

## THE CONTEXT

A recent innovation in teacher education programs at UWS Nepean, is the Internship. This internship program is offered as a full time study pathway for a person to obtain their fourth year of training, and BEd status. All who enter this internship program will have a Bachelor of Teaching (3 yrs) with a strong academic record (a credit average or above is desirable) and a high level of practicum performance (as identified in their practicum reports). There is competition for entry to this program.

Those who gain entry to this program undergo a combination of coursework and in-school experiences such as teaching; classroom related research; and other teacher oriented activities eg. parent-teacher interviews; policy and curriculum committees; corporate planning etc.

The fact that those admitted to the internship format are qualified teachers (with a 3 yr BTch.) has meant that the relationship between the internees and the experienced teachers selected to work with them is changed from the traditional roles of "student teacher" and "co-operating teacher".

To acknowledge this change in the relationship we have titled the internee, a qualified teacher in their own right, the Associate Teacher (AT). The experienced teacher has been titled the Colleague Teacher (CT). It is intended that this relationship will be a collegial one where an experienced practitioner will induct a colleague, who is a beginner, into the profession. This is seen as a professional development opportunity for both participants.

The in-school component of the internship program requires the Associate Teacher to be responsible for the planning, teaching and assessment of the class for three days per week for the ten week term. This is not done in isolation but in a collegial working relationship with their Colleague Teacher.

This collegiality is expected to have a significant impact on the relationship between Colleague and Associate Teachers.

Traditionally the practicum was "supervised" by a qualified practising teacher who was responsible for the development of a student teacher. The supervisory practices employed by supervising teachers and the relationships with student teachers have been reported as being top-down, master and apprentice like with an imbalance of power between the supervisor and student teacher. (Cameron & Wilson '93; Boydell '86). With the introduction of an internship where a pair of qualified teachers are working together in a collegial relationship there has been a move from traditional supervisory practice to that of shared

responsibility for the class and a collegial approach to teacher improvement.

It has been noted that many of the characteristics, roles and functions performed by these Colleague Teachers have a great deal in common with those involving mentoring and mentors.

It is the literature dealing with beginning teaching and that of mentoring which has shaped this study.

The move from theory into practice in any profession or work situation is a difficult transition and it is doubtful that any situation is more difficult than teaching because of the complex nature of the teaching

task. Howey (1986) refers to this period of transition as one of "chaos and lack of support" when new teachers really struggle to master effective classroom strategies.

Classroom teaching can be very lonely and very stressful. The nature of teaching usually means that new teachers are isolated from their colleagues (Hersh et al, 1993) and have to try to cope alone. Beginning teachers need the opportunity to interact and share (Huling-Austin, 1992).

... beginning teachers develop teaching expertise more quickly if allowed to observe and be observed (p.175).

Rarely during the normal school day are there designated opportunities for teachers to commune with peers or other adults (Krasnow, 1993).

Mentoring has come to be applied to a more formal process in professions and businesses whereby a more experienced person is able to give support and advice to a less experienced colleague for the purpose of professional growth. In education there are wide applications, one of which is the use of mentoring in teacher induction.

Mentoring has been described as a relational process in which one person empowers another by sharing resources. Stanley and Clinton (1992) make the following definition:

Mentoring is a relational process between mentor, who knows or has experienced something and transfers that something (resources of wisdom, information, experience, confidence, insight, relationships, status, etc.) to a mentee, at an appropriate time and manner, so that it facilitates development or empowerment. (p.12)

In being a mentor one needs to have a willingness and desire to help another colleague. Usually, there are mutual benefits arising from the mentoring process. Hutto, Holden, Haynes (1991) include these aspects

in their definition:

A mentor is an experienced, successful and knowledgeable professional who willingly accepts the responsibility of facilitating professional growth and support of a colleague through a mutually beneficial relationship.

Mentoring has been used widely in many businesses and professions and has been found to be most helpful in the teaching profession. Coomble (1989) found that

... young teachers who have a mentor relationship tend to cope better with the pressures of the professional world. (p.25)

Mentor teachers should be willing to participate in the program, have demonstrated exemplary teaching practices with evidence of professional growth, effective communication skills, be accessible to colleagues and have a solid knowledge of community resources (Hersh et al, 1993).

Mentors need to be

genuinely concerned with advancing their beginners' interest in and ability to think through their own problem (Wildman, Magliaro, Niles and Niles, 1992, p.207).

These writers have identified twelve characteristics that have been consistently reported by both mentors and mentees as being important.

- 1.Willing to be a mentor.
- 2.Sensitive: that is, knowing when to back off.
- 3.Helpful, but not authoritarian.
- 4.Emotionally committed to their beginners.
- 5.Astute - that is they know the right thing to say at the right time.
- 6.Diplomatic - for example they know how to counteract bad advice given to their beginner by others.
- 7.Able to anticipate problems.
- 8.Nurturant and encouraging.
- 9.Timely in keeping the beginners apprised of their successes.
- 10.Careful to keep beginners' problems confidential.

11. Enthusiastic about teaching.

12. Good role models at all times.

Qualities that have been identified through other studies include:

\*being one who listens, an active listener who can also role play classroom situations with an attempt to clarify problems and strategies (Mateja, 1992).

\*being experienced in the field and respected by other colleagues (Mateja, 1992).

\*being accepting, non-judgemental, willing to see other viewpoints (Weeks, 1992).

\*having a sense of humour (Weeks, 1992).

\*being able to model and demonstrate effective teaching practices (Hutto et al, 1992).

\*being reflective and analytic about their own teaching thus encouraging this in the mentee (Zimpher and Reiger, 1988).

Vonk (1993) summarises these in calling for open-mindedness, reflectiveness, flexibility, listening skills, empathy, creativity and a helping attitude from practicing teachers because those actually working in classrooms make the best coaches as they are practising techniques on a regular basis (Young et al, 1993).

Anderson and Shannon (1988) identified specific functions of a mentor in a collegial relationship as being to:

encourage  
affirm  
inspire  
challenge  
teach or coach  
counsel  
sponsor

befriend

Mentoring also has benefits for the mentors. Being a mentor is a helpful form of professional development and the benefits are reciprocal. In a study by Hoffman and Feldlaufer (1992) eighty-three percent of mentors reported that the program enhanced their classroom abilities; 84 percent reported that mentoring increased their

enthusiasm for the profession; and 98 percent reported experiencing positive results involving their teaching, professional growth, and impact on the profession (p. 102).

Mentoring is a process which cannot be hurried (Weeks, 1992). It involves continuous sharing of information and opportunities for co-teaching (Mateja, 1992). Teachers should be involved in setting their own goals for they can then become "responsible leaders in their own professional development" (Krasnow, 1993, p.11).

## METHOD

This investigation involved the preparation and implementation of a questionnaire which was completed by all Colleague Teachers (19) at the beginning of their internship experience. Colleague Teachers had participated in a professional development program of 15 hours spread over two full days and two afternoons where information was provided and discussed about the needs of beginning teachers and of the roles, functions and characteristics of colleague teachers. We investigated these areas in terms of the literature dealing with mentoring as we saw a high degree of overlap between the roles and expectations of the colleague teachers in our internship program and a mentor.

The questionnaire was designed to collect data with regard to the following categories:

1. Personal information - including age; gender; number of years experience; number of student teachers previously supervised; academic qualifications; how and why they had become a Colleague Teacher in our Internship program.
2. Importance of the characteristics of mentors in assisting their role as Colleague Teachers to their Associate Teacher.
3. The extent to which the functions of mentors will be employed by the Colleague Teachers.

The questionnaire was administered to the 19 Colleague Teachers involved in the internship program. A five point Likert scale was utilised in each of the main questions of the questionnaire.

These Colleague Teachers are both Primary and Early Childhood trained and are currently teaching in the K-6 environment.

At the completion of the Internship the Associate Teachers were invited to join a focus group in order to gain through qualitative methodology their perceptions of their experience in the 10 week teaching term. Two 1 hour sessions were held where specific focus questions were put to the group. These sessions were audio taped and then analysed to

arrive at the statements recorded in the results section of this paper.

It was expected that these data would answer the following research questions:

A. What characteristics of mentors do Colleague Teachers perceive as being important in assisting their role as a mentor to an Associate Teacher?

B. To what extent will Colleague Teachers utilise specific mentoring functions in their relationship with Associate Teachers?

C. What perceptions did the Associate Teachers have of their Colleague Teachers in assisting their development as teachers?

## RESULTS

Colleague Teachers had characteristics which are indicative of the general teaching population. However, they were as a group:

younger than the average age of teacher population in NSW;

experienced with regard to student supervision;

well qualified in terms of academic qualifications;

motivated to be a Colleague Teacher.

### Table 1 - Aggregated Personal Information

Age (mean) 36.26 years

Teaching Experience (mean) 13.26 years

#### Number of Student

Teachers Supervised	Number of participants	Student Supervised
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6	.....	10 or more students supervised
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1	.....	7 - 9 students supervised
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4	.....	4 - 6 students supervised
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6	.....	1 - 3 students supervised
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2	.....	0 students supervised
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Academic Qualifications	Number of participants	Academic Qualifications
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33	year	Dip Teach
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114	year	BEd
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3	Masters	degree
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22	year	trained
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The process of becoming a Colleague Teacher identified that:  
 3 Colleague Teachers had personally applied  
 3 Colleague Teachers had volunteered  
 10 Colleague Teachers had been requested by the Principal  
 3 Colleague Teachers had been requested by an executive of the school

It was encouraging to see that the two Colleague Teachers who had not supervised student teachers previously were both approached by their Principals to be involved in the internship program. I have taken this to indicate that each Principal had confidence in their personal and professional attributes to be nominated for involvement in the program.

The reasons why Colleague Teachers' wanted to be involved in the program were for intrinsic/high ideal purposes.

The reasons in order of their means were:

1. Own professional development 2.26
2. Being able to make a change to my school through the release time provided 2.32
3. To play a role in assisting a new teacher to enter the profession 3.21
4. To provide my class with a new teachers approach and ideas 3.89
5. To further my own promotion opportunities 4.63
6. For the time release provided from my own class 4.68

Table 2 - The degree of importance of mentoring characteristics in assisting Colleague Teachers to perform their role.

Characteristics of Mentors	Importance in assisting your role as a Colleague Teacher
Mean	S.D.
Willing to be involved as a Mentor.	4.63 0.49
Sensitive to the needs of beginning teachers.	4.53 0.61
Helpful, but not authoritarian.	4.37 0.76
Emotionally committed to the Associate Teacher.	3.37 1.12
Astute: knowing what to say and when to say it.	3.95 0.62
Diplomacy.	4.11 0.66

Able to anticipate problems.3.840.69  
Nurture the Associate Teacher.3.580.96  
Timely in providing feedback to the Associate Teacher.4.320.75  
Confidentiality.4.260.73  
Enthusiastic about your own teaching.4.420.84  
A good role model.4.420.69  
Encourage the Associate Teacher.4.530.61  
An active listener4.420.69  
Able to model effective teaching practices.4.210.98  
Respected by other colleagues.4.050.85  
Acceptance of the Associate Teacher.4.470.61  
Assist the Colleague Teacher with planning an educational program.4.00  
0.75  
Provide alternative strategies in classroom practice.3.790.71  
Display non judgemental behaviour to the Associate Teacher.4.160.77  
Have a sense of humour.4.580.60  
Willing to see other viewpoints.4.470.70  
Reflect on your own teaching.4.160.96  
Encourage critical reflection by the Associate Teacher.4.370.76

Table 2 indicated that generally the respondents rate most characteristics as being important to them as Colleague Teachers.

Those characteristics with relatively higher means such as willingness to be a mentor; sensitive to the needs of beginning teachers; to encourage the Associate Teacher; to accept the Associate Teacher; to have a sense of humour and to be willing to see other viewpoints indicate that Colleague Teachers are committed, personable, flexible and encouraging towards their Associate Teacher.

Colleague Teachers seem to value as being more important those characteristics which are professional in nature and value as being less important those characteristics which can be identified as being affective in nature and possibly not related to direct professional behaviour.

It must be remembered though that this differentiation is only relative. Colleague Teachers have in general rated all the characteristics as being either moderately important, very important or extremely important.

Table 3 - The level of use of various mentoring functions by Colleague Teachers.

Specific Functions of a MentorThe extent to which Colleague Teachers will employ these functions

Mean S.D.  
Encourage 4.42 0.51  
Affirm 4.00 0.67  
Inspire 3.95 0.85  
Challenge 4.21 0.79  
Teacher/coach 4.21 0.63  
Counsel 4.63 0.68  
Sponsor 4.05 0.62  
Befriend 4.05 0.62

Table 3 indicates that Colleague Teachers will employ to a great extent or a very great extent all of the functions listed.

Those functions with relatively high means: encourage; challenge; teacher/coach; counsel; can be seen to be again professional activities that require strong personal and professional skills. They are action related and can be viewed as those functions which "get the job done".

Those functions with relatively lower means: inspire; affirm; sponsor; befriend; can be seen as those not related to direct action or behaviour as being possibly hard to decipher or interpret or seen as not required in a professional relationship, e.g. sponsor or befriend.

These data seem to indicate that the relationship between Colleague Teacher and the Associate Teacher is viewed by the Colleague Teachers as being "task oriented" and very professional in nature.

Colleague Teachers have been entrusted with the responsibility of introducing a beginning teacher to the teaching profession. They obviously are taking this induction process very seriously and are therefore wanting to display very professional behaviours and to keep the relationship on a highly professional level. They do not perceive the relationship necessarily to be a social and friendly one at the beginning of the intership. This may occur over time as the relationship develops.

#### SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH ASSOCIATE TEACHERS

These discussions were held over two 1 hour sessions with the Associate Teachers. Prepared focus questions were put to the group and discussion was allowed to continue until the group had exhausted all avenues of discussion and no further points were made. Very few

prompts were necessary as the participants were very eager to provide their views. There was a great deal of agreement among the participants to the points made in contributing to the answer of each focus question.

What characterised your relationship with your Colleague Teacher?

There were both positive and negative views of this relationship.

Positive:

- a positive partnership where shared responsibility was a feature;
- a friendly, supportive relationship where the AT was encouraged and supported by CT;
- one where mentoring by the CT was central;
- acceptance of the AT as a peer and an equal in teaching;
- collegial, in that the CT was open to the sharing of ideas, of changing class organisation and expectations in order to allow the AT to experiment with their approaches to teaching;
- professionally developing because the AT could see the "whole job" through the various roles of teachers. The AT's were exposed to a much wider view of teaching than just classroom practice; and
- one where the AT's ideas and views were more valued than in their previous practicum experiences.

Negative:

Two AT's reported that their relationship was characterised by:

- their CT being passive, aggressive in their attitude towards the AT. This gave an impression of being uninterested in the AT and aggressively negative in their few communicative efforts with the AT;
- the CT was aloof and generally non-communicative;
- an imbalance of power between the CT and AT producing a superior/inferior climate;
- the CT not being supportive of the AT in quite open and confronting ways e.g. no desk provided for AT; no space in storerooms; openly disagreeing with AT in the classroom in front of the class. This led to a reduction in the credibility of the AT with the class;
- a view by the CT that the AT will learn from them but that the CT could not possibly learn anything from a beginner;
- being overly critical where they criticised everything and were negative towards anything the AT attempted; and

- the CT being too friendly with their AT. This gave the impression that the CT may not give feedback that was critical or negative of the AT. In the view of some AT's this interfered with CT being professionally critical of their Associate's practice.

How did the relationship with your CT change or develop over time?

The AT's reported that:

- in the initial stages of the internship they had to prove themselves;
- the CT's became more accepting of the AT as time went by;
- the AT's were being challenged more and more as the internship proceeded;
- the internship began a little like the traditional student teacher - co-operating teacher relationship but within a short time became more a partnership with a collegial relationship;
- the CT became trusting of their AT;
- the class responded to the AT as "the" teacher and this pleased the CT thus permitting the AT to become fully responsible for the class organisation and operation;
- other staff (including administrative staff) responded positively to the AT's after an initial settling in period; and
- because AT's were in the school for a much longer period of time (10 weeks compared to the traditional practicum in pre-service programs of 4 weeks) it allowed them to establish themselves better in the school and therefore to be treated the same as other staff members.

What characteristics did your Colleague Teacher display that assisted your development as a teacher

The AT's responded to this question with the following views.

- CT's were open to the associate's ideas;
- CT's were encouraging of their associates;
- CT's has a sense of humour;

- if you were having a "bad day" the CT could reflect on their own experience as a beginning teacher and empathise with your situation and feelings;
- CT's trusted their associates and were prepared to allow them to experiment;
- CT's provided opportunities which challenged their associates and made them think about their teaching;
- CT's related to their associates in a co-operative and collegial manner, especially in front of pupils and other teachers;
- there was a combination of camaraderie and professional responsibility which enhanced the relationship and put the AT's at ease;
- CT's provided regular feedback to their associates;
- CT's were central to the development of their associates self concept;
- CT's were supportive of their associates in accepting the associates views;
- CT's respected their associates as a teacher;
- the CT and AT were able to talk to each other as equals. This led to many interesting conversations about teaching. Topics of these conversations included: learning styles; teaching approaches; philosophy of teaching; how children learn best; how classes can be organised; the broader roles involved in teaching; developing a balance between teaching and the rest of your life; assessment of students; career paths in teaching; and
- the CT provided a great deal of time to meet, talk and work with their associate. This point was unanimously agreed by the group as being an extremely important characteristic for all CT's to display. It was the regular availability of time to discuss all manner of things that was regarded as essential to the smooth introduction of a beginning teacher to the profession.

What characteristics did your Colleague Teacher display that hindered your development as a teacher?

AT's raised the following characteristics:

- the CT did not trust their associate;

- the CT did not value the opinion of their associate;
- there was little collegiality in the relationship;
- the CT had a negative attitude to any suggestions made by the associate;
- the AT was not encouraged to experiment. There was an expectation that the associate would become a clone of the colleague;
- the CT could not release the class to the associate. The CT was protective of their class and made many excuses to come into the class and work with the pupils; and
- the CT was overly critical in a negative manner. It seemed at times that the CT was being particularly "picky" in continually providing negative feedback while never providing any positive feedback. This had serious effects on the associates self concept.

It should be emphasised that these comments were not made by the group of Associate Teachers generally. There were two students who did not have very satisfactory experiences and these comments predominantly came from them.

#### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

There appears from the data presented to be significant agreement between the Colleague and Associate Teachers as to the important characteristics in a collegial, mentoring relationship:

The Colleague Teachers identified in their questionnaire responses the areas of:

- sensitive to the needs of beginning teachers;
- encouragement of the associate;
- acceptance of the associate;
- a sense of humour;
- willing to see other viewpoints;

as being very or extremely important characteristics of a mentor.

The Associate Teachers made significant comments which supported these

views. The commentary included statements about their Colleague Teachers:

- acceptance of them in the school and especially in the classroom as a "real" teacher;
- encouragement of them in the development of classroom practice;
- trusting their associate to experiment and try things that were different;
- having a sense of humour and being able to see the positive side of things when they may not have gone so well.

The Associates report that these characteristics of their Colleagues played an important role in their relationship and assisted them in their growth as a beginning teacher. The collegial relationship was greatly valued by the Associates and contributed to their development of a positive self concept.

There were some negative comments made by two Associates that in some instances Colleague Teachers were also non communicative, not supportive and overly negative in their criticisms. This provides some concern as to the manner and process of the selection of teachers to take on the role of Colleague.

With regard to the extent various functions were employed by the Colleague Teachers, the Associate Teachers were again broadly in agreement with the findings from the Colleague Teacher questionnaire. Where the Colleagues identified encourage; challenge; teacher/coach; and counsel as being relatively high on their scale the Associates certainly identified encouragement; providing a challenge; and providing sound counsel as being those characteristics which they perceived as being of assistance in their development as a teacher.

The findings of this study support the views of many writers in the field about the nature of mentoring, the characteristics required and the functions performed by the participants in the mentoring relationship.

The Colleague Teachers have an average of more than 13 years teaching experience. They have been selected by their Principals to participate in the program. The majority hold a four-year (Bachelor) qualification or better. This suggests that the definition of Hutto, Holden and Haynes (1991) of a mentor as an experienced, successful and knowledgeable professional has been achieved.

Colleague Teachers regard willingness to be involved as a Mentor as an extremely important characteristic, again agreeing with the work of Hutto et al.

The personal characteristics rated highly by the Colleague Teachers and reported by their Associate Teachers as being important to their growth and development support the conclusions of Wildman, Maggliaro, Niles and Niles (1992). The specific functions of mentors identified by Anderson and Shannon (1988) were also implemented to a great extent by our Colleague Teachers. Interestingly the Associate Teachers were not quite so supportive of this view as they had some reservations about the ability of the Colleagues to implement these functions.

There were some doubts cast upon the program by two students who did not complete the requirements of the Internship. Their experiences have given the writer some cause for questioning the selection process of these Colleagues and the lack of a process for matching the Colleague Teacher, the school and the Associate Teacher in a more formal sense.

## CONCLUSION

This study has reinforced the view that a mentoring process has great potential as part of an induction program for beginning teachers.

In order for such a program to be implemented effectively there needs to be a number of decisions made that will support the process and work towards ensuring its success.

Firstly, a training program for Colleague Teachers is essential. The existing program needs to be extended and improved. The program needs to be based upon principles which will guide the content and processes involved. Some of these guiding principles are:

- all Colleague Teachers need to be identified as being extremely willing to be involved in the whole program;
- Colleague Teachers should be aware of the varying needs of Beginning Teachers;
- Colleague Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the characteristics and roles of a mentor;
- Colleague Teachers must be prepared to devote a great deal of time in developing and nurturing the collegial relationship;
- Colleague Teachers need to demonstrate the inter-personal skills required for developing and maintaining a collegial relationship.

Secondly, the selection process for Colleague and Associate Teachers

needs to be investigated and suggestions made in order to ensure a compatible match between Associate, school and Colleague.

Further investigation needs to be entered into so as to identify aspects of the Internship program that could be improved. Particular attention could be paid to the action research component of the program and how it can be better integrated to the classroom practice of the Associate and their Colleague.

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