloads in the design of the program, financial shortfalls and lack of commitment on the part of mentors. Time challenges also included not being released from their classes to engage in classroom observations of the ECT, fulfil scheduled lesson debriefs with ECTs and be available to support them.

Some mentors suggested that a training program should be considered part of the mentoring process to develop their skillsets and learn how best to support ECTs in their care. The findings support the view that a guided framework with a reflective process embedded as part of the program would support ECTs in their teaching journey by guiding mentors to plan and engage in conversations with their beginning teachers more effectively. For some mentors, the absence of quality support for them to guide ECTs added to their stress and impacted their work, not to mention influencing the mentoring experiences of ECTs.

Lack of mentor training and having an insufficient understanding of the governance aspects of teacher registration impacted the mentoring experiences of ECTs. In addition to their workload challenges, some mentors indicated that they did not have the time to explore the governance aspects of teacher registration. Aware of the challenge this caused for ECTs, mentors often sought assistance from their respective sectors to answer ECTs' registration questions.

The wellbeing of mentees was a concern for some mentors who indicated that they did not have a clear understanding of mental health first aid and/or skills in non-therapeutic counselling. Some mentors in regional and rural locations stated they did not have the skillset to support the mental health of their ECTs. With the resource challenges of their locations, providing ECTs with support was limited.

Mentors also reflected on challenges that may have influenced the mentoring experiences of ECTs. There was agreement that mentors also needed to be exemplary instructional and curriculum practitioners and have high-level relational skills. However, two mentors indicated that fellowmentors allocated in their respective schools did not support their assigned ECTs. In one case, the mentor reported a fellow mentor bullying an ECT, and in the other, the mentor considered a fellow mentor's instructional capacity to be limited. Interestingly, even though some ECTs indicated a preference for experienced classroom teachers, the mentor findings revealed that the school leadership team members who were not themselves mentors often oversaw the mentoring process. In this context, mentors were aware of their overwhelming time commitments and the challenges this unavailability posed for their mentees, with meetings being regularly interrupted, postponed and/or simply cancelled. Also interesting was that mentors were often unaware of their positional power and did not realise this may have had consequences for their relationship with their mentee.

Insufficient physical, human and financial resources negatively impacted the mentoring experiences of ECTs. In schools with limited staff and resources, some mentors were appointed because there was no other option available in their location. For example, some mentors indicated that staff in their school were mainly ECTs and that there was little access to other mentors in the area. This significantly impacted the mentoring experiences of ECTs. Additionally, it was found that it was challenging to release beginning teachers from their classrooms to chat with their mentors or attend networking sessions. In this context, it was challenging to provide equal opportunities to all ECTs to attend networking days. Finally, limited human, physical and financial resources influenced the mentoring experiences of novice teachers. Most mentors indicated that effective programs could not be implemented without adequate resourcing, and others communicated that mentoring programs needed to be financially supported if the mentoring programs were to meet the needs of ECTs.

Findings from the study showed that funding for time release, mentor training and general support of the ECT was left to the school. For schools in regional, rural and remote locations, some ECTs and mentors indicated that financial and physical resources were crucial challenges that significantly impacted the mentoring experiences of ECTs. Given that mentoring programs varied across educational sectors and states in Australia, this resulted in some mentoring programs not prioritised in schools. As a result, funds were distributed to other areas, leaving some ECTs with little support.

The attitudes and characteristics of some ECTs were identified as challenging to the mentoring process by some mentors. Some mentors expressed concern about the inflexible, rigid attitudes displayed by some ECTs who insisted that their classroom practice and approaches were satisfactory when the mentors noted otherwise. Other mentors felt that the ECTs' capacity for resilience was relatively low, which impacted their motivation to show up for work as well as their teaching effectiveness. The challenges associated with the attitudes and attributes of some ECTs caused incredible frustration for some mentors. The perceived absence of a growth mindset in ECTs contributed to the breakdown of some mentor-mentee relationships. In this context, mentors felt they were not heard and were perceived negatively by the ECTs in their care. Research elsewhere confirms the findings of this study. Daly et al. (2017) examined the perspectives of faculty members about mentoring and found that mentee resistance was a challenge in some contexts, which had implications for the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

7.3.2.1 Regional considerations

Some ECT and mentor participants believed that working in regional, rural, or remote locations should qualify them for extra support beyond what could be provided by the school when it came to establishing and running mentoring programs. In this study, some of the mentors noted that the challenges of mentoring in regional and/or rural locations included supporting ECTs in their professional development, and on a personal and practical level. Mentors noted that an additional aspect of the role was to assist ECTs to sort out accommodation, provide them with opportunities to connect with their families and engage with community networks. Contextual considerations such as remoteness of the teaching location were critical to understanding the mentoring experiences of ECTs.

7.3.3 Research Question 3: To what extent do the perspectives of ECTs and mentors about the mentoring experiences of ECTs influence the personal and professional growth of ECTs?

The study's findings make evident the personal and professional growth achieved by ECTs in mentoring programs. Development in self-efficacy and confidence were identified as key contributing factors to personal growth. Equally, professional efficacy and participating in networks were examples of professional growth acquired as a result of ECT mentoring programs. Mentor and ECT questionnaire respondents and interview participants overwhelmingly agreed that good relationships between mentors and mentees contributed to the personal and professional growth of ECTs.

7.3.3.1 Personal growth

The capacity to become aware of and use personal resources to cope with challenging situations contributed to the success of mentoring experiences for ECTs. This study revealed the developing dimensions of ECT resilience that included emotional, motivational, profession-related and social aspects of self that contributed to the personal growth of ECTs. When beginning teachers can develop their resources, purpose, courage and efficacy, they can develop confidence and enjoy the by-product of better mental health.

ECT questionnaire respondents and interview participants provided insight into their perspectives on their personal growth as a result of their mentoring programs. When mentoring programs worked well, they facilitated the personal growth of ECTs. Development self-efficacy and confidence were two critical elements aligned with the personal growth of some beginning teachers. In addition, some ECTs felt that the mentoring process gave them a voice in the professional conversation with their mentor, which helped develop their professional interpersonal skills. For example, some ECTs were encouraged to provide input into collaborative projects that enabled them to feel like active contributors to the school. Others were able to share their thoughts about the design of specific programs for their respective year groups. All these factors contributed to the personal growth experienced by ECTs in the course of being mentored.

The ECT findings revealed that being encouraged and challenged in positive ways to be the best they could be assisted ECTs in their personal growth. This

terminology was used frequently by the participants and respondents during the study. Being able to celebrate strengths and recognise areas for improvement provided some ECTs with the courage to use their resources to trial strategies in their classrooms. ECTs with supportive mentors communicated that they could focus on their reflective practice and draw on their motivation and efficacy to excel in their role. Additionally, the newfound confidence of ECTs also enabled them to consider exploring their role to develop their respective skillsets further.

The mentoring experiences of ECTs also contributed to their self-belief. ECTs and mentors identified this aspect of personal growth as requiring great support. For many ECTs, even though their sense of vocation formed the driving force behind their entry into teaching their experience of feeling alone at times challenged their decision to stay. For some ECTs, feeling overwhelmed was a regular occurrence that affected their capacity to teach. However, when assigned a positive and supportive mentor, ECTs indicated they developed the courage to talk about their challenges and collaboratively explore solutions, which boosted their self-belief with a ripple effect on their wellbeing.

The mentor data supported the finding that the mentoring experiences of ECTs fostered their personal growth. The mentors observed that the mentoring process enabled mentees to develop a strong sense of confidence and self-efficacy in their being, doing and relating. Some mentors perceived that their ECTs developed a strong awareness of their wellbeing as part of their mentoring experience because they were frequently asked how they were coping. Some mentors indicated that talking with ECTs about their wellbeing and conversing with them about their options supported their personal growth. Other mentors explained that being part of a mentoring experience that fostered trust and mutual accountability encouraged ECTs to ask for support.

In addition to the personal growth experienced by ECTs during their mentoring process, some mentors believed that they too experienced personal growth. Mentors considered a renewed and refocused direction for teaching and learning a form of personal growth. The renewed intrinsic desire to aspire to be better educators resulted from catching the enthusiasm and new ideas of ECTs. Mentors became more aware of their tone and structured their feedback to celebrate the strengths of ECTs as well as

identify areas for improvement. A reframed approach to working with ECTs also enabled mentors to develop their own interpersonal and relational capacities, focusing on empathy and compassion.

7.3.3.2 Professional growth

As indicated in this study, the professional growth of ECTs was found to be a critical element of their mentoring experience. Professional growth is achieved when theory is blended with practice and is often focused on learning goals and characterised by continuous improvement. This study's findings reveal that the professional growth of ECTs is reflected in teaching and learning and developing relationships and networks.

ECT questionnaire and interview participants indicated that teaching and learning practices were identified in the data as key focus areas for the professional growth of ECTs. Working with a mentor to learn the craft of teaching and becoming familiar with the contextual aspects of the school enabled ECTs to develop more confidence in making decisions about teaching and learning in the classroom. ECTs took risks and were able to explore different approaches to address differentiation, student engagement and pedagogy. The ECT findings revealed that having a mentor enabled some ECTs to increase their practical knowledge and address behaviour management issues.

A practical and relational mentoring experience fostered solid relationships between the mentor and the mentee. This study's findings revealed that strong relationships provided the basis for open, trusting and respectful communication between the mentor and the mentee. Effective communication enabled ECTs to be vulnerable in sharing their genuine concerns about their professional challenges and seeking support to refine their practice. Modelling effective communication was also pivotal for ECTs to effectively communicate and apply these skills to other situations.

Professional growth was also evident in the formation of ECT networks. Being connected to collegial networks enabled ECTs to share their journey outside their immediate school environment and learn from others. Some ECTs found the experience of engaging in different networks critical to their professional growth. ECTs were able to build their knowledge and skillset to teach in specific areas and

were also able to access online support. ECTs believed that the value of networks could not be underestimated. Not only did the networks provide a platform to share resources and ideas, but they also gave them a safe space to share their experiences.

Like ECTs, mentors overwhelmingly confirmed that they believed mentoring programs supported the professional growth of the ECTs, specifically with their classroom practice. Mentors acknowledged that ECTs were more able to make suggestions about problem-solving, meet daily challenges and feel comfortable sharing their learnings. Some mentors explained that the professional growth of ECTs was evident in the curriculum, assessment and reporting capacity of ECTs and their classroom management. Other mentors attributed the professional growth of ECTs to their capacity to develop time management approaches that assisted them to be better prepared for teaching and learning in their respective classrooms.

This study found that the mentoring experiences of ECTs enabled them to develop relationships with many stakeholders. For example, some mentors indicated that their ECTs found they could communicate with parents more effectively after discussing with them the strategies that would best support teacher parent integration in the classroom. The result of encouraging ECTs to connect with parents enabled them to invite the parents to engage with their class for specific programs and events. Equally, other mentors allowed some ECTs to lead specific projects because the mentoring they had undergone developed the interpersonal skills and leadership capabilities required to undertake the tasks.

Another factor in their mentoring experience that supported the professional growth of ECTs was to engage in career progression planning. Several mentors indicated that ECTs on short-term contracts sought advice and support to prepare for their next teaching position. Other mentors mentioned that some ECTs were aspirational and looked for ways to develop their knowledge, skills and understandings to take on more responsibility. Establishing a career plan with specific professional goals was another dimension of the professional growth evident in the mentor findings. Some mentors communicated that the mentoring experiences of some ECTs enabled them to focus on the key areas that would make them more competitive for future promotions.

The study findings revealed that learning about teacher registration expectations was considered an aspect of professional growth. Some mentors indicated that they did not have the knowledge, skills, or understandings to prepare and or support ECTs with their registration requirements. Some mentors found the process to be an additional challenge to what already was an intense role. Others were unclear about the teacher registration expectations and resorted to contacting their education sector representative for support.

7.4 Considerations for future mentoring programs

Like other research, this study's findings indicate that the design of mentoring programs is fundamentally influenced by people's understanding of mentoring as a concept, its implementation in respective schools and sectors, and the physical, human and financial resources required for it to be successful. Therefore, attention must be directed to supporting effective mentoring processes that comprise a formal program, quality mentor-mentee interactions and a coordinated approach to meeting ECTs' needs with professional learning.

The findings from this study also support the literature in the field. Program design and value, mentor selection and training and teacher registration are essential considerations for designing mentoring programs in the future – all noted by other researchers. Most ECTs and mentors indicated that a structured program that included induction was considered necessary to design mentoring programs, as were allocated time, clear expectations and contextual processes. The study's findings overwhelmingly revealed agreement between ECTs and mentors that the mentor-mentee relationship was pivotal to the mentoring process. The views of both cohorts were that mentors needed to be appropriately selected and trained for the role and be given the appropriate time to work with ECTs. Equally, ECTs needed to be provided with a clear outline and expectations of the program so they could develop an understanding of the respective stakeholders' roles.

A study finding that was not evident in the Australian literature is that ECT attitudes and behaviours needed to reflect respectful, open and positive mindsets as learners in an ongoing process of improvement.

7.5 Contribution of the study

This study makes several contributions to the field of ECT mentoring.

1. A first contribution to the study of the mentoring experiences of ECTs is bringing together the views of ECTs and mentors on the same issues. While ECTs and mentors share many similarities about the importance of structured mentoring programs, appropriately selected mentors and effective mentor and mentee relationships, they also have many different perspectives about mentoring and its implementation in the school context. For example, as shown in the chapter, Discussion of Results, mentors indicated that school-based induction, regular debriefing opportunities and mentors were provided to the ECTs at their school. However, the discrepancy in the number of ECTs who received these opportunities was noted in Chapter 4.

2. The second contribution to the field of study is equal attention given to the voices of ECTs and mentors. The questionnaire and interviews for both ECTs and mentors provided participants with the same opportunities for response. Although the ECTs and mentors were not paired (as outlined in Chapter 3), studies giving voice to both ECTs and mentors on the same issues are rare in the field.

3. The third contribution to the field of study is a mentoring framework (Figure 6.1) with guiding principles that are designed to support the role of the mentor and the mentee. The scoped and sequenced model of planning, design, implementation and evaluation form the frame that guides the design of a mentoring program in the school context.

   Included in the mentoring framework is a proposal for the training requirements for mentors. The training requirements are divided into two parts. The first stipulates the criteria for training and the second outlines training framework considerations for mentors. The findings in this study revealed the importance of mentor training consisting of: an understanding of mentoring as a concept and its role in education; clarity regarding the duties, roles and responsibilities of the mentor; instruction in mental health first aid and non-therapeutic counselling; tutelage in courageous conversations and guidance on best practice in classroom observations and professional learning.

This study also highlighted the characteristics and skillsets of mentors as being integral to the mentoring process. Mentors need to be more than just lead practitioners in the field of education – that is, in teaching and learning. They also need to be relational and possess knowledge of multiple areas, including the leadership of self and others. Additionally, the importance of wellbeing and the way in which mentors engaged in conversations with ECTs about wellbeing were revealed in the study. For some mentors, especially those who identified working in regional, rural and remote locations, the mental health of their ECTs was a priority, but often they did not have the skills and/or resources to support them.

With the importance of training mentors critical to the mentoring process, it is suggested that a framework be developed for training mentors. Although beyond the scope of this study, the critical elements for consideration include non-negotiable criteria for the selection of mentors; a mentor implementation strategy that invites mentees to select their mentors; the design of a mentor induction process and ongoing, regular mentor professional learning.

4. The fourth contribution of the study is a proposed requirement for an explicit and mandated role for school leaders with respect to mentoring programs. The findings revealed that it is the responsibility of school leaders to commit to a quality ECT mentoring program and for creating a school culture that promotes professional learning and the support of ECTs by all staff. Additionally, school leaders who are not mentors of ECTs should also check in on their progress. ECT confidence was enhanced when school leaders made the time to visit ECTs. Equally, the study's findings identified that principals often prioritised other funding programs in their respective schools to the detriment of funding for mentoring. As a result, mentoring programs were not supported in some schools, resulting in ECTs who felt fearful and isolated within their respective contexts.

5. The fifth contribution of the study to the body of evidence about the mentoring experiences of ECTs is proposing a standard teacher registration process. There is no generic process for teacher registration in Australia, and states and territories are guided by their own processes. The findings in this study emphasised the stress that ECTs experienced in fulfilling the relevant requirements of the registration process in their jurisdiction. Given that

different Australian jurisdictions have different registration processes, insufficiently trained mentors felt ill-equipped to support ECTs to fulfil their state's registration requirements. This area is also beyond the scope of this study. However, it must be placed on the education agenda if there is to be parity in approach amongst the Australian states.

6. The sixth contribution of the study relates to the importance of ethics in the mentoring relationship. Ethical considerations such as values and principles were often assumed as part of the mentoring process. There was no discussion or training aligned with a code of conduct for mentors and/or mentees, nor was there any reference to signing a mentoring contract. The study results reflected a top-down approach used by school leaders, which stipulated the program's requirements within their respective schools without a process for recourse for either the mentor and/or the mentee should the relationship not work. For example, some ECTs described their mentor as having inadequate communication skills and limited interest in the program. However, ECTs were often too frightened to approach leadership team members to talk about their negative experiences. Aware of the power differential between them and their mentors, and all too cognisant of the fact that mentors signed off on their contracts and registration elements, ECTs withheld from sharing their negative experiences. The consequence of this was that ECTs felt isolated and were not able to access the support they required. All these factors contribute to the body of knowledge about the mentoring experiences of ECTs. Exploring a code of conduct as part of the training process for mentors and embedding it as key criteria for the induction process of ECTs is pivotal.

7. The seventh contribution to the study of mentoring is to explore the mental attitudes and perspectives of ECTs about being open to personal and professional growth. This study found that some ECTs did not understand the mentoring process and its purpose to support their growth and development. The consequence of this was that some ECTs did not welcome the guidance provided by some mentors and responded in ways that exemplified a fixed mindset.

8. The final contribution to the study of mentoring in education is to clarify the nomenclature aligned with mentoring. Firstly, having a clear understanding of what mentoring means in the context of education is critical. While the research

findings confirm the limited understanding of mentoring and its requirements, ECT mentoring in schools demonstrated a variety of approaches that were sometimes ad hoc. This study found that the existing mentoring approaches used in schools were varied and ad hoc because the programs were often designed around a perception of mentoring that was not suited to education. Secondly, clarifying the differences in terminology and practice between coaching and mentoring, induction and orientation are also pivotal to clarifying mentoring. This study's findings revealed that the unclear terminology also impacted the design of mentoring programs because it was not understood whether mentoring was part of an induction program or if induction was part of a mentoring program. Collectively, these findings captured the challenges experienced by schools that created mentoring programs in the absence of formal guidance on how to meet the needs of their ECTs. While this is beyond the scope of this study, it is nevertheless a critical component for consideration in mentoring.

7.6 Significance of the study and recommendations

Despite the public and private investment in research about mentoring programs for teachers, particularly ECTs, the practice of mentoring remains an enigma. The literature confirms that the existence of many and varied mentoring programs and practices means that the entire area of mentoring ECTs in education contexts is confusing, inconsistent and ad hoc. For some ECTs, this has resulted in negative mentoring experiences and for other ECTs, mentoring has been and continues to be a positive source of significant growth.

The study is significant for two main reasons. Firstly, the findings confirm the understandings presented in the literature. There continues to be a need to define mentoring and its role in education, an obligation to distinguish between mentoring, induction and orientation and a prerequisite to acknowledge the differences between coaching and mentoring explicitly. These findings will contribute to the broader national and international discussions about mentoring and inform the development of mentoring programs in the education sector. Secondly, the findings clearly show what processes could be embedded in mentoring programs offered in schools and systems to provide further support to ECTs. These include:

1. mandating the implementation of a flexible, mentoring framework
2. establishing criteria for the selection of mentors
3. designing and implementing mentor training programs that include mental health first aid and non-therapeutic counselling
4. establishing guidelines to support a code of conduct
5. establishing a consistent teacher registration process across Australia
6. establishing guidelines to support the requirements of teacher registration.

This study also has implications for various stakeholder groups for which the researcher proposes the recommendations set out in the next section.

7.7 Recommendations for the profession

As a result of the research findings, eight recommendations are presented for consideration, which may further support the concept of mentoring as a strategy for ECTs.

7.7.1 Recommendation 1: The establishment of a national education mentoring plenary council

This study's findings reveal a gap in national conversations between sectors and registration bodies about mentoring generally and about the mentoring of ECTs. The sector would benefit from an agreed definition of mentoring for Australian schools and for clarity that will address the confusion between mentoring and induction, orientation and coaching. The national education mentoring plenary council would oversee the process for mandating the implementation of mentoring programs in all Australian schools.

7.7.2 Recommendation 2: Mentors and mentees must be at the centre of mentoring programs

This study has significant implications for the design of mentoring programs for ECTs. Consideration must be given to structured programs that include induction and have mentors and mentees at the centre of their design. The literature confirms the importance of the mentor-mentee relationship. The mentor must be appropriately selected and trained for the role and be allocated sufficient time to work with their mentee. ECTs must also have clear understandings and expectations about their role and the roles of others who are a part of the mentoring program.

7.7.3 Recommendation 3: School leaders must have a role in and support the ECT mentoring programs in their schools

Mentoring programs in schools are heavily influenced by the school principal and leadership teams. School leaders directly impact program design, implementation and ongoing support, including mentor selection and training, time allocation and resourcing. The recommendation for school leaders to have a role in the program may include but not be limited to connecting with ECTs regularly and sharing in celebrations and opportunities for development.

School leaders have a professional responsibility to look after the growth and development of their staff. Providing programs that assist ECTs in navigating the challenges experienced in their early years of a teaching career and developing their resilience are critical components of supporting ECT retention within the profession. Mentoring is far more than a strategy of ticking the boxes to indicate something has been attempted. Instead, mentoring requires careful planning that accounts for the local context, guided implementation and ongoing evaluation. Creating a workplace culture that supports the growth of staff is pivotal to a successful school.

7.7.4 Recommendation 4: Mentors must be familiar with the teacher registration requirements for ECTs transitioning from provisional to full registration

Mentors are required to be trained in the teacher registration process. This includes being aware of the relevant teacher registration requirements by connecting with the personnel from the registration bodies. In addition, mentors are responsible for supporting ECTs with creating portfolios that address AITSL standards and provide ongoing support for the personal and professional development of the ECT.

7.7.5 Recommendation 5: All mentoring programs should be governed by an ethical code of conduct

The education sector and school leaders are responsible for providing safe workplaces for their staff. Consideration may be given to formally acknowledging and embedding a code of conduct for mentors and mentees into mentoring programs. A code of conduct will ensure that the norms, practices and procedures associated with the mentoring relationship are clearly articulated so that mentors and mentees fulfil the respective expectations of their role in the mentoring process.

7.7.6 Recommendation 6: That federal and state education ministers mandate mentoring programs to support the growth and retention of ECTs in their respective school systems

The research findings in this study have relevance for federal and state government education ministers. Significant government investment is required to ensure that an ECT mentoring process is implemented in all schools in Australia. In doing so, the mentoring programs and processes need to be mandated, not just being a highly recommended option.

7.7.7 Recommendation 7: That AITSL provide leadership in the sector with respect to the mentoring experiences of ECTs and provide explanations and examples showing how schools can use the mentoring framework model developed as a result of this research

These study findings are also significant for AITSL due to their responsibility for supporting the professional education community. AITSL should provide education sectors and their schools with appropriate resources to support the quality planning, design, implementation and evaluation of mentoring programs for novice teachers in schools. Consideration may be given to mentoring as a compulsory strategy to support teacher induction processes and supportive framework models and resources should be created to reflect this.

7.7.8 Recommendation 8: That teacher education providers and professional bodies be trained in the mentoring process

All stakeholders in education must be made aware of the mentoring programs available for ECTs. Informing and providing professional development for teacher education providers and professional bodies to embed mentoring processes and practices into their programs will ensure that future ECTs will be clear about mentoring as a concept and have access to mentoring programs to support their needs as they transition from university to school.

7.8 Further research

This research study provides a basis for further research. The research itself could be replicated in other countries to provide further insights linked explicitly to other countries. The research findings have evidenced the lack of clarity surrounding the definition of mentoring, especially in the education sector, and have shown the

impact of this lack of clarity on programs (or the absence of programs) to support ECTs. Researchers in the field may also wish to explore practices and processes of induction and orientation as allied concepts. The literature uses the terms induction, orientation and mentoring interchangeably, which subsequently affects the mentoring programs designed and implemented in schools and education sectors.

Consideration for future research may include a modification of the design of this research to explore paired ECTs and their mentors on their mentoring experiences and how these may contribute to their personal and professional growth. In addition, researchers in the field may wish to compare the paired ECT and mentor findings to non-paired ECTs and mentors to assess any gaps in the data.

Further research is required to evaluate the design of mentor training programs within the Australian context. The study's findings revealed limited Australian examples of mentor training programs for schools and education sectors to consider. Researchers in the field may wish to explore exemplar models that may be used at an education sector and school level, respectively.

This research study also provides a basis for further research on the evaluation of mentoring programs in schools. An evaluation process must consider what makes a mentoring program for ECTs successful and establish critical criteria for consideration. Researchers in the field may also wish to consider the impact of the mentoring programs for ECTs in schools by including student, mentor and ECT voices and feedback as critical criteria. In addition, providing snapshots of best-practice experiences would benefit future research. Equally, researchers may wish to explore further if the criteria used in one location and one country could be transferred to another.

7.9 Benefits of the research

The benefits of the research provide insight into the considerations that may be used to support the perennial challenge of teacher retention. Similarly, a focus on the wellbeing of ECTs and the training provided to mentors to assist them with the knowledge, skills and understandings to support ECTs is a benefit to the research. Another benefit of the research is to create one process that unites states and territories in the registration process of ECTs.

The findings of this study support the formation of ECTs in their early years across government and non-government schools in Australia. Providing quality

mentoring programs for the personal and professional growth of ECTs fosters a culture of stewardship underpinned by equity, accountability and sustainability. The research may also help schools develop a culture where everyone is responsible for the support given to ECTs. Fostering a culture of growth that reflects peer support and guidance would support the work of mentors and assist ECTs to feel welcomed and supported in their schools.

Given that early-career support and professional satisfaction with working conditions are known causes of ECT attrition, implementing these recommendations – which aim to support the transition of teachers from university to their respective school contexts – would likely make a significant, positive difference in teacher retention.

This research may support education systems and sectors to plan, design, implement and evaluate effective mentoring programs in the future – a significant benefit. This study's findings highlighted the importance of understanding wellbeing in the workplace and the training required to enable mentors to support ECTs in their personal development. Learning about the successes and challenges of past mentoring approaches demonstrates the continuing need for growth in this area, which requires leadership at the federal level of government.

As previously indicated, given that different Australian jurisdictions have different registration processes, the federal and state governments may wish through AITSL to consider implementing one national teacher registration process. In mandating one national teacher registration process, criteria for supporting ECTs could be established through a national education mentoring plenary council (refer to Recommendation 1) that would ensure mentoring programs meet the required criteria for implementation in respective school and education sectors.

7.10 Limitations of the research

An exhaustive list of potential limitations is not provided however, there are four key factors that may have limited the scope of the study.

First, COVID-19 caused widespread changes to schooling in 2020. Second, some mentors and ECTs qualified the information they provided because they were fearful of judgement. Third, the challenges aligned with the collection of data resulted in a change of methodology which impacted on aspects of the research. Fourth, the researcher was the coordinator of ECT programs at the time of conducting the research.

Most of the data were collected during COVID-19. As a result, many schools had to change their modus operandi to address the challenges posed by the pandemic. Some changes included removing general programs from the school's day-to-day running and direct teachers to online platforms to meet the students' needs for home-based learning. While the impact of this period differed across the states and territories of Australia, ECTs acknowledged that they had limited access to their mentors, and scheduled classroom observations and debriefs could not be completed. In addition, the challenges were associated with low numbers of students in some schools and no students in others.

Second, a limitation of the study that may have contributed to the comprehensiveness of the research was the fear of judgement expressed by mentors and ECT participants. Even though anonymity was guaranteed and opportunities to withdraw from the research at any time were emphasised, some mentors and ECTs were concerned about the findings having an impact on their respective sectors. Despite wanting to voice their concerns, some mentors and ECTs may not have been as forthcoming as they would have liked.

Third, given the challenges with the limited ECT and mentor questionnaire responses in 2019, the methodology was revised midway through the study to use social media (Australian teacher sites) as a recruitment tool in 2020. This meant that the researcher was unable to identify the states or educational jurisdictions in which the questionnaire respondents were employed. Consequently, the findings should not be generalised into the educational context of every state or territory in Australia. Future studies could seek to identify any differences in ECT mentoring and reasons for those differences or key features in terms of policy, funding and other resources allocated to mentoring, etc.

Fourth, another limiting factor relates to the researcher being an educator and facilitator responsible for coordinating ECT programs for Catholic Education WA at the time of undertaking the research. The researcher journaled key ideas regularly and compared them with the NVivo software and spreadsheet summaries. Despite the triangulation processes used, future studies could ensure that the researcher is not a coordinator for ECT programs.

7.11 Conclusion

This study explored the mentoring experiences of ECTs from the perspectives of ECTs and mentors in Australia and reflected the insights of ECTs and mentors who shared their experiences of mentoring ECTs. The study identified the positive and negative mentoring experiences of ECTs and revealed what could be done to better support the ECTs in Australian schools. Exploring the mentoring experiences of ECTs and mentors meant that mentoring processes and practices, and the value of mentoring programs, could be analysed.

The study has highlighted the variety of mentoring experiences that ECTs experience. Ensuring that mentoring as a strategy to support ECTs is mandated is critical to the support provided to ECTs to foster their personal and professional growth. In addition, mentoring as a concept in education needs to be more clearly defined. Mentoring must be supported by best-practice mentoring frameworks to guide schools in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of mentoring programs and practices. Further considerations must include more opportunities for ECTs and mentors to share their insights into the process. Reframing and refining mentors' work as part of an effective training process is conducive to successful mentoring. Mentors are not separate from the mentoring experiences of ECTs. Mentors who are partners in the process should be factored in as equal participants in the mentoring programs designed to support ECTs.

Personal impact statement

My passion for supporting ECTs has been a guiding force for me throughout my teaching career. As an educator with 28 years of experience, I have been blessed to work with the hearts and minds of ECTs and have been privileged to walk alongside them in their transition from university to ECT and from ECT to mid-career teacher and beyond.

I believe that ECTs are the future of education. While there is much discussion about what needs to be done in supporting ECTs and their personal and professional growth, there is no mandatory, formal process to guide a process of action in Australia. The study has taught me about the importance of quality mentoring programs for ECTs. The ECT and mentor questionnaire respondents and interview participants overwhelmingly agreed that attention was needed regarding the selection and training of mentors. ECT data makes it clear that to be a good mentor, it is not enough to be an expert in the field of education. The study has also taught me that a clear understanding of mentoring is critical if programs are to be designed to meet their needs. To achieve this, step-by-step guides must be provided to support busy schools.

The ECTs in our care today are our experienced teachers of tomorrow. Retaining quality teachers is a moral imperative if our students are to receive a quality Australian education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Early Career Teacher Questionnaire

Effective Mentoring Experiences of Early Career Teachers (ECT)

1. Mentoring Experiences of Early Career Teachers

Thank you very much for taking part in this important research. It will gather much-needed evidence to help develop successful approaches for supporting early career teachers. We very much appreciate your participation as we want to understand the mentoring experiences of early career teachers.

We very much appreciate you sharing what you think!

* 1. Electronic consent: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "agree" button indicates that you have read the information letter attached to the email of invitation and that you voluntarily agree to participate. If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button. When you click on the "disagree" button you will be exited from the study.

- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree

Effective Mentoring Experiences of Early Career Teachers (ECT)

2.

2. In which state/territory do you work?

- ◯ Western Australia
- ◯ South Australia
- ◯ Northern Territory
- ◯ Queensland
- ◯ New South Wales
- ◯ Victoria
- ◯ Tasmania
- ◯ ACT
- ◯ Other

* 3. Are you part of a mentoring program as an ECT?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

1

* 4. In which type of school are you currently employed?

- Composite
- Primary
- Secondary

* 5. How old are you?

- 21-25 years of age
- 26-30 years of age
- 31-40 years of age
- 41-50 years of age
- 51-60 years of age
- 61 years of age +

* 6. With which gender do you identify?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

7. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

- Bachelor of Education
- Graduate Diploma of Education
- Master of Teaching
- Master of Education
- Doctorate (PhD or EdD)

* 8. Which of the following qualifications did you complete at university?

- [ ] Early Childhood
- [ ] Primary School
- [ ] Secondary School
- [ ] Specialist
- [ ] Early Childhood and Primary

Effective Mentoring Experiences of Early Career Teachers (ECT)

3. Effective Mentoring Experiences of ECTs

2

* 9. At which university did you gain your most recent teaching qualification?

- ◯ Edith Cowan University
- ◯ Curtin University
- ◯ Murdoch University
- ◯ University of Western Australia
- ◯ University of Notre Dame Australia
- ◯ Other (please specify)

* 10. Is teaching your...

- ◯ First career
- ◯ Second or subsequent career

* 11. For how long have you been teaching?

- ◯ 3 months
- ◯ 6 months
- ◯ 1 year
- ◯ 18 months-2 years
- ◯ 3 years
- ◯ 4 years
- ◯ 5 years

* 12. What is your current employment status as a teacher?

- ◯ Full-time
- ◯ Part-time (0.5-0.9 FTE)
- ◯ Part-time (0-0.49 FTE)
- ◯ Casual (Relief Teacher)
- ◯ Short-term contract (3-12 months)
- ◯ Other

* 13. Which year levels are you teaching?

- ☐ Early Years
- ☐ Junior Primary (1-3)
- ☐ Upper Primary (4-6)
- ☐ Junior Secondary (7-10)
- ☐ Upper Secondary (11-12)

* 14. In your teaching career have you ever had a mentor?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

15. Provide details of the mentor's role.

3

Effective Mentoring Experiences of Early Career Teachers (ECT)

4.

* 16. With regards to the mentoring process at your school, do you...

- ○ Meet with the principal once per term
- ○ Meet with the principal once per semester
- ○ Meet with a mentor once per term
- ○ Meet with a mentor once per semester
- ○ I answered 'no'
- ○ Other

* 17. If you have a mentor and they are not your principal, are they a...

- ☐ Vice/Assistant Principal
- ☐ Head of Learning Area
- ☐ Head of Year
- ☐ Experienced Classroom Teacher with no administrative responsibilities
- ☐ Peer
- ☐ I do not have a mentor
- ☐ Other

* 18. Describe in detail the mentoring programme for ECT(s) at your school?

* 19. Describe in detail the best mentoring experience that you have had?

* 20. Describe your most challenging mentoring experience?

Effective Mentoring Experiences of Early Career Teachers (ECT)

5.

4

* 21. Does the mentoring programme at your school meet your needs as an ECT?

- Yes
- No

* 22. What mentoring would you like to see in schools?

* 23. To what extent do you agree that the activities below form part of your mentoring experience?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
School-based induction					
Performance management and development opportunities					
Classroom observations and feedback					
Formal mentor arrangement					
Guidance on curriculum and planning					
Access to curriculum resources					
Regular debriefing opportunities					
Additional non-contact time beyond Enterprise Bargaining Agreement requirements					
On-going networks with other ECTs					

5

* 24. As an ECT, my mentoring experiences enable me to:

	Not at all	A little	Neutral	Somewhat	A lot
Control disruptive behaviour in the classroom					
Get students to believe that they can do well in school work					
Make my expectations about student behaviour clear					
Craft good questions for my students					
Help my students value learning					
Use a variety of assessment strategies					
Provide an alternative explanation for concepts					
Implement alternative instructional strategies in my classroom					

* 25. My mentoring experiences enable me to:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Build resilience					
Develop relationships with students, staff and or parents					
Focus on my well-being					
Balance my workload					
Engage more effectively with curriculum, assessment and reporting					
Engage in effective Classroom Management					
Deal with isolation of my location					
Establish networks with other ECTs					
Prepare my TRB Portfolio					

6

* 26. Describe how your mentoring experiences influenced your personal growth?

* 27. Describe how your mentoring experiences influenced your professional growth?

28. If you would like to be interviewed, please provide your first name only (or pseudonym) and a contact number

7

Appendix B

Mentor Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Perceptions of Early Career Teacher Mentoring

Consent

* 1. Electronic consent: Please select your choice below.

- ◯ Agree. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and voluntarily agree to participate.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Perceptions of Early Career Teacher Mentoring

About you

* 2. In which type of institution are you currently employed?

- ◯ Early Learning Centre
- ◯ K-10 School
- ◯ Primary School
- ◯ K-12 School
- ◯ Secondary School
- ◯ Other (please specify)

* 3. To which age group do you belong?

- ◯ 21-25 years of age
- ◯ 41-50 years of age
- ◯ 26-30 years of age
- ◯ 51-60 years of age
- ◯ 31-40 years of age
- ◯ 61 years +

* 4. With which gender do you identify?

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Prefer not to say

* 5. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

- ◯ Bachelor of Education
- ◯ Master of Education
- ◯ Graduate Diploma of Education
- ◯ Doctorate (PhD or EdD)
- ◯ Master of Teaching

* 6. For how long have you been teaching?

- ◯ 1-4 years
- ◯ 21-30 years
- ◯ 5-10 years
- ◯ 31-40 years
- ◯ 11-20 years
- ◯ 41 years +

* 7. What is your current role?

- ◯ Principal
- ◯ Deputy Principal
- ◯ Head of Learning Area
- ◯ Year Coordinator
- ◯ Classroom teacher

Other (please specify)

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Perceptions of Early Career Teacher Mentoring

ECTS in your school

* 8. How many ECTs (up to 5 years teaching experience) do you currently have at your school?

- ◯ none
- ◯ 1
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 3
- ◯ 4
- ◯ 5+

* 9. Is there a mentoring programme for ECTs at your school?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Perceptions of Early Career Teacher Mentoring

Mentoring ECTs in your school

* 10. Please give an overview of the mentoring programme for ECTs at your school? This may include the aims and structure of the programme and how successful it has been.

* 11. How often does the ECT meet with their mentor?

- ◯ weekly
- ◯ fortnightly
- ◯ monthly
- ◯ each term
- ◯ as often as they wish

* 12. Who are the allocated mentors to ECTs?

- ◯ Vice/Assistant Principal
- ◯ Head of Learning Area
- ◯ Head of Year
- ◯ Experienced Classroom Teacher with no administrative responsibilities
- ◯ Peer
- ◯ Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers
- ◯ Other (please specify)

* 13. To what extent to you agree these activities are part of the mentoring experience at your school?

	Strongly agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
School-based induction	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Performance management and development opportunities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Classroom observations and feedback	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Formal mentor arrangement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Guidance on curriculum planning	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Access to curriculum resources	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Regular debriefing opportunities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Additional non-contact time beyond Enterprise Bargaining Agreement requirements	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
On-going networks with other ECTs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 14. I believe that ECTs would like more assistance with:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Building resilience	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Developing relationships with students, staff and or parents	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Well-being	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Workload	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Curriculum, assessment and reporting	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Classroom Management	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dealing with isolation of their location	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Establishing networks with other ECTs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Preparing their TRB Portfolio	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other (please specify)

Perceptions of Early Career Teacher Mentoring

Your experience as mentor (1)

* 15. In your teaching career have you ever mentored an ECT?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Perceptions of Early Career Teacher Mentoring

Your experience as mentor (2)

* 16. Please describe your experience of mentoring ECTs.

* 17. What are the best experiences you have had as a mentor?

* 18. As a mentor, what kinds of challenges have you encountered with ECTs?

* 19. In your ideal world what would the most effective mentoring experience involve?

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Perceptions of Early Career Teacher Mentoring

Final thoughts

* 20. How do you think mentoring can support ECTs personal growth?

* 21. How do you think mentoring can support ECTs professional growth?

22. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you for your time. If you would like to assist further and discuss your mentoring experiences with me, please email me with the subject line 'mentoring experiences' - nunziatina.bonfiglio@my.nd.edu.au. All discussions are confidential and any data reported will be de-identified. I look forward to the opportunity to talk with you if you wish.

Thanks and regards,

Nancy Bonfiglio-Pavisich
PhD Candidate
The University of Notre Dame Australia.

Appendix C

Early Career Teacher Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EARLY CAREER TEACHERS (Examples)

Researcher:

***Introduction*:** Thank you for volunteering to participate in today's interview. The results of this interview will be used to gain insights into the mentoring experiences of early career teachers. Given that we are using a pseudonym, this interview will not identify you as an individual participant.

Today, there are seven questions for you to answer. If at any time you are uncomfortable with the questions asked, you are not required to answer them. Equally, if you are uncertain about a question being asked, I am more than happy to reframe it so that it is clear. Please note that you are able to engage with the Employee Assist Program should any of the questions evoke anxiety or recall of painful memories.

***Duration*:** Today, I will audio record the interview to ensure that all of the information provided is captured. This interview should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. If you are ready to begin, I would like to ask you some questions about your mentoring experiences as an ECT and how these may influence your personal and professional growth.

QUESTIONS

1. Can you please describe your current mentoring experiences?

2. What are your mentoring needs at the moment?

3. As an ECT, can you describe the mentoring program in your school?
   (What aspects of the mentoring process have/have not assisted you to transition into the classroom and into a school?)

4. What are your best mentoring experiences as an ECT in school?

5. As an ECT, what are examples of challenging mentoring experiences that you have had in a school?

6. In your experience, what do you see as the challenges of developing mentoring programmes in a school?

7. In your experience, how could a mentoring programme be better implemented in a school?

Researcher: Thank you for your time in participating in this study. Do you have any other general questions or feedback that you would like to add? **(end)**

1

Appendix D

Mentor Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS (Examples)

Researcher:

***Introduction*:** Thank you for volunteering to participate in today's interview. The results of this interview will be used to gain insights into the mentoring experiences of early career teachers. Given that we are using a pseudonym or first name only, this interview will not identify you as an individual participant.

Today, there are seven questions for you to answer. If at any time you are uncomfortable with the questions asked, you are not required to answer them. Equally, if you are uncertain about a question being asked, I am more than happy to reframe it so that it is clear. Please note that you are able to engage with the Employee Assist Program should any of the questions evoke anxiety or recall of painful memories.

***Duration*:** Today, I will audio record the interview to ensure that all of the information provided is captured. This interview should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. If you are ready to begin, I would like to ask you some questions about your perception of the mentoring experiences of ECTs and how these may influence their personal and professional growth.

QUESTIONS

1. Can you please explain what mentoring means to you?
2. Can you explain your experiences of mentoring ECTs?

   2a. What were the benefits for you and the mentee?
3. What do you believe are the mentoring needs and experiences of ECTs?
4. As a school leader, can you describe the mentoring program in your school?
   (What aspects of the mentoring process have/have not assisted your ECTs to transition into the classroom and into the school?)
5. What do you see as the challenges of developing quality mentoring programmes in schools?
6. In your opinion, what are the benefits of developing quality mentoring in schools?
7. In your experience, how could a mentoring programme be better implemented in schools?

Researcher: Thank you for your time in participating in this study. Do you have any other general questions or feedback that you would like to add? **(end)**

1

Appendix E

Ethics Approval Letters

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

19 Mouat St (PO Box 1225) Fremantle WA 6959
+61 8 9433 0555 | enquiries@nd.edu.au

3 May 2019

Prof Caroline Mansfield & Ms Nancy Bonfiglio-Pavisich
School of Education
The University of Notre Dame Australia
Fremantle Campus

Dear Caroline and Nancy,

Reference Number: 019059F

Project Title: "Effective mentoring experiences of early career teachers in non-metropolitan Catholic schools."

Your response to the conditions imposed by a sub-committee of the University of Notre Dame Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has been reviewed in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007, updated 2018). I am pleased to advise that ethics approval has been granted for this proposed study.

Other researchers identified as working on this project are:

Name	School/Centre	Role
Dr Anne Coffey	School of Education	Co-Supervisor

All research projects are approved subject to standard conditions of approval.
Please read the attached document for details of these conditions.

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Signature Redacted

Dr Natalie Giles
Research Ethics Officer
Research Office

cc: A/Prof Dianne Chambers, SRC Chair, School of Education

Broome Campus 88 Guy St (PO Box 2287) Broome WA 6725
Sydney Campus 140 Broadway (PO Box 944) NSW 2007

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

19 Mouat St (PO Box 1225) Fremantle WA 6959
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16 December 2019

Prof Caroline Mansfield & Nancy Bonfiglio-Pavisich
School of Education
The University of Notre Dame Australia
Fremantle Campus

Dear Caroline and Nancy,

Reference Number: 019059F

Project Title: "Effective mentoring experiences of early career teachers in non-metropolitan schools."

Your application for an amendment to your approved low risk research project has been reviewed by a sub-committee of the University of Notre Dame Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007, updated 2018). I am pleased to advise that ethics approval has been granted for the proposed changes.

Other researchers identified as working on this project are:

Name	School/Centre	Role
Dr Anne Coffey	School of Education	Co-Supervisor

All research projects are approved subject to standard conditions of approval.

Please read the attached document for details of these conditions.

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Signature Redacted

Dr Natalie Giles
Research Ethics Officer
Research Office

cc: A/Prof Dianne Chambers, SRC Chair, School of Education

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

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22 July 2020

Professor Caroline Mansfield & Nancy Bonfiglio-Pavisich
School of Education
The University of Notre Dame Australia
Fremantle Campus

Dear Caroline and Nancy,

Reference Number: 019059F

Project Title: "Effective mentoring experiences of early career teachers."

Your application for an amendment to your approved low risk research project has been reviewed by a sub-committee of the University of Notre Dame Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007, updated 2018). I am pleased to advise that ethics approval has been granted for the proposed changes.

Other researchers identified as working on this project are:

Name	School/Centre	Role
Dr Anne Coffey	School of Education	Co-Supervisor

All research projects are approved subject to standard conditions of approval.
Please read the attached document for details of these conditions.

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Signature Redacted

Dr Natalie Giles
Research Ethics Officer
Research Office

cc: A/Prof Dianne Chambers, SRC Chair, School of Education

Broome Campus 88 Guy St (PO Box 2287) Broome WA 6725
Sydney Campus 140 Broadway (PO Box 944) NSW 2007

CATHOLIC EDUCATION
WESTERN AUSTRALIA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

29 May 2019

Ms Nancy Bonfiglio-Pavisich
The University of Notre Dame Australia
32 Mouat Street
FREMANTLE WA 6160

Dear Ms Bonfiglio-Pavisich

EFFECTIVE MENTORING OF EARLY CAREER TEACHERS IN NON-METROPOLITAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS – CEWA REFERENCE RP2019/20

Thank you for your completed application received 6 May 2019, whereby this project seeks to learn about the mentoring experiences of early career teachers and how these may influence their personal and professional growth.

I give in principle support for the selected Catholic schools in Western Australia to participate in this valuable study. However, consistent with Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) policy, participation in your research project will be the decision of the individual principal and staff members. A copy of this letter must be provided to principals when requesting their participation in the research.

The condition of CEWA approval is that a final list of the Catholic schools participating in this research project is to be provided to CEWA.

Responsibility for quality control of ethics and methodology of the proposed research resides with the institution supervising the research. CEWA notes that the University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee has granted permission for the duration of this research project (Reference Number: 019059F).

Any changes to the proposed methodology will need to be submitted for CEWA approval prior to implementation. The focus and outcomes of your research project are of interest to CEWA. It is therefore a condition of approval that the research findings of this study are forwarded to CEWA.

Further enquiries may be directed to Jane Gostelow at jane.gostelow@cewa.edu.au or (08) 6380 5118.

I wish you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely

Signature Redacted

Dr Debra Sayce
Executive Director

50 Ruislip Street, Leederville WA 6007 | PO Box 198, Leederville WA 6903 T (08) 6380 5210 W ceo.wa.edu.au

CATHOLIC EDUCATION
Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

Record No: R531899
Container No: 2014/60

Nancy Bonfiglio
[redacted]

Via email: Nunziatina.bonfiglio@my.nd.edu.au

Dear Nancy

I am writing in response to your request to undertake research titled **"*Effective Mentoring Experiences of Early Career Teachers*"**

Your request has been approved subject to the following:

1. The Principal gives final permission for research to be carried out in his/her school. This letter of approval should accompany any approach to schools or teachers.

2. If the schools are located in the ACT and the research is qualitative in nature, meaning that contact, however minimal, with a student will occur even if just to visit a classroom, the researcher must apply for and satisfactorily receive a Working With Vulnerable People Background Check prior to conducting the research. The background check required is the one for volunteers which means that there is no cost to the researcher to obtain this check. Please visit the ACT Office of Regulatory Services' website on http://www.ors.act.gov.au/ and click the 'forms' button and the Working With Vulnerable People, Volunteers link to access the registration process for the background check.

3. For research conducted in New South Wales Schools, please go to the NSW 'Working With Children Check' website at https://check.kids.nsw.gov.au and complete in the volunteer declaration. This task will be required by all researchers in NSW regardless of the nature of the research. Applications are free and are submitted electronically.

4. Brenda Foley is to be contacted immediately should your research differ in any way from that proposed.

5. Confidentiality of findings and anonymity of students is adhered to. The research must comply with the requirements of the Commonwealth Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000.

6. That upon completion of your research a copy of your report is forwarded to me.

52 - 54 Franklin Street, Manuka ACT 2603 | 02 62345455
PO Box 3317 Manuka ACT 2603 | www.cg.catholic.edu.au
ABN 47 824 127 996

Appendix F

Mentor Letters and Forms

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Mentoring experiences of Early Career Teachers

Dear School Leader

This letter is to invite you to participate in a study regarding the mentoring experiences of Early Career Teachers (ECTs). In accordance with the ethics approval, I am also seeking permission to contact ECTs in your school. For this research, ECTs include teachers in their first five years of service.

I am conducting this study for my Doctor of Philosophy research at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle. The topic of this study is important because to date, relatively little is known about ECT's mentoring experiences, and as you may be aware, it is an issue of interest for schools, sectors, and education policy makers. Your participation will contribute to how mentors can best support ECTs and sharing your experiences will help inform strategies to assist future ECTs and those who support them. I know how time-poor school leaders are, and so I really appreciate you considering this invitation.

Participation in this study will involve:

Completion of an online questionnaire, approximately 20 minutes in duration

OR

Completion of the online questionnaire **and** one 30-minute telephone interview in Term 3, 2020 at a time and date suitable for you.

Your privacy

Your privacy is important. Participation in this study and any information will be treated in a confidential manner and all data will be kept anonymous.

The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Any identifying information (e.g. names of people, places and schools) will be removed. Following the study, the data will be kept in a de-identified format in a secure location.

The data collected from you will be stored securely in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle for at least five years after which time, any hard copy data will be destroyed by shredding and electronic information will be permanently deleted. The results of the study will be published as a journal article, thesis and/or book chapter.

As I am hoping to maximise participation, please feel free to circulate this invitation to members of your Leadership Team.

Should you kindly consent to participate in the survey, please find the link here. Also, if you would like to be interviewed, please contact me at nunziatina.bonfiglio@my.nd.edu.au or [redacted].

Should you have any questions, you may also wish to contact my Chief Supervisor, Professor Caroline Mansfield by email caroline.mansfield1@nd.edu.au

Kind regards,

Nancy Bonfiglio

PhD Candidate, The University of Notre Dame, Australia

1

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Mentoring experiences of Early Career Teachers in Western Australia
School Leader Consent Form and
Permission for ECT participation in the study

Please read the information below and indicate your consent by highlighting the relevant text.

I agree to take part in this research project by

- Completing an online questionnaire

OR

- Completing an online questionnaire and participating in one telephone interview.

I grant permission for you to contact the early career teachers in my school and invite them to participate in this study. The names and email addresses of the early career teachers are:

1.
2.
3.

- I have read the Information Sheet and Letters of Invitation provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.
- The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.
- I understand that if I have consented to an interview, that my interview will be audio recorded.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.
- I understand if I withdraw, I can request that the interview data I have provided be destroyed.
- I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.
- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided that my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

Name: Date:

1

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Mentoring experiences of Early Career Teachers
Participant information sheet for School Leaders

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this study. The research seeks to understand the mentoring experiences of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) in Australian schools and how this may influence their personal and professional growth. In this context, we refer to ECTs as newly appointed teachers in their first five years of service. I will be conducting the study in my capacity as a PhD student at The University of Notre Dame, Australia, Fremantle under the supervision of Professor Caroline Mansfield.

What is the project about?

Attracting high quality teachers is critical to the survival of the teaching profession in Australia. The induction of ECTs and the support provided to them in their initial posting is a critical element in their retention. Recent reviews suggest that providing high-quality support for ECTs in the form of mentoring may reduce the impact of challenges in the early years of working in the profession. Given the varied definitions and approaches of mentoring that exist in education, and the challenges of accessibility, equity and quality, the aim of this study is to explore the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia.

How this research can help?

It is anticipated that gathering data from the lived mentoring experiences of (ECTs) over time will inform schools and systems (locally, nationally and internationally) about the types and quality of mentoring experiences available to ECTs. This study will enable recommendations to be made about how best to support the mentoring experiences of early career teachers in the future.

What does participation involve?

For your information, you may volunteer to participate in one of two ways, as below.

- By completing an anonymous online questionnaire regarding your experience of mentoring ECTs (approximately 20 minutes in duration)

OR

- By completing the online questionnaire **and** participating in one interview approximately 45 minutes duration in Term 3, 2020 at a time and date suitable to you. I will conduct these interviews by telephone. The interviews will be audio recorded.

What if I change my mind?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any time without giving a reason and with no negative consequences. You are also free to ask for any information which identifies you to be withdrawn from the study, however you cannot withdraw survey responses, as these are non-identifiable.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

All data gathered in this study will be treated confidentially.

Once the recruitment and data gathering process is complete, the spreadsheet and copies of emails will be given to the Chief Supervisor, Professor Caroline Mansfield and will be permanently removed from my computer. All participants will be identified by an ID number which will be used in all file names, transcripts, analysis and writing of results.

All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Audio and text file names will include the participant's research ID and any identifying information (specific to location or school) will be removed from interview transcripts. Only the Chief Supervisor, Professor Caroline Mansfield and I will have access to audio and text files.

Once the study is completed, the data collected will be stored securely in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle for at least five years after which time, any hard copy data will be destroyed by shredding and electronic information will be permanently deleted. The results of the study will be published as a journal article, thesis and/or book chapter.

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame, Australia (approval number 019059F). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact The University's Research Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

Once we have analysed the information from this study, I will send an email to the participants providing a summary of the project and key findings.

If you are willing to consent to participation in this study, please go to the online questionnaire here. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me by email at nunziatina.bonfiglio@my.nd.edu.au or [redacted]. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the Chief Supervisor, Professor Caroline Mansfield at caroline.mansfield1@nd.edu.au.

Thank you again for assistance with this research project. This sheet is for you to keep.

Regards,

Nunziatina (Nancy) Bonfiglio

PhD Candidate, The University of Notre Dame Australia

Appendix G

Early Career Teacher Letters and Forms

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Mentoring experiences of Early Career Teachers

Dear Early Career Teacher,

I hope that your year is progressing well and that you are finding teaching to be everything you wanted to be and more!

I am inviting you to participate in a study regarding your school mentoring experiences and how they may have influenced your personal and professional growth as an Early Career Teacher (ECT).

I am conducting the study as part of my Doctor of Philosophy research at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle.

The topic of this study is important because to date, relatively little is known about ECT's mentoring experiences in non-metropolitan areas, and as you may be aware, it's an issue of interest for schools, sectors and education policy makers. Your participation will help make a contribution to how mentors can best support ECTs and sharing your experiences will help inform strategies to assist future ECTs and those who support them. I know how time poor ECTs are, and so I really appreciate you considering this invitation.

Participation in this study will involve:

Completion of an online questionnaire, approximately 20 minutes in duration

OR

Completion of the online questionnaire **and** one telephone interview approximately 30 minutes duration in Term 2, 2020 at a time and date suitable for you.

I have attached a participant information sheet for you containing more information about the study.

1 Your Privacy

Your privacy is important. Participation in this study and any information provided will be treated in a confidential manner and all data will be kept anonymous. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Any identifying information (e.g. names of people, places and/or schools) will be removed.

Following the study, the data will be kept in a de-identified format in a secure location. The data collected from you will be stored securely in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Fremantle for at least five years after which time, any hard copy data will be destroyed by shredding and electronic information will be permanently deleted. The results of the study will be published as a journal article, thesis and/or book chapter.

Should you kindly consent to participate in the online questionnaire, or questionnaire and interview, please complete the consent form below and feel free to access the online questionnaire here.

1

Should you have any questions you may contact me on [redacted] or my supervisor, Professor Caroline Mansfield by email caroline.mansfield1@nd.edu.au .

I am really looking forward to the opportunity to learn about your experience and appreciate the time you have taken to read this email.

Kind regards,

Nancy Bonfiglio-Pavisich
PhD Candidate, The University of Notre Dame, Australia

2

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Mentoring experiences of Early Career Teachers Consent Form.

Please read the information below and indicate your consent by highlighting the relevant text.

- I agree to take part in this research project by

    1. Completing an online questionnaire

        OR

    2. Completing an online questionnaire and participating in one telephone interview.

I have read the Information Sheet and Letters of Invitation provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.

The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.

I understand that if I have consented to an interview, that my interview will be audio recorded.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.

I understand if I withdraw, I can request that the interview data I have provided be destroyed.

I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.

I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided that my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

Name: Date

1

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

Mentoring experiences of Early Career Teachers
Early Career Teacher Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this study. The research seeks to understand the mentoring experiences of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) in Australian schools and how this may influence their personal and professional growth. In this context, we refer to ECTs as newly appointed teachers in their first five years of service. I will be conducting the study in my capacity as a PhD student at The University of Notre Dame, Australia, Fremantle under the supervision of Professor Caroline Mansfield.

What is the project about?

Attracting high quality teachers is critical to the survival of the teaching profession in Australia. The induction of ECTs and support provided in their initial posting are critical elements in retention. Recent reviews suggest that providing high-quality support for ECTs in the form of mentoring may reduce the impact of challenges in the early years of working in the profession. Given the varied definitions and approaches of mentoring that exist in education, and the challenges of accessibility, equity and quality, the aim of this study is to explore the mentoring experiences of ECTs in Australia.

How this research can help?

It is anticipated that gathering data from the lived mentoring experiences of ECTs over time will inform schools and systems (locally, nationally and internationally) about the types and quality of mentoring experiences available to ECTs. This study will enable recommendations to be made about how best to support the mentoring experiences of ECTs in the future.

What does participation involve?

You can participate in this research in one of two ways:

- By completing an anonymous online questionnaire regarding your mentoring experiences (approximately 20 minutes in duration)

OR

- Completing the online questionnaire **and** participating in one interview approximately 30 minutes duration, one in Term 3 and the other in Term 4, 2020 at a time and date suitable to you. I will conduct these interviews by telephone. The interviews will be audio recorded.

What if I change my mind?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any time without giving a reason and with no negative consequences. You are also free to ask for any information which identifies you to be withdrawn from the study, however you cannot withdraw survey responses, as these are non-identifiable.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

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If you are willing to consent to participation in this study, please go to the online questionnaire here. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me by email at nunziatina.bonfiglio@my.nd.edu.au or [redacted]. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the Chief Supervisor, Professor Caroline Mansfield at caroline.mansfield1@nd.edu.au.

Thank you again for assistance with this research project. This sheet is for you to keep.

Regards,

Nunziatina (Nancy) Bonfiglio
PhD Candidate, The University of Notre Dame, Australia