

Using Mentored Learning To Support Pre-service Teachers In Child Protection

**Paper Presented at the NZARE/AARE Conference in Auckland, NZ, 29 Nov – 2 Dec
2003**

**Dr. Faye McCallum
School of Education, University of South Australia.**

Using Mentored Learning To Support Pre-service Teachers In Child Protection.

The issues and problems associated within a specific context where pre-service teachers were found to be ill prepared to fulfil part of their teaching responsibilities is explored. The issues arose out of a review of Mandatory Notification Training, which aims to prepare mandated notifiers to report incidences of suspected child abuse and neglect to Child Protective Services. The review highlighted factors that inhibited pre-service teachers to fulfil the legal mandate. These focussed on conceptual understanding of content, and connections between learning and personal experiences. It was found that the training was based on assumptions about knowledge, learning, and teaching that differed from the assumptions underlying prevailing practice. This raises the following questions: Are the assumptions of existing training actually consistent with identifying and reporting practices? What content and processes of preparing pre-service teachers to report are necessary to move them towards confident practice? Mentored learning was adopted as a strategy that explored and tested these assumptions. An evaluation of pre-service teachers' knowledge, understanding and confidence to report suspected child abuse and neglect prior to graduation indicated that this approach enabled them to acquire more effective skills and familiarity with the mandated role.

Introduction

The number of children reported as abused and neglected in Australia has more than doubled from 42468 in 1988-89 to 115471 in 2000-01 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2002; cited in Goddard, Mitchell & Tucci, 2003). The situation is similar around the world highlighting that children require protection from perpetrators and situations that place them at-risk. Various prevention strategies exist that aim to address this global social problem. These include mandatory notification that legislates certain professionals to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect to child protective services, mass media campaigns, personal safety programs, and welfare and community services. Teachers and volunteers who work in schools are one of the groups of professionals mandated by law to report. Teachers are well placed to assist in the identification, reporting and prevention of child abuse and neglect as supported by Hawtin and Wyse,

Teachers are ideally placed to recognise signs of abuse which may be physical, psychological and/or developmental. They are often in a position of trust in relation to children and enjoy the benefit of long term sustained contact with children, particularly at primary school level (Layton, 2003, p 21.4).

In South Australia the Children's Protection Act (1993) identifies certain professionals as mandated reporters. Pre-service teachers are included due to the nature of their contact with children which may be as volunteers, working in schools, during practicum experiences, on camps and excursions, and in special programs like sport or 'out-of-school hours care'. This requires them to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect, based on reasonable grounds, to Family and Youth Services (hereafter, FAYS). To prepare pre-service teachers to fulfil this legal mandate they are required to complete a one-day training in mandatory notification. Two accredited trainers must deliver the program, designed by FAYS. At the University of South Australia, pre-service teachers are advised to complete the training at an external venue, at any time during their 4-year degree. The training is completed once and issues pertaining to child protection issues are not addressed in any other aspect of the teaching degree. Teachers in South Australia are required by employing bodies to provide evidence that this training has been completed.

Review of training

Although it is acknowledged in the literature that training is a key influence in child abuse and neglect prevention (Hawkins & McCallum, 2001; Levin, 1983; Nightingale & Walker, 1986; Lumsden, 1992; Kalichman, 1993; Reiniger, Robison & McHugh, 1995; Orelove, Hollahan & Myles, 2000), concerns with its effectiveness are also identified which indicate that teachers are inadequately prepared for the mandated role (McCallum, 2001; Abrahams, Casey & Daro, 1992; Crenshaw, Crenshaw & Lichtenberg, 1995; Watts & Laskey, 1994; Nightingale & Walker, 1986). This provided the impetus to review pre-service teacher knowledge, understanding and confidence about child protection issues, specifically as they relate to mandatory notification training. The training informs mandated notifiers about legal obligations, how to identify indicators of abuse, how to respond to victims of abuse, and how to notify suspected child abuse or neglect.

The review was conducted in the final semester of pre-service teachers' Bachelor of Education program, over three consecutive years. Participants had completed mandatory notification training and all required practicum experiences. Volunteers were sought from a sample of pre-service teachers who were enrolled in an elective course. A questionnaire was completed which sought to investigate pre-service teacher knowledge about child abuse and neglect, understanding of the legal requirements for mandated notifiers, and levels of confidence to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

Child abuse and neglect knowledge

Section 11 (1) and (2) of the Children's Protection Act 1993, states that educators are obliged by law to notify the Department for Family and Community Services (renamed Department of Family and Youth Services in 1998) if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child/young person has been abused or neglected and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person's work (whether paid or voluntary) or in carrying out official duties (Family and Community Services, 1997, p. 25). Forty-one percent of the sample could articulate this legal responsibility and the others were confused. They were confused about the meaning of the term 'legal responsibility' as some considered it to be a concern for child safety and that mandatory notification meant teaching children about personal safety, and safe/unsafe environments. It was also thought that it was the training of educators about 'children at risk' and strategies they should employ to assist at-risk children.

The participants listed the professional groups who are mandated to report, as stated by 'The Children's Protection Act' 1993. The list comprises a wide range of professionals (with student responses in parenthesis) such as: medical practitioners [76%]; registered or enrolled nurses [43%]; dentists [3%]; psychologists [8%]; the police force [47%]; probation officers [0%]; social workers [43%]; teachers in any educational institution (including a kindergarten) [96%]; approved family day care providers [30%]; employees of, or volunteers in, a government department, agency or instrumentality, or a local government or non government agency, that provides health, welfare, education, childcare or residential services wholly or partly for children [25%]; and managers whose duties include the direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of services to children [14%].

Three percent of respondents did not list any professional groups and other professional groups who are not legally obliged to report suspected child abuse and neglect were included. They are: Justice of the Peace [2%]; mandated notifiers [3%]; pharmacists [2%]; ministers of religion [6%]; politicians [1%]; judges [1%]; the fire department [1%]; the general public [4%]; lawyers [7%]; parents/caregivers [11%]; public servants [3%]; ambulance/first aid officers [3%]; grandparents [1%]; anyone working with children [15%]; coach/gym or swimming instructors [5%]; neighbours [1%]; and welfare workers [3%].

Sixty eight percent stated that any person could report suspected child abuse and neglect and 27% did not know who was obliged to report. These figures show some level of confusion but despite this, most pre-service teachers acknowledged the role of educators [96%], doctors [76%], and the police [47%] who are the three groups to report most cases of suspected child abuse and neglect in South Australia (McCallum, 2000). The pre-service teachers were asked to identify the four main types of abuse that were taught in the training: sexual abuse [64%]; physical abuse [88%]; emotional abuse [66%]; and, neglect [54%]. Sixty-one percent of the respondents identified the types correctly but others were also listed, for example: verbal abuse [16%]; mental abuse [6%]; psychological abuse [12%]; violence [4%]; isolation [2%] and social abuse [1%]. Fourteen percent did not provide any answer. These responses indicate further confusion that could create difficulties in the identification of specific indicators of victims of abuse.

Understanding the legal requirements

Eighty-six percent rated mandatory notification training as 'very important'. The role of the mandated notifier, to identify and report suspected child abuse and neglect to the child protective services, was clear for 33%. The remainder of the pre-service teachers considered their role to include: an awareness of child abuse and neglect; concern about child safety; keeping records to provide information; monitoring children's behaviour and appearance; protecting children; ensuring children are cared for and treated properly; and, educating children about personal safety. It appears that the legal mandate is not clear for this group which could contribute to under-reporting behaviours.

During the required training, mandated notifiers are informed to consult child protective services if they are unsure about their decision to notify or if they feel they do not have sufficient grounds to report. Forty-four percent knew to do this. However, for confidentiality reasons and for risk of contaminating information, they are explicitly told that they must not discuss details related to the suspected child abuse with colleagues, senior staff or others. Table 1 shows the consultative groups that were used when they were unsure whether they had enough reasonable grounds to make a notification. Pre-service teachers were unsure about whom to consult and some were sharing unethical and confidential information to others. It also indicates power indifference between teachers and pre-service teachers who believe they should consult with experienced or senior staff indicating they are not confident to make a decision alone.

<i>Persons who were consulted</i>	<i>Responses %</i>
Child Protective Services	44
School Principal	27
Social Worker	5
Police	3
Colleague	4
Child Abuse Hotline	2
Mandatory Notification Board	2
Government Department	7

Table 1: Persons who were consulted by pre-service teachers

The legislation informs mandated notifiers that notifications are 'suspicion only' and the training demands that abuse does not have to be proven by the notifier to be reportable. Seventy-five percent knew this but 13% indicated they had to prove that abuse had occurred to make a report and 12% did not know. Notifications are anonymous and no information is to be discussed with the child or their parents/caregivers. Sixteen percent did not know if they should inform the child and/or parents/caregivers and 5% indicated they should. The responsibility to notify lies with the mandated notifier. However, 15% stated that you should gain permission from senior staff (i.e. the principal) at the school and 17% did not know. Mandated notifiers are immune from civil liability if they report in good faith; 38% knew this, 16% disagreed and 45%

did not know. This is significant because literature related to professional under-reporting shows that they are sometimes scared or fearful about reporting. Confusion about procedural and legal requirements is evident with this sample of pre-service teachers, which has consequences for the role of the mandated notifier.

Confidence to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect

Levels of knowledge and clarification about legal requirements are two factors that influence reporting. Another is the level of confidence of the reporter to identify suspected child abuse and neglect, to decide to report, and to make the notification. Factors that influenced levels of confidence during the decision-making process were identified.

Factors that affect confidence	Levels of confidence %		
	Low	Medium	High
Ability to identify abuse	25	40	29
Personal commitment	2	5	93
Level of understanding of legalities	35	36	28
Knowledge of reporting procedures	48	32	19
Assurance that agency will respond	23	45	20
Ability to inform others about training	67	20	13

Table 2: Pre-service teacher confidence levels

Table 2 shows that pre-service teachers were highly committed (93%) to identify and report suspected child abuse and neglect; however, their level of confidence in their ability to identify was high for 29%. Twenty-eight percent indicated high confidence to understanding the legislation, 36% were relatively confident and 35% of low confidence. Nearly half showed low confidence (48%) for knowing the reporting procedures. Similarly, 67% did not feel confident to tell others about child abuse and neglect requirements and the role. And as a group, they did not feel confident that child protective services would respond to their reports. All of these factors have a direct influence on their confidence to identify and report suspected child abuse and neglect, which can lead to under-reporting.

Discussion

The findings identified key elements about the effectiveness of mandatory notification training that are consistent with research conducted about other professionals who are mandated to report suspected child abuse and neglect (Lumsden, 1992; Kalichman, 1993; Reiniger, Robison and McHugh, 1995; Orelove, Hollahan and Myles, 2000). Levin (1983) and Nightingale and Walker (1986) make specific reference to teachers' inadequate training for detecting and managing cases of suspected child abuse and neglect. Consequently, training which is recognised as having a role in child abuse and neglect prevention, impacts on the effectiveness of mandatory reporting implementation.

The review highlights that mandatory notification training is highly valued by pre-service teachers who also perceive it as an important part of their teaching responsibility. However, confusion exists for this group that may impact on the effectiveness of the mandated role for which they have been trained. These include knowledge about who the mandated reporters are, the designated categories of child abuse and neglect, and whether or not they have civil immunity if they report in good faith. Likewise, some respondents were unclear about key actions related to their role. For example, whether the mandated reporter must prove that abuse has occurred or should they report on suspicion alone, whether they are able to consult with

colleagues, and whether they must inform the parent/caregivers of the report. All of these actions were specifically covered in the training that they attended. Such misconceptions may confuse the pre-service teacher and influence decisions related to the identification of and subsequent report of suspected child abuse and neglect to child protective services.

Confusion about policies and procedures has a direct influence on pre-service teacher confidence to identify and report. This review showed that less than a third of pre-service teachers were confident to identify abuse and a small group were confident knowing the reporting procedures. There was further confusion about the legal understanding associated with reporting, the legislation was also not clear and the majority of pre-service teachers indicated that they had little confidence that the system would respond adequately. This was despite a high level of commitment by pre-service teachers, to child abuse and neglect prevention. Research conducted on the under-reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect (McCallum, 2001; Besharov, 1990; Bavolek, 1983; Coleman, 1995; Silverman, 1987; Sundell, 1997; Wurtele & Schmidt, 1992; Rodrigues & Sutherland, 1999) recorded similar findings as reasons why mandated reporters fail to report. The research of Watts and Laskey (1994) conducted with educators and childcare personnel, also support the findings of this review.

Berson, Berson and Ralston (1998) support the importance of appropriate training and the teacher's role by stating:

The pervasiveness of child abuse necessitates appropriate training of pre-service teachers to fulfil their legal and ethical responsibilities (p. 333).

They support that training programs which present lists of symptoms associated with child abuse and neglect are inadequate, because they do not: develop decision-making skills, encourage appropriate teacher responses, or assist teachers to interact effectively.

The pre-service teacher responses in this review highlight inadequacies with the training that are congruent with the difficulties reported in the literature for experienced educators. This group of pre-service teachers were keen to complete further studies and training in the area to increase awareness of the issues and their confidence to identify and report. This is clear evidence that pre-service teachers require additional training and that 'one-off' or isolated programs are not sufficient to skill beginning teachers to fulfil the legal mandate, or to be able to contribute to ongoing child abuse and neglect prevention.

The findings question the current model that is used to train pre-service teachers to identify and report suspected child abuse and neglect and suggests that there is a need for alternative or additional curriculum in pre-service teacher education courses about child protection. The next section describes an approach, mentored learning, which was used to better inform pre-service teachers of the mandating role with an aim to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence to function in a more preventative manner in regard to child protection. An evaluation of this approach follows the discussion.

Mentored Learning

Mentoring programs in teacher education have been a popular support at pre-service and inservice levels in the United States since the early 1980's. Some were designed to reduce novice teachers' attrition; some were intended to move novices smoothly and efficiently into the existing teaching culture; some required mentors to be a substantial support for novices' learning to teach; and finally, some were developed to transform the teaching profession and culture (Huling-Austin, 1990).

Several kinds of knowledge, skills, and dispositions are expected of the novice teacher as they enter the profession of teaching, their reporting role being just one. Educators need to consider

what and how novices are expected to learn. Firstly, Kennedy (1991) suggests that novice teachers need to develop relevant dispositions and that these include their personal beliefs about knowledge, learning and teaching. Wang and Odell (2002) report on research on both pre-service and in-service teachers and suggest that their personal dispositions toward teaching have a strong impact on what they are able to learn from professional development opportunities. Secondly, Wang and Odell state further that to help students develop deep and flexible conceptual understandings about content, teachers need to also develop the same sort of knowledge including relevant pedagogical content. Armed with this knowledge, teachers are able to help students make the connections, relate ideas and address misconceptions. Thirdly, specific pedagogical learner knowledge must be developed by novice teachers. This knowledge allows them to understand learners from different cultural, social, and family backgrounds, interpret policies and support learner development in cognitive, social, physical, and psychological dimensions (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

The mandatory notification training experienced by this group of pre-service teachers used a process of transferring information in an expository way with little interaction, time for questioning or reflection and which was set within a one-day time limit. Research on teacher knowledge suggests that in order to teach effectively, novices need to develop crucial dispositions and knowledge. These include: a strong commitment; a deep understanding of subject matter and its representation in relation to the real teaching situation; a broader knowledge of diverse student populations and skills in observing and interpreting their learning; and, a flexible connection between these dispositions and knowledge in various teaching contexts and for diverse student populations (Wang & Odell, 2002, p 490). The review reveals that mandatory notification training in its present form, is not effective in helping pre-service teachers, as novices to the profession, to develop the kinds of knowledge, understandings and confidence that are crucial in their day-to-day work of protecting children. This is because traditional training is unable to support pre-service teachers in reflecting because they lack the practical experience in teaching and don't have the time available to do this. Consequently, it is difficult for them to make the connections from the training content to the realities of abused and neglected children. Compounding this is the problem that many may have had little personal experiences of abuse or neglect, and, for others there may be recent or close experiences which are still dominant in their lives. Also, the training is taught in isolation with little or no connection to the actual context of teaching. And, the content related to victims of abuse and neglect consists of descriptive generalisations about group physical and behavioural characteristics.

The current training appears to have been based on the following assumptions about how pre-service teachers learn and apply knowledge. That they:

- have extensive and regular contact with children;
- are committed to child abuse and neglect prevention;
- are familiar with child development in all its forms;
- are experienced at teaching;
- can manage personal issues associated with child abuse and neglect;
- support the values that underpin the training;
- understand the complexities associated with identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect;
- retain sufficient knowledge about how to identify and report from one training session;
- will be able to make the connections between the training and the reality of each school context in which they will teach;
- understand how FAYS operates and their role within that;
- learn in a linear process and will be able to apply their new knowledge confidently and skilfully in a school situation;
- will automatically apply knowledge and skills of identifying and reporting when training is complete;

- have equal power/status to the experts in the practicum setting where, in fact, they are often powerless; and,
- can develop the kinds of knowledge needed for action without careful reflection or examination.

Supported by Richardson (1996) the present study mirrors a general finding that pre-service teachers' conceptual change is often superficial, transitional, and slow to make its way into actual teaching practice. Although pre-service teachers would have some ideas about reporting suspected child abuse and neglect, those ideas can be easily transformed or changed by the reality of teaching at which they are still grappling. A previous study by McCallum and Baginsky (2001) showed that there were many factors that amplified the problem of reporting for pre-service teachers. These included: inadequacies with the training, the current emphasis in education on children's attainment in certain curriculum areas, culturalisation to more traditional ways of teaching after graduation, difficulties with the decision-making processes, a crowded curriculum which forces child protection out, teachers insensitivity to the social issues experienced by their students, an un-supportive teaching profession for novice teachers, difficulties transitioning to the world of teaching, and concerns over some of the teaching methodologies used in teacher preparation courses.

The Mentored Learning approach occurred in an elective course titled 'Child Protection Issues' which was available to final semester teacher education students only. The group size was kept to a maximum of 25 to enhance small group learning and all participants had completed the compulsory mandatory notification training at least two years prior. The approach used was based on the following assumptions:

- that pre-service teachers needed additional time to fully understand the issues raised in the one-day program, to reflect on this as it relates to their practicum experiences, to revisit the content and to address personal values about it;
- they needed to be 'guided' through issues by becoming familiar with child protection policy, the practices of FAYS, school procedures, and how to deal with the immediacy of the problem;
- that pre-service teachers need to unpack the complexities of child protection issues through thinking, reflecting and collaborating with others in order to develop a plan of action;
- they needed to become agents of change and advocates for children;
- that the mentor understands and appreciates that pre-service teachers are novices in the profession and particularly in dealing with child protection issues;
- to acknowledge a humanistic perspective rather than focus on content. This allows one to consider the individual in relation to their environment which results in increased self-esteem which can enhance actual learning and personal development; and,
- that the mentor is an important source of emotional and psychological support that can assist pre-service teachers to transition into the practice of teaching with child protection issues embedded in their daily programs and dealings with children.

It is therefore expected that teacher mentoring can serve as an important strategy for overcoming the limitations of traditional training because it is a strategy that supports novice teachers as they learn. Taking this into account and with a view of making the conceptual change needed for action, the following processes were adopted:

Structure: A time limit of 14 weeks at 2 hours a week was timetabled for face-to-face contact with additional on-line chat-time and access to a relevant website. The course began with revisiting previously presented material and pre-service teacher anxieties about their mandating role. This raised personal misconceptions, which enabled the group to negotiate specific learning needs for the course based on a collaborative style. The lecturer, who acted as a mentor, was able to guide the pre-service teachers through relevant issues by providing

information about Child Protection policies, procedures and practices pertaining to FAYS and the school systems in which they would seek employment.

Mentor: The course developed more as an induction program where teacher mentoring was regarded as a process of emotional support for the pre-service teachers to help them overcome the reality shock of abuse and to reduce psychological stresses caused by the conflict between their personal issues and the professional requirements. The lecturer, as mentor was guided by researchers like Wang & Odell (2002) who suggest that mentors must be committed to the kind of teaching that is needed and must be able to work with novices as agents of change. In particular, the mentor needs to know how to support novices by posing problems for current teaching practice, uncovering assumptions underlying current practice, constructing and reconstructing the curriculum, and reflecting on teaching practice in unique contexts. Secondly, they need to develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and be able to connect that knowledge to diverse student populations in the context of teaching. And to know how to engage novices in developing similar understandings of content, their students and relationships. Thirdly, mentors are expected to have a deep understanding of the relationship between principled knowledge and teaching practice and to help novice teachers develop similar understandings in the context of teaching. Fourth, mentors are expected to inquire systematically and to critically reflect. In particular, mentors should help novices discover teaching knowledge through collaborative reflection on classroom discourse and thoughtful deliberation about teaching. They should guide novices' discovery with principles. Much of this resonates with the approach of the mentor in this course. Therefore, the mentor posed problems cited from their actual teaching episodes, involved case study's, allowed time for reflection both personally and as a group, and explored relevant issues from an inquiry approach to teaching.

Also, Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992) cited in Wang and Odell (2002) provided inspiration to enable the mentor to work in three ways: *as a local guide*, who assisted pre-service teachers to transition smoothly into the profession by familiarising them with policies, practices, methods of teaching, and materials and by helping to solve their immediate problems; *as an educational company*, who worked closely with the pre-service teachers to uncover their thinking and to develop sound reasons for action; and, *as an agent of change*, who built networks with the pre-service teachers, fostered their norms of collaboration and shared inquiry, and sought to break down traditional isolation. The mentor provides emotional support during scheduled sessions, through e-mail and on-line. Child protection prevention programs would be shared and sessions would be based on inclusive classroom strategies that cater for the needs of at-risk children. In addition to offering practical teaching knowledge and knowledge of resources, the mentor would demonstrate and model teaching, and give advice and suggestions when they were struggling with immediate problems. The pre-service teachers would be encouraged to collaborate in similar ways enabling them to enhance their portfolio of teaching resources. This guidance would decrease as the pre-service teachers gained the confidence to function independently and collaboratively as teachers. As the subject matter is of a sensitive nature, personal dilemmas often present themselves. The mentor was able to respond to individual or group concerns by providing support, time, and reflection that encouraged them to address their own, each others, and global issues. This kind of emotional and psychological support is one of the dominant expectations that mentors and novices can bring to their relationship (Wang & Odell, 2002, p 492).

Teaching Methodologies: Rather than focussing on learning content, a humanistic perspective of teaching was used because learning to teach requires substantial mentoring and coaching, follow-up, resources, and time. This perspective suggests that individuals' competence can be affected by their personal situation at the time, and by taking personal responsibility for the development of their own beliefs and actions. The learning of relevant content and confidence is therefore enhanced. Course content was negotiated with the pre-service teachers and the opportunity for them to explore particular topics of interest or concern was encouraged. Wang and Odell (2002) support this humanistic perspective about learning as it emphasises the

importance of emotional support in socialising novices into the teaching profession. An outcome is the solving of personal dilemmas and difficulties in developing their professional identity and once they are able to solve these, their accumulated teaching experience can help them not only to stay in teaching but also to become more effective teacher's (p 493).

Pedagogy: Learning to teach in a manner where they can respond to the needs of the learners is a process of active construction and reconstruction of beliefs, pedagogical content knowledge, and pedagogical learner knowledge, and of the relationships among them. Such learning should be practically based where the relationship between theory and practice can be explored and the assumptions about teaching and learning can be examined. Learning to teach in new ways, based on an understanding of students lives and needs, is an ongoing process involving individual reflection on and collaborative inquiry about teaching practice, with a notion of what good teaching practice is. The teaching processes used for the duration of the course allowed for this learning and understanding, as did the professional reading for the subject, the assessment criteria which was self-selected and the participatory nature of the workshops.

Conclusion

If, as described by Feiman-Nemser & Remillard (1996) cited in Wang and Odell, the task of teacher mentoring is to help novices develop the necessary practical knowledge for teaching, which includes the acquisition of techniques and skills necessary for teaching, knowing the available resources for teaching, and understanding the contexts and cultures of teaching, then the evaluation of this example becomes crucial.

The evaluation produced favourable responses: 91% stating that their awareness about child protection issues had been increased to a high degree; 77% agreed that the course had increased their knowledge about child protection to a high degree and 23% to an above average level; their confidence to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect improved for 82% to an above average level and 14% to a high level; and 91% of the sample had learnt about other groups of 'at-risk' children to a high degree.

Learning and the retention of information for teaching beyond graduation were commented on by these students; *This should be a core subject because when you do mandatory training you are in second year. This is all forgotten by fourth year. It is too short and learning only occurs in short term memory whereas this course allows for long-term memory and, Thanks for running such an eye-opening course. It has made me very aware of child protection issues and how we can help in the prevention and detection of child abuse and neglect.*

As stated earlier, short or one-off courses are not a desirable way of learning and retaining knowledge, particularly in areas where social action and advocacy for children's well-being is needed. Child protection issues need to be integrated into core courses not taught in isolation. The course being evaluated here is structured to eliminate these risks and it appears to have achieved its aim of increasing awareness, knowledge and understanding of child protection issues, as supported by pre-service teacher comments like: *This course is essential for beginning teachers - it is essential for developing greater awareness, understanding and strategies and, This is an essential component in educating and informing teachers about child abuse and, This course is extremely valuable and essential to the future prevention of child abuse and neglect.* Content learnt in this course is closely related to the practical aspect of teacher's work, as evidenced by: *this subject needs to be compulsory for all Bachelor of Education pre-service teachers. More awareness of children at risk needs to be around. Too often we are put into situations in schools with no knowledge in this area.*

The experiences of this group of pre-service teacher's reminds us of the educational and behavioural manifestations associated with child abuse and neglect. Working with abused children requires skill and understanding, empathy and patience (Watts and Laskey, 1994, p.

123). For pre-service teachers, these qualities cannot be achieved through 'one-off' training nor can they be achieved through brief isolated lectures in teaching programs. Springer, Stanne and Donovan (1999) support small group learning as an effective teaching/learning strategy. This is used in the 'Child Protection Issues' course because it is an effective mode to use in undergraduate courses and programs which are additionally appropriate for potentially sensitive and emotional topics, with the added advantage that topics can be related to practical significance.

In summary, the mentored learning approach encouraged dialogue about sensitive issues, was effective in helping pre-service teachers to overcome personal problems and to feel more comfortable to address child protection issues; challenged prior knowledge about child abuse and neglect and their role in it; built on this knowledge and its understanding; allowed the pre-service teachers to situate themselves into the teaching culture and the realities of the classroom, demands of day-to-day teaching, and complexities they will be faced with; supported the development of necessary skills and confidence; and, allowed mentor and novices to engage in collaborative inquiry.

It was anticipated that by using this approach to address child protection issues, the pre-service teachers would learn a kind of teaching different from that of prevailing practice. This would help them develop conceptual understandings of the subject matter and the relationship it has with the children whom they will teach; build connections between children's learning and their personal experiences and real life contexts; and, support them to move toward excellence. To develop this, pre-service teachers need to develop a strong commitment and advocacy toward child protection issues, a deeper understanding of the subject matter, a broader knowledge about diverse student populations and their learning, and connections between these dispositions and knowledge.

Furthermore, the design of the mentored learning approach described in this paper reflects a combination of two assumptions about learning: (1) the fundamental goal of learning is continuously to transform existing knowledge of practice toward emancipatory ends, and (2) a constructivist assumption that knowledge is actively built by learners through the process of active thinking.

In this experience, the mentor became an advocate for the particular needs of the pre-service teachers. This focussed on their conceptual understanding of subject matter, connections between their learning and their personal experiences in real-life contexts, active discovery of ideas, and careful examination of the ideas in the community of learners. Such reform has constructivist assumptions about knowledge, learning, and teaching that differ from the assumptions underlying prevailing practice. Such reform influences policies for teacher education and professional development at both national and local levels, especially policies that define what novice teachers need to learn and be able to do (Wang & Odell, p 490).

Reference list

- ABRAHAMS, N; CASEY, K; & DARO, D. (1992) Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes and Beliefs about Child Abuse and Neglect and its Prevention. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, **16**, 229-238.
- BAVOLEK, S. (1983) Why Aren't School Personnel Reporting Child Abuse in Wisconsin? *TEASE*. **6** (1).
- BERSON, M; BERSON, I; & RALSTON, M. (1998) Evolving a Community's Response to Child Sexual Abuse. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education*, **4** 3(July), 323-335.
- BESHAROV, D. J. (1990) *Recognizing Child Abuse: A Guide for the Concerned*. New York: Free Press.

COLEMAN, A. (1995) *Child Abuse Reporting: An Urban Profile*. New York, USA, Garland Publishing, Inc.

CRENSHAW, W.B; CRENSHAW, L.M; & LICHTENBERG, J.W. (1995) When Educators Confront Child Abuse: An Analysis of the Decision to Report. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, **19** (9), 1095-1113.

DARLING-HAMMOND, L. (1998) Teacher Learning That Supports Student Learning. *Educational Leadership*, **55** (5), 6-11.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICES (1997) *Information Package for Reinforcing The Legal Responsibilities of DECS Mandated Notifiers for the Schooling Sector*. Adelaide, South Australia, DECS: 28

GODDARD, C; MITCHELL, J. & TUCCI, J. (2003) Protecting Children from Abuse. *Professional Educator*, **2** (1-March), 22-24.

HAWKINS, R. & MCCALLUM, C. (2001) Mandatory Notification Training for Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect in South Australian Schools. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, **25** (12), 1603-1625.

HULING-AUSTIN, L. (1992) Research on Learning to Teach. *Journal of Teacher Education*, **43** (3)173-180.

KALICHMAN, S. (1993) *Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse. Ethics, Law and Policy*. American Psychological Association. Washington DC, USA.

KENNEDY, M. (1991) Some Surprising Findings on How Teachers Learn to Teach. *Educational Leadership*, **49** (3), 14-17.

LAYTON, R. (2003) *Our Best Investment. A State Plan to Protect and Advance the Interests of Children*. Finsbury Press for the Government of South Australia. Adelaide, South Australia.

LEVIN, P. G. (1983) Teacher' Perceptions, Attitudes and Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect. *Child Welfare*, **62** (1), 14-20.

LUMSDEN, L. (1992) Stemming the Tide of Child Sexual Abuse. The Role Schools can Play. OSSC (OREGON SCHOOL STUDY COUNCIL) *Bulletin*, **35** (5), 1-27.

McCALLUM, F (2000) *The Effectiveness of Training as Professional Development: Teachers as Mandated Notifiers of Child Abuse and Neglect*. PhD thesis, University of South Australia, Australia

McCALLUM, F (2001) Inhibiting and Enabling Factors that Influence Educator Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect. In (Eds), Berson, M; Berson, I and Cruz, B. *Cross Cultural Perspectives in Child Advocacy*. Information Age: USA.

McCALLUM, F. & BAGINSKY, M. (2001) *A Comparison of Pre-service Training to Identify and Report Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect in Australia and the United Kingdom*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Meeting, Seattle, USA.

NIGHTINGALE, N. & WALKER, E (1986) Identification and Reporting of Child Maltreatment by Head Start Personnel: Attitudes and Experiences. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, **10** 191-199.

ORELOVE, F. P; HOLLAHAN, D. J. & MYLES, K. T. (2000) Maltreatment of Children With Disabilities: Training Needs for a Collaborative Response. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, **24** (2), 185-194.

REINIGER, A; ROBISON, E. & MCHUGH, M. (1995) Mandated Training of Professionals: A Means for Improving Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, **19** (1), 63-69.

RICHARDSON, V (1996) The Role of Attitudes and Beliefs in Learning to Teach. In J. Sikula, T. Buttery & E. Guyton, (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*. 2nd. Edition. NY: Macmillan.

RODRIGUES, C. & SUTHERLAND, D. (1999) Predictors of Parents' Physical Disciplinary Practices. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, **23** (7), 651-657.

SILVERMAN, F. (1987) *Child Abuse: The Conflict of Under-detection and Over-reporting. Commentaries*, 441-443.

SPRINGER, L; STANNE, M. & DONOVAN, S. (1999) Effects of Small-group Learning on Undergraduates in Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology: A Meta-Analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, **69** (1), 21-51.

SUNDELL, K. (1997) Child-care Personnel's Failure to Report Child Maltreatment: Some Swedish Evidence. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, **21** (1), 93-105.

WANG, J & ODELL, S. (2002) Mentored Learning to Teach According to Standards-Based Reform: A Critical Review. *Review of Educational Research*, **72** (3-Fall), 481-546.

WATTS, V. & LASKEY, L. (1994) Preparing Teachers for Effective Child Protection: A Pre-service Curriculum Approach. *South Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, **22** (2), 117-127.

WURTELE, S. & SCHMIDT, A. (1992) Childcare Workers' Knowledge About Reporting Suspected Child Sexual Abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, **16** 385-390.