Mentoring –

transforming school cultures

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ABSTRACT

Research has indicated that local school factors affect teacher professional development, yet discussion of the link between mentoring programs for beginning teachers and aspects of the organisation in which they occur is sparse in the literature. This paper explores these links through a case study of a Queensland school involved in a district mentoring program. It draws on semi-structured interviews with eight participants, designed as part of the evaluation of the program. It is argued that leadership in the school and the existence of a formal mentoring program legitimised behaviours enacting key values which supported a cultural change in the school.

Introduction

Rapid change has led to changes in the conditions and learning needs of students and an explosion of subject-matter knowledge and knowledge about teaching and learning (Smylie 1995 p.97). Teachers are hence being urged to teach in ways they were not taught themselves (Hargeaves 1997). These factors have highlighted the need for ongoing professional growth for teachers (e.g. Logan and Sachs 1995). The literature now abounds with models of professional development (e.g. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley 1990) and discussion of policies (e.g. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1995) and practices (e.g. Lieberman 1995) which support or inhibit teacher professional growth.

A growing emphasis in teacher professional development is on recognition of the expertise of practising teachers and the importance of teachers learning from and with one another (e.g. Acker 1995). Talbert and McLaughlin's 1994 study, for example, supported the contention that "teacher professionalism depends, to a signficant degree, on the extent and character of local teacher community" (Talbert and McLaughlin 1994). So notions of community and collegiality are increasingly appearing in the literature on teacher professional development and school improvement.

Institutional arrangements (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1995) and factors like school culture (Fullan 1991a, Guskey and Sparks 1996, Smyley 1995) affect teacher development. "[T]he 'order' of an organisation is maintained through its symbolic systems, routines, habits or conventions, rules, environmental interactions, rewards, incentives, and sanctions" (Smylie 1995 p.108) and changing existing institutional orders in a school is not easy. Talbert and McLaughlin (1994) argue that discussions of improving education have paid little attention to social-normative dimensions of professional practice and Guskey (1995) claims that many approaches neglect the "powerful impact of context" (p.117). Yet sociological research on work has demonstrated the ability of work groups to set standards of occupational behaviour and teachers' work lives are shaped in powerful ways by local school traditions and norms (Talbert and McLaughlin 1994).

Mentoring

Mentoring practices are not new, having existed formally and informally in workplaces for a long time. Current trends in professional development for teachers have, however, brought a renewed focus on mentoring, as it features what are considered desirable aspects of professional development, as discussed above. In recent years within education, mentoring has been discussed widely in the United States and increasingly in Australia with respect to the induction of new teachers (Carter 1997, Cochran-Smith and Paris 1995). In the United Kingdom, changes to teacher training which have meant that student teachers spend the majority of their preservice time in schools have placed a greater focus on formal mentoring programs (Field and Field 1994, Tomlinson 1995, Wilkin 1992). Mentoring is seen as an effective (and cheap) way of teaching people how to teach (eg Maynard and Furlong 1995, Field and Field 1994) and is increasingly being advocated as a desirable way of fostering teacher professional development (e.g. Board of Teacher Registration 1998).

Much of the writing on mentoring for beginning or student teachers is of a technical nature, looking at, for example:

- definitions/understandings of mentoring (Carruthers 1992, Field 1994, Anderson and Shannon 1995, Kay 1990, Martin 1996, Maynard and Furlong 1995, Tomlinson 1995);
- the roles of a mentor (Bey 1990, Elliot and Calderhead 1995, Huling-Austin 1990, Hurst and Wilkin 1992);

- the importance of relationships (Odell 1990, Rothera, Howkins and Hendry 1995, Tomlinson 1995); and
- how to set up a mentoring program (Berrill 1992, Hill, Jennings and Madgwick 1992, Thody 1993, Turner 1995).

The benefits of mentoring for teachers are often mentioned (e.g. Caldwell and Carter 1993, Killion 1990, Tomlinson 1995). Those involved in mentoring programs appear to have a belief that the organisation as a whole benefits, but this does not seem to be explored in any depth. The benefits of mentoring appear to be accepted in an uncritical way (Long 1997) with an absence of a theoretical or conceptual base (Jacobi 1991).

Discussion of the links between effective mentoring programs and aspects of the organisation in which these occur is sparse and ambiguous in the literature. The ambiguity typical of such discussion is evidenced in Kelly and colleagues' statements (1992, p.178) that, established in organisations which strive to be "caring communities" mentoring can and should enhance the development of everyone in that organisation. Yet it also (in the same paragraph) "provides a scheme whereby both the mentor and the protégé … can work together to build … 'The Learning Company'." In other words a caring community can be conserved and transmitted through mentoring, and/or a learning community can be created through mentoring. This reveals the tensions inherent in the literature around whether mentoring is a conservative practice or a transformative practice.

Cochran-Smith and Paris (1995) argue that mentoring programs, based as they usually are on skill and culture transmission, are essentially conservative and that alternative visions of mentoring are needed. Caldwell and Carter (1992) believe that "mentoring, or one of the other forms of collaboration in the workplace, is a prerequisite if restructuring of organisations is to be effective." It seems that mentoring practices have the potential to transform rather than reproduce school culture. The challenge is to understand how that potential can be realised.

Despite the emergence of writings in the area of teacher professional development which argue for the importance of context, there appears to be a lack of research on the effect of context on mentoring programs. If mentoring is seen as a means of transforming schools, then exploration of the nature of the relationship between mentoring programs and the organisation in which they occur will advance our understandings in this area. Talbert and McLaughlin (1994) argue that research is also needed on how teacher community develops in a local context and on the role played by the school culture and context. They maintain that the multiple lenses of organisational and social systems theory are needed to understand the development of teacher collaboration. This paper attempts to explore some of these issues.

School culture

"Culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that builds up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools" (Deal and Peterson 1998). Culture is 'the way we do things around here' (Garratt 1990).

Teaching has traditionally been isolated work, with teachers working alone in their "egg-crate" classrooms (Lortie 1975). Isolated teachers can feel powerless in the face of pressures and decisions imposed on them, which they do not understand and "this sense of powerlessness eats away at the teacher's sense of his or her own capacity to make a difference in children's education" (Fullan and Hargreaves 1991 p.39). This can lead to what Hargreaves (1994) calls "a culture of individualism".

Rather than blaming teachers for this, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) propose that aspects of teachers' work support this culture. A school's context, for example, contributes to its culture. "[T]he impossibly high expectations many teachers set themselves in a job with poorly defined limits … and a range of mounting pressures and rising expectations for excellence in a widening array of responsibilities" also contribute to a culture of individualism (Fullan and Hargreaves 1991 pp.42-3).

Smyth (1989) argues that the silence of teachers who have come to adapt to being left alone and being alone can be a 'protective response to subordination'. School leadership (as opposed to management) is about providing teachers with ways of beginning a dialogue with one another and realising that "part of being a teacher involves grappling with and collectively confronting the contradictory demands of the educational system," (Smyth 1989 p.223). Such activities are part of a culture of collaboration rather than a culture of individualism.

The crucial role of the principal in schools is widely acknowledged in the literature (e.g. Fullan, 1991b, Groundwater-Smith and White 1995, Hall 1987, House 1975, Louis and Miles 1990). The relationships established between principal and teacher will pervade the relationships throughout the entire school: "If the teacher-principal relationship can be characterized as helpful, supportive, trusting … so too will others" (Barth 1990 p.19). Through his/her behaviours, the principal is "steward" of the values of a school (Caldwell 1994).

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991 pp.48-9) refer to the work of Nias and her colleagues in England (1989). Their research into the staff relationships of five primary schools indicated that cultures of collaboration consist of particular qualities, attitudes and behaviours that run through staff relationships on a day-to-day basis. Staff reveal their vulnerabilities and allowances are made for personal circumstances; individuals are valued. Commitment, help, support and trust underpin the way the teachers treat each other.

Mentoring programs are based on teachers working together, talking together and supporting one another, so it would appear that they would help create a culture of collaboration in a school. However, Hargreaves (1994) warns that programs like mentoring which mandate teachers working together can lead to "contrived collegiality", rather than to the cultures of collaboration which are seen as desirable. This study sought to explore the relationship between a mentoring program and the culture of a particular school.

The study

A case study methodology was used for this project because case studies can present complex pictures which resist simple interpretations (Walker, Lewis and Laskey 1996). The study was based on a primary school involved in a district mentoring program for teachers new to the state education system. Semi-structured interviews with eight participants - administration, mentor teachers, mentee teachers and consultants involved with the school - were carried out as part of the evaluation of the district mentoring program. Further analysis of the responses revealed interesting insights into the dynamics of the school at the particular time, and follow-up interviews with two of the respondents helped clarify these. An interpretative approach has been adopted, so the partiality of both the researcher and the respondents needs to be acknowledged (Gill 1996).

A limited case study of one school can not draw definitive conclusions, but it can throw some light on issues relating to mentoring programs and the context in which they are implemented. The experiences and perspectives of the participants are important sources of

insight into the complexities of the lives of teachers in schools, and of how organisational factors impact on those lives.

<u>The school</u>

Sunnyside State School is located in a major regional centre of Australia. The school has just over 500 students in classes from preschool to Year 7. The clientele of the school is predominantly working class attracted to the area by its cheaper housing. Two factors - a fractured casualised workforce and family change - place much stress on families and children in the area.

A new principal had been appointed the year before the mentoring program was established and she described the situation when she arrived:

> *"… when I arrived there was a fair amount of graffiti and damage happening at the school. …. There were major issues. We had to put in a crisis management team. I trained four members of staff so we had proper procedures for when a kid was out of control. We had a few scenes you know kids up trees threatening to kill themselves. Children who I suspected were being molested. One little Year 1, I had to go off and do the training for physical restraint. Yes year 1. He had to be held down and I learned how to do it. If the big kids went beserk we just called the police. I worked out I could handle about six children in one go – 2 to 3 in my office and 2-3 with the deputy and after that I'd have to ring up the parents to come and get them…. The first year I was here we had real trouble getting TRS [casual, relief] teachers. The good teachers just refused to come here, and the ones that would come weren't any good with our kids, so the deputy and I just went up and taught them ourselves. Half a day each."*

Most of the staff were experienced teachers. *"A proportion of the staff had been there a long time and were reluctant to make changes,"* said the principal. *"Then there were the younger people, or rather those who hadn't been here very long – they weren't all young. So the staff was fairly split – some wanted to try new things out, but others didn't like this, it made them look not too good."*

In the interviews, participants gave insights into "the way things were done" at Sunnyside before the current principal arrived. *"This school is probably the most unsocial, non-cohesive school I've ever worked at,"* Mentor 1 told me. *"I've just got back after a week off sick and no-one came and said 'How are you?' "*

Sunnyside State School is an older-style school which had been remodelled into an open area school in the 1970s. Many of the staff are seasoned teachers whose first experiences of having other adults in their classrooms were associated with being inspected in their early days of teaching – a cold and often unpleasant experience for many. *"Teachers didn't really like to work with other teachers, but the school structure was such that they had to… So I at least tried to put together teachers who wanted to be in the same room"* (Principal).

At Sunnyside State School, teachers struggle with diversity, learning and behaviour problems, and a growing amount of "social work" in their roles, and many drive themselves hard, leaving little time and energy for collaboration. The administrator pointed out, *"I class this as one of the tougher schools … no class in this school is an easy class." "Teachers were exhausted every day just from teaching the kids"* (Principal). These factors can also lead to some teachers giving up, which can lead to resistance to discussion of teaching with their colleagues.

The principal outlined the situation of the two mentee teachers. Mentee 1 had taught briefly elsewhere, and was new to the state. The principal described how the class she was given was formed, two weeks into the school year:

> "When I came here last year, teachers believed their work was just with those 25 kids in their class. A classic example was when I needed to form a new [year] 1-2 class early this year and I trusted their professional judgment and I asked them to nominate students for the new class. Well what they did was stuck in all their little shits! I didn't realise, but the rest of the school was aghast! … I was angry and the staff knew I was angry about that. I'd told them I was trusting their professional judgment to do the right thing…But that had been the culture at this school… By the end of first term I thought Mentee 1 wouldn't last another term."

Mentee 2 was a graduate who had trained as a specialist secondary teacher and been appointed as a specialist primary teacher, so she taught all classes in the school for 30 minute sessions during the week. *"With Mentee 2, just out of Uni, it was like putting a fish in a tank of pirhana,"* the principal said. *"I don't know if it was stress, but the kids were just revolting … Mentee 2 was just lost, very talented in her area, and is very committed, but had only ever done high school pracs … She had some kids who were being difficult and the classroom teachers were blaming her … But teaching [a specialist area] is difficult – half an hour with every class in the school."*

Mentee 2 revealed: *"It's been tough because I'm the only first year here and there are a lot of very experienced teachers. There seem to be a lot of teachers who've been here for a very long time and there's "Well, are you going to last?" and so they talk to me differently. The fact that I'm young and not experienced and new to the school meant, yeah, they did treat me differently, some of them."*

So, at the beginning of the year, the two teachers new to Sunnyside State School discovered that many of the teachers there valued their privacy and their territory. The behaviour of the established teachers appeared to be based on the belief that new teachers should be left to "sink or swim", to undertake a "rite of passage" or "trial by fire" (Brock and Grady 1997 p.16). Teachers didn't ask colleagues how they were in case they revealed they were having a tough time, and many teachers left as soon as school finished, thus avoiding contact with colleagues and parents and further contact with students: *"Three o'clock and they're all gone"* (Mentor 1).

Culture plays a major role in school restructuring and school improvement efforts. Some schools develop "toxic" cultures with a fractured and hostile spirit and focus and a sense of helplessness and despair which can foster radical individualism rather than collegiality (Peterson 1999 pp.17-18). It seems that, over time, Sunnyside State School had developed such a culture.

The mentoring program

Towards the end of the principal's first year at the school, a consultant in the district offered a two-day mentoring training program. The principal called for volunteers and Mentor 1 and Mentor 2 attended this training and attended mentor network meetings during the year. The administration had shown that it valued mentoring behaviours by allocating the funds for the teachers to attend the training and promoting the mentoring program in the school:

> "*If the school management doesn't support mentoring it must be very difficult for the mentor" (Principal).*

The two-day program explored concepts of mentoring, included some consultation skills training and encouraged participants to come to their own understandings of how they might implement a mentoring program in their school. The district did not prescribe or mandate any school structures or processes. While this training helped the mentors with skills and understandings about mentoring processes and programs, it also served to give a name and a status to mentoring behaviours at Sunnyside State School.

> *"A lot of it [mentoring] comes naturally, but doing the inservice organised it in my own mind and now I want to set some things in place formally in school policy – what the program is, its goals etc. We've new teachers coming next year and we've got the opportunity to really help them" (Mentor 2).*

Having a formal mentoring program in the school was a first step towards cultural change and school improvement. However, the existence of a mentoring program alone is not sufficient to change "the way things are done" at a school (Long 1997). This paper will argue that the program itself would have achieved little in the area of cultural change without the leadership and the norms of behaviour that were fostered in the school that year.

Leadership

This section will explore the part that leadership at Sunnyside State School played in fostering cultural change, particularly the leadership of the principal. Leadership is not exercised in a vacuum, but in the culture and context of a particular school. There had been a turnover of administration at Sunnyside State School over the years. *"These were leaders who under the managerial system had got caught up in the administrative side of the school and hadn't dealt with the two big issues – teacher stress and behaviour management,"* commented the new principal.

Brock and Grady (1997 p.24) consider the principal to be "the culture leader", the one who "establishes the climate and vision for the school". The way the principal undertakes his or her role is crucial . "What the principal says, does, and rewards indicate which behaviours are acceptable and which are unacceptable. The principal establishes and reinforces key values, beliefs, rituals, and social norms" (Groundwater-Smith and White 1995 p.110).

> *"The first year I just did enough to calm things down and stress 'This is the way we behave in this school'. I suspended a lot of kids. But I was very very careful of the way I acted, never yelling, because I knew everyone was watching to see what I'd do. And yelling and shouting was the way it had been done there before. But now the teachers felt they couldn't yell and shout any more. I was doing all that modelling work with the teacher and the kids together. The men who used to yell and scream slowly realised that they couldn't behave that way any more" (Principal).*

Very deliberately and very carefully, the principal modelled what she believed was appropriate behaviour, trying to change the norms in the school. Her values and beliefs were embedded in these behaviours and some of the teachers recognised this:

> *"She's here for the good of the kids. No problem is too small for her to deal with. She loves teaching and she loves kids" (Mentor 2).*

> *"She's great with parents. She already has them on side by her manner, the smile on her face, her welcoming manner. If there's an issue it's always a case of how can we work together to solve this problem for the good of the kid? … She's out there every morning at 8 am saying hello to all the kids.*

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> *Some of them get here very early and she knows them all by name…She also gives us personal support – we can come to her with our personal problems…" (Administrator).*

Mentor 2 argued *"Yes there's been a change in the school, and there's one reason for that and that's because of [the principal]."* There is no doubt that the principal played a key role in changing the norms of behaviour at the school, but the administrator recognised the role the mentors had played in supporting change: *"We've got someone here who's really made a difference… These two people along with [the principal] are making a huge difference to the school."*

If leadership is about making things one believes in happen, then, as Fullan and Hargreaves (1991 p.51) argue, it is a particular kind of leadership, one that enables or empowers teachers, that facilitates change in a school. Leadership can come from a variety of sources in the school, and mentoring programs are strategies for fostering more experienced teachers' experiences of leadership. "[E]very teacher is a leader" (Fullan and Hargreaves 1991 p.78; Barth 1990 p.123) and it takes all staff to transform the culture of a school.

> *"I didn't do it myself. You have to recognise which people on your staff have the potential and you have to use outside consultants in a way which is appropriate for your school and the particular situation" (Principal).*

Comments from the administrator supported the principal's strategy of ensuring teachers knew that their strengths were recognised and appreciated: *"She's [the principal] such a positive person, and has confidence in your ability and that's really given confidence to the staff."*

The two teachers who were trained as mentors both came to play key roles in the school, particularly Mentor 2. The principal relinquished authority to them, and gave them credit for success:

> *"But really the change was from one teacher here who became a leader… Mentor 2 really drove the mentoring program … because she's really well received by the rest of the staff because she's always helping everyone … I was really really lucky with that teacher [mentor 2]. Alongside me, she really wanted to change things. She really was committed to cultural change… So you have to have mentors who are committed to the profession and to the system. Because she set a good example as a mentor, a couple of other teachers saw this and changed too. Although she was a young teacher with new ideas she was an older person and she didn't take sides and she promoted what she believed in her everyday work. And everyone respected her. She lived her values" (Principal).*

Both mentors felt that their values of wanting to help others were key ones and that the mentoring program gave them "lots of opportunities to help" (Mentor 1). These teachers had agency to make decisions and to influence others. The principal trusted their professional judgements:

> *"… Now mentor 2 has organised the administrator and I. She's come and told us how we can support the mentee best" (Principal).*

Sergiovanni (1996 p.154) uses Tannenbaum's (1968) research to argue that when administrators share power, there is more power for everyone, and the total amount of power and influence in the whole organisation is a predictor of satisfaction and performance.

Certainly, the mentoring program legitimised the supportive behaviours and values of these two teachers, and gave them a structure to take leadership roles, building on the principal's modelling to make "helping each other" part of "the way we behave around here". But it was the interplay of all factors which led to changes.

The next section discusses further the development of a culture of collaboration at Sunnyside State School.

Cultures of Collaboration

Values of collaboration started to become a basis for relationships at Sunnyside State School:

> *"With the change in administration, there's been a change in the culture of the school. I think we have a lot of teachers in the school who are and will be mentoring. [The principal] has had a really clear vision of how she wants the school to operate, to feel and how children are to be managed. And the mentoring project has fitted well into that. … A key word is supportive regardless of how horrible things can be at times, and it's support for everyone. It's easy to be supportive of kids but everyone needs support" (Administrator).*

The principal worked at establishing positive relationships in this school. She demonstrated commitment to the staff with a recognition of the challenging job they had and constantly affirmed: *"If a kid's got a problem it's all of our problem".*

The mentoring program played a key role in demonstrating this. Mentor 1 highlighted the situation of the young teacher new to the state:

> *" I told her (mentee 1) she gets 10 out of 10 for sticking it … She sent a note up one day saying 'I'm finished' and I went and got the class and took them for her … This school has been very supportive of mentee 1 in terms of taking the kids" (Mentor 1).*

The principal explained the part the mentoring program had played:

> *"When I first came here I was putting out fireballs all the time... So this year I did a lot of positive things. … I was upfront. I used to say "If a kid's got a problem it's all of our problem". And then the mentoring program showed everyone there were other ways to operate especially when it was obvious to everyone that this teacher was not coping, was "failing" and we didn't throw her out, we set up support and people saw we meant what we said and they came onside… The only way we survived with that teacher in that class was the mentoring. That class was just revolting. Even the deputy and I didn't know what to do with them… [The administrator] and I had been modelling for nine months, but the mentoring program picked up on it – and we plied all this money and all this time into this teacher and it started to snowball. … I still keep saying 'We're all in this together'." (Principal).*

Feelings of interdependence and mutual responsibility were slowly fostered. Towards the middle of the year, some of the staff were sharing responsibility for the difficult Year 1-2 class, a result of discussions initiated by one of the mentors at Behaviour Management Committee meetings. The principal indicated; *"Each child in the difficult class has been taken on by a teacher. It's built into the behaviour management program of the*

school." When these children caused stress in the classroom, Mentee 1 had an arrangement to send particular children to particular teachers, who were prepared for this and had strategies ready to support the child.

Mentee 2's challenges were different as she taught every class in the school. The consultants spoke to some of the teachers on her behalf. According to the principal, *"They said to them, instead of saying she's not up to it, they said, 'You manage your class well, [mentee 2]'s having trouble. Could you give her some ideas as to how to manage these kids?' And so collegiality started. And the Behaviour Management Committee took it on"* (Principal). This young graduate was happy with the help she'd been given, which engendered a feeling of belonging:

> *"The principal helped a lot and so did the consultant. I've been really pleased with the help I've got here … The mentor has helped me a lot especially lately, because I've got difficult classes … I've never felt I've been dumped in and left to fend for myself. As a first year teacher, I didn't really expect such help. The first term or two I was pretty hesitant but then I realised people weren't there to judge but to help. But that was myself, my perception, that they might be judging me. They've always been really supportive"* (Mentee 2).

The trained mentors and the administration played a key role in supporting the mentee teachers. However, as a result of the leadership at the school and the work of the school's Behaviour Management Committee and the district consultants, there were many supportive relationships developed in the school. The mentees appear to have been able to draw on the expertise and support of a range of people from both within the school and from the district. In particular, relationships within the school changed:

> *"I would say that every teacher here has helped one of those two teachers in some way over the year… Once these teachers took these young teachers under their wing, it affected the other teachers"* (Principal).

Mentor 2 indicated: *"The people at the school who care about other people have been more comfortable helping others this year."* The behavioural norms were moving from territorial, defensive mechanisms to a willingness to share, give encouragement, support and help. According to the administrator: *"Coming in to the school now it's a really happy place, a place you want to be."* Relationships were changing from self-protective to supportive of others. The principal noticed changes in particular teachers' behaviour:

> *" The next person who offered to train [as a mentor] was someone who usually didn't involve herself in staff things, but she had been part of the support for the Year 1-2 teacher, because she was close to her geographically. Others told her she was a good class teacher, but the mentor went and asked her to help mentee 1 and so did the consultant and the next year she put her hand up. Now that was a great outcome. I never thought that she would [be interested in helping others]"* (Principal).

It is important to state here that teachers at the school varied in their commitment to helping one another. However, the interpersonal behaviours modelled by the principal and the mentor teachers, which were so clearly based on values of sharing, support, trust and care, had affected the behaviours of other teachers and had started to move the culture of individualism previously prevalent in the school towards a culture of collaboration.

At the end of the year, the administrator summed it up: *"This 'I had them last year and they were no problem' has gone, and it's from the mentor teachers being strong and standing up for what they believe."*

Discussion

Systems thinking has highlighted that organisational development and individual development are linked in complex ways, and that organisational development ultimately depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals (e.g. Garratt 1990, Senge 1990, Talbert and McLaughlin 1994). Schools are sites of contestation with their own unique sets of relationships and cultures established through the values, beliefs and behaviours of the particular individuals associated with them. Change is not easy, and simplistic approaches will not work. It takes skilled leadership and time. "Existing cultures are often deep and strong" (Groundwater-Smith and White 1995 p.172). Reaffirming particular values and beliefs over others takes strength and determination.

Before the arrival of this principal, Sunnyside State School appears to have become "stuck" (Rosenholtz 1989), perhaps even what Heath (1989) called a "neurotic institution" (quoted in Groundwater-Smith and White 1995 p.116). Smyth (1989) argues that school leadership has less to do with administrative functions, which appear to have been the focus of previous principals at this school,

> and more to do with finding ways in which school participants can gain a wider sense of community and give full expression to an enhanced 'possibility' of the way schools might be (Smyth 1989 p.219).

Referring to Greenfield's work, Smyth (1989 p.220) argues that teachers want schools to "reflect the values that are central and meaningful in their lives" and that this leads to continual struggle and contestation as each seeks to express beliefs, knowledge and rituals:

> In this view we are all leaders in some degree. We all have legitimacy in the degree to which we act out of our own values and can involve others in them (Greenfield 1981 p.27 quoted in Smyth 1989 p.220).

The new principal had clear views about what a school should be like, based on values of caring for students, teachers and parents and providing support. These were modelled by her during her first year at the school and the modelled behaviours were noticed by staff and emulated by some, certainly by the administrator and the teachers who volunteered to be mentors. Mutual support, trust and openness characterise an authentic collaborative culture (Groundwater-Smith and White 1995 p.114). These are the same values which underpin mentoring behaviours.

The mentoring program named and legitimised the supporting behaviours and encapsulated explicitly and publicly the values these few individuals in the school shared. Through being recognised as mentors, the mentor teachers adopted more powerful voices in the discourse of the school and were able to influence others. Other teachers, reminded of their basic values of "loving teaching and loving kids" and seeing ways of expressing these opening up, began to share responsibility and support the mentee teachers.

It needs to be pointed out that contestation about values and beliefs and about the type of school Sunnyside was and would be was still occurring at the end of the year described in this paper, and is still occurring now. The culture is being created and re-created along with leadership patterns and relationships. A key factor has been another change in the principalship.

This paper argues that the existence of a formal mentoring program in a school is not sufficient for cultural changes to occur. A formal program can, in fact, lead to "contrived collegiality" (Hargreaves 1994) if it is implemented as a model with a focus on the set procedures to be followed rather than on living the values of trust and working together. In this way, mentoring could serve as a conservative practice, preserving the status quo.

These experiences at Sunnyside State School would, however, indicate that mentoring can be a transformative practice, that a formal mentoring program can support a cultural change towards a more collaborative culture if the behaviour of key people seen as leaders in the school (including the administration) also embodies the values of commitment, sharing , trust and support which underpin the concept of mentoring. As the principal of Sunnyside avowed:

> *"You have to do all those things in the school as well as mentoring, because just having the program is not enough … The management team have to have these skills, it must be modelled … We're all in this together."* (Principal).

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