

**Beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of teacher mentoring processes in primary schools: A case study in Aotearoa New Zealand**

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## Abstract

This qualitative research study is an investigation into three pairs of beginning and mentor primary teachers' perceptions of teacher mentoring processes during the first-year of induction and mentoring for the beginning teacher. Furthermore, this research study had a specific focus on how the participants' and their respective schools' interpret and use national policy guidelines on induction and mentoring in primary schools, along with how the participant dyads perceive the nature and quality of the mentoring experience. In the realms of this focus, the training and support of mentor teachers was investigated, and the skillset of the mentors. Moreover, this was considered in light of the data gathered and the current literature on mentoring in educational and related contexts (for e.g. Cameron & Lovett, 2007; Heller, 2004; Lovett & Davey, 2009; Chambers, 2018; Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018).

Three qualitative methods were used to collect data in this research study; namely semi-structured interviews with the participants, document analysis and field notes. Data was analysed using a constant-comparative approach, where data is reduced and condensed to common themes, interpreted and conclusions drawn (Lichtman, 2013; Mutch, 2005; Yin, 2014). The essence of the findings is presented in two themes: *Theme 1: Mentoring Policy – illusion or confusion?* and *Theme 2: Mentoring Practice in Action*.

The findings of this study illuminate the importance of collaborative professional learning through an educative mentoring approach. The findings highlighted mentoring practice based on prior experiences, lack of training and support for mentor teachers, and how differing perceptions of key national policy guidelines: '*Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers*' (TCNZ, 2015) results in variable mentoring practice and outcomes. The key findings of this study validate the need for more synergy between key actors within primary schools when engaged with induction and mentoring processes.

Further, through the provision of training and support for mentor teachers, it is suggested this will positively influence the quality and nature of mentoring practice within induction and mentoring programmes. A key part of this process is for leadership to ensure opportunities for mentor teachers to engage in professional learning about mentoring. Furthermore, to deepen their understanding of the importance of underpinning mentoring practice and learning conversations with adult learning principles and key mentoring skills. This study served to highlight the challenges beginning and mentor teachers face in what is a complex social activity. The key findings of this study validate the need for further research on

mentoring processes in primary schools and how to ensure effective mentoring happens as part of the everyday fabric (Hudson, 2013).

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Within Aotearoa New Zealand's dynamic education system, education leaders face increasing pressures to deliver professional development and more personalised professional learning to meet the individual needs of teachers and students (Timperley, 2011). Literature suggests that when education leaders implement effective professional learning initiatives, embedded in adult learning principles, they can bring about transformative change to teaching and learning outcomes (Brookfield, 1986; Cameron, 2009; Jarvis, 2010; Knowles, 1980; Robertson, 2016). Heller (2004) further suggests that these effective professional learning cultures may be linked to effective educative mentoring and coaching.

There is a wealth of literature acknowledging how mentoring and coaching can have a powerful and positive impact on the development of beginning teachers (e.g. Cameron, Lovett & Garvey-Berger, 2007; Lovett, 2002). Similarly, there is a growing amount of literature suggesting that when beginning and mentor teachers engage in *learning conversations* that are based on collaboration and reciprocal growth, new knowledge about professional practice can be generated through a greater encouragement of personal identity and agency (Burley & Pomphrey, 2011).

Contrary to this, Johnson & Kardos (2003) suggest that inadequate induction and mentoring may result in poor quality teaching and learning in the classroom and may also contribute to high attrition rates of beginning teachers. Lovett (2002) suggests the importance and need for skilled mentor teachers who are capable of protecting the interests of beginning teachers. Similarly, Spooner-Lane (2017) suggests that without effective mentoring support, many beginning teachers may struggle early in their careers and may fail to learn the nuances of effective teaching. Cameron and Lovett (2011) support the views of Johnson & Kardos (2003) and Spooner-Lane (2017) by suggesting when a beginning teacher embarks on their teaching career this enthusiasm can quickly turn to disillusion when the mentor teacher does not pay close attention to the beginning teacher's professional learning needs. Furthermore, beginning teachers can often be thrown in 'the deep-end', and assume roles and responsibilities they are ill-equipped for at this stage of their careers. This has negative implications for beginning teachers, when mentor teachers themselves may not be knowledgeable or skilled in their roles as mentors (Tolhurst, 2006).

As an educationalist who works as both as a mentor and coach to both teachers in primary schools and student teachers in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes, it is these

concerns that have driven me towards wanting to further understand the complexities and implications of mentoring processes in primary schools.

## **1.1 Research Aims**

Therefore, the main aim of this case study research was to explore and analyse mentoring processes evident in primary school professional development and learning opportunities during the first year of induction and mentoring for beginning teachers. Intuitively, if we link the concerns discussed above around beginning teacher attrition rates, a current and well-documented teacher shortage crisis in Aotearoa New Zealand (Collins, 2017; Gerritsen, 2018) and a lack of research investigating mentoring processes in Aotearoa New Zealand primary schools (Spooner-Lane, 2017), arguably studies of this nature may be well over due.

It is intended that through participant interviews, this study will give insight into how beginning and mentor teachers perceive the mentoring process, their roles within the process, and the perceived value they attach to it (Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Grudnoff, 2012; Lovett & Davey, 2009; Spooner-Lane, 2017). Through providing the participants the opportunity to have a voice and express perceptions of lived experiences this may illuminate improved methods of mentoring practice and processes as they see it. Also, through document analysis of the Education Council New Zealand (ECNZ, 2015) document entitled '*Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers*' (ECNZ, 2015) the discussion enabled me to compare and contrast the findings from the participant interviews with current literature and policy documentation from the participant schools, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Teaching Council, New Zealand, Matatū Aotearoa (TCNZ, 2019), with a view to consider and discuss (mis)alignment (e.g. Brookfield, 1995; Cameron, 2009; Chambers, 2015; Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018; Robertson, 2016). Additionally, I have made connections between Adult Learning Principles (e.g. Brookfield, 1986; Jarvis, 2010; Knowles, 1980, 1984; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005) and research surrounding contemporary mentoring processes and practice and will therefore include this concept in my discussion. This discussion enables me to consider any possible enablers and barriers that appear to affect the mentoring process.

I have aimed to address the calls from the literature asking for further elucidation surrounding the significance and implications of mentoring processes for beginning and mentor primary school teachers engaged in induction and mentoring programmes (e.g. Johnson & Kardos, 2003; Lovett & Davey, 2009; Stoll, 2011). It is hoped that his study helps address the

paucity of literature about research investigating mentoring processes within Aotearoa New Zealand primary school contexts (Grudnoff, 2012; Spooner-Lane, 2017). The following research questions provided the genesis for my research and guided the study.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

- (i) What are the national guidelines on mentoring practice in primary schools and how do individual primary schools interpret and use these?
- (ii) How do beginning and mentor teachers perceive the nature and quality of the mentoring experience?

## **1.3 Professional Background of Researcher**

My motivation and impetus for this research study stems from a background of teaching in primary school education, my role as a professional practice lecturer and as a mentor to high performance coaches and athletes. While mentoring across education and sporting contexts I have often felt my mentoring and coaching knowledge was driven by my own motivation and relied on my own solutions to what can be a dynamic and complex role. This perceived lack of knowledge and way of being with mentoring and coaching practice changed when I started postgraduate study at tertiary level. This also coincided with starting in my role within initial teacher education which has correlations to mentoring and coaching. Postgraduate study has provided opportunities to conduct small-scale research, to open my mind to new knowledge and has contributed to my own professional growth and upskilling as a mentor. These experiences have given me the motivation to embark on this thesis research study.

Therefore, the motivations for this study originate from my own personal motivations to improve as a mentor in my current roles within education and sporting contexts. These motivations clearly align with the lack of research around mentoring in Aotearoa New Zealand primary schools and the acknowledgement of its worth in contemporary educational literature.

## **1.4 Thesis Structure**

To provide structure to the thesis, I have provided a summary of the main chapters below.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

This opening chapter has provided insight into the genesis of this thesis research and also identified a clear need to address the concept of mentoring within educational contexts. I have briefly outlined the way that this has been achieved and the research questions that underpin the study. Specifically, the research questions are addressed through an investigation of the perceptions of beginning and mentor primary teachers involved in mentoring processes and also by exploring the policies, documentation and procedures that the schools and relevant educational organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand utilise for mentoring.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

I discuss the educational policy and wider research literature relating to mentoring processes across educational contexts in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. I focus particular attention on beginning and mentor primary school teachers (which is a major focus of this thesis research) and wider educative mentoring knowledge required by mentor teachers.

## **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

I outline and justify the methodology, design and research methods used in this qualitative multiple case study.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

This chapter reports on the findings to emerge from the interpretive data analysis and is presented in two main themes, each having two main sub-themes. Excerpts from the participants' interviews (verbatim) are included to bring authenticity and validity to the research and allow the beginning and mentor teachers' voices (perceptions) to be heard.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

In the discussion section I have addressed the main research questions as well as providing insight into the findings. I reveal and discuss the major themes (and subthemes) that are clearly outlined in the 'Findings' chapter and weave the policy documentation and wider research literature, that was presented in the 'Literature Review' chapter, in with these findings. Through this process of comparing and contrasting the findings to the current literature on

mentoring in educational contexts, I attempt to shed light on the factors that were identified as enablers and barriers and the possible tensions that were uncovered.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

I conclude this research study with a summary of the key findings, implications for mentoring practice in educational contexts, limitations related to this research study are outlined and finally possible future research considerations.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

As a form of professional development, mentoring appears to play an important role (Rowe, 2003; Robertson & Timperley, 2011). Therefore, the following literature review will outline the concept of mentoring in educational and related professional contexts in Aotearoa New Zealand. By detailing traditional and contemporary literature relating to mentoring theory, approaches and models, I will provide an overview of how mentoring has, and currently is, conceptualised and implemented within educational contexts. It is hoped that this will ground the reader in current 'best practice' while also understanding the conceptual changes over time, specifically, a perceived shift from professional development to professional learning as it relates to educative mentoring (Lovett & Davey, 2009; Fullan, 2007; Johnson & Kardos, 2003).

In addition, the review will look to uncover, and detail, the layers of meaning that the beginning and mentor teachers give to the perceived value of the mentoring process. This will include research surrounding the mentor teachers' *selection, training, professional learning and development opportunities* and *mentoring practices* (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). I will also outline research that has identified *enablers* and/or *barriers* to mentoring processes, including the impact that schools have on the induction and mentoring process. Further, I will introduce the role that *learning conversations* play in the development of both beginning and mentor teachers and the stance mentor teachers adopt when engaged in mentoring practice (Tolhurst, 2006).

I begin with an introductory explanation below to clarify the ambiguity surrounding the terms *Mentoring* and *Coaching* (Burley and Pomphrey, 2011) and also *Mentoring* and *Induction* (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Spooner-Lane, 2017) and continue by detailing the concepts suggested above.

### 2.2 Terminology - What is Mentoring vs Coaching? Mentoring vs Induction?

In recent years, professional learning and development has come more sharply into focus for teachers and education organisations within New Zealand. This is partly due to a dynamic education system influenced by political policies, ever-changing technology, a shift to innovative learning environments and education leaders under more pressure to be more proactive in promoting professional learning and development (Timperley, 2011; MoE, 2018).

Within this changing landscape *mentoring* and *coaching* is being promoted as an essential, yet complex beginning teacher induction process at the beginning of their careers (TCNZ, 2018); Langdon & Ward, 2015). However, the literature indicates confusion over the terminology, specifically, around the terms mentoring and coaching. It appears that these terms, and the roles required by each, can be confusing for inexperienced or unskilled teachers and this makes distinguishing between the two quite problematic (Clutterbuck, 2013; Feiman-Nemser & Ball, 2012; Tolhurst, 2010; Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Zachary, 2000).

It appears that key differences, according to Burley and Pomphrey (2011) lie in the duration and nature of the professional relationship. Burley and Pomphrey (2011) suggest that *Mentoring* generally refers to a long-term relationship between the mentor and mentee where each grows through a collaborative, constructivist approach. In this sense, constructivist learning is characterised by building on prior experiences and making new meanings, learning is considered an active process and not passive, and learning is a social/collaborative activity and contextual (Bolton, 2009; Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Lovett, 2002). In contrast, *Coaching* is generally a short-term arrangement revolving around specific skill and performance improvement of the coached (Tolhurst, 2006; Zachary, 2000). *Coaching* is therefore goal-driven, solution and skill focused, time-limited and places more emphasis on the coached being responsible for the process and performance, while the coach imparts specific skill knowledge (Chambers, 2015; Robertson, 2016). Given the confusion and complexity surrounding these terms, and the approaches required to effectively implement them, there is the potential to overlap these roles and diminish their impact and outcomes. This is particularly evident when inexperienced teachers with limited knowledge and understanding of context assume one or both of these roles (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009).

Also, Ingersoll & Strong (2011) and Spooner-Lane (2017) contend that mentoring programmes have become the dominant form of beginning teacher induction process to the extent that these terms have become interchangeable and add confusion around terminology and use. Feiman-Nemser & Carver (2009) agree, and argue that we must clearly define mentoring and induction as terms to clarify the desired outcomes for both beginning and mentor teachers. Bradbury and Koballa (2008) and Langdon, Alexander, Ryde and Baggetta (2014) agree, suggesting that there is an entanglement of induction and mentoring terminology and practice and there is a lack of consistency in the way mentoring is conceptualised and implemented in primary schools.

Therefore, for the purposes of this study, and for clarity, I have investigated *mentoring* in primary school contexts and have adopted Burley and Pomphrey's (2011) definition that proposes a long-term, collaborative, constructivist relationship between the mentor and beginning teacher. This appears congruent with the policy documentation currently dominating the discourse. Also, in this study, and for the purpose of differentiating mentoring from induction, as requested by Feiman-Nemser & Carver (2009), I have defined *induction* to be the two-year allocated time provided to beginning teachers that includes the assignment of a mentor teacher and appropriate resourcing. It is expected that at the conclusion of this induction period the beginning teacher can become a fully registered teacher (Education Council New Zealand, ECNZ, 2015).

### **2.3 A Brief History of the Induction and Mentoring Process in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Historically, before the education reforms of 1985 in New Zealand, beginning teachers were assessed by Ministry of Education inspectors for their ability to meet professional teacher standards (Cameron, 2009). Since 1985, all New Zealand schools have been provided with policy, resources, funding, guidelines and allocated time to provide comprehensive induction and mentoring to beginning teachers (Cameron, 2009). This induction and mentoring entitlement for beginning teachers involves the assignment of a mentor teacher and appropriate resourcing. The mentor teacher and resourcing is provided for the provisional registration period of two years, after which the beginning teacher must meet full registration requirements (ECNZ, 2015).

Interestingly, a pilot research study in New Zealand between 2006 – 2008, *Learning to Teach*, acknowledged that there are policies and processes in place for mentoring the beginning teacher, however, there were discrepancies in the quality and nature of mentoring happening within education sectors (Cameron, Dingle & Brooking, 2007). The literature reports that these concerns were met with changes to policy guidelines and a clear shift in the language and terminology used in these documents (Cameron, Dingle & Brooking, 2007; Langdon & Ward, 2015). Over time, the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand has further refined these induction and mentoring guidelines placing more emphasis on best practice and clear messages linking mentoring to collaborative inquiry (ECNZ, 2018).

Notably, there was a shift from an 'advice and guidance' approach with a tutor teacher, to an 'induction and mentoring' approach with a mentor teacher (ECNZ, 2015; Grudnoff, 2012). However, despite this comprehensive induction and mentoring process being in place,

it appears that the quality of induction and mentoring in New Zealand, and internationally, has been found to be variable (Langdon & Ward, 2015).

## **2.4 Mentoring in Education - Effective Teaching and the Mentoring Process**

The definition of what constitutes an effective teacher can be difficult to define, as effective teaching can be interpreted differently and what may resonate with one learner may not with another. The literature reports that an effective teacher is able to connect with a learner through a relationship of trust, respect and understanding and consequently impact successfully on student outcomes (Alton-Lee, 2003; Rowe, 2003). Alton-Lee (2003) proposes several key characteristics of quality teaching which include a focus on student achievement, pedagogical practices allowing for collaboration and diversity within learning, responsiveness to student learning processes and management practices, and emphasising learning, not compliant behavior.

For beginning teachers to demonstrate these key characteristics they require opportunities to work with and observe others who are skilled and knowledgeable in these teaching behaviours and be supported in accordance with educative mentoring practices (ECNZ, 2018). In other words, according to Zachary (2000), when beginning teachers are guided and supported within a comprehensive mentoring relationship, there is more likelihood these teachers will apply what they learn, develop and grow. Additionally, it appears that when mentoring processes are centered around co-constructed professional goals and learning conversations with the mentor, the beginning teacher is challenged and supported to meet the characteristics of effective and quality teaching (Heller, 2004).

Furthermore, Fraser & McGee (2008) suggest that teachers who make a difference reveal depth of knowledge, an on-going passion for learning, and a desire to connect with students in ways that enhances the learning experience. Beginning teachers, with enthusiasm and energy, are most likely to bring many of these attributes starting out in their careers. When education leaders are committed to an induction process which is emotionally supportive, provides opportunities for learning conversations about teaching and learning with an experienced mentor teacher and opportunities for collegial interaction, this can lead to positive growth for the beginning teacher (Cameron, Lovett & Garvey-Berger 2007; Clutterbuck, 2003; Jones, 2015; Lovett, 2002; Timperley, 2011).

Clearly, the literature reflects the importance of mentoring during the induction period of the beginning teacher's career (Cameron, 2009; Lovett & Cameron, 2011). Importantly,

mentoring within education is now being viewed as a core feature of teachers' professional learning and development, and with evidence suggesting early career teachers that are well mentored are more likely to be effective practitioners (Chambers, 2015; Rowe, 2003; Robertson & Timperley, 2011). Effective mentoring processes appear to be capable of promoting transformative change for both the individual and the school organisation (Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Bolton, 2009; Chambers, 2015) and should become part of school infrastructures and practice to promote and critically reflect on quality teaching and learning processes (Hudson, 2013).

## **2.5 Effective Mentoring**

It is widely recognised in the current education literature the importance of induction programmes that reflect democratic notions of mentoring for both the beginning and mentoring teachers and the wider learning community (Brondyk & Searby, 2013; Feiman-Nemser & Ball, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Langdon, 2014). The literature supporting this view promotes the benefits of providing mentoring for beginning teachers during the induction process and suggests that it should be emotionally supportive, provide opportunities for learning conversations about teaching and learning processes, and reflect a collaborative interaction between the mentor and beginning teacher (Cameron, Lovett & Garvey-Berger, 2007; Grudnoff, 2012; Kearney, 2014; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993). Izadinia (2015) further reports that this process can allow beginning teachers to begin to form teacher identity through emotional support, agency and self-efficacy.

Similarly, Brookfield (1995) and Johnson & Kardos (2003) suggest that mentoring processes, aligned with professional exchange and collaboration, can be empowering and give a sense of 'pedagogic rectitude'. Teachers in this instance, are immersed in a professional learning cultures that reflect collaborative diagnosing, planning, implementing and evaluating their own learning (Brookfield, 1986; Rhodes, Stokes, Hampton, 2004). Supporting this collaborative theme, Grudnoff (2012) investigated the perceptions of beginning teachers' in the first six months of their teaching careers to help determine the characteristics of high-quality mentoring in schools. Results reported the positive benefits of having a mentor teacher readily available to discuss issues and collaboratively problem-solve.

## **2.6 Barriers to Effective Mentoring**

In contrast, Cushion (2015) acknowledges the body of literature offering support, theories and ideas on mentoring, but reports a lack of evidence for the effectiveness of mentoring and suggests many of the positive claims in the literature are largely unfounded. Others support this view, claiming that there is a need for more evidence to clearly define and understand effective mentoring processes during beginning teacher induction (Grudnoff, 2012; Langdon, 2014; Spooner-Lane, 2017).

However, despite this documented lack of evidence, there is some literature claiming that mentoring processes within beginning teacher induction programmes is poorly defined and executed in educational contexts (e.g. Darling, 2007; Heller, 2004; Nuthall, 2007; Smardon & Charteris, 2016; Castanheira, 2016; Chambers, 2015; Langdon & Ward, 2015; McLaughlin, 2002; Bolton, 2009; Bubb, 2007; Johnson & Kardos, 2003 ).The literature appears to demonstrate multiple influences impacting on the mentoring processes and professional learning of beginning teachers during induction in primary school education contexts. It is suggested that when the quality of mentoring within induction programmes is not founded on notions of collaborative growth and empowerment, the beginning teachers' opportunities to acquire competencies, confidence and pedagogical content knowledge, the professional growth of the beginning teacher appears to be compromised (Cameron, Lovett & Garvey-Berger 2007; Lovett & Davey, 2009; Johnson & Kardos, 2003).

The literature identifies that conceptualising the mentoring process provides a significant source of confusion and tension for beginning and mentor teachers (Darling, 2007; Nuthall, 2007; Smardon & Charteris, 2016). Confusion and tensions occur when mentoring is used concurrently as a tool for appraisal, evaluation and is linked to registration, remuneration and career progression. These tensions put systems and stakeholders at odds with each other within organisations or institutions (Bronfenbrenner & Mahoney, 1972; Darling, 2007; Nuthall, 2007; Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017) and as Smardon and Charteris (2016), suggest, professional learning and development for teachers is often difficult to achieve due to the previously reported tensions. McLaughlin (2002) further highlights this point by suggesting that improving quality teaching through professional learning and development processes, such as mentoring, can often be a problematic and challenging due to these competing pressures. Chambers (2015) provides another perspective, and possible solution to this concern when commenting about mentoring in physical education and sport. Chambers (2015) suggests that a possible solution to these competing tensions may lie in shifting our thinking of mentoring

from a simple collaboration between individuals, to a holistic perspective where mentoring becomes a component of the whole system (Heller, 2004; Chambers, 2015). In this view, it becomes the wider school responsibility to support the growth of the beginning teacher through the induction period, and collaborative mentoring becomes the vehicle to support a pathway to teaching expertise and subsequent positive learning environments.

Another source of concern appears to arise from poorly executed induction and mentoring programmes. These are claimed to result from poor leadership and unskilled or poorly trained mentors that contribute to a compromise in the quality of the mentoring outcomes (Bolton, 2009; Bubb, 2007; Johnson & Kardos, 2003). There appears to be some emphasis in the literature placed on the term ‘experienced teacher’ as the mentor, but it appears that utilising ‘experienced teachers’ in these roles does not always guarantee the beginning teacher will receive quality mentoring from the mentor (Chambers, 2015; Langdon & Ward, 2015). Intuitively, I would suggest that the term ‘experienced teacher’ has multiple interpretations and provides ambiguity to many. For example, to some, ‘experience’ simply refers to time in the job, or the position of authority that the teacher holds, whereas, to others ‘experience’ relates more to the actions and behaviours exhibited by teachers in different situations/contexts regardless of age, time in the job, or the position of authority they hold.

A further area highlighted by literature surrounding the role of mentoring during teacher induction, highlights the benefits of a positive school learning culture and the mentoring relationship between the beginning and mentor teacher (Lovett & Cameron, 2007; Lovett, 2007; Langdon, 2014). Lovett and Cameron (2007) highlighted the voices of five early career teachers, who perceived that support ranged from supportive, ad hoc, to unsupportive. Cameron, Baker & Lovett (2006) also found that the learning culture of a school during the induction period and mentoring process has an impact on the development, retention and job satisfaction of early career teachers.

Further implications arise from an apparent mismatch between the policies and rhetoric of mentoring during beginning teacher induction processes and the actual reality and ‘lived experiences’ of those beginning and mentor teachers in mentoring relationships (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Effectively, studies suggest that while legal guidelines and policies are in place for induction periods and mentoring processes, often the quality and nature of mentoring experienced by beginning teachers varies (Lovett & Cameron, 2011; Langdon, 2015; Spooner-Lane, 2017). There is an emerging portrait of poor induction experiences for beginning teachers resulting from poor quality mentoring experiences. This

appears to have a detrimental effect on the beginning teacher including a reduction in the quality and speed of professional learning and growth and may also contribute to high attrition rates of beginning teachers (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Lovett, 2007).

For example, Johnson & Kardos (2007) reported on 486 first and second-year teachers in the United States, and concluded that many novice teachers perceived their work to be solitary, and that they were expected to be prematurely expert and independent. They concluded that many new teachers work without the support of integrated professional learning cultures and that mentor teachers lacked the necessary skills to be effective in their role. Similarly, an Australian study into mentoring practices during induction, concluded that it is imperative to have quality and effective mentors to retain quality teachers and curb world-wide attrition rates in beginning teachers (Kearney, 2014). Richter, Kunter, Ludtke, Klusmann, Anders & Baumert (2013) suggest by improving mentor training, based on constructivist learning principles, may lead to more effective mentoring practice for beginning teacher induction. This raises important questions about evaluative processes of mentoring practice both at individual and institution levels and how these can be improved to provide better outcomes for beginning teachers? Moreover, if the mentoring experiences, as reported in the literature, are consistently varied, what type of professional training and development are mentor teachers receiving? (Johnson & Kardos, 2007).

## **2.7 A Shift from Professional Development to Professional Learning and Mentoring**

Traditionally, professional development in education may be characterised by contexts where ‘experts’ challenge teacher assumptions, present teachers with new possibilities and challenge social norms (Timperley, Barrar & Fung, 2008). Experts may reside inside the organisation, or as is often the case, outside the organisation. Timperley (2011) infers that external experts who challenge teachers’ assumptions and the social norms may have some impact but questions if this may constrain professional learning. Fullan (2007) and Opfer and Pedder (2011) also report that teachers who attend professional development courses characterised this way, often fail to demonstrate effective learning and sustainable levels of behavioural change in the classroom. McLaughlin (2002) proposes that this requires further research devoted to how *professional learning* impacts in the classroom and the knowledge that teachers need to develop their practice. Cameron (2009) further suggests that when schools have a culture of high expectations for students and teachers’ professional learning, these culture and support processes allowed the beginning teacher to thrive and be an effective teacher.

Intuitively, it appears that this traditional perspective of professional development, appears to be changing. There is some current literature that confirms a shift from previous notions of *professional development* to notions of *professional learning*, where professional learning reflects an emphasis on more individualised, context-rich (classroom) learning and aligns with current literature promoting educative mentoring approaches that emphasise evidenced based inquiry learning (Timperley, 2011; Tolhurst, 2006). Professional learning requires an educative mentoring approach emphasising collaborative inquiry for both the beginning and mentor teachers and promotes transformative change to a teacher's own classroom context and the wider school organisation (Robertson, 2016; Timperley, 2011). If the mentor teacher provides the beginning teacher with professional learning opportunities that are context-rich and collaborative in nature, then this will promote professional growth, agency and identity during the mentoring process for both the mentor teacher and the beginning teacher (Cameron & Lovett, 2007; Heller, 2004; Lovett & Davey, 2009). That is, when teachers engage with professional learning there is an emphasis on learning which is critically and collaboratively co-constructed through the use of effective mentoring (Burley & Pomphrey, 2011). In an earlier UK study, Southworth and Yeoman (1989) found collaborative school cultures were ones where teachers welcomed opportunities for talk about their work and made time informally and formally for this to happen. Unfortunately, in a more recent study of New Zealand beginning teachers, Lovett and Davey (2009) concluded that these opportunities to talk were often left to chance and early career teachers can easily become disheartened if their need for talk about practice is perceived as being a burden to colleagues.

Beginning teachers professional learning needs can often be determined by principals, lead teachers, cluster group leaders and/or Ministry of Education directives (McLaughlin, 2002). Therefore, there is the possibility that this may impact on the mentoring process and diminish the mentor and beginning teachers' capacity to act and determine the direction of professional learning (Smardon & Charteris, 2016). This is highlighted by McLaughlin (2002) and Timperley (2011), where both suggest that these structures may negatively impact on the professional learning needs of beginning teachers and ultimately their students. Indeed, this appears to concur with Smardon & Charteris (2016), suggestion that professional learning and development for teachers is often difficult to achieve in organisations due to competing demands and tensions.

It appears that educative mentoring, based on constructivist principles where the mentor teacher collaboratively facilitates an understanding of alternate beliefs and viewpoints, collects

and assesses high quality evidence that is professionally relevant to themselves and the beginning teacher is at odds with many of the structural influences within educational contexts (Bennett & Fyall, 2018; Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Smardon & Charteris, 2016; Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

## **2.8 Professional Learning of the Mentor Teacher**

A feature of New Zealand's beginning teacher induction programme is to assign an 'experienced teacher' as a mentor to provide advice and guidance in the first two years of professional socialisation (ECNZ, 2015; Spooner-Lane, 2017). Grudnoff (2012) reports that although mentoring is a key part of New Zealand's approach to induction for beginning teachers, currently there are limited opportunities and no mandatory obligations for mentor teachers to engage in professional development for this crucial leadership role. Langdon (2011) also brings attention to this concern and further suggests that mentor teachers are an under-utilised resource.

While there is some international research (USA) that promotes positive mentoring programmes with rigorous selection criteria that includes previous education performance, the ability to identify, articulate, and develop high-quality instruction, understanding of diverse student populations, and advanced interpersonal skills (e.g. Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009), many have demonstrated evidence of poor mentoring practice, due in part to poor mentor training (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993; Langdon, 2014). For example, Langdon (2014) concludes that the development of mentor expertise is problematic as most mentors have limited access to sustained professional development and have limited knowledge of mentoring. Similarly, Achinstein and Athanases (2006) found a 'reductive' approach to mentoring was prevalent with mentor teachers offering quick-fix solutions and often reinforced the status quo of teaching and learning processes. Also, in the *Teachers Matter Study* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005) it was concluded that in most countries the mentor teacher's role was to provide affective support and fix deficits in areas such as management. Therefore, as Israel, Schatz-Oppenheimer (2017) report, mentoring is a complex role as the mentors have to operate under conditions of professional tension while simultaneously balancing support and evaluation for the beginning teacher. Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) suggest mentor teachers should be trained to balance these conflicting demands. These findings signify that even though the desired educative mentoring model, as outlined in contemporary literature (Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Bolton, 2009; Chambers, 2015) and

advocated in induction and mentoring macro policy guidelines, is not always achieved by mentor teachers.

Reasons for this are not clear, however, there is some literature beginning to emerge. Spooner-Lane (2017) who reviewed ten studies on the nature and effectiveness of mentoring programmes for beginning teachers in primary schools, including a New Zealand study, reported that the primary sector requires more targeted, rather than generic, approaches to developing effective beginning teachers. Further literature reflects that the selection of the mentor teacher can be subjective due to the interpretation of ‘experience’ for the mentor teacher and often does not consider all the attributes of effective mentorship (Kearney, 2014). According to Chambers (2015) mentor teacher training alone, does not guarantee a successful mentoring relationship. Mentoring outcomes may be compromised if the mentor teacher does not possess the right dispositions, alongside participation in mentor development and learning (Chambers, 2015). Simply assigning experienced classroom teachers as mentors, without the necessary careful consideration of their ability to be collaborative, empowering and inquiry-focused, can lead to inhibiting the beginning teacher’s professional and personal growth (Chambers, 2015; Langdon & Ward, 2015). Mentor teachers are required to be skilled facilitators and expert teacher educators, rather than simply experienced teachers (Langdon & Ward, 2015). This may imply that greater attention needs to be placed on the selection process of mentors as well as the on-going training and support for these teachers.

Importantly, mentor teachers require expert knowledge, pedagogy and skills that reflect adult learning principles. Numerous studies have reported on, and argue that, mentor teachers trained in adult learning principles are capable of facilitating effective professional learning that is critically and collaboratively constructed (Brookfield, 1986; Cameron, 2009; Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018; Jarvis, 2010; Knowles, 1980, 1984; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005; Robertson, 2016). This is further elaborated in the next section.

## **2.9 Mentoring and Adult Learning Principles**

It appears that mentoring approaches within the beginning teacher’s induction period has evolved from a traditional professional development model to a professional learning model where a reciprocal relationship with the mentor teacher is underpinned by principles of adult learning and evidence-based collaborative inquiry processes (Brookfield, 1986; Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Jarvis, 2010; Knowles, 1980; Zachary, 2000).

A wealth of literature reinforces adult learning principles as a foundation to underpin a

successful mentoring relationship and process (Tolhurst, 2006, Robertson, 2016; Zachary, 2000). According to Brookfield (1986), Knowles (1980) and Jarvis (2010) adult learning principles are characterised by learners being self-directed and involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction, learning builds on prior experiences and relates to real-life situations, learning is centered on problem-solving and links to theory and the learning process involves collaborative dialogue. In addition, the ability of mentors to listen for learning, questioning, withhold judgement, challenge assumptions and collaboratively deconstruct practice and pave a new way forward (Lovett, 2002). The literature reports on varying degrees of how well these principles are part of mentoring relationships. For instance, in a recent study in New Zealand of 12 beginning teachers' perceptions of induction and mentoring, only one beginning teacher talked about their mentor challenging her to extend her teaching and collaboratively being a learner beside her (Grudnoff, 2012). According to Aspfors and Fransson (2015) the real challenge is how best to train and support mentors to be effective in their practice, approaches and strategies. In the same study of ten research studies on education for mentor teachers, the findings reported surprisingly that some countries with well-established mentoring programmes, New Zealand included, do not seem to have any systemised mentor education (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015).

Despite conjecture over how to define best practice in mentoring (Brondyk & Searby, 2013), it appears that adult learning principles are aligned to current interpretations of mentoring that describe beginning teacher induction as a process of professional learning. In my interpretation, there is emerging evidence that identifies specific knowledge, skills and dispositions aligned to adult learning that contribute to mentor effectiveness (e.g. Brondyk & Searby, 2013). Within this context, Timperley et al., (2008) suggests that effective mentors make connections between theory and practice and align mentoring practice with adult learning principles. For example, providing feedback and feedforward, goal setting, setting of agendas, decision-making by both the mentor teacher and beginning teacher, using a range of open and closed questions during learning conversations, and challenging the teachers' assumptions to provoke reflection.

Similarly, in education, physical education and sport contexts, it is suggested that successful mentor teachers create a motivational climate intrinsically driven, focused on collaborative inquiry and allowing for rapport building (Bolton, 2009; Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Chambers; 2015; Robertson, 2016; Tolhurst, 2006; Zachary, 2000). Others have identified factors such as growth mindset, a mastery focused motivational climate, goal

orientations, resilience, coping with adversity, self-awareness, and working towards personal and professional goals as important for effective mentoring contexts (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 2006; Hone; 2016).

## **2.10 Reflection and Learning Conversations**

As adult learning principles are considered foundational epistemological knowledge for the mentoring process (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1980), *reflection* and *learning conversations* are also considered important pedagogical tools for effective mentoring. These two terms become inextricably linked, as it is *reflection* on professional practice that is considered important and contributes to quality professional learning and ultimately, effective teaching (Cameron, 2009; Harris, 2002; Absolum, 2006). It is through *learning conversations* that effective mentor teachers, alongside beginning teachers, reflect in, on and for action (for detailed explanation see; Schon, 1983) allowing for the framing and solving of problems (Lovett, 2002). The literature acknowledges that mentoring can have a powerful impact when the mentor and mentee engage in learning conversations that collaboratively generate improving knowledge about professional practice (Cameron, Lovett & Garvey-Berger, 2007; Lovett, 2002). In a New Zealand study of mentor and beginning teachers' professional learning conversations, Langdon (2014) acknowledges the complexity of the mentor's position, as often they take up conflicting roles as assessor. When this is considered alongside being a trusted colleague, and a need to concurrently attending to beginning teachers' and students' needs, the mentor's role appears complicated and messy (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Schatz-Oppenheimer (2017).

Harris (2002) suggests that true reflective practice involves collaboration with critical friends, changing of habits, and is concerned with improving practice rather than collecting knowledge. Reflective frameworks that place emphasis on unpacking and challenging assumptions and beliefs appear to be significant in current education literature (e.g. Brookfield, 1995; O'Connor & Diggins, 2002). These models of *critical reflection* (for detail see Fyall, 2017), for the beginning teacher, allow for a process that is evidence-based, more in-depth, transparent, allows assumptions to be questioned and identifies ineffective means of teaching and learning (Absolum, 2006; Cameron & Lovett, 2015). In essence, this potentially allows mentoring practices to move beyond traditionally entrenched and dominant discourses with a view to seek change. Indeed, as Fyall, Cowan and Galvan (2018) suggest, both the mentor and mentee need to be aware of the political, cultural and historical nature of education and

challenge common assumptions and dominant hegemonic practices. This requires a collaborative two-way conversation that allows the beginning teacher (mentee) to take ownership and direction of their own professional learning and not allow the mentor to manipulate and gate keep the nature and direction of knowledge. Further solidifying this position, Fransson and Grannas (2013) conclude that the mentor teacher needs to be self-aware of how they position themselves in regard to power, knowledge, values, authority and educational stance.

That said, Cameron (2009) proposes that critical reflection of practice may happen at a superficial level and may mirror and reinforce poor practice and less objectivity. It was reported that when there is insufficient shared expertise for the beginning teacher to access, there are missed opportunities to observe new practice, critique assumptions and reframe problems at a deeper level (Cameron, 2009). In summary, there appears to be barriers of knowledge, time, self-awareness and leadership that can hinder the development of reflective skills, in beginning and mentor teachers, and this may be due to poor processes and lack of theoretical knowledge (Harris, 2002; Hudson, 2013).

Self-awareness, according to Helman (2006) is important during learning conversations. Tolhurst (2006) and Helman (2006) both remind mentors of the importance of being self-aware, particularly, the stance that is adopted during learning conversations that may, or may not, allow a beginning teacher to reflect on new possibilities. For example, these stances can be to extend thinking, teach directly, promote accountability through to paraphrasing dialogue, inquiring to clarify or summarising back reflective thoughts (Helman, 2006; Tolhurst, 2006). Fyall, Cowan and Galvan (2018) conclude that without self-awareness, mentor teachers may unwittingly continue a 'business as usual' approach. In this sense, the mentor teacher becomes a 'gatekeeper' of knowledge and the beginning teacher may be constrained by traditional and dominant social norms that require them to conform to the status quo. This appears problematic and may inhibit growth and development of both the beginning and mentor teachers (Helman, 2006; Tolhurst, 2006).

Effectively, education leaders and mentor teachers who do not understand adult learning principles and/or are not skilled in collaborative learning conversations that reflect democratic reflective processes may compromise the professional learning of all stakeholders (Johnson & Kardos, 2003; Lovett & Davey, 2009). It would appear that this may be due to factors of context, terminology, conceptualisation, application, and, inconsistent training and development (Spooner-Lane, 2017).

## **2.11 Other Enablers and Barriers Contributing to (in)effective Mentoring**

There is evidence in the literature that suggests beginning teachers face a number of enablers and barriers that can impact on the quality of the induction and mentoring process (Langdon, 2011; Lovett & Cameron, 2011; Lovett, 2007). In a study of beginning secondary English teachers, Lovett & Davey (2009) reported various challenges to professional growth and effectiveness in the classroom. These included; a lack of time and space to meet with the mentor, mentoring that inhibited agency and little problem-solving driven by the beginning teacher, unrealistic expectations by leadership, and a poor mindset by the beginning teacher. Johnson & Kardos (2003) argued that when the quality mentoring neglects the beginning teacher, the opportunities to acquire competencies, confidence and pedagogical content knowledge, are compromised. Similarly, Cameron, Lovett and Garvey-Berger (2007) reported that beginning teachers can be thrown in at the deep end, often assuming roles and responsibilities they are ill-equipped or trained to teach. Anthony, Haigh and Kane (2011) revealed that beginning teachers became frustrated with the inconsistencies in the frequency and quality of feedback, a ticking box mentality for teacher registration requirements, a lack of time devoted to mentoring by principals and also principals not meeting the legal requirements for release time for beginning teachers.

Fyall, Cowan and Galvan (2018) stress that unless the mentor is aware of the effects that power has on the construction and validation of knowledge, and considers more empowering, democratic, constructivist approaches to mentoring, the beginning teacher is locked into business -as-usual, and may not acquire professional knowledge and learning appropriate for contemporary education contexts. Similarly, Chambers (2015) reports that mentoring and coaching is a social structure involving power relations and the way power is exercised can empower or disempower the beginning teacher. In this sense, the mentoring process is a political act, intimately linked with power and control over what constitutes legitimate knowledge and who holds and controls that knowledge (Bennett & Fyall, 2018; Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018).

There is also evidence in contemporary literature that suggests that poor induction and mentoring may contribute to increasingly high attrition rates of beginning teachers worldwide (Lovett, 2007; Pietsch & Williamson, 2010). It has been estimated that anywhere from 30% to 50% of beginning teachers leave the profession within five years (Collins, 2017). If this is coupled with an aging teacher population, and a societal view that multiple career changes is 'normal', this may account for the current teacher shortage crisis (Collins, 2017; Gerritsen,

2018; Kearney, 2014; Spooner-Lane, 2017). Johnson and Kardos (2003) suggest that the key to addressing teacher shortages and high dropout rates of beginning teachers in the first five years may not reside in active recruiting, but instead, in support and training for teachers in the classroom. At the forefront of this is the importance of effective mentoring during the induction process (Johnson & Kardos, 2003).

Despite policy guidelines and documentation and long-term investment in the induction period and mentoring structures, it appears that there is a lot of potential to improve induction and mentoring structures for beginning and mentor teachers (Anthony, Haigh & Kane, 2011).

## **2.12 Mentoring and Leadership in the Learning Community**

When education leaders are committed to an induction period and mentoring programme that is emotionally supportive, involves evidence-based inquiry learning conversations with an experienced mentor and opportunities for collegial interaction, then the beginning teacher has more chance of prospering in the formative years (Cameron, Lovett & Garvey-Berger 2007; Robertson, 2016). The literature reports that education leaders play a significant role in developing or hindering a culture of critical reflection and make a significant case for mentoring and professional learning to be a key consideration for education leaders (Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Bolton, 2009).

According to Speck and Knipe (2005), strong visionary leadership is necessary to create collaboration between teachers, students and parents, in a learning community that has processes deeply embedded in the schools' organisational systems and also reaches beyond the school gates to the community. Acheson and Gall (2003) discuss the importance of leaders having a good sense of a beginning and mentor teachers' level of expertise to ascertain the best supervision plan for growth. In addition, Stoll (2011) highlights how this type of learning focused culture moves relationships from unilateral to collaborative improvement and aligns with a constructivist educative mentoring approach.

Lovett and Davey (2009), suggest that beginning teachers can be vulnerable as their beliefs, values and perspectives are challenged by the powerful influences of the workplace. This would indicate that leaders have an important role in the formation of professional learning and would suggest that there needs to a better understanding of the current processes and possibilities that provide a more supportive learning community. It is clear there is still a great need to investigate mentoring processes within educational contexts such as New Zealand.

### **2.13 Summary**

In summary, drawing on literature from the fields of education (and also physical education and sport), this chapter has outlined the key literature related to beginning teacher induction and mentoring. The review has consolidated an understanding that mentoring is viewed as an important professional learning process for beginning teachers and also the wider learning community. I have provided clarity around terminology, and also the historical background that explains a 'shift' in perspective from one of professional development, to one of professional learning. I have presented critique in this area and also described some of the theories that scholars have used to underpin contemporary mentoring theory. It is hoped that this has provided the reader with a better understanding of current approaches and best-practices in mentoring. Through a review of the literature I have created a foundation on which to inform my study, I now introduce the research methodology (in Chapter Three) which informs the basis of this research study.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter provides a comprehensive outline and theoretical rationale for the chosen research design that guided this study and the methods employed to gather and analyse the data. This chapter includes,

- a description of how a qualitative, multiple case study research design is best-suited to provide an in-depth investigation into mentoring practices in primary schools and answer my research questions.
- the methods of data collection employed (namely semi-structured interviews, document analysis and field notes), and the measures taken to strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the data and reporting of the subsequent findings.
- the context and research setting of the study are outlined, including a description of the participants and the rationale used for their selection (sampling strategy).
- the ethical considerations and decisions that guided the research are explained in detail, with risks identified and detail of the initiatives taken to address these during the study.

### 3.1 Qualitative Research

#### 3.1.1 Research Paradigms

Research is a way of making sense of phenomenon, and is ‘a process of *systematic inquiry* that is designed to collect, analyze, interpret and use data’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2015, p.2). Research is conducted and is influenced by the researchers ‘world view’ (or paradigm), however, it is important that the researcher should carefully consider the nature of the inquiry and the research questions at hand before determining the research paradigm that informs the study (Mertens, 2015). In this sense, the nature of the research and its context should be compatible with the research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Therefore, researchers can use a variety of paradigmatic approaches that orient and represent different ways of thinking about and undertaking specific research projects (Mallet & Tinning, 2014; Mertens, 2015).

Mertens (2015), proposes four research paradigms and the labels that are commonly associated within them (see table 1). These are: *Post-positivist*; holds the belief about the importance of objectivity and generalizability but they suggest that researchers modify their claims to understandings of truth based on probability rather than certainty. *Constructivist*; knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process and that researchers

should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. *Transformative*; this paradigm directly addresses the politics in research by confronting social oppression at whatever level it occurs. Transformative researchers consciously and explicitly position themselves side by side with the less powerful in a joint effort to bring about social justice. *Pragmatic*; researchers that use this paradigm, collect data in a simultaneous or sequential manner using methods that are drawn from both qualitative and quantitative in a means that best addresses the research question/s (Mertens, 2015). Each of these paradigms are based on different epistemological and ontological assumptions (for a detailed discussion see Mertens, 2015) and the researcher can determine which of these is best suited to answer the research questions whilst also demonstrating compatibility with the research context.

The constructivist paradigm (Mertens, 2015), is underpinned by the assumption that meaning is not discovered but instead is constructed by the individual through interaction with people, experiences and situations (Mertens, 2015). In this view, it is perceived that people construct meaning in different ways even in relation to the same phenomenon, that is, that the social world is constructed through multiple, often divergent perspectives (Crotty, 1998). Thus, constructivism rejects the notion of one distinct truth and instead acknowledges the importance of subjectivism (Mertens, 2015).

This has significant compatibility with qualitative inquiry, where, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggest that qualitative research approaches are suited to educational contexts, because often the nature of the research is to richly, and in-depth, describe the participants perceptions, thoughts or views of particular phenomenon and contexts. Mertens (2015) contends that a key characteristic of qualitative research methods, is to provide a *thick description* of the time, place, context and culture of the research setting and participants lived experiences. This *thick description* allows the reader to make judgements about the applicability of the research findings to their own situations. Qualitative inquiry, therefore allows the researcher to be absorbed into the world of the participants with the view of illuminating this world to others (Stake, 1995).

As a qualitative researcher, guided by constructivist principles, I have sought to understand the complexity of the induction and mentoring processes in selected primary school settings in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and by employing qualitative methods to gather and analyse data, I have made sense of a situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the research environment (Mertens, 2015).

Table 1: Labels commonly associated with different(research paradigms (from Mertens, 2015)

<b>Post-positivist</b>	<b>Constructivist</b>	<b>Transformative</b>	<b>Pragmatic</b>
Experimental	Naturalistic	Critical theory	Mixed methods
Quasi-experimental	Phenomenological	Neo-Marxist	Mixed models
Correlational	Hermeneutic	Feminist theory	Participatory
Causal comparative	Symbolic	Critical race theory	
Quantitative	interaction	Freirean	
Randomized	Ethnographic	Participatory	
control trials	Qualitative	Emancipatory	
	Participatory action	Postcolonial/Indigenous	
	research	Queer theory	
		Disability theories	
		Action research	
		Human rights/equity	

Through the use of qualitative methods I have been able to construct in-depth, personalised accounts of the induction and mentoring process and the participant experiences within a primary school context, and show descriptive evidence of how the participants construct their own reality of this (Crotty, 1998; Mertens, 2015). Given that mentoring in primary schools is being promoted, by the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (ECNZ, 2018), as a collaborative, constructivist, professional learning tool to promote growth of both the mentor and beginning teachers I viewed this constructivist, qualitative design was best suited to the research context. Moreover, this provided the framework for a rich and descriptive multiple case study design, which is now outlined below (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

### **3.2 Multiple Case Study Design**

Yin (2014) suggests that qualitative case study research situates itself well within a real world context and may be employed to investigate an individual, small groups, communities, an event, or programmes that the researcher wants to gain greater insight. In this way, the researcher can explore specific phenomenon, in depth, and gather the rich and thick description required for analysis (Mertens, 2015; Yin, 2014). Moreover, through interpretation, the

researcher reveals ways to resolve an existing or emerging problem. However, Yin (2014) cautions that cases should be 'bound' and contain specific questions and propositions that keep the study within feasible limits. Therefore, by 'bounding the case' I was able to provide a clearly defined unit of analysis around mentoring processes. In this study, I 'bounded' and defined each case as - a first year beginning teacher and his/her assigned mentor teacher within the same primary school.

In addition to identifying these single cases, I also considered and employed a multiple multiple case study design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Multiple case study, as opposed to one-case, enabled me to conduct an analysis of the data within, and across cases (Mutch, 2005). According to Stake (1995) and Yin (2014), a multiple case approach can capture greater complexity of relationships, beliefs and attitudes within the research context and is able to explore more than one perspective, allowing for multiple perspectives, themes, trends or issues to emerge. Both Yin (2014) and Mutch (2005) suggest the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling than single case-study design, and the overall study may be regarded more robustly.

Cognisant of the above discussion, I employed a multiple case-study design for this study as it allowed for an in-depth investigation into a specific phenomenon, while also enabling a cross case comparison and analysis (Mutch, 2005; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Specifically, each case was defined as a first-year beginning teacher and his/her assigned mentor teacher within the same primary school and the study looked to gather data across three separate pairs of beginning and mentor teachers who were all in separate primary schools. I believe that through understanding individual cases and then making collective interpretations and comparisons across multiple cases, I have gained a better insight into the beginning and mentor teachers lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lichtman, 2013).

This enabled me to look for emerging themes, similarities and differences that emerged to tell a story about the mentoring processes within Aotearoa New Zealand primary schools (Glesne, 1999). From these I was able to generate propositions regarding induction and mentoring processes in relation to the cases that I explored. These propositions include; new possibilities and improved ways of mentoring practice for mentor teachers, and also improvements for mentor training and support structures.

### **3.3 The Research Settings and the Participants**

#### *3.3.1 Settings*

The participants/dyads of this research study are employed in three separate Aotearoa New Zealand schools. Firstly, one dyad teaches in a purpose-built modern learning environment; a hub with four teachers in this learning space. This urban school is reasonably new, situated close to a major city and caters for students Yrs 1-8 and has a roll of 400. Secondly, a dyad teaches in an intermediate section (Yrs 7/8) of an urban high school. This school is located in a regional part of New Zealand and is the only high school within the town. The school caters to Yrs 7-13 and has a roll of 360. The last dyad is based in a small rural school, located one hour from a major New Zealand city, and caters for Yrs 1-8 and has a roll of 120. It was felt this range of school settings would add greater depth to the research study and complement the purposive sampling method used to identify the participants of this study (see in the following section). With all three schools in this study having different characteristics this provided the opportunity to make comparisons across cases of mentoring processes and to generate theory about how settings may impact on mentoring processes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). For the purposes of this study, the schools in question will be referred to using the following pseudonyms Bluestone School, Yellowpark School and Huntington School throughout the research.

#### *3.3.2 Sampling*

This qualitative multiple case study research used *purposeful sampling* to select three pairs of mentor and beginning teachers from three Aotearoa New Zealand primary schools (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Purposive sampling is described as a common method for qualitative researchers to hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement to make a series of strategic choices about with whom, where, and how one does one's research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Stake, 2005). In this respect, it allows the researcher to focus on specific issues, populations and as the name suggests a purposive sample has been chosen for a specific purpose and adds greater depth to the study than does a probability sample (Palys & Atchison, 2008) The purposive criteria used in this study were (a) three beginning teachers in their first-year of induction and mentoring programme; (b) the three mentor teachers currently assigned to the beginning teachers of this study; (c) the assigned mentor teachers have been identified as being experienced and having positions of

responsibility within a school; (d) the school of the participants provided a setting that would add to the depth and richness of the research study.

Therefore, purposive sampling was employed as it enabled me to specifically target first-year beginning teachers and their assigned mentor teachers (Yin, 2014). According to the Teaching Council, New Zealand, Matatū Aotearoa (TCNZ, 2018) mentor teachers are seen to have up to date and in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning processes and expertise in educative mentoring underpinned by adult learning principles (TCNZ, 2018). Mentor teachers have been identified by school management leaders as having the necessary skills to transition a beginning teacher into their career and oversee the induction process to the point of full teacher registration (TCNZ, 2018).

### *3.3.3 The Participants:*

The initial contact and access to the participants and contexts was through my professional association. Using the above criteria described above, this resulted in six teachers being invited to be participants in this study and who all met the purposive selection criteria detailed above. The participants ranged in age from 22yrs to 52yrs with an average age of 37yrs. The gender of the participating teachers included one male and five female teachers. The mentor teachers had an average of 14 years teaching experience, which varied in range from 10yrs to 18yrs and an average of four years of experience as a mentor teacher. All three mentor teachers hold positions of leadership and responsibility within their respective schools. As set out in the participant selection criteria above, the participant sample aimed to reflect a variation in teaching and mentor experience, age, educational setting and ease of accessibility for the researcher.

For confidentiality reasons (see ethics section below for further detail) the participants are referred to using the following pseudonyms: beginning teachers (BT B, BT J, BT M) and the mentor teachers (MT D, MT F, MT S). As with the schools involved in this study, and for reasons of confidentiality to minimise risks of disclosure, the teachers will be referred to using the above mentioned pseudonyms.

## **3.4 Methods: Data Collection and Timeline**

This qualitative multiple case study is underpinned by a constructivist assumption that meaning is not discovered but instead constructed by the individual through interaction with people, experiences and situations (Crotty, 2003; Mertens, 2015). That is, to make sense of lived and

rich experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Yin, 2014;). Therefore, in this multiple case study, data were captured in three different ways. These were; (i) in-depth, semi-structured interviews, (ii) both Ministry of Education and individual schools’ policies and procedural documentation relating to mentor teachers, and (iii) I also took field notes at each of these data collection points. The reason for field notes was to firstly, capture a word-picture of the setting, the participants’ actions and conversations, and secondly, to record my own reflective frame of mind, ideas, hunches and concerns (Yin, 2003). Data gathering was conducted over the period of June to August in 2018 and this was followed by the data analysis (See Figure.1 below–Data collection timeline).

*Figure 1: Data collection timeline*



### *3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews (and field notes)*

Yin (2014) suggests interviews offer a depth of information that permits the detailed exploration of particular issues in a way not possible with other forms of data collection. Data collection through this approach generates rich, descriptive information that leaves the participants’ perspectives and voices intact, while providing multiple contexts for understanding the phenomenon under study (Lichtman, 2013; Mutch, 2005). The semi-structured interview employed in this phase of the research is one method commonly engaged in by educational researchers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

The main purpose of the semi-structured interview is to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants perspectives and experiences in a comfortable environment that allows them to express these perspectives and experiences in their own way (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). There appears to be several advantages of semi-structured interviews over more structured forms (Burns, 2000). Firstly, the informant’s perspective dominates, rather than that of the researcher. Secondly, the language used to describe their experiences and perspectives can be

natural and informal and, thirdly, the informality of the conversation may help contribute to a more equal status between interviewer and the participant. These factors contribute to a more flexible and informal conversation that may allow the researcher to modify the questions and pursue different lines of inquiry. This may result in ‘richer’ and ‘thicker’ data gathering (Burns, 2000). However, this flexibility may create its own challenges, as unskilled interviewers may produce inconsistencies between interviews that make the data more difficult to analyse (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Additionally, the cost, in terms of time, effort and skills may also prove challenging for the researchers employing semi-structured interviews (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). With this in mind, and despite the challenges suggested, the semi-structured interviews were developed to elicit the participants’ perceptions of the mentoring processes.

The semi-structured interview schedule had guiding topics and questions that formed the basis of the interviews. Additionally, and in-line with qualitative methodology, these interviews were designed to be fluid and flexible in nature for both the participants and the researcher (Mutch, 2005). All individual participant interviews followed a similar structure but as an interviewer I had considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the participants a chance to shape the context of the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). To get *rich and thick description* required in qualitative research, good in-depth interviews should produce data filled with words that reveal the respondent’s perspectives, in this case about the mentoring processes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). However, as a researcher I did not want to fall into the trap of only hearing the voice that can be easily named, categorised and responded too. I needed to be fully aware of the voice that escapes easy classification to unearth a participant’s true experience and meaning (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

Participants were emailed the semi-structured interview schedule, topics and questions one week prior to allow for reflective thought of lived experiences before meeting with the researcher (see appendix 1). This was also a means to allow the teachers time to prepare and feel at ease before the interview. Below are some examples of guiding questions asked during the semi-structured interviews (refer to appendix.1 for a complete list):

- Can you explain what mentoring means to you?
- What are your perceptions of the mentoring relationship?
- What are some enablers and barriers that you face within the induction and mentoring processes and how do they impact on the mentoring relationship?

- Beginning teachers were asked: What are your perceptions of the mentor teacher's skills?
- Mentor teachers were asked: As a mentor what are your perceptions of your skills during learning conversations?

Each, individual semi-structured interview lasted between 45-60 mins in duration. The interviews were conducted at a place and time of convenience for each participant to set the participant at ease and elicit a comfortable, informal environment that would aid in free-flowing conversation. In all circumstances the semi-structured interviews were completed in the participants own school, and in a quiet place away from any distractions. Interviews were audio recorded and field notes were also taken by myself as the researcher.

At the conclusion of the interviews participants were invited to raise any concerns and concluding thoughts on their perceptions. I allowed time after the interviews for the expression of gratitude and for informal talk. Often this unplugged time can reveal more information of importance (Glesne, 1999). The recordings were transcribed verbatim and the participants were emailed their individual transcript to check for accuracy. All participants were offered the opportunity of an individual follow up interview at a place of their convenience by the 30 August 2018 if they had any additional stories, experiences or thoughts to share with me following the interview. All of the participants read and approved individual transcripts for authenticity. Two beginning teachers and two mentor teachers had follow up interviews to share additional perceptions on mentoring processes after reflecting on the first interview.

As a researcher, I paid close attention verbal cues whilst conducting the semi-structured interviews but additionally to the other cues that the participant exhibited, such as body language. These took the form of 'field notes'. Field notes are described as another source of rich data providing insight into the participants' verbal and non-verbal behaviour and the context in which these behaviours take place, the researcher's own thoughts, feelings and impressions (Flick, 2014; Maharaj, 2016; Miles & Huberman, 1994). For the purposes of this research study, during and after semi-structured interviews, field notes were made of key words/phrases used by the participants, quick fragmentary jottings of descriptions, behaviour and activities as a way to richly describe the context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, the field notes formed a component of 'thick descriptions' for this research study and also provided a opportunity to critically reflect upon experiences in the field and proceed to higher levels of analysis and interpretation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Maharaj, 2016). These

were included in my analysis and are utilised in my findings and discussion where appropriate.

### *3.4.2 Document Analysis: Policy Documentation for Mentoring*

Document analysis is described as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed or electronic material (Bowen, 2009). As a research method document analysis is applicable to qualitative case studies – intensive studies producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon and is used to uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). This appears to have compatibility with this multiple-case study because as a researcher I was investigating key documents at both macro and meso levels and looking to understand how these documents influenced mentoring processes within Aotearoa New Zealand primary school contexts. In summary document analysis provides background and context, a means to ask additional questions, provides supplementary data and a means to triangulate with other data sources (Merriam, 1998). In the following ‘Data Analysis’ section I outline a constant-comparative method I used to interpret and make sense of this and other data sources (Lichtman, 2013).

Therefore, in addition to the individual semi-structured interviews and the data generated from them, I also undertook a document analysis. An examination of both national and individual school policies and procedures relating to mentoring processes and practices, provided valuable data about the training, support and expectations of these teachers. These data consisted of both Ministry of Education and the individual school documentation. Analysis of these policy documents enabled me to compare and contrast the participants perceived understandings of the mentoring processes with that promoted from both a national, school policy perspective.

The national policy documentation was sourced from multiple internet sites that are freely available in the public domain. These were; Teaching Council, New Zealand, Matatū Aotearoa (TCNZ, 2019), The Ministry of Education (MoE, 2019), New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER, 2018) and Te kete Ipurangi (TKI, 2018). Specifically, this data enabled me to identify and outline the underpinning theory associated with mentoring practice and the accompanying implementation strategies promoted by policy makers (Cameron, Dingle & Brooking, 2007). In the case of individual schools, permission was sought, and gained, from each principal, for access to the school’s policies and documentation relating to mentor teachers’ requirements, obligations, expectations, selection and training processes.

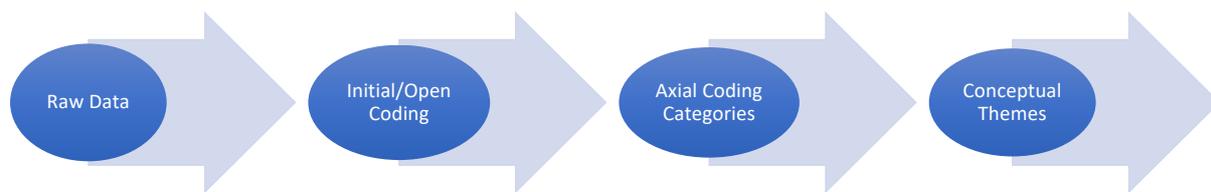
Once all of these were obtained a document analysis was conducted to capture the data that was relevant to the key theme of the study and the three 'cases' under investigation.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

A common approach to analysing qualitative data is through a constant-comparative data analysis method and using a coding system to make meaning of the data (Lichtman, 2013; Mutch, 2005). The constant comparative method involves breaking down the data into discrete 'incidents' or 'units' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and coding them to categories. As Taylor and Bogdan (1984) summarise: "in the constant comparative method the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to develop concepts; by continually comparing specific incidents in the data, the researcher refines these concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent explanatory model" (p126). In this instance, this method of constant-comparative analysis suggested by Lichtman (2013) and Mutch (2005) was employed to analyse the data captured by the transcribed semi-structured interviews (and the accompanying field notes), and the national and individual school policy and procedural documentation relating to mentor teachers.

To gain insight, coding is part of a constant-comparison methodology that enables the researcher to reduce large amounts of raw data into categories, and then further down to conceptual themes based on the perceptions of the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Mutch, 2005). Through using this data analysis approach, I was able to look at individual cases and also across the three 'cases' for both the beginning and mentor teachers and compare and contrast these against the policy documentation.

During this process of coding, I created an indexing/categorising system to bring order to the data analysis process. Specifically, I looked for an item of text (words, phrases, terms etc.) or behaviour that said the same thing or reflected the same thing (Cohen et al., 2011). This process emerged in three distinct phases: initial/open coding, axial coding and conceptual themes (Cohen et al., 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) (see figure 3 below-Coding process). Through these phases of data reduction, the coding tools helped me to simplify and organise the data into manageable chunks. I briefly outline below these phases and to highlight how qualitative research is inevitably interpretive, and is a reactive interaction between yourself and the data of an already interpreted social encounter (Cohen et al., 2011).



*Figure 2: Coding process*

The initial/open coding involved comprehensive reading and re-reading of the data to code the transcribed semi-structured interviews and the field notes, and the policy and procedural documentation. An initial/open code can be a word, a phrase, or an action and you assign a code. For instance, these might be repeated words or actions, strong emotions, metaphors, images, emphasised items, key phrases, or simplified concepts (Mutch, 2005). In essence, the data is broken ‘open’ and you go through the twin process of constantly questioning the data and then comparing the data with other empirical data (Grbich, 2007). At this stage, if needed, I made comments under the codes to refer to at a later stage. I also kept referring back to the main research questions of the study to bring my focus back to the aims of the study and this helped in bringing clarity to the constant-comparison coding process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The next crucial stage of data analysis was axial coding, a process where you identify relationships and links between the codes (Lichtman, 2013). The texts were examined and labels or key words were used to identify emerging categories. During this phase, I was reducing a long list of codes down to a smaller list of categories, with some having sub-categories until further inferencing and interpretive analysis had been done (Grbich, 2007). At this stage I was having to decide and identify which categories were less important than others and come back to my research questions to guide my decision-making (Lichtman, 2013). At the completion of this stage I met with my supervisors to review the initial/open and axial coding phases to receive some constructive feedback on the data analysis process so far, and to see if the themes starting to emerge from the data were an accurate reflection of the participants’ perceptions and schools’ policies and procedures (Glesne, 1999).

The final step in the data analysis coding process is to identify key conceptual themes that reflect the meaning you attach to the data you collect (Lichtman, 2013). Data needed to be richly evident in at least four out of six participants’ accounts, or two out of three accounts if analysing responses from either beginning or mentor teachers as a separate group, and common

to other data sources to be included as a final theme in the findings section. Grbich (2007) suggests this is where you validate the relationship between a nominated central core category and drawing together additional categories of context, conditions, actions, interactions, and outcomes together with an integration of field notes/memos. I found that the more I read and re-read the data I was able to identify those themes that were richer in meaning than others. These overarching themes I identified and finalised were prevalent throughout the coding process and reflect, in my opinion, the participants' perceptions about mentoring processes. Through this constant-comparative method I was able to feel more comfortable with the data as I progressed through the coding process and steps of reductive analysis. Moreover, I felt confident that I had reduced the data to three main conceptual themes and subthemes that quintessentially encapsulated the study (see Table 2: Findings overview below). These themes are 1: *Mentoring Policy-illusion or confusion?* 2: *Mentoring Practice in Action*. These will be presented in Chapter Four – The Findings. Following this process of data analysis, the key emergent themes were used to inform an interpretation of the participants' perceptions and guide a report of the findings through a narrative discussion in Chapter Five.

*Table 2: Findings overview*

<p><b>Theme 1: Mentoring Policy – illusion or confusion?</b></p>	<p><b>Subthemes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The illusion</li> <li>• The confusion</li> </ul>
<p><b>Theme 2: Mentoring Practice in Action</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions of mentoring and mentoring relationships</li> <li>• Learning conversations: Collaboration or gatekeeping?</li> </ul>

### **3.6 Rigour and Trustworthiness**

With any qualitative research approach to have credibility and including this multiple case study, the issues of rigour and trustworthiness need to be addressed (Cohen et al., 2011). This is a process where researchers work to meet the criteria of validity, credibility and believability of their research – as assessed by the academic communities, the participants and stakeholders (Mutch, 2005; Stake, 1995).

Yin (2014) suggests that qualitative researchers take the view that they can verify their interpretations by having others, including participants and fellow researchers' look at the data and go through the same process. In this study, rigour and trustworthiness was reflected through the practice of conducting member and peer checks of the transcribed interviews and data analysis stage. This process in the data analysis stage allowed the participants to check individual transcripts of the semi-structured interview/s and field notes. Principals of schools were given a transcript of field notes about policies and procedures to check. Additionally, my peer supervisors for this study conducted a thorough check of the transcripts and monitored the process of data analysis to look for patterns of inconsistency. Furthermore, my supervisors scrutinized the preliminary findings to ensure that these had been truthfully considered and processed (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

This process of member checking ensures accuracy by checking for inconsistencies, bias, or errors in interpretations. These are addressed in the discussion of the researcher's interpretation of the unfolding story (Cohen et al., 2011; Glesne, 1999). At the report writing stage, to further strengthen the rigour of the research, I asked participants to comment on aspects of the study that they considered incomplete or unrealistic, and if the themes were accurate and the interpretations are fair and representative (Creswell, 2013).

With data triangulation, the potential problems of construct validity can be addressed because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon (Yin, 2003). In qualitative research, triangulation is defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) and is reflected in this research by collecting data through semi-structured interviews, documents and policies pertaining to mentor teachers, field notes and member checks. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that triangulation is intended as a check on data and a means of validation, while member checking, provides an element of credibility, is used as a check on members' constructions of data. In essence the researcher of this study was trying to adopt an objective stance through triangulation. Therefore, the data collection methods in this study have contributed to the rigour and trustworthiness of this research.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

The approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC) was gained to ensure the research design of this qualitative multiple case study met ethical standards. It is important to act ethically to protect the researched, the

researcher, and the credibility of the research (Mutch, 2005). This involves research adhering to key research principles that ensure ethical accountability. For example, some key ethical principles involve; informed consent, clear and concise information (information sheet), ensuring no harm to the participants, a right to voluntarily participate, the right to withdraw, gaining permission from the schools to conduct research, no coercion or deceit, protecting the collected data (Cohen et al., 2011; Mutch, 2005). These relevant ethical procedures are discussed below with a view to make transparent my attempts to provide ethically sound research.

Prior to the study commencing, the participants were individually invited to meet with me and discuss the aims of the research, obligations and address ethical conduct around risks of disclosure and to ensure confidentiality throughout the research. This was an important process to establish rapport and trust with the participants and provided them the opportunity to ask any initial questions or raise concerns. This discussion was revisited prior to the participants signing the consent form (see appendix 4). The participants and principals were informed by a detailed information letter (see appendix 2 & 3) about their rights, the nature and process of the study, and asked to take away a consent form while considering the invitation to participate. In addition, this process had the intention of providing clarity about methods and purpose, and avoiding any deceit or misinterpretation from the researcher or participant (Mutch, 2005). In this study, participants and school principals, prior to signing the consent forms, were advised that participation in the study was voluntary. If they did participate, they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or judgement and the right to decline answering any of the questions. If any of the participants or schools withdrew from the study, I made it clear that I would remove any information relating to them, on the proviso that this was practically achievable. If one teacher of the mentoring pair withdrew from the study, and true to the spirit of confidentiality as a researcher, I would withdraw that pair of participants from the study to protect the rights and welfare of all parties involved and to avoid any harm to the participants. Any reported data, from that case, would not be used in the findings and destroyed. However, after 30 August 2018, it will not be possible to remove the impact of the data on the analysis of the thesis conclusions if there was a withdrawal after this date. As Mutch (2005) further explains, participants should not be coerced to participate in the research, and therefore I believe that I addressed this issue through the ethical principle of voluntary participation and the participant having the right to freely choose whether to partake

in the research, or not. For this research study, there were no withdrawals of participants or assigned schools once the research had commenced.

As a researcher, I protected a participant's and school's right to privacy through a promise of confidentiality. In addressing the issue of maintaining confidentiality, I made it clear to all participants, including school principals, that the results may benefit their future induction and mentoring processes. However, I also outlined that the research study was small and there was a risk of identification of individuals and schools within the school and community. I articulated to the participants that in order to decrease risks of maintaining confidentiality, I employed a number of techniques. Firstly, I explained that I used sensitivity and judgement to minimise harm to the participants and workplace organization, by using general descriptions and information relating to the schools and their location, for example, a regional geographical location of the schools only. Secondly, to ensure individual participant and school confidentiality, I used pseudonyms to identify both the school names and the names of the participants.

Lichtman (2013) proposes that an important ethical consideration is to consider and mitigate in any research design involves the possible risks associated with power imbalances between the researcher and the participants. Silverman (2004) describes power imbalances in qualitative research as inevitable, suggesting from a Foucauldian analysis power cannot be wished away or legislated away as it is inherent in all relationships. For example the notion of power is significant in the interview situation, for the interview is not simply a data collection but a social and frequently a political act. It can be argued, that typically, more power resides with the interviewer: the participant is under scrutiny whilst the interviewer is not (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In this research study, as a researcher I was conscious mentor teachers can be viewed in a position of power by beginning teachers due to them being influential in determining beginning teachers suitability for holding a full practicing registration and this could have impacted on candid responses (Silverman, 2004). I understood these concerns and have acknowledged that power imbalances in this research, may exist on three levels, namely, between the researcher and the participants, between the beginning teacher and the mentor and the participants and school leadership. The following outlines the ways that I have sought to address these possible power imbalances.

On the researcher/participant level, it was important in this discussion, prior to consent, that I interact with the participants in a natural, unobtrusive and non-threatening manner to put the participants at ease. I comprehensively outlined to all participants, and principals of schools

involved in the research, that they understand the process in which they are to be engaged and the risks, implications and obligations involved. All parties need to clearly understand the importance of ethical conduct during the research process given the sensitive nature of the data being collected and to ensure confidentiality throughout the research. This risk of harm, risks of disclosure and potential power imbalances was minimised by drawing attention to professional conduct and the aims of the study. I further addressed these risks of disclosure by encouraging honest but professional and respectful dialogue. On the beginning teacher/mentor teacher level I ensured to both the beginning and mentor teachers that I would not disclose information that might identify individuals, mentoring pairs, or school responses.

Throughout the research process I was mindful of protecting the collected data. In this case, all data, including interviews and field notes and analysis documentation, was kept in locked and secure facilities accessed via electronic password. As the researcher, I was the only person who had access to these data, however, my supervisors, from time-to-time were also privy to the information. In addition, I outlined to all participants how the findings will be presented and reported, with the possibility the findings may be used to improve mentoring practice and policy in their schools or on a wider scale.

Once the participants, including the school principals were fully informed of all of the above information, the participants signed and submitted the consent forms and were happy to progress with their research participation. The following chapter now presents the findings of the study and details the major themes and subthemes emanating from the data analysis process.

## Chapter Four: Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present the research findings from the analysed data. This is presented in two distinct sections. In the first section, I present the document analysis of the national policy guidelines surrounding induction and mentoring in primary schools, and secondly, I outline the induction and mentoring policy and guidelines associated with each individual participant school. Additionally, I draw on the interview data exploring the mentor and beginning teacher's perceptions of the policy, procedures and support structures within their schools. Notably, the key themes to emerge from this analysis suggested that there were inconsistent interpretations, by each school, of the national policy guidelines, and also different interpretations between the individual schools. The findings are presented under the heading; – 'Mentoring policy – illusion or confusion?' This theme is correlated to research question one – 'What are the national guidelines on mentoring practice in primary schools and how do individual primary schools interpret and use these?'

*Figure 3: Findings - Relationship between the research questions, themes and subthemes*



The second section of the findings reflects the themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews and field notes. These findings relate to research question two - 'How do beginning and mentor teachers perceive the nature and quality of the mentoring experience?' This analysis outlines a deeper understanding of the mentor and beginning teachers' perceived knowledge, relationships and their experiences. For a summary of the main

themes, sub-themes and the relationship of these to the research questions, please refer to Figure 3 above.

## **4.2 Theme 1: Mentoring Policy – Illusion or confusion?**

The first theme of this study is called ‘*Mentoring Policy – illusion or confusion?*’ Presenting these findings reveals data about national policy and guidelines, as set by the Education Council New Zealand (2015), and also how these are interpreted and implemented within the participant schools. I firstly outline the key ideas and concepts reflected in the national policy guidelines and then weave this with the participant schools mentoring policy documentation. Additionally, I include the beginning and mentor teachers interview comments from the interview questions relating to policy, procedures, training and support to elucidate their understanding and interpretations of the national policy guidelines.

Specifically, and despite the *illusion* that schools believed they were addressing mentoring in an appropriate way, this theme reveals that the participating schools reflected some *confusion* when interpreting the national policy guidelines for induction and mentoring. There was also some inconsistency between the participating schools’ interpretations of the national policy guidelines, namely, confusion surrounding an understanding of ‘educative mentoring’ and the training and support structures required for mentor teachers required to implement it. This may ultimately have implications for beginning teachers during their induction period (These implications are discussed further in the ‘discussions’ chapter below). The findings of this first major theme are organised into the following three subthemes and are presented below as;

- The illusion
- The confusion

### **4.2.1 The illusion**

This sub-theme provides a brief overview of the key messages from the Education Council New Zealand (ECNZ, 2015) document entitled ‘*Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers*’ (ECNZ, 2015). I also have drawn on mentoring information from the Teaching Council, New Zealand, Matatū Aotearoa (TCNZ, 2019), New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER, 2019), and Te kete Ipurangi (TKI, 2019). As a researcher, I felt by including data in this sub-theme it would provide a wider backdrop and context to the findings of this study. Furthermore, how these key guidelines, at a macro level, filter down to

policy and documentation and are interpreted within the participant schools and by the beginning and mentor teachers.

### *National policy guidelines*

Considering the importance of mentoring in the induction process, and how the literature reports of mentoring contributing to the professional and personal development of both beginning and mentor teachers (e.g. Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Bolton, 2009; Chambers, 2015), it is useful for the context of this study to unpack key national guidelines/macro policy for induction and mentoring. Induction is used as a broad term for all support and guidance (including mentoring) provided to new graduated teachers as they begin their teaching practice in real situations and progress to full registration after a two-year induction and mentoring programme (ECNZ, 2015). Further to this, the guidelines view an induction programme as being comprehensive, comprising many elements, for example relationships built on trust and collaboration, high quality educative mentoring, evidence-informed evaluations of professional practice against the Practising Teacher Criteria, opportunities for sustained professional learning and not a standard checklist of requirements (ECNZ, 2015; NZCER, 2019; TKI, 2019).

The guidelines report a high-quality mentoring programme is relationship-based, focused on educative mentoring, recognised and resourced (ECNZ, 2015; TCNZ, 2019). The purpose and significance of the document '*Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers*' is highlighted in the following statement:

The Guidelines are designed to shift school, Kura and early childhood education (ECE) policy and practices towards an 'educative mentoring' approach. This is a shift away from a view of induction as 'advice and guidance' to one of skilled facilitation of 'learning conversations' focusing on evidence of teachers' practice. Rather than just improving 'advice' and emotional support, the mentor teacher co-construct professional learning, where learning is reciprocal. (ECNZ, 2015)

This statement highlights the paradigm shift from an advice and guidance induction and mentoring programme, to one focused on skilled educative mentoring. These guidelines were designed for all stakeholders that play a role in mentoring Provisionally Certified Teachers (PCTs) and other teachers in need of support. Characteristics of policy guidelines of educative

mentoring, and the role of the mentor in this process as part of beginning teacher induction are for example (ECNZ, 2015):

- goal orientated – beginning teacher and mentor goal
- deeper exploration of practice and evidence of learning- and what lies behind the surface issues
- the mentor teacher develops beginning teacher autonomy and agency
- the mentor and beginning teacher build knowledge by using their teaching as a site of inquiry
- incidental learning opportunities are taken advantage of to maximise growth
- the mentoring relationship engages in serious professional learning conversations, where the mentor actively listens, is aware of stance used, challenges pedagogy and explores deeper issues
- learning conversations provide feedback and assessment based on evidence

The guidelines state this important message:

All professional leaders are responsible for ensuring they have an induction and mentoring policy in place for their school, Kura or ECE service based on these guidelines (ECNZ, 2015).

Furthermore, there needs to be provision for mentor teacher professional development. This is succinctly illustrated below:

Ongoing support systems and professional development opportunities for mentor teachers should be established. As set out in these guidelines, the mentor teacher role involves specific skills that cannot be assumed but need to be explicitly taught and supported. They are skills that are also needed in other professional leadership roles. This means that increasing capability in these areas will have an impact on the quality of the wider professional leadership in a school, kura or ECE setting. (ECNZ, 2015)

Therefore, this correlates to a general view, drawing on the guidelines and other key mentoring information (refer to NZCER, 2019; TCNZ, 2019; TKI, 2019) there is a strong emphasis on mentors being exposed to development programmes that may include (but not confined to) the following content (ECNZ, 2015, p.19):

- pedagogy of mentoring
- facilitation of challenging, evidence- informed, professional learning conversations
- knowledge of the Practising Teacher Criteria (and how to use them to guide the professional learning of a PCT)
- approaches to gathering evidence of PCTs' learning and of providing and documenting formative feedback
- collection and analysis of learning data for PCTs to engage within their professional learning
- knowledge of specific strategies such as for supporting differentiated learning needs, English for Second Language learning, English for Additional Language learning, and support for literacy and numeracy learning
- leadership development
- active listening
- how to personalise learning

There is an expectation in the guidelines that employers, leadership, mentor and beginning teachers who form a professional mentoring dyad, and schools or wider learning community all play a key role in ensuring a common understanding of how the vision statement will be interpreted and applied within their context, and be committed to it (ECNZ, 2015; TCNZ, 2019; NZCER, 2019).

*Individual school's policy and guidelines on induction and mentoring for beginning teachers*

This study specifically reviewed the participant schools' policy documentation relating to mentor teachers and the induction and mentoring processes. The findings revealed that two of the three schools had limited documentation relating to the induction and mentoring processes and in the other school's case there was no documentation. Furthermore, the limited findings reveal that of the two schools who had policy and procedural documentation, there were differences and inconsistent interpretations compared to that of the national policy guidelines. Below is a summary, albeit brief, of the three schools' policy documentation.

### *Bluestone School*

Bluestone School had various documents relating to the induction and mentoring programme. This was accessed on a Google Docs platform and available for all each mentor and beginning teacher dyad. These documents included:

- A term plan for provisionally registered teachers (PRT) induction and mentoring
- A term meeting planner for the PRT
- A PRT template for formal observations – including next steps learning and next observation date.
- A PRT weekly reflections – including weekly goal, observations completed, Professional learning and development (PLD) attended and curriculum/inquiry focus.
- A PRT term report – a summative report including points of strength and development. Sections allowed for comments by PRT, tutor teacher and Principal. Included future focus and action plan steps.
- A copy of the Professional Teaching Criteria for registration purposes.
- A copy of the document – ‘Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers’ (ECNZ, 2015).

The majority of this documentation was in template form (bullet points 1-5), and the final two documents were downloaded pdf copies of the teaching criteria (TCNZ, 2019) and the Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers (ECNZ, 2015).

### *Yellowpark School*

This school had one generic document comprising of two pages that was downloaded from the Education Council New Zealand (ECNZ, 2015) and referred to information (links provided) about provisionally certificated teachers, the Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers, for mentor teachers and teachers that may require mentoring. It is acknowledged that the participant beginning and mentor teachers in the school used a google doc to plan scheduled meetings, agenda and the content of professional learning focus. However, it appeared that the documentation was rather minimal.

### *Huntington School*

This school could not provide any policy documentation relating to mentor teachers or the induction and mentoring processes, despite an induction and mentoring programme stated as

being in place. As evidenced above, there are differences in, and a limited range of documentation available from the participating schools, ranging from comprehensive to minimal. For example, *Bluestone* School provided comprehensive documentation, *Yellowpark* School provided some documentation, and *Huntington* School could provide no documentation.

*Beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of induction and mentoring policy documentation*

Here, I asked the participant mentors for their perceptions of the '*Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers*' given the importance of this guiding document that underpins the induction and mentoring processes. Analysis suggested an 'ad hoc' approach was taken by all the participant mentors. For example, one mentor teacher made the following comment,

Don't have a huge induction process, hopefully next year. Going through a lot of changes within our school. Beginning teacher and I did our own induction process this year. (MT S)

Another mentor teacher had read the guidelines but then commented on how they had sourced their own ideas from an alternative education website. This mentor said,

It doesn't feel like there is consistency as there are multiple ways of interpreting the information. (MT D)

This ad hoc approach was further evidenced by, and reflected in the following excerpts,

Mentoring reflects some of the guidelines, own flavour but following them. (MTF)

A little bit of guidance, a lot of support, encouragement, a bit of admin. Bits and pieces for their portfolio. (MT S)

These comments, and my accompanying field notes, suggested that each individual participating school was comfortable with their approach to mentoring, however, they appeared to be under the illusion that this was appropriate. It also reflects that the three schools all had variations in their conceptualisation, interpretation and the level of detail drawn down from the national induction and mentoring policy guidelines. It also appeared from the mentor teachers' comments that they were confusing the teacher registration requirements for the beginning

teacher induction, with mentoring practice. This has obvious implications for consistent application and collaborative learning opportunities that are foundational in the national policy guidelines. This is discussed further in the discussion chapter.

#### **4.2.2 Confusion**

##### *Selection, training and support*

Findings suggested that there are gaps in the selection, training and support of mentor teachers in the participant schools' induction and mentoring processes, highlighting a source of tension for both beginning and mentor teachers. Findings indicated schools' commitment to meeting the obligations of the induction and mentoring guidelines varied, and it was likely that these schools may not be meeting the vision underpinning the guidelines for induction and mentoring (ECNZ, 2015). The document analysis of the Education Council (ECNZ, 2015) 'guidelines for induction and mentoring and mentor teachers', states that,

Mentors need to be carefully selected, provided with access to high quality professional development and support for their role, and assured of dedicated time to carry out their role (ECNZ, 2015, p. 15).

In the document analysis of the all the individual participant schools, I found no evidence to suggest that there was any formal training and/or support offered to mentor teachers, any information about the role, or, any responsibilities or accountability of the mentor teacher. Additionally, I found no evidence of procedures or policy for challenges or grievance between the beginning and mentor teacher.

Similarly, the beginning and mentor teacher interview data analysis confirmed this. The participants responded to open-ended questions related to the selection, training and support of mentors, thoughts on the value of mentoring in the workplace, and what type of additional support is required for mentor teachers? So, despite the national guidelines suggesting that mentoring required 'carefully selected' mentors, it appears that mentor teachers across all three participating schools assumed their roles on teaching experience alone. One mentor spoke about how they acquired their mentoring role in the following way.

The principal decided, we spoke about the best person for the job and the BT's needs. (MT F)

The remaining two mentor teachers in this study were proactive indicating they had approached the school leadership asking for the role. The following comments provide evidence of this,

As leader of a team encompassing the beginning teacher I brought it to leadership's attention and asked to be the mentor teacher. (MT D)  
Selected as BT requested it and so did I. BT and I had worked together in the past and it went really well so wanted to continue with that. It was granted which is great. (MT S)

When the mentor teachers were asked about the type of training and support they had received for the role, they all indicated they had received limited training, as evidenced in the following comments,

Training to be a mentor – nothing, no training, only read the guidelines. (MT F)  
I haven't received any but the Principal has just started a coach thing, time is a barrier. Need training to be more effective though. Not sure what the school could do but they do need to be a bit more proactive. (MT D)

This lack of training and support appeared to be a source of tension for the mentor teachers. Field notes taken during this part of the interview reflected discontent and some anxiety by all three mentor teachers. The following quote is indicative of the frustrations demonstrated by the mentor teachers when answering questions on training and support.

I receive no training and support, unfortunately. I just draw on my own experience and what I have read and just what comes naturally (in a frustrated manner). (MT S)

Furthermore, and as evidenced, this raises questions about the quality of induction and mentoring processes and the implications in particular for beginning teachers. A beginning teacher made the following comment supporting the findings that there is a paucity of training and support for their mentor teacher.

Leadership should give her more support and feedback. Not sure how much feedback mentor teacher gets and leadership haven't asked me for any feedback about my mentor teacher. (BT J)

Another beginning teacher abruptly supported the need for more training and guidance for mentor teachers with this comment.

Mentoring the mentors would be great! (BT M)

This beginning teacher has provided evidence of being mindful of the dual roles their mentor teacher must fulfil and further illuminates how mentoring is a complex social activity. Mentor teachers reported barriers of time and highlighted how the mentoring dyads largely operate as a separate entity from the wider learning community. Furthermore, the comments indicate a tension with how leadership may not be addressing their obligation to provide training and support for mentor teachers. These comments were made in regard to these sentiments and also evidence how the mentor teachers would like some systems of professional accountability within mentoring processes.

A better use of time to observe the beginning teacher and making it easier to observe. Time big problem, a bit more training and support from leadership.  
(MT D)

Would be great if school was a bit more involved. It's nice to have autonomy but I don't know that our school has any ideas what mentors are doing, or not doing, so some are having better experiences than others. Even just checking in to see what is being covered would be good for accountability and potential for PD would be good. (MT S)

### *Educative mentoring*

Another area of confusion appeared to reside in the concept of educative mentoring, where, there was evidence suggesting that mentors were not truly cognisant with the concept of educative mentoring practice. The following comment was made by a mentor teacher when asked to define educative mentoring,

No not sure, think I may be doing educative mentoring. (MT F)

The national guidelines for induction and mentoring suggest a move from a traditional professional development model to one of professional learning and *educative mentoring* (ECNZ, 2015). In this view, educative mentoring requires expertise, skills and knowledge specific to mentoring. This is characterised by a shift from the traditional mentor-led approach

to one which encourages the beginning teacher to take more ownership of their own professional learning (ECNZ, 2015; NZCER, 2018). This is achieved through a collaborative approach with the mentor and can consist of, for example, self-reflection, goal-oriented learning and evidence-based feedback (ECNZ, 2015, p.25). However, there was little evidence of educative mentoring theory or application in any of the participating schools' policy documentation on induction and mentoring. Although, it is acknowledged that Bluestone and Yellowpark schools both included a pdf copy and a URL link, respectively to the 'Guidelines for induction and mentoring and mentor teachers' (ECNZ, 2015), which contain educative mentoring detail. Despite this, there was some evidence to suggest that teachers reflected some characteristics of the educative mentoring process. However, this appeared to be 'ad hoc' and is more likely to be intrinsically driven by the mentor teachers as opposed to driven by school leadership and the related policy and documentation. For example, mentor teachers made these comments.

Having a collaborative partnership where we share ideas. (MT S)

We have a very open, honest relationship where we can have that feedback.

Building a reciprocal two-way relationship and with all the teachers within the hub. (MT D)

Findings point to mentoring relationships ranging from the mentor teacher guiding and providing solutions/options about practice, through to both members of the dyad engaging in an *educative mentoring* approach emphasising collaborative inquiry. Moreover, the findings highlight the complexities and contested space of induction and mentoring processes in a primary school context.

### **4.3 Theme 2: Mentoring Practice in Action**

The second main theme to surface from the data analysis was '*Mentoring practice in Action*'. These findings relate to research question two 'How do beginning and mentor teachers perceive the nature and quality of the mentoring experience? Specifically, the interview questions explored the participants' perceptions of their own mentoring experiences and relationships, and painted a picture of their lived worlds. This included exploration of their perceived knowledge, understanding, and personal experiences of their specific roles in the mentoring process during beginning teacher induction. This then enabled me, in the discussion chapter,

to compare and contrast these personal lived experiences with the document analysis, interpretations and themes emerging from research question one.

The findings in this theme reflect that all of the study participants viewed mentoring as an important and positive process. There is also much evidence to suggest that the participants view mentoring as a developmental partnership underpinned by strong interpersonal skills. Furthermore, mentoring was perceived as a collaborative, reflective process that is achieved through positive social interactions. At face value this is heartening, and it reflects many of the key concepts and characteristics associated with educative mentoring and professional learning as described in the national policy documentation (ECNZ, 2015). However, further analysis indicates a lack of clarity and understanding about the roles within a mentoring relationship and what actually constitutes effective *educative mentoring* practice. The data analysis of this theme is organised into the following two sub-themes:

- Perceptions of mentoring and mentoring relationships
- Learning conversations: Collaborative learning or gatekeeping?

#### **4.3.1 Perceptions of mentoring and the mentoring relationship**

##### *Positive, collaborative relationships*

This second major theme focuses on the participants' perceptions of the quality and nature of each mentoring relationship during the first year of induction. When asked about the value of mentoring in the workplace, all participants in this study unanimously commented on the positive benefits of mentoring and how it may be useful across the wider learning community. This is highlighted below.

Very important. Having that go to person who knows where I'm at and what I have been doing and learned so far. Having that safe support person. (BT J)

Someone who will almost act as a 'buddy' to ease me into teaching, a support if required. (BT B)

Mentoring isn't just about knowledge, it is about being positive and inspiring. My mentor is very positive, she's amazing! (BT J)

Another consistent message reflected in the mentor teachers' perceptions of the mentoring process, eluded to the importance of collaborative and positive relationships. This is evidenced in the following interview excerpts.

We have a very open, honest relationship where we can have that feedback. Building a reciprocal two-way relationship and with all the teachers within the hub. (MT D)

To work alongside the beginning teacher ... being in an approachable and trusted way. (MT D)

Open to criticism, be vulnerable. Sense of humour and positivity. Got to be honest, this is life, dealing with people, not everything works out how you want it to work out. Having a passion for children is a real enabler. (MT D)

This was also a common theme with the beginning teachers who reported similar sentiments. The following quotes are indicative of the beginning teacher responses,

Sitting down having open, professional conversations and to receiving honest feedback and mutual respect. (BT M)

Really positive, lots of motivation ... and demonstrates the commitment of a true professional. (BT M)

My mentor is a quiet person who listens and offers sound advice. They never dismiss any of my questions or concerns. I'm made to feel valued as if they genuinely want me to succeed. (BT B)

Having the MT relationship where I can go to her anytime and I know my expectations, it is all there for me to work through. (BT J)

My mentor is patient, open, positive, enthusiastic, honest and trustworthy. (BTJ)

We are learning so it is important to feel secure and trust, that will help you. Good to have a laugh together. My mentor is very organised and efficient, very good listener. (BT J)

All of the participants described mentoring with a strong emphasis on interpersonal factors and where knowledge is shared with the beginning teacher. One beginning teacher expressed the following,

I look at it as support and guidance, ... I like someone with a bank of knowledge to impart on me and has experience. (BT J)

Another beginning teacher commented on the increase in self-esteem gained through the mentoring process.

Building resilience in the classroom is one of my goals. My mentor helps me to believe in myself and her on-going encouragement does play a role in that. (BTB)

Further examples are reflected by the beginning teachers, where nurturing a collaborative relationship help them build confidence and enhance their professional growth.

We have a rather relaxed approach and our meetings are flexible. My mentor is very approachable and I've felt that I can ask questions. She is reassuring and keen to continue making meetings to monitor my progress. I think we're like-minded. (BT B)

My mentor teacher makes me feel valued and as if she genuinely wants me to succeed. (BT B)

My mentor is a quiet person who listens and offers sound advice. They never dismiss any of my questions or concerns. I'm made to feel valued as if they genuinely want me to succeed. (BT B)

Another beginning teacher suggested,

I get positive feedback, saying I'm doing a good job, compliments the little things. Gives me a good boost. (BT M)

We meet every week 30minutes to an hour. Discuss problems, talk about what we can do next time and other options. I get to decide what works for my classroom but I am given options to integrate into my teaching. (BT M)

Really positive, lots of motivation. (BT M)

The above comments are indicative of all three beginning teachers in this study. It appears that they perceive the mentoring is required to be friendly, reciprocal, collaborative and positive. The mentor teachers shared similar sentiments. The following is reflective of how the mentors viewed the mentoring process.

... [mentoring involves] professional respect for each other. (MT F)

Ultimately being the BT go-to person for anything. Encourage, debrief and having reflection. (MT S)

Having a collaborative partnership where we exchange ideas as equals. (MT S)

Quite motivational, try hard to be positive and supportive. Hopefully the beginning teacher feels the same. (MT S)

As a team, we all contribute as learners together, striving to better our practice, we have discussions to improve and give each other feedback. (MT D)

Got to foster that trust, risk-taking, being able to experiment and have that collaborative inquiry. (MT D)

I am learning as a teacher and mentor, feeding off each other. Feel like we are a partnership working alongside each other. (MT D)

Also, as suggested by two mentor teachers', mentors need to be vulnerable themselves.

Open to criticism, be vulnerable. Sense of humour and positivity. (MT D)

You have to be able to reflect honestly and be prepared for feedback. Showing I can be vulnerable too. (MT F)

### *Reflection*

Another key term to arise for the interview data supported the notion of reflection. All three pairs of the beginning and mentor teachers acknowledged the use of reflection as a tool to analyse their professional practice. In this sense, reflection formed a key part of learning conversations between the mentor and beginning teacher.

When asked to detail the use of reflection in the mentoring processes, one mentor teacher described it as,

Reflecting the whole time. We are analysing what you did and figuring out another way to help a child with their learning and finding solutions together – though with the BT’s flavour. Constant reflecting on practice. (MT D)

Similarly, a beginning teacher made the following comment.

It is huge! Doing it myself, making sure within all my lesson plans I have evaluation and reflection ... looking at children and seeing how to help those who may not be making progress. (BT J)

Further insights into reflective practice were also mentioned by another beginning teacher who suggested that reflective practice is used,

All the time. Quite often the mentor teacher and I will discuss things, then go away and think about them, then come back and discuss solutions. Will discuss with MT and other teachers. (BT M)

Reflection was also visible following formal observations of the beginning teacher, after an episode of teaching. An example of how reflection is led during formal observations is evidenced below.

The mentor teacher will (observe a lesson) say what area would you like me to look at, and we reflect on these things together. (BT J)

Throughout the findings, there is strong evidence supporting the need for a positive and collaborative relationship and that this forms the basis of an effective mentoring partnership. Specifically, the mentoring relationship should be based on mutual respect that allows for open two-way dialogue and allows for reflection and constructive feedback. This appears to be consistent with the recommendations in the guiding documentation.

However, the mentor teachers acknowledged some contradictions between the need for the beginning teacher to lead the reflection conversations but found it difficult to allow for this. The following comment highlights this point.

Getting the beginning teacher to lead the conversation. There is always a limit to what you know and then I give them more and increase/grow that knowledge. Share my experience and knowledge for them to trial (MT F).

Additionally, only one of the beginning and mentor teacher pairings made any suggestion that reflective practice, as intended in the national policy guidelines, was to be a collaborative, two-way learning process (Huntington School). In this instance, the mentor only suggested that the beginning teacher offered reflective feedback about the mentor's classroom and practice.

Reflection is huge in the mentoring process, it's what it's all about really, constant reflection. Definitely two-way exchange, I don't force her to take on my ideas and I receive feedback about my own classroom – she offers great ideas. (MT S)

While it is encouraging that this particular mentor acknowledged reflection in this manner, it is also discouraging to consider that all other participants did not, despite much prompting to extract an understanding of this process. This concern gives rise to the following theme, where I outline some other contradictions that became apparent in the data analysis of the participants interview data.

#### **4.3.2 Learning conversations: Collaborative learning or gatekeeping?**

Another subtheme to arise, has its genesis in my interpretations of the words and language used to describe the mentoring process and the experiences of the beginning and mentor teachers. While it appears in the above subtheme that the beginning teachers and mentors were attuned to the concepts of collaboration, being supportive, where learning is viewed as reciprocal and the result of a two-way dialogue, the interview data was littered with examples that contradicted these concepts. Often, the words and descriptions used, appeared to be more reflective of the traditional, one-way knowledge transfer dialogue. In this sense, the mentor is the expert, and controls what knowledge constitutes effective teaching and learning. Therefore, the mentor teacher assumes the role of 'gatekeeper' and controls what knowledge is learned, and in which direction it flows (Bennett & Fyall, 2018; Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018). The field notes taken during the interviews also suggested that both the beginning and mentor teachers were unaware of the contradictions in their interview comments and assumed that this was normal mentoring practice. This appears to be at odds

with the language and intent of the national policy guidelines that reflects a two-way collaborative approach where learning and knowledge transfer is reciprocated between the mentor and the beginning teacher. For example,

I like someone with a bank of knowledge to impart on me and has experience.  
(BT J)

The mentor will say what went well, and then go through what can be improved. (BT J)

Mentor teacher will say what area would you like me to look at and schedule it. The MT sits and writes notes, looks at planning but I don't think I have seen any data. More of a summary and will give suggestions and we reflect on these things together. (BT J)

Another, beginning teacher stated,

...driven by the MT. MT's drive has rubbed off on me, demonstrates the commitment of a true professional. (BT M)

My mentor supplies the skills and knowledge to go and work on. (BT M)

The mentor teacher is quick to give a solution but does sometimes give me time to ponder (BT M)

The third beginning teacher also used similar language, when describing conversations had with other beginning teachers.

BT's, I talk to, talk about how mentors have shaped their practices and outlook on teaching. (BT B)

The beginning teachers also used language that suggested that the mentor teacher took control over the content discussed and the direction of the conversation.

Somebody who guides me to where I'm supposed to be heading – especially if I'm heading in the wrong direction. (BT B)

I attend meetings six times a term with other beginning teachers in the school and a HOD presents topics and tips that will be useful in our development.

(BTB)

The mentor teachers' articulations of the mentoring process during the interviews also appeared to contradict the notion of a two-way, collaborative inquiry process that underpins educative mentoring as it is reflected in the national policy guidelines (ECNZ, 2015). All of the mentor teachers were in leadership positions in the respective participant schools and this appeared to have some impact on their mentoring approach. When questioned around the role of power, and the imbalances that can occur in the mentoring relationship, all mentor teachers inferred that it was sometimes difficult to not take control of the mentoring conversations and offer their experience and advice without including the beginning teachers' thoughts. The following is indicative of the three mentor teachers' comments on this matter.

Being in leadership it does sometimes automatically change that balance of power. It is a challenge to not let the leader part of me come out. (MT F)

Additionally, the following mentor teacher comments further outline the illusion of being collaborative and two-way, and unwittingly taking control over the mentoring environment.

Imparting my knowledge through suggestions ... They need answers and usually pretty quickly. (MT D)

I work alongside the beginning teacher to impart knowledge of teaching of learning for the students, knowledge of school and parents. (MT F)

I tell her ideas and give my opinions I'm just there to give suggestions to help her tick the boxes and feel comfortable in her classroom. (MT S)

As mentioned in these findings, the field notes provided a valuable source of data and also a means to record my own intuition during interviews to make poignant observations. One such instance was a mentor teacher having an 'aha' moment as evidenced below.

Sometimes I talk too much, so should listen more but I can work on this...I learn when I talk. (MTS)

This mentor teacher during the interview realised they may be unwittingly taking over a learning conversation and how this may be detrimental to the learning taking place. Another mentor teacher had a similar moment articulating how the interviews had made her realise her lack of knowledge about mentoring. As illustrated below,

The interviews have opened my eyes and super excited about looking forward.

(MT F)

In summary, in this chapter I have identified the participants and their respective schools' perceptions as to how the '*Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers*' (TCNZ, 2015) have been interpreted and implemented within induction and mentoring processes. Despite the illusion that schools believed they were addressing mentoring in an appropriate way it was evident that there was some confusion at a school level with the interpretation of National Policy Guidelines (ECNZ, 2015) and further confusion associated with understanding the idea of 'educative mentoring'. Beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of mentoring as a means for professional learning was positive especially when underpinned by strong interpersonal skills. Participants viewed mentoring as a developmental partnership involving both collaboration and reflective practice. However, while this is heartening to hear, the findings suggest that there were contradictions in the beginning and mentor teachers articulated experiences of educative mentoring and professional learning, and also concepts such as collaboration and reciprocal learning. Unwittingly, their perceptions of the mentoring experience appeared to be more reflective of the traditional, one-way knowledge transfer dialogue where the mentor is seen as the expert and ultimately controls what knowledge constitutes effective teaching and learning (Fransson & Grannas, 2013). The findings in this section will be used to generate discussion in the following chapter.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the reported qualitative findings are addressed through a narrative discussion. A discussion that specifically focuses on mentoring during the first year of induction for three pairs of beginning and mentor primary school teachers. Specifically, the discussion explores how the national policy guidelines ‘*Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers*’ (ECNZ, 2015) that underpin this process are interpreted and implemented within the participant schools (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and also a discussion on the perceived benefits and challenges experienced by the participants. In doing so, I want to invite the reader to engage with the text and draw comparisons to their own professional contexts, specifically those who work in primary schools.

The two main themes to emerge from the findings of this study were:

- 1) *Mentoring Policy – illusion or confusion?*
- 2) *Mentoring Practice in Action.*

These themes (and subthemes presented below) directly relate to the research questions underpinning this study. This is achieved by weaving the literature presented in Chapter Two, with the findings presented in Chapter Four.

### 5.2 Theme 1: Mentoring Policy – Illusion or Confusion

The following discussion looks to answer research question one:

What are the national guidelines on mentoring practice in primary schools and how do individual primary schools interpret and use these?

This research question relates to the main theme, *Mentoring Policy – illusion or confusion?* and the following subsequent subthemes: *The illusion*, and, *The confusion*.

This discussion seeks to interpret the participants’ and their respective schools’ interpretation and subsequent implementation of key national policy guidelines on mentoring within the first year of induction.

It has been acknowledged in the findings that despite the *illusion* that participating schools believed they were implementing the guidelines in an appropriate manner, there was contrary evidence that suggested all participating schools also reflected some *confusion* when

interpreting the guidelines. Specifically, an understanding of the educative mentoring process as outline in the national policy documentation. Namely, leadership and mentor teachers did not have a comprehensive understanding of educative mentoring as it is intended in the policy documentation, nor, how this could be implemented and supported through school systems and structures. This flows through to an apparent lack of training and support for mentor teachers to effectively implement the guidelines in everyday practice.

### **5.2.1 The illusion**

New Zealand is recognised and identified from international research as having exemplary best practice induction and mentoring processes, which are characterised by a one to two-year mandated programme that focuses on teacher learning and evaluation, the provision of a mentor, the opportunity for collaboration and structured observations (Kearney, 2014; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993). The National Guidelines for Mentoring (Education Council, 2018) clearly suggest that,

All professional leaders are responsible for ensuring they have an induction and mentoring policy in place for their school, kura or ECE service based on these guidelines. (ECNZ, 2015)

Similar to Kearney (2014), and Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1993), the findings of this study suggested that the three participating schools were under the illusion that they had effective mentoring policy and procedures for first year teachers. However, further analysis suggested that the participating schools were missing the necessary transfer of information from the national policy guidelines to implement effective training and support systems and structures for mentor teachers within their schools. This may have resonance with the amount of growing evidence that the school context in which mentor and beginning teachers work can either enhance or inhibit their professional development (Bubb, 2007; Grudnoff, 2012; Timperley, 2008). For example, Cameron, Lovett and Garvey-Berger (2007) report, and as was the case in this study, many beginning teachers are thrown in at the deep end, assuming the same responsibilities and roles as their experienced colleagues without the necessary training or skills. Furthermore, ineffective mentoring may contribute to high levels of stress and burnout and result in high attrition rates of beginning teachers (Bolton, 2009; Bubb, 2007). In New Zealand, I would contend that currently, this may in turn, be a contributory factor to the current teacher crisis shortage (Kearney, 2014).

Findings revealed that there were differing amounts of mentoring policy documentation in the participating schools. This varied from no documentation, as was the case with Huntington School, to some in the case of Yellowpark School. For example, *Bluestone School* had some detail relating to the induction programme for the beginning teachers. This was in the form of templates (shared platform), ranging from weekly/term plans, release days, inquiry focus, scheduled observations and appraisals and reflections, but little information relating to mentoring. In contrast, Yellowpark School had a two-sided A4 generic document downloaded from the Education Council NZ (2015) website about induction and mentoring. Huntington School had no documentation at all. This is concerning and suggests that despite clear policy documentation and guidelines from the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (2018), the translation of this documentation differed significantly between the participating schools.

This could explain, and confirm Grudnoff's (2012) concern that the mentoring experience of beginning teachers can be diverse and variable, and this wide range of interpretations of the mentoring process that may have adverse effects. It appears that this may be related to the amount and the interpretation afforded to the national policy guidelines by each school. It appears from the study findings that there may be a greater need for schools to source, understand and provide clear and consistent translations of the national mentoring policy guidelines.

The lack of documentation pertaining to mentor teachers was a significant finding. For instance, there was no evidence of clarity about the job description, role, training and support, responsibilities/expectations, accountability and policy if there is a grievance within a mentoring relationship. For the mentor teachers in this study, this lack of clarity about induction and mentoring processes and the role of the mentor teacher was a source of tension. One mentor teacher illustrates this sentiment with this frustrated response.

Don't have a huge induction process, hopefully next year. Going through a lot of changes within our school. Beginning teacher and I did our own induction process this year. (MT S)

While it is not unforeseen that a school's culture and context will influence the interpretation of the Education Council NZ (2015) guidelines, the findings demonstrate that leadership within the participating schools interpret these guidelines with different emphasis and interpretation.

These differing interpretations of the guidelines by leadership and mentor teachers, is consistent with the findings of Langdon, Alexander, Ryde and Baggetta (2014) suggest that the

multifaceted nature of the induction and mentoring is lost in the rhetoric as induction and mentoring are viewed as one entity. Similarly, Castanheira (2016) argues that often the induction process is merely used as a tool for appraisal, evaluation and linked to registration, remuneration and career progression. This was clearly the case with the three participating schools, where, according to Smardon & Charteris (2016), it is suggested that an environment that contributes to the development of quality beginning teachers is often difficult to achieve. The difficulty appears to lie within systems that are at odds with each other. For example, the teacher registration process appears to subsume the mentoring role within the induction process, as is evidenced by the policy documentation templates that dominant Bluestone School's induction and mentoring documentation.

As a result, this has manifested itself in an ad hoc approach by mentor teachers with an emphasis on socialising the beginning teacher into the school system and guiding them through the registration process. For example, this was evidenced as one mentor teacher succinctly stated 'it doesn't feel like there is consistency as there are multiple ways of interpreting the information' (MT D). Also, as, one beginning teacher reported 'Not all beginning teachers have the same programme or system within the school for their mentor teachers' (BT B). It appeared through the documentation of Bluestone School that there was a strong emphasis on socialising the beginning teacher into the school system and guiding them through the registration process.

Burley & Pomphrey (2011), Spooner-Lane (2017) and Zachary (2000) suggest that such an ad hoc approach results in a 'business and usual' traditional view of mentoring. In this sense mentoring remains a process of one-way knowledge transfer, and as suggested by Grudnoff (2012) defaults back to traditional notions of professional development and teacher registration. This is at odds with the notion of professional learning, which reflects a collaborative two-way inquiry process that promotes learning for beginning teachers, as it is described in the national policy documentation (ECNZ, 2015). It is worthy to acknowledge here that despite the issues outlined above, the beginning and mentor teachers were fueled by a passion for teaching and supporting a novice into a career through a positive, trusting relationship. However, unwittingly, they often adopted a traditional perspective of mentoring.

In adopting this perspective, the participants also appeared to operate independently and not within, or indeed part of, the wider learning community. Langdon (2011) suggests that mentoring processes within beginning teacher induction should be 'anchored' in a community of learners, where, knowledge is shared and constructed across a variety of experiences and

participants. This is also a key premise of the national mentoring policy documentation (ECNZ, 2015). Given this, it appears that leadership within the participating schools of this study, could provide more opportunities with beginning teachers to work collaboratively with more experienced colleagues across the school (Chambers, 2015; Grudnoff, 2012). Speck & Knipe (2005) argue that leadership has an important role to play in ensuring the intention of the national guidelines are followed in schools. Heller (2004) supports this notion, and aligns with Chambers (2015) suggestion, that it is the wider school responsibility to support the growth of the beginning teacher through induction and mentoring as a pathway to expertise and not solely the responsibility of the mentor teacher. This type of learning focused culture moves relationships, and mentoring dyads, beyond the unilateral to collaborative (Stoll, 2011). Resulting in improved collegial relationships, sharing of professional knowledge, greater depth of understanding between teaching levels and this approach aligns with constructivist educative mentoring and the emphasis on the wider learning community contributing to the growth of beginning teachers, as outlined in the ‘guidelines’ (ECNZ, 2015, p.15) (Speck & Knipe, 2005). Despite this, the findings in this study reflected varied degrees of leadership involvement in the induction and mentoring programme. Only one pair reported the principal checking in regularly with the mentor or beginning teacher, albeit briefly.

The above highlights the lack of documentation and inconsistencies found in the participating school’s interpretation and implementation of the national policy guidelines for mentoring and induction processes. This may explain the variability in the mentoring experiences reported by the beginning and mentor teachers and some of the challenges that it creates. With this in mind, the following details the apparent *confusion* associated with these identified challenges.

## **5.2.2 The confusion**

### *Mentor training and support*

Another major finding of this study indicated a lack of training and support offered to mentor teachers. As eluded to in the previous section there was a sparseness of documentation outlining support and training for mentor teachers. Mentors commonly expressed such comments as, ‘receive no training and support unfortunately’ (*MT S*). The mentor teachers identified this finding as a source of tension. The following discussion will seek to interpret this tension.

All three mentor teachers in this study were considered ‘experienced’ classroom teachers and hold leadership positions. One mentor teacher (MT F) in particular had a strong background of leadership, mentoring and management within the school. However, none of the mentor teachers in this study identified that they were ‘experienced’ in educative mentoring or the nuances of professional learning.

All three mentor teachers indicated that they used a range of mentoring approaches from directive to inquiry-based, that align with educative mentoring. For an example of inquiry-based practice one mentor stated, ‘I use active listening, deliberate use of questions to get the BT to think/reflect critically about practice’ (MT F). However, in practice, mentoring approaches appeared to be more ad hoc and based on prior experiences, knowledge and subjective hunches. For example, mentor (MT F) contradicted the above statement by stating ‘There is always a limit to what you know and then I can give more and grow that knowledge through my experiences and knowledge’ (MT F). This often translated into traditional notions of mentoring where, the mentor teacher controlled the conversation and outcomes. So, while the mentors could articulate the terms and concepts associated with educative mentoring, there was limited knowledge of the effect that traditionally entrenched approaches to mentoring have on the disposition and agency of the beginning teacher (Helman, 2006).

Further to this point, and linked to the national policy guidelines on induction and mentoring practice, mentor teachers are required to be skilled facilitators and expert teacher educators, rather than simply experienced teachers (ECNZ, 2015; Langdon & Ward, 2015). Langdon (2011) found, in a New Zealand context, that while selection criteria for mentor teachers are stated in the national guidelines, these were not commonly used. According to Hobson and Malderez (2013) at leadership level there is often a lack of clarity about the selection and criteria for mentor teachers.

International research (USA) also reflects that while there are rigorous selection criteria for mentors, scrutiny is placed on the mentor’s dispositions. This includes dispositions such as, previous education performance, the ability to identify, articulate, and develop high- quality instruction, understanding of diverse student populations, and advanced interpersonal skills, it is unclear if these criteria are based on teaching or more specific to mentoring (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). With this in mind, it is unsurprising that all three mentors in this study reported having received no formal training for the professional role of mentor teacher. This point is illustrated in the following response.

Training to be a mentor – nothing, no training, only read the guidelines. (MTF)

Grudnoff (2012), Langdon (2014) and Spooner-Lane (2017) reported that mentoring is a key part of New Zealand's approach to induction for beginning teachers, however, there are currently limited opportunities and obligations for mentor teachers to engage in professional development for this crucial leadership role. The findings of this study suggest that the development of mentor expertise is problematic as most of the mentors had limited access to sustained professional development, and have limited knowledge of educative mentoring. For example, one mentor teacher expressed the following about receiving no training or support 'just checking in to see what is being covered would be good for accountability and potential for PD would be good' (MT S). In this sense, Anthony, Haigh and Kane (2011) suggest that the induction and mentoring programme can become a 'ticking the box' scenario when leadership don't place emphasis on the role of the mentor teacher. This appears to be the case despite the national policy guidelines clearly stating a need for,

[s]tructural support from the employer and senior colleagues, ensuring dedicated time is provided for mentoring and other professional development.  
(ECNZ, 2015, p.14)

This perspective was also supported by a beginning teacher when they commented, 'not sure how much feedback mentor teacher gets and leadership haven't asked me for any feedback about my mentor teacher' (BT J).

Perceptions of all of the participants, and the sparseness of documentation relating to mentor teacher training and support, corroborate the findings of Aspfors and Fransson (2015), who reported that New Zealand schools do not give priority or provide any systemised or mandatory mentor education programmes. This lack of mentor education, training and support may be considered a major factor in explaining the variable nature of mentoring processes reported in this study.

Aspfors and Fransson (2015), also suggest that mentor teacher development is dependent on the consistency and application of national policy into school environments and this will determine what is implemented in schools (Bronfenbrenner & Mahoney, 1972; Nuthall, 2007; Darling, 2007). Indeed, the study participants identified training, evaluation and accountability deficiencies within induction and their mentoring programmes, suggesting that their schools' policies and procedures were not congruent with the national policy intentions. This appeared to suggest a disconnect between the national policy guidelines, the school leadership, and the mentor and beginning teacher pairs. This point was given significance by

all the participants who reported that they worked in isolation and as separate entities, instead of within a community of learners, supported by the school leadership. When questioned on their interactions with school leadership around mentoring matters, one of the participating mentors suggested that regular meetings occurred with the principal, however, this was often not about mentoring development.

The findings suggested that all participating schools lacked on-going mentor training and support for mentor teachers. This is reflected in the following mentor teacher comment,

Need training to be more effective though. Not sure what the school could do but they do need to be a bit more proactive. (MT D)

One beginning teacher made a similar comment supporting this lack of mentor training by stating, 'leadership should give her more support and feedback' (BT J). Burley and Pomphrey (2011) advocate for school leadership to strongly promote and drive professional development and learning for mentor teachers. However, it seems that even though mentoring can be outlined in national policy guidelines, in reality it can be hard to enact (Langdon & Ward, 2015; Burley and Pomphrey, 2011; Bolton, 2009). It appears that within the three participating schools that effective mentorship related to 'experienced' classroom teachers and not to teachers who were experienced and trained in educative mentoring processes. The findings revealed that the mentor teachers recognised the importance of training and on-going support, but were limited by a lack of leadership and support for professional learning.

Richter, Kunter, Ludtke, Klusmann, Anders & Baumert (2013) suggest that improving the quality of mentor training could help make changes to the mentor's conceptions about mentoring and ultimately lead to changes in their mentoring practice. This is crucial in a necessary shift from traditional notions of professional development to that of educative mentoring and professional learning that aligns with the intentions of the national mentoring and induction policy guidelines (ECNZ, 2015).

### *Educative mentoring*

Another key finding of this study revealed differing conceptions of educative mentoring by the participants. This finding also highlighted the complexity of mentoring and how this space is contested through individual interpretations and interactions (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Factors such as, subjective interpretation of national guidelines/policy, induction and mentoring context, mentor disposition, leadership and school culture, knowledge of mentor,

and the beginning teacher's mind-set have all been shown to contribute to this complex socially constructed activity (Grudnoff, 2012; Langdon, 2014; Lovett & Cameron, 2007; Spooner-Lane, 2017).

Bradbury and Koballa (2008) infer that an understanding of mentoring held by mentors and beginning teachers is often informed and influenced by the complex interactions and complicated dynamics of school environments. This may, in part, be due to the common belief that there is no universal definition of mentoring and that mentoring is a contested practice (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015; Clutterbuck, 2013; Feiman-Nemser & Ball, 2012). However, this is confusing because in New Zealand there are universal guidelines that clearly outline policies and procedures for induction and mentoring (see ECNZ, 2015). What this study indicates, is that misunderstanding may arise at the school leadership level, where, there appears to be a lack of direction and focus on the national guidelines. This could explain the varied interpretations of educative mentoring by the participating schools and a subsequent lack of training and support given to mentor teachers. Therefore, I would propose that the issue may not lie with a lack of a 'universal definition of mentoring', instead the issue may indeed lie with the emphasis placed on understanding and interpreting the universal policies and guidelines by school leadership. Effectively, the time, emphasis and resourcing placed on understanding the appropriate structures and support mechanisms required to apply educative mentoring in schools may be a future school leadership concern and challenge.

A significant part of this challenge appears to be making a clear distinction between mentoring and induction, where it appears that the participating schools' documentation and mentoring behaviours reflected that these terms were often used interchangeably. In this sense, the participating schools saw induction and mentoring synonymously and used the mentoring process to nurture beginning teachers through the teacher registration process.

Given that the participant schools all appeared to use mentoring, within the induction process, as a vehicle to help beginning teachers gain teacher registration, a clear delineation is required if mentoring is to become a professional tool that aids beginning teachers to develop their craft. Such a delineation may help avoid the 'ticking box' mentality that appears to dominate mentor practices in the participating schools (Anthony, Haigh and Kane, 2011).

Specifically, with regard to understanding educative mentoring, as it is intended in the national policy guidelines, all three-participating mentor and beginning teacher pairs provided evidence of favouring what Elliot and Calderhead (1993) describe as a deficit developmental mentoring model. This is an approach with an emphasis on meeting the personal needs of the

beginning teacher through building a trusting relationship. In this perspective, requisite and predetermined knowledge is presented to the neophyte teacher as something deemed necessary to do their job well (Elliot and Calderhead, 1993). It is suggested that this more directive, one-way approach to mentoring and knowledge development socialises and manipulates the mentee into an apprenticeship model that contradicts the notion of facilitative educative mentoring (Fyall, Cowan and Galvan (2018). In essence, the mentor teacher, often unwittingly, becomes the ‘gatekeeper’ of knowledge and therefore determines what constitutes effective teaching and learning (Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018; Fransson & Grannas, 2013).

This is at odds with the concept of educative mentoring, as presented in the National policy guidelines, where knowledge is constructed by both the mentor and the beginning teacher and is based on reflection and collaborative problem solving to build new knowledge appropriate for twenty-first century learners (ECNZ, 2015, p. 19). Burley and Pomphrey (2011) and Bolton (2009) suggest that ‘educative mentoring’ places importance on both parties involved in the mentoring relationship and that they therefore share the responsibility of problem solving and knowledge construction. Educative mentoring, as it is intended in New Zealand schools, also eludes to concepts of reciprocal growth and development, where, problems, solutions and learning is freely exchanged between both the mentor and the beginning teacher (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Timperley, 2011; Tolhurst, 2006). This common theme amongst the participant mentors was not lost in their articulations. Mentor Teacher S clearly eludes to this when stating the following,

Ultimately being the BT go-to person for anything. Encourage, debrief and having reflection. Having a collaborative partnership where we exchange ideas.  
(MT S)

However, despite this apparent understanding of educative mentoring, albeit superficially, the findings of this study revealed that the participants’ articulations often contradicted this. Specifically, more emphasis appeared to be focussed on ‘imparting knowledge’ to the beginning teacher, than any form of reciprocal growth. Essentially, subscribing more to the deficit, developmental mentoring model, as described by Elliot and Calderhead (1993), where the beginning teachers are unwittingly manipulated into an apprenticeship model of learning how to teach (Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018). Chambers (2015) suggests that often mentor and beginning teachers will perceive their relationships as collaborative and enriching, even if they are not. The following excerpt is reflective of the common mentor behaviours experienced and

articulated by the beginning teachers. This appears to confirm that beginning teachers are also unaware of the nature of the mentoring relationship and what this should look like.

I look at it as support and guidance, impart knowledge. Not give me the answers but listen and give me help when I need it. I like someone with a bank of knowledge to impart on me and has experience. (BT J)

This confusion in conceptualising national policy guidelines for educative mentoring may provide an explanation for the large variations in mentoring practice across the participant schools (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Spooner-Lane, 2017). As Castanheira (2016) suggest, when there is confusion conceptualising and defining national policy and guidelines, this can influence the whole system. In some instances, this may lead to other unintended consequences, such as a failure of the mentoring relationships (Smardon & Charteris, 2016).

This demonstrates how the participating schools in this study may be under the *illusion* of having an appropriate induction and mentoring programme, however, the reality of the lived experiences of the participating beginning and mentor teachers reflects *confusion* around the concept of educative mentoring as it is intended in the national policy documentation.

### **5.3 Theme 2: Mentoring Practice in Action**

The following discussion looks to answer research question two:

How do beginning and mentor teachers perceive the nature and quality of the mentoring experience?

This research question relates to the second major theme, *Mentoring Practice in Action* and is divided into two subthemes to highlight key findings from this study, these are, *Perceptions of mentoring and mentoring relationships*, and, *Learning conversations: Collaboration or gatekeeping?* The ensuing discussion provides an insight into the perceptions of the mentors and beginning teachers on the nature and quality of the mentoring experience. Furthermore, there is a focus on the mentor teachers' behaviours and the influence of this on the mentoring relationship with the beginning teacher.

### 5.3.1 Perceptions of mentoring and mentoring relationships

The participants placed great value on positive interpersonal relationships, that included an emphasis on emotional support, the importance of being positive and professional, and growing the personal relationship. This subtheme emerged from the interview data related to the mentor and beginning teacher perceptions of their mentoring relationships.

As reported in the findings chapter, each case reported common terms to describe the mentoring relationship. These were built around honesty, trust, emotional support and providing agency. The participants suggested that the success of the mentoring relationship lies not just in the knowledge of the mentor, but also requires the mentor to have skills at developing a positive professional-personal relationship (Beutel and Spooner-Lane, 2009). It is suggested the mentor teachers of this study have been instrumental in instilling a sense of confidence in the beginning teachers and this has contributed to these beginning teachers' positive self-efficacy, teaching enthusiasm, job satisfaction and moving beyond survival mode (Cameron, Lovett & Garvey-Berger 2007; Clutterbuck, 2003; Jones, 2015; Lovett, 2002; Timperley, 2011). An example of this is evidenced below by a beginning teacher highlighting the interpersonal side of mentoring.

Mentoring isn't just about knowledge, it is about being positive and inspiring.

My mentor is very positive, she's amazing! (BT J)

This comment described by a beginning teacher was indicative of all the beginning teachers in this study. Furthermore, highlighting the empathetic disposition of the mentor teachers and through deliberate acts of building personal connections, it is implied that this has influenced the formation of positive self-efficacy and professional identity for the beginning teachers in this study. This appears consistent with Izadinia (2015), who reported that mentor teachers play a crucial role in the development of beginning teachers' professional identity through emotional support and instilling confidence. Similarly, Cameron, Lovett & Garvey-Berger (2007), Clutterbuck (2003), Jones (2015), Lovett, (2002) and Timperley (2011) suggest that beginning teachers that have strong self-belief and confidence contribute to teacher motivation and job satisfaction. The same authors are of the opinion that this contributes to teacher retention and therefore leads to less stress and burnout. In this study, it appears that the participating mentor dispositions have impacted positively on the beginning teachers' formation of professional identity and confidence and these teachers, at least, may not succumb to burnout that leads to high attrition rates in beginning teachers. Kearney (2014) emphasises

the role trained mentors play in curbing world-wide attrition rates of beginning teachers and makes a connection to well-being and resilience. There was a common perspective from the beginning teachers of this study to consciously develop resilience as a means to initially survive, and then thrive in this formative years of their induction to teaching. Also, the beginning teachers placed a significant emphasis on building resilience as a way of contributing to their increased self-esteem and self-belief (Izadinia, 2015).

Building resilience in the classroom is one of my goals. My mentor teacher helps me to believe in myself. Her on-going encouragement does play a key role in that. (BT B)

Another beginning teacher spoke about ‘Building resilience in the classroom is one of my goals.’ (BT B). Hone (2016) suggests that knowing our strengths and developing resilience is associated to a raft of desirable outcomes, including academic and career success, achieving personal goals, coping with adversity and better health and well-being. This emphasises Lovett and Davey’s (2009) sentiments that increased resilience impacts and contributes to high self-efficacy in the formative years and is enhanced through a sophisticated understanding of reflective practice.

This aligns with the findings of this study where both the mentor and beginning teachers valued the importance of reflection as a tool for professional learning and developing skills such as resilience and building self-esteem. Cameron, Lovett and Garvey-Berger (2007) suggest that when reflection is used by the mentor and mentee during their mentor learning conversations, there is the capacity to improve knowledge about the professional practice of teaching. One mentor teacher captured this consensus when stating,

I try to use active listening, building self-esteem and deliberate use of questions to get the BT to reflect and think critically about practice. (MT F).

For the teachers of this study, reflection is considered an everyday occurrence during mentoring, and a key catalyst to improving teaching and learning practice. All participants articulated the use of reflection in examining their practice. The following mentor’s comments highlighted this, and in this instance, supported the language used within the educative mentoring policy guidelines,

Reflection is huge in the mentoring process, it’s what it’s all about really, constant reflection. Definitely two-way exchange, I don’t force her to take on

my ideas and I receive feedback about my own classroom – she offers great ideas. (MT S)

At face-value this is very encouraging, however, as discussed in the findings chapter, this was not common and was contradicted many times by all three mentors over the course of the interviews.

Lovett (2002), using Donald Schon's framework of reflection 'on', 'in', and 'for' the development and learning of one's own professional practice or work, may shed some light on this concern. Schon (1983) proposes that reflection 'on' practice is when teachers reflect on a lesson or experience that you have already had and consider what could have been done differently, as well as looking at the positives of the experience, reflections 'in' practice is when the teacher reflects on their actions as they happen and adjusts actions accordingly, and reflection 'for' practice is when the teacher looks to the future lesson and prepares a plan of action catering to the needs of teaching and learning processes. Lovett (2002) contends that in most instances reflecting 'on' practice dominates the reflective process for beginning teachers. It appeared from the findings of this study, that the majority of reflection during mentoring also subscribed to Schon's (1983) reflection 'on' action, where the mentor teacher identified the beginning teacher's problems, and unwittingly looked to solve them (Lovett, 2002). This is not compatible with the intentions of reflective practice as outlined in the national mentoring policy guidelines where, it states that the mentoring programme, and intuitively the mentor, will 'provide intensive, specific support based on evidence from the teaching and learning of the students – so the PCT is able to systematically reflect on this evidence and learn from it (ECNZ, 2015, p. 15). Additionally, the national policy documentation clearly states that high quality mentoring occurs when mentors 'guide, support and give feedback and facilitate evidence - informed reflective learning conversations' (ECNZ, 2015, p. 11). Furthermore, an educative mentor is, 'not merely a 'buddy' providing emotional support and handy 'just in time tips' to the PCT' (ECNZ, 2015, p.11).

Unfortunately, the perceptions of mentoring articulated by the study participants appeared to be more focused on being a 'buddy' to provide situational adjustment, technical advice, emotional support and guidance (Achinstein and Athanases, 2006). While these are commendable, and the beginning teachers appear to be developing confidence, this conception identifies mentoring as a process of enculturating new teachers into the current system, with minimal critique or problem solving through collaboration and inquiry and may lead to merely replicating the status quo (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

With this in mind, and consistent with the claims of Chambers (2015), the mentor teachers in this study may be unwittingly producing or passing on entrenched organisational and social norms without reflecting upon their appropriateness in modern learning environments. The following subtheme, ‘collaboration or gatekeeping?’ discusses this further.

### **5.3.2 Learning conversations: Collaboration or gatekeeping?**

While the study participants acknowledged the benefits of learning through informal conversations with colleagues, the findings from this study found that *mentoring conversations* between the mentor and the beginning teacher were pivotal learning opportunities for the beginning teacher. In this sense, the conversations between the mentor and beginning teacher become sites for learning and knowledge production (Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018; Tillema, van der Westhuizen and van der Merwe (2015). Therefore, a focus on learning conversations should be considered a key aspect of mentor training (Chambers, Haughey, Breslin and Brennan, 2018).

Given that the term mentoring conversation can be considered alongside learning and knowledge production, intuitively, I would argue that the terms *learning conversation* and *mentoring conversation* could be used synonymously. With this view, the following theme emerged from the participants’ common use and description of these two terms. This concept of learning, within a conversation, does not appear to be lost within New Zealand’s educative mentoring framework, where, the national guidelines state that mentors will ‘guide, support, give feedback and facilitate evidence-informed reflective learning conversations’ (ECNZ, 2015, p. 11). Therefore, for clarity, I have adopted the term ‘learning conversation’ to encapsulate the essence of both terms and also to align with the language used in the New Zealand policy framework on mentoring and induction (EC, 2015). It is within these learning conversations and the participants’ descriptions of these, that my analysis has led to the subtheme – Professional learning conversations: Collaboration or gatekeeping? The findings confirmed that the mentor teachers in this study predominately base their learning conversations on prior experience, being an ‘experienced’ teacher or leader, and ‘hunches’ on what is effective educative mentoring. The following explicates this claim.

It appears that the learning conversations within the professional learning model of beginning teacher induction, provide a key site for learning. Therefore, these key sites for learning should be linked to the underpinning concepts associated with the national policy

guidelines, namely, reciprocity, adult learning principles and evidence-based collaborative inquiry (Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Jarvis, 2010; Knowles, 1980; Zachary, 2000).

Despite the conjecture over how to define best practice in mentoring, it appears that adult learning principles are aligned to many current interpretations of mentoring within teacher induction (Brondyk & Searby, 2013). There is a wealth of literature that reinforces that adult learning principles underpin successful mentoring programmes (e.g. Tolhurst, 2006, Robertson, 2016; Zachary, 2000). Adult learning principles are characterised by a collaborative dialogue between learning facilitators and learners that are characterised by self-directed planning and evaluation, building on prior experiences that relate to real-life situations, and problem-solving (Knowles, 1980; Jarvis, 2010). Mentors subscribing to this perspective are required to listen for learning, question, withhold judgement, challenge assumptions and collaboratively deconstruct and reconstruct practice (Lovett, 2002). Timperley et al., (2008) suggests that effective mentors make connections between theory and practice and align mentoring practice with adult learning principles. For example, providing feedback and feedforward, goal setting, setting of agendas, decision-making by both the mentor teacher and beginning teacher, using a range of open and closed questions during learning conversations, and challenging the teachers' assumptions to provoke reflection. Unfortunately, Helman (2006) and Tolhurst (2006) suggest that many mentors are not fully cognisant with such knowledge and the skills aligned to adult learning principles.

While the participants in this study demonstrated some aspects of adult learning principles underpinning the professional learning conversations, the findings suggest that this may have been limited and unintentional. For example, the mentor teachers all explained the importance of using data (linking to real life situations) to inform the learning conversations.

A lot of our conversations now are organic and come up when they come up depending what is going on so we compare and contrast. Always evidence based, we always look through notes and have discussions based on data collected. (MT S)

A beginning teacher eluded to the dispositions required by mentors to enhance learning conversations when they stated,

My mentor is patient, open, positive, enthusiastic, honest and trustworthy. The mentor will say what went well, go through what can be improved, then they ask if I have any questions and we start bouncing ideas off each other. (BT J)

Again, this suggests that the conversation involves a collaborative dialogue, founded on previous experience (the lesson), real-life situations, and that through an inquiry problem-solving approach the beginning and mentor teacher arrive at solutions that inform future teaching behaviours. This is encouraging, and at face-value, appears to tick many of the boxes, however, a closer scrutiny of the interview data revealed many contradictions. Namely, an emphasis more on ‘the mentor will say what went well, go through what can be improved’. This appears to align with Lovett’s (2002) concerns that learning conversations may be dominated by reflecting ‘on’ action, alone, with a disregard for the collaborative dialogue that sets problems and explores solutions to be planned, experimented and (re) evaluated in future. That is reflecting ‘for’ future action (Shon, 1983).

Therefore, learning conversations may unwittingly play a role of socialising and enculturating novice teachers into the community of practice (Wenger, 1998). In effect this may entrench traditional perspectives of teaching and learning and privilege certain knowledge (Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018). This essentially becomes a form of ‘gatekeeping’ where it becomes difficult to challenge existing and entrenched assumptions of teaching and learning, despite the constantly evolving nature of educational environments.

Evidence of this arose from an analysis of the mentor and beginning teachers’ descriptions, and the subsequent contradictions, apparent in the transcript data. It appeared that despite the mentor teacher ability to articulate concepts and theories that aligned to learning conversations that were underpinned by adult learning principles and therefore an educative mentoring framework, all mentors appeared to strongly suggest that their mentoring behaviours at times were non-collaborative. There was also a lack of awareness around the impact that this disposition would have on the mentor teacher. As outlined in the findings chapter, this was apparent in all the participating mentors in this study, and is ideally captured by the following mentor comment,

Sometimes I talk too much so should listen more... (MT S)

Another example to highlight this point was made by a beginning teacher who believed that the mentor was, ‘a talker, good at extracting information and prompting me.’ (BT M). However, this appeared to be contradicted by the mentor (MT F), who in contrast, admitted that during the learning conversations, there was an appearance of active listening but actually had already formulated the problem, some solutions and opinions to give the beginning teacher as options.

In studies by Tolhurst (2006) and Helman (2006) mentors are reminded of the importance of being self-aware of the stance that is adopted in learning conversations to allow the beginning teacher to open up to new possibilities. For example, these stances can be to extend thinking, teach directly, promote accountability through paraphrasing dialogue, and, inquiring to clarify or summarize reflective thoughts (Helman, 2006; Tolhurst, 2006). Helman (2006) suggests that unless mentor teachers are self-aware of the stances they adopt, and the effect that this has on knowledge creation during learning conversations, then beginning teacher may be constrained by existing and dominant social norms that subscribe to the status quo. These learning environments potentially inhibit learning and growth and stagnate the development of both the beginning and mentor teachers (Helman, 2006; Tolhurst, 2006). This appeared to interfere with the mentors' ability to listen for learning, question rather than tell, withhold judgement, challenge dominant educational assumptions and collaboratively deconstruct practice with a view to pave a new way forward for both the mentor and mentee (Lovett, 2002).

It is interesting and worthy to note at this point, that during the follow up interviews and the study debrief that the participants had 'opened their eyes' to new ways of looking at the mentoring process that were more congruent with learning conversations and educative mentoring as outlined above. The following participant comments highlights this point.

I'm trying to do more listening for learning, more open questions and being more self-aware. (MT D)

These interviews have really opened our eyes – super excited going forward!

(MT F)

Despite the importance placed on learning conversations by the participants, the focus appeared to be on the beginning teacher alone. This may account for the one-way dialogue that appeared to dominate the participants' descriptions of the learning conversations, where the mentors and the beginning teachers commonly referred to knowledge as being something that was to be imparted on the beginning teacher. For example, a beginning teacher reported that 'the mentor teacher is quick to give a solution but does give time to ponder sometimes' (sighing) (BT M). Achinstein & Athanases (2006) found this 'reductive' approach to mentoring was often prevalent with mentor teachers offering quick-fix solutions but this often had the effect of

reinforcing the status quo around perceptions of what constituted effective teaching and learning.

Sfard (1998) refers to this as the transfer acquisition metaphor of learning, where, the task of the mentor, for example, is to impart (or transfer) learning to individuals. Successful learning, and therefore mentoring, consists of the beginning teacher acquiring (and, hence, possessing) the learning. So, despite the mentors and beginning teachers articulating notions of collaborative learning conversations, this was continually contradicted by the participants. As Fyall, Cowan and Galvan (2018) suggest, mentors may not always be aware that they are assuming the role of 'gatekeeper' and controlling the direction of professional learning, nor will the mentees be aware of this subjugation.

Chambers (2015) acknowledges that mentoring and coaching is a social structure involving power relations and the way power is exercised can empower or disempower the beginning teacher. Similarly, Fyall, Cowan, & Galvan (2018) report that the mentoring process is a political act, intimately linked with power and control over what constitutes legitimate knowledge and who holds that knowledge. While mentors may be unaware and not perceive a power imbalance in the mentoring relationship, it is argued that mentoring relationships can never be power neutral (Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018). I would therefore argue that both mentor and beginning teachers need to consider the effects that power has on the construction and validation of knowledge during mentoring learning conversations and the effect this has on growth and development (Fyall, Cowan, & Galvan, 2018). Understanding that learning conversations require a power neutral site where there is a two-way, reciprocal flow of information and learning between the beginning teacher and the mentor is imperative to effective educative mentoring. This is founded on sound understanding and implementation of adult learning principles within the mentoring dyad, and is characterised by self-directed planning and evaluation, building on prior experiences that relate to real-life situations, and problem-solving (Knowles, 1980; Jarvis, 2010). Mentors subscribing to this perspective are required to listen for reciprocal learning opportunities, question for understanding, withhold judgement, challenge dominant educational assumptions with a view to 'doing things better'. Through a collaborative approach, mentor teachers are able to deconstruct and reconstruct both the beginning teacher and their own practice (Lovett, 2002). This may provide the 'new' knowledge required for the increasingly demanding and ever-evolving nature of teaching and learning environments in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### *Further considerations*

At this point in the discussion it is worthy to note some of the major reasons that the participants identified as contributing to this somewhat confusing nature of mentoring. The data analysis and resultant findings revealed three major ideas. These were; the multiple roles often assumed by the mentors and the tensions associated with these multiple roles, the time constraints placed on mentors and mentees due the modern complexities of the teachers' role, and, a lack of school-wide leadership in developing and promoting effective training and support structures within the school.

Langdon (2014) considers that the complexity and number of roles taken by mentor teachers in schools may compromise the mentor's ability to mentor. Often, due to their experience, school leaders take up conflicting roles as leaders, managers and assessors, while trying to maintain a friendly and trusted role as a colleague and confidant. Similarly, Schatz-Oppenheimer (2017) reports that mentoring is a complex professional role, where mentors have to operate in professional tension by simultaneously balancing both support and evaluation for the beginning teacher. The mentor participants in this study all eluded to this concern. This was clearly captured in the following statement,

It is difficult to attend to their own personal growth as it requires a trifocal approach – a complex process addressing the needs of the mentor, mentee and student learning. (MT S)

Being in leadership it does sometimes automatically change that balance of power. (MT F)

The findings suggest that the mentor teachers found it difficult to juggle the needs of the beginning teacher with the needs associated with other roles they assumed in the school. As mentor teacher F suggests, this sometimes resulted in a power imbalance during the mentoring relationship. This implies that any notions of educative mentoring, in a power neutral mentoring relationship that is characterised by collaborative inquiry and reciprocal growth, may be significantly compromised. It appears that the mentor teachers struggled, at times, to deal with these challenges. Therefore, I would argue in support of Yusko & Feiman-Nemser (2008) claims that training and support of mentors should more adequately address these concerns to address these conflicting demands.

Another barrier to effective mentoring to surface from the participant perceptions was a reference to time, or more specifically, a lack of. This may have resonance with the issue eluded to in the above paragraph, but the participants outlined, in more detail, the time pressures on all teachers in modern school environments and the complex nature of the teaching profession. This is illustrated well in the following beginning teacher statement,

Everyone's busy, all the time. Teachers have so much on them, not to mention being mentor teacher. Makes me wonder if I should try to deal with this myself and not bother my MT. (BT J)

This feeling of 'guilt' is particularly alarming, given that beginning teachers rely on the mentoring process for guidance, support and professional development. This concern was common, and also echoed by the Mentor teachers.

A better use of time to observe the beginning teacher and making it easier to observe. Time is a big problem. (MT D)

It appears that time may be constraining the mentors' ability to engage often with the beginning teachers and therefore compromising the educative mentoring process. That is, due to a lack of time available, beginning teachers may be limited in their ability to make connections and have opportunities to observe and reflect on new practice, critique entrenched assumptions, problem set and problem solve in a collaborative way with their mentor (Cameron, 2009; Harris, 2002; Hudson, 2013).

Finally, all three mentor teachers suggested that leadership may not be addressing their obligation to provide training and support for mentor teachers and is captured by the following mentor statement. 'Training to be a mentor – nothing, no training, only read the guidelines.' (MT F). It is important to note that if the mentor teachers are to achieve congruence with the Education Council NZ (2015) induction and mentoring guidelines, this will require strong leadership from schools. This leadership must provide appropriate developmental opportunities for mentors (Langdon & Ward, 2015; Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Strong visionary leadership is necessary to create mentoring and learning cultures that move from traditional unilateral to collaborative approaches that align with notions of educative mentoring (Bolton, 2009; Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Speck and Knipe, 2005; Stoll, 2011).

It appears that leadership may play a significant role in identifying and addressing many of the issues and concerns outlined in this discussion chapter. However, it appears that in the

participant schools, leaders paid scant regard to resourcing and overseeing the training and implementing the necessary structures and systems to do so. The following chapter summarises this discussion and also provides a number of recommendations for school leadership to consider when looking to support mentor and beginning teachers in their important roles.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusion

This concluding chapter highlights what has been learned from this qualitative research study entitled '*Beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of teacher mentoring processes in primary schools: A case study in Aotearoa New Zealand*. This chapter provides some concluding remarks related to the mentoring relationship, educative mentoring and the recognition and resourcing of mentoring within the school. This will be followed with a series of related recommendations, limitations and ideas for future research.

The New Zealand Education Council (ECNZ, 2018) has now mandated mentoring as an essential component of the beginning teacher induction programme. They have described high quality mentoring as both relationship-based and educative in focus. They have acknowledged that mentoring must be recognised as a professional role in terms of career development, and must be well resourced in schools. (ECNZ, 2015, p.11). This study suggests that the relationship between mentor and beginning teachers was positive and supportive. However, findings suggest that there are a number of considerations related to the interpretation and implementation of the national mentoring guidelines. These areas require further thought and attention to align with the *education* part of educative mentoring.

It was evident in this study that the relationship between mentors and beginning teachers was positive and supportive. There was no question about the importance mentor teachers placed on the quality of this relationship and what beginning teachers were experiencing. Mentor and beginning teachers could articulate that the mentoring relationship was collaborative and that knowledge was co-constructed, however, further analysis revealed some inconsistencies and contradictions in these articulations, particularly when describing what this looked like in practice. It was very clear that, as suggested in the national guidelines, ongoing professional development and support is required for mentor teachers if they are to advance relational and educative mentoring skills (ECNZ, 2015).

A major finding in this study reflected that schools had little policy and/or documentation relating to mentoring. This ranged from no documentation, to some documentation. Further analysis of these documents revealed that most of them were downloaded directly from the Education Council website and that they were related to the technical aspects of induction and registration alone. For example, weekly/term plans, release, appraisal and reflection templates. Detail relating to mentoring guidance and support was

sparse. This highlights the possible disconnect between national mentoring policy guidelines and translation of this to the policy and practice of mentoring in schools. The lack of mentoring policy in schools appears present an ad hoc approach to mentoring and its interpretation and may contribute significantly to the wide-ranging variation in mentoring processes experienced by the study participants. In essence, it appears that notions of educative mentoring may be lost in this translation.

Despite the *illusion* that participating schools believed they were meeting their obligation to beginning teachers, by implementing the national mentoring guidelines appropriately, there was conflicting evidence to suggest they were not. Schools reflected some *confusion* associated with the interpretation (Darling, 2007; Nuthall, 2007) and implementation of educative mentoring practices as outlined in the national mentoring guidelines. While the national guidelines provide a framework for mentoring and induction, these guidelines are as Ingersoll and Strong (2011) suggest, open to multiple and subjective interpretations and differing conceptions of mentoring practice. It appears that interpretation may be creating layers of misinterpretation between school leadership and those responsible for mentoring and induction within the school, and of course mentor and beginning teachers. As a result, this appeared to be influencing the nature and quality of educative mentoring practices within the school.

Also, adding to this *confusion* was what appeared to be misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the relationship between mentoring within the induction process and meeting requirements for New Zealand Teacher Registration. Findings suggest that mentoring within the induction process was being used as tool for appraisal and evaluation, and was linked to teacher registration, remuneration and career progression. This appeared to be limiting the potential of educative mentoring.

Learning conversations were recognised by beginning and mentor teachers as an important part of the mentoring process, in fact, these teachers suggested that the learning conversation was central to the mentoring relationship. There appeared to be no set format for conducting learning conversations and they ranged from formal weekly learning conversations with a structured format and set agenda to more organic, flexible and responsive approaches to the beginning teacher's needs. There was evidence of mentor teachers using such skills as listening for learning, questioning, reflection and allowing for agency during learning conversations (Helman, 2006; Tolhurst, 2006). However, findings suggested that these skills were predominately based on the mentors own prior experiences as an experienced teacher or

leader, hunches on what is effective mentoring practice, and personal assumptions, as opposed to explicit training and understanding of educative mentoring.

In practice learning conversations presented as a one-way dialogue even though beginning and mentor teachers had articulated these as being collaborative. While not appearing to be intentional, mentors were controlling the transfer of knowledge and unwittingly positioning themselves as a 'gatekeeper' to the knowledge being created and therefore learned (Fyall, Cowan & Galvan, 2018). I concluded that this has the potential to reproduce educational, organisational and social norms, not transform them. The notion of transformative, reciprocal growth for the beginning and mentor teachers was not evident. For these reasons mentoring in this study was not perceived as educative as described in the national policy guidelines.

There was no doubt that mentor teachers in this study would have benefited from greater recognition of the role of mentoring within the school and more formalised professional training and support from school leadership. Also, mentor training was not consistent with educative mentoring as outlined in the national mentor and induction guidelines (ECNZ, 2015). Mentor teachers appeared to be managing multiple leadership roles and were often selected as a mentor because of their teaching or leadership experience (in one case the mentor was self-appointed), and not on the experience and understanding of educative mentoring. I would argue that this lack of recognition, support and adequate selection criteria, can influence mentoring practice and may result in unintended outcomes. For example, mentoring practice not aligning with the constructivist epistemology that underpin adult learning principles may have a tendency to mirror, rather than question, social norms and values that lead to reinforcing poor practice and less objectivity (Cameron, 2009).

It was evident from this study that there is a need for more resourcing and a greater emphasis on including mentoring as a wider school responsibility. This included greater alignment with national policy guidelines, greater training and support for the mentor teachers and in turn greater accountability for their actions.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

With the above conclusions in mind, the following recommendations have been identified for those responsible for the leadership of mentoring and induction programmes in primary schools, and for the mentors themselves as they continue to work with the definition of educative mentoring.

### **Recommendation 1:**

School leadership will be required to *understand and translate national mentoring policy documentation into their own school's policy*. Individual school policy documentation needs to be consistent with national policy guidelines, specifically with a view to promoting educative mentoring and effective learning conversations as they are intended. Through more robust and succinct school interpretations of induction and mentoring, this would see mentoring practice align with the national policy guidelines.

### **Recommendation 2:**

School leadership should give greater *recognition to mentoring* within their schools and also to the mentors. This will require an emphasis on resourcing and also consideration on ways of selecting, accountability, training and supporting mentors in this important role. This selection process of mentor teachers would then look beyond 'experience' and be more mindful of the disposition of mentors. Mentors that have a purpose to create a two-way exchange with the beginning teacher and see relationships that reflect reciprocal growth.

### **Recommendation 3:**

Leadership should provide and promote *more professional development opportunities for mentors*. This will require a greater emphasis on time and resourcing that is devoted to the mentor role. Similarly, mentors should be actively encouraged and resourced to seek out professional development in educative mentoring. Through these opportunities mentors would be able to require key mentoring skills: listening for learning, different mentor stances, questioning, reflection and observational tools (Helman, 2006; Tolhurst, 2006).

### **Recommendation 4:**

School leadership should look to include *a greater number of Professional Development opportunities* for mentors and beginning teachers *that look to unpack the requirements of effective educative mentoring*. This will include (e.g. learning conversations, the role of power in the construction of knowledge, adult learning principles, collaborative and learner-centred inquiry and reflection). Through a greater understanding of adult learning principles, and educative mentoring, mentoring dyads would be able to explore praxis more effectively with a view to improved teaching and learning outcomes.

### **Recommendation 5:**

School leadership will be required to consider ways of promoting and resourcing educative mentoring as *a schoolwide responsibility*. This will strengthen and foster mentoring relationships across the school and shift thinking from simply a collaboration between individuals, to a richer and more nuanced view of mentoring as a component of the whole school system (Chambers, 2015).

### **6.3 Limitations of the research**

The research design and planning of this study made every effort to ensure there were few limitations. However, it is acknowledged that given the nature and scope of qualitative, case study research, it is not viable to generalize these findings to all school settings. Indeed, it is only indicative of the three specific cases outlined in this research. However, the rich and descriptive findings from this case study do provide an in-depth portrayal of the individual cases and it is hoped that others might find these cases enlightening and relevant for their own context.

It is also acknowledged that the cases in this study specifically identified and outlined the lived experiences of the mentoring dyads alone and did not seek an understanding from wider sources, such as leadership and the wider community. This may limit the ‘picture’ portrayed here, however, this is something that may be investigated in the future and is highlighted below.

### **6.4 Future Research**

Further research is needed into the effect of interventions and improved mentoring processes to see if change to mentoring practice is sustainable for those beginning and mentor teacher partnerships during the induction phase. Indeed, it is worthy to note that near the completion of this study, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (TCNZ, 2018) announced a new induction and mentoring pilot project ‘Tuakana Teina’. It would be remiss for future research in this area to not take this into consideration. I will watch the outcome of this pilot project with great anticipation. Also, this study has identified the importance that leadership must play in the promotion and understanding of mentoring processes within individual school settings. Understanding leadership perspectives on mentoring and ‘their world’ may provide a wider

perspective around the nuances of mentoring and help explain and perhaps find solutions moving forward.

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## Appendices

### Appendix. 1 Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

**The following research questions will guide the proposed study.**

- (i) What are the national guidelines on mentoring practice in primary schools and how do individual primary schools interpret and use these?
- (ii) How do beginning and mentor teachers perceive the nature and quality of the mentoring experience?

Topics and themes – and examples of the type of sub-questions to be asked:

- (i) What is the nature and quality of the mentoring experience for both the mentor and beginning teacher?**

*Mentoring Relationship:*

- Can you explain what mentoring means to you?
- What type of approaches or skills are used in your current mentoring processes and what in your opinion does effective educative mentoring look and sound like?
- Can you explain and provide insight into the nature and quality of the mentoring experience as a beginning teacher or mentor teacher?
- Do you feel the mentoring relationship has a balance of power and can you explain the learning focus of the relationship?
- Does the mentoring partnership position as a separate entity or does it position within a wider school community of learners? i.e. management and collegial support and exchange of professional learning.

*Decision Making & Agency:*

- As a mentor or beginning teacher can you tell me how these are being addressed in the mentoring process?
- What are your perceptions on being empowered and your identity being developed by the mentor? If so, how does the mentor achieve this in the relationship?

*Enablers and Barriers:*

- What are some enablers and barriers that you face within the induction and mentoring processes and how do they impact on the mentoring relationship?

*Resilience:*

- Does resilience play a role in the overall development of both the beginning and mentor teachers? How do you go about developing this ?

**(ii) What skills are utilised by the mentor and how does this compare to the literature on best practice in mentoring? What are the implications for the mentee?**

*Learning Conversations:*

- What are your perceptions of learning conversations and do they follow any set protocol or framework? i.e. working with an agreed focus, using evidence-based data from the classroom, frequency, allowing for collaborative inquiry and feedback to each other, formal or informal?
- What are your perceptions of the mentor's skills or your own skills as a mentor during learning conversations and other mentoring practice?
- How are teaching observations conducted, frequency and how are they followed up? i.e. post observation conferencing/learning conversations.

*Reflection Processes:*

- What role does reflection of practice take in the mentoring processes?
- Is there a two-way exchange of ideas, opinions and professional growth when reflecting in learning conversations?

*Goal Setting:*

- What are your perceptions on setting goals professionally and personally within the mentoring relationship?
- How do you coach goal setting? And what type of goals are set?
- How would you describe the motivational climate of the mentoring relationship?

- Can you tell me if or how your professional learning through mentoring is context-rich?

**(iii) What programmes and development opportunities are in place for mentor teachers? How do these compare to contemporary literature on best practice in mentoring?**

*Mentor Training:*

- How were you selected as a mentor and did you or the beginning teacher have any input in this process?
- What training and support do you receive from your school as a mentor teacher?
- What are your thoughts on the value of mentoring in the workplace?
- What type of additional support would you like to see for mentor teachers?

## Appendix. 2 Information Sheet for the Participants: Beginning and Mentor Teachers

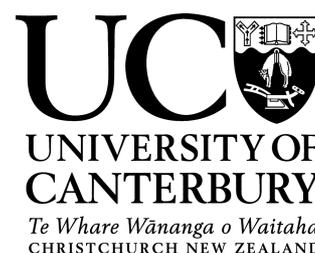
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Tel: +64 3 364 2131 ext: 6131

Researcher – Grant Buchanan: [gmb32@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:gmb32@uclive.ac.nz)

Mobile: 0278117880



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### Beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of teacher mentoring processes in primary schools: A case study in Aotearoa New Zealand

#### Information Sheet for the Participants: Beginning and Mentor Teachers

My name is Grant Buchanan and I am a student at the University of Canterbury. I am currently undertaking a Master of Education thesis (EDEM690) to complete this degree. The aim of this case study research is to explore and analyse the mentoring process evident in primary school professional development programmes.

The central purpose of this research is to investigate beginning and mentor primary teachers' perceptions of the first- year mentoring process. Furthermore, I will be focusing on the mentor teacher's skills when having learning conversations with the beginning teacher and how mentoring is used as a professional learning tool. Mentor teachers are seen to have up to date and in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning processes and expertise in educative mentoring underpinned by adult learning principles (<http://educationcouncil.org.nz>, 2017). The study will compare and contrast these perceptions with that of contemporary literature. Implications for the research may contribute to future mentor teachers' practice, mentoring processes and improved outcomes for beginning teachers. The research relies on the voices, knowledge and experience of relevant teachers to capture the richness and complexities involved in this topic. I am interested in connecting with, and learning from individuals who are willing to share their lived experiences and insights of the mentoring process and it will provide for an authentic context for research and for the findings to emerge and tell a story.

As mentors and beginning teachers I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Your role in the study will be a participant in two forms of data collection about the mentoring process. If you accept my invitation to take part in this study it will mean that you have agreed to be part of an individual semi-structured interview and a video/audio-recorded observation of a learning conversation between the beginning and mentor teacher. The semi-structured interview will be conducted by me and the interview process will take between 45-60mins in duration in a place of your convenience. I will ask you questions about your perceptions of the mentoring process and experiences, and your thoughts on how you view mentoring as a professional learning tool. I will record data via audio recording and in note form. The observation of the learning conversation will take place at your school and will be video/audio-recorded for no longer than 30mins. Video/audio recording will allow me to gain information about the way communication takes place (facial expression, body language etc that may not otherwise be noticed if audio recording only), I will also take notes. This will be another source of rich data to compare and contrast perceptions and analyse educative mentoring practice. If you have any additional stories, experiences or thoughts that you would like to share with me following the interview or observation, I will arrange to complete an individual follow up interview at a place of your convenience by the 30 August 2018. Participants will be given a copy of the interview transcription to review for accuracy and authenticity.

Please note participation in this study is voluntary. If you do participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or judgement. If you withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to you and your school, provided this is practically achievable. If one of the dyad withdraws from the study, and true to the spirit of confidentiality as a researcher, I will withdraw that pair of participants from the study to protect the rights and welfare of all parties involved and to avoid any harm to the participants. Any reported data, from that case, will not be used in the findings and destroyed. However, after 30 August 2018, it will not be possible to remove the impact of the data on the analysis of the thesis conclusions.

I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the raw data of interviews, viewing footage of a video/audio-taped observation of a learning conversation and notes. All the data will be securely stored in password - protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be securely destroyed at the University of Canterbury.

The results of this study may be used to revise and improve future mentoring practice and mentoring programmes for beginning teachers. The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation. This research study is using a small sample and therefore there is a risk of identification within the school and community. As a researcher, I will employ a number of techniques to remain true to the promise of confidentiality by providing general information and not specific information about participants and schools. For example, average age of participants and teaching experience and general geographical locations of schools. To ensure confidentiality, I will be using pseudonyms for the names of the participants and schools and this will manage the invasion of privacy and being identified in the research. As a researcher, I will protect a participant's and school's right to privacy through a promise of confidentiality; not disclosing information between beginning and mentor teachers or a school and teachers in any way that might identify individual or the school responses or place of employment.

The findings of the research may reveal areas for improvement in the mentoring process, and that the intent of the research is to possibly bring about personal, educational and social benefits while protecting the rights and welfare of all parties involved throughout each stage of the research study.

Each participant will receive a copy of my findings in the form of a report. I will also ask for your approval and consent to the findings being available as a public document via the UC library database and they may be used for future publications. This independent study is being carried out as a requirement for a Master of Education degree by Grant Buchanan, under the supervision of Glenn Fyall and Jackie Cowan. They will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in this project and have approved my research plan. They can be contacted at the following email addresses:

[glenn.fyall@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:glenn.fyall@canterbury.ac.nz)

[jackie.cowan@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:jackie.cowan@canterbury.ac.nz)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)).

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me through my contact details. If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it by email by (20/06/2018). Thank you for considering this request.

Yours sincerely,

Grant Buchanan

## Appendix. 3 Information Sheet for the Principals

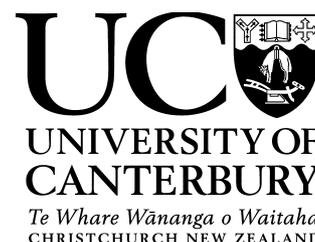
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Researcher – Grant Buchanan: [gmb32@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:gmb32@uclive.ac.nz)

Mobile: 0278117880



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### **Beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of teacher mentoring processes in primary schools: A case study in Aotearoa New Zealand**

#### **Information Sheet for the Principals**

My name is Grant Buchanan and I am a student at the University of Canterbury. I am currently undertaking a Master of Education thesis (EDEM690) to complete this degree. The aim of this case study research is to explore and analyse the mentoring process evident in primary school professional development structures.

The central purpose of this research is to investigate beginning and mentor primary teachers' perceptions of the first- year mentoring relationship. Furthermore, I will be focusing on the mentor teacher's skills when having learning conversations with the beginning teacher and how mentoring is used as a professional learning tool. Mentor teachers are seen to have up to date and in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning processes and expertise in educative mentoring underpinned by adult learning principles (<http://educationcouncil.org.nz>, 2017). The study will compare and contrast these perceptions with that of contemporary literature. Implications for the research may contribute to future mentor teachers' practice, mentoring relationships and improved outcomes for beginning teachers. This research relies on the voices, knowledge and experience of relevant teachers to capture the richness and complexities involved in this topic. I am interested in connecting with, and learning from individuals who are willing to share their lived experiences and insights of the mentoring relationship.

Principals I am asking for permission to have access to your school, while I conduct research with a beginning and mentor teacher for the purposes of the study. I am asking for permission to investigate and make notes from any school policies or documents pertaining to mentor teachers. I will not be needing to work with any children while conducting research at your school, only to interview the participants, observe a learning conversation between a beginning and mentor teacher and analyse policies and documents pertaining to mentor teachers at your school.

If mentor and beginning teachers accept my invitation to be a participant in my research study it will mean they will be asked to be part of an individual semi-structured interview and a video/audio-recorded observation of a learning conversation between the beginning and mentor teacher. To give you some insight into these data collection processes I have outlined brief details. The semi-structured interview will be conducted by me and the interview process will take no longer than 45-60mins and be at a place of the participants' convenience. I will ask participants questions about their perceptions of the mentoring process and experiences, and their thoughts on how they view mentoring as a professional learning tool. I will record data via audio recording and in note form. The observation of the learning conversation will take place at your school and will be video/audio-

recorded for no longer than 30mins. Video/audio recording will allow me to gain information about the way communication takes place (facial expression, body language etc that may not otherwise be noticed if audio recording only), I will also take notes. This observation will be another source of rich data to compare and contrast perceptions and investigate educative mentoring practice. Participants will be given a copy of the interview transcription to review for accuracy and authenticity.

Please note participation in this study is voluntary. If you do participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to your school, provided this is practically achievable. If one of the dyad withdraws from the study, and true to the spirit of confidentiality as a researcher, I will withdraw that pair of participants from the study to protect the rights and welfare of all parties involved and to avoid any harm to the participants. Any reported data, from that case, will not be used in the findings and destroyed. However, after 30 August 2018, it will not be possible to remove the impact of the data on the analysis of the thesis conclusions.

I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the raw data of interviews, viewing footage of a video/audio-taped observation of a learning conversation and notes. All the data will be securely stored in password - protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be securely destroyed.

The results of this study may be used to revise and improve future mentoring practice and mentoring programmes for beginning teachers. The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation. This research study is using a small sample and therefore there is a risk of identification within the school and community. As a researcher, I will employ a number of techniques to remain true to the promise of confidentiality by providing general information and not specific information about participants and kura/schools. For example, average age of participants and teaching experience and general geographical locations of kura/schools. To ensure confidentiality, I will be using pseudonyms for the names of the participants and kura/schools and this will be a means to manage the invasion of privacy and being identified in the research. As a researcher, I will protect a participant's and kura/school's right to privacy through a promise of confidentiality; not disclosing information between beginning and mentor teachers or a school and teachers in any way that might identify individual or the kura/school responses or place of employment.

The findings of the research may reveal areas for improvement in the mentoring process, and that the intent of the research is to possibly bring about personal, educational and social benefits while protecting the rights and welfare of all parties involved throughout each stage of the research study.

You will receive a copy of my findings in the form of a report. I will also ask for your approval and consent to the findings being available as a public document via the UC library database and they may be used for future publications. This independent study is being carried out as a requirement for a Master of Education degree by Grant Buchanan, under the supervision of Glenn Fyall and Jackie Cowan. They will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in this project and have approved my research plan. They can be contacted at the following email addresses: [glenn.fyall@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:glenn.fyall@canterbury.ac.nz) [jackie.cowan@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:jackie.cowan@canterbury.ac.nz)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)).

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me through my contact details. If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it by email by (20/06/2018).

Thank you for considering this request.

Yours sincerely,

Grant Buchanan

## **Appendix. 4 Consent Form for the Participants: Beginning and Mentor Teachers**

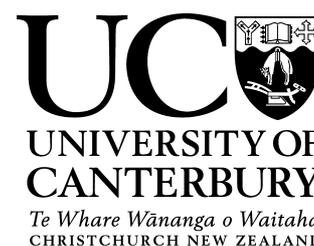
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### **Beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of teacher mentoring processes in primary schools: A case study in Aotearoa New Zealand**

#### **Consent Form for the Participants: Beginning and Mentor Teachers**

I consent to participate in Grant Buchanan's research project, Beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of teacher mentoring processes in primary schools: A case study in Aotearoa New Zealand. I have been given a full explanation of this thesis research project in the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I have read and understood the information provided to me concerning the thesis research project and what is required of me if I agree to participate in the research.

I understand that the information I provide to the researcher will be treated as confidential and that no findings or reports that could identify either me or my kura/school will be published.

I understand that participation in the project is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty or judgement.

Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable. I understand that if one of the dyad withdraws from the study, and true to the spirit of confidentiality, the researcher will withdraw that pair of participants from the study to protect the rights and welfare of all parties involved and to avoid any harm to the participants. Any reported data, from that case, will not be used in the findings and destroyed. However, I understand that after 30 August 2018, it will not be possible to remove the impact of the data on the analysis of the thesis conclusions.

I agree to our interview conversations and video/audio recorded learning conversations being taped and notes being made during interviews. I understand the researcher will be video/audio recording to gain information about the way communication takes place during a learning conversation (facial expression, body language etc that may not otherwise be noticed if audio recording only). I know I will receive an emailed copy of the interview transcripts that I can check for accuracy and authenticity.

I understand that any data, information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the raw data of interviews, viewing footage of a video/audio-taped observation of a learning conversation and notes.

I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be securely destroyed at the University of Canterbury after five years.

I understand the risks associated with taking part in this research and how they will be managed. I understand that this research study is using a small sample and therefore there is a risk of identification within the school and community. I understand the researcher will employ a number of techniques to remain true to the promise of confidentiality by providing general information and not specific information about participants and schools. For example, average age of participants and teaching experience and general geographical locations.

I understand I will receive a report of the findings of this study. I have provided my email details below for this.

The results of the project may be published, but I have been assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher has ensured me this will be achieved by using pseudonyms for the names of the participants and kura/school and this will be a means to manage the invasion of privacy and being identified in the research. I understand the researcher will protect a participant's and kura/school's right to privacy through a promise of confidentiality; not disclosing information from a participant or kura/school in any way that might identify that individual or the kura/school where they are employed. I understand a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher Grant Buchanan at [gmb32@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:gmb32@uclive.ac.nz) or his supervisors (Glenn Fyall and Jackie Cowan) at [glenn.fyall@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:glenn.fyall@canterbury.ac.nz) or [jackie.cowan@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:jackie.cowan@canterbury.ac.nz) for further information.

If I have any complaints, I can contact The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, College of Education, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140. ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz))

By signing below, I agree to participate in this thesis research project.

Participant's name:

Participant's signature:

Participant's email:

Date:

Please return this completed consent form to Grant Buchanan ([gmb32@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:gmb32@uclive.ac.nz)) by 20/06/2018.

## **Appendix. 5 Consent Form for the Principals**

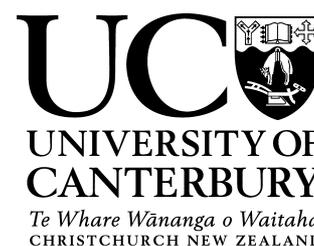
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mobile: 0278117880



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### **Beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of teacher mentoring processes in primary schools: A case study in Aotearoa New Zealand**

#### **Consent Form for the Principals**

I consent to Grant Buchanan having access to our school, while he conducts his research study with mentor and beginning teachers who will be participants in his research project, Beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of teacher mentoring processes in primary schools: A case study in Aotearoa New Zealand. Additionally, allowing him access to any policies or documentation pertaining to mentor teachers. I have been given a full explanation of this thesis research project in the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I have read and understood the information provided to me concerning the thesis research project and what is required if our school agrees to allow access to our school, while he conducts research with and a beginning and mentor teacher for the purposes of the study.

I understand that the information our school provides to the researcher will be treated as confidential and that no findings or reports that could identify my school will be published.

I understand that participation in the project is voluntary and our school may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information our school has provided should this remain practically achievable. I understand that if one of the dyad withdraws from the study, and true to the spirit of confidentiality, the researcher will withdraw that pair of participants from the study to protect the rights and welfare of all parties involved and to avoid any harm to the participants. Any reported data, from that case, will not be used in the findings and destroyed. However, I understand that after 30 August 2018, it will not be possible to remove the impact of the data on the analysis of the thesis conclusions.

I understand that any data, information or opinions our school provides will be kept confidential to the researcher. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the raw data of interviews, viewing footage of a video/audio-taped observation of a learning conversation and notes.

I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be securely destroyed at the University of Canterbury after five years.

I understand the risks associated with taking part in this research and how they will be managed. I understand that this research study is using a small sample and therefore there is a risk of identification within the school

and community. I understand the researcher will employ a number of techniques to remain true to the promise of confidentiality by providing general information and not specific information about participants and schools. For example, average age of participants and teaching experience and general geographical locations.

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By signing below, I agree to allow permission for the researcher to have access to our kura/school and any policies or documentation pertaining to mentor teachers.

Principal's name:

Principal's signature:

Principal's email:

Date:

Please return this completed consent form to Grant Buchanan ([gmb32@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:gmb32@uclive.ac.nz)) by 20/06/2018.

## Appendix. 6 Ethics Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY OF  
CANTERBURY

*Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha*  
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Rebecca Robinson Telephone: +64 03 369 4588, Extn 94588 Email:  
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Ref: 2018/21/ERHEC 14 June 2018

Grant Buchanan School of Health Sciences UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Grant

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal “Beginning and Mentor Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher Mentoring Processes in Primary Schools: a Case Study in Aotearoa New Zealand” has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your emails of 16<sup>th</sup> May and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2018; **and the following:**

*In the Information Sheets and Consent Forms, where there is reference to “shredded”, please amend to “securely destroyed”.*

Should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

PP

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Robinson".

Dr Patrick Shepherd

***Chair Educational Research Human Ethics Committee***

*Please note that ethical approval relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research.*

FES