



Step 1, Section 2

My personal set of events, memories and experiences

My multi-memberships

This section briefly describes some significant events of my lived experiences during participation in the “community of practice” (Wenger, 1998) of education. In the past I have been involved in a number of communities of educational practices, each with their own historical and social context. The artwork symbolises (see *Figure 3* “We belong to many communities of practice”, image from animation titled “Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”) the schools where I worked, the universities at which I studied, the Catholic Diocese of which the schools were a part, the Board of Studies and the larger community of education within NSW all contributed either directly or indirectly to my current practice. This multi-membership contributed to the history of my practice and to my evolving identity as a teacher and critical friend.

Working within each of these practices gave me structure and meaning to what I did as a teacher. Wenger (1998) portrayed practice as social and this type of practice includes both the explicit and tacit (p. 47). Here I describe some of the explicit (structures I was part of and also established) and tacit (assumptions I held) experiences of my practice as I commenced my inquiry journey.

I had been a teacher of visual arts for nearly thirty years, working within the secondary school system. My varied teaching experiences and positions of responsibility

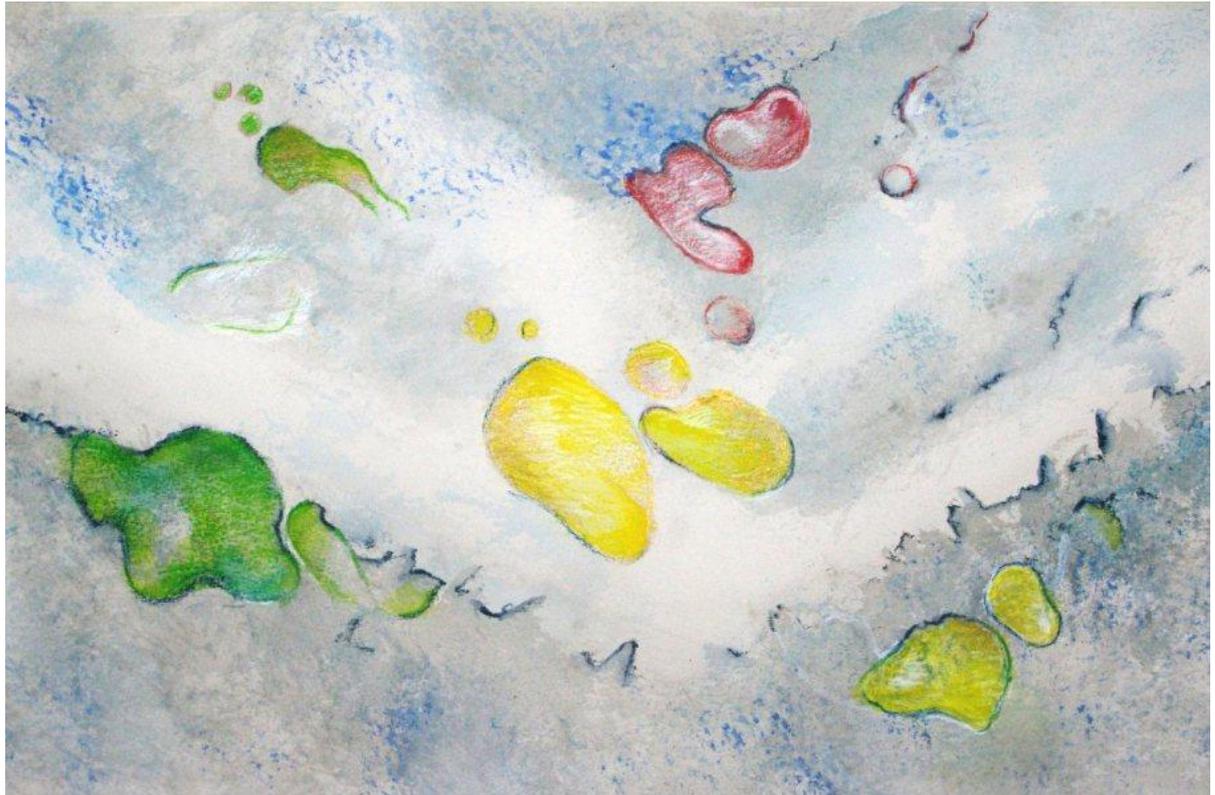


Figure 3. “We belong to many communities of practice”, image from animation titled “Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”.

allowed me to work with a variety of communities from within the secondary school structure. Over the years I taught at a number of socio-economically poor and affluent schools, both single sex and co-educational within a major Catholic school system in New South Wales. I also had the opportunity to work in a number of middle management positions such as Pastoral care coordinator, Creative arts coordinator, Key Learning Area resource officer (a consultancy style position) and Professional development coordinator. These positions allowed me to develop relationships which focused on the different communities such as students, parents, colleagues and the executive from within the broader school community.

My artistic practice includes both photography and drawing. I trained in the traditional technique of “Black and White” photography, developing and printing my images

in a darkroom. My photographic practice evolved along with the technological changes in photography including colour negatives, Cibachrome (slide film) and modern digital images. My subject matter comes largely from the natural environment mainly landscapes above and below the sea. My drawing practice involves work in watercolour, pencil, charcoal and pastels, often combining them to create different textural qualities to my work. My subject matter includes life drawing, landscapes and subjective abstract images as emotive representations of my lived experiences.

My ongoing commitment to my own PD as a teacher saw my work go beyond the school and the classroom. Over the past sixteen years I have conducted research both at a university level and for the school systems. While working on a Master of Art Education course, I became very interested in two topics, “Bullying behaviours of girls” and “Art therapy” (now referred to as “Art and Psychology”). These interests originated from my experiences in pastoral care and the visual arts. I commenced a thesis which combined these two interests. Applying a socio-psychological model to problem behaviours within the school setting, I aimed to evaluate the usefulness of using art as a non-verbal diagnostic tool, to help identify those students involved in bullying and teasing behavior (Betlem, 2001). This research led me to explore links to sociology, psychology, social constructivism, art and psychology. While I was required to discontinue this program due to a chronic illness, I remained interested in art linked to these areas of study.

My interest in mentoring and acting as a critical friend began when I first started working in 1999 at a Catholic secondary school in the outer western suburbs of a major city in New South Wales. This school was part of a systemic restructure which saw the combining of three schools into one, multi-campus school. The campus I worked at was one of two, 7-10 campuses, and the third was as a senior school campus. As a result of the restructure many of the established teachers decided to leave. The year I commenced, there

were over twenty new staff, many of which were new to teaching. I was appointed to the newly created position of Creative arts coordinator, looking after visual arts, music, dance, drama and later photography. The Creative arts faculty was made up of seven staff. This included two visual arts teachers, two music teachers and one dance teacher, all in their first or second year of teaching. The drama teacher and I were experienced teachers. However two years later, she too left and was replaced with a first year drama teacher.

The school presented a number of challenges. For example, many of the students were struggling academically, teachers had a low expectation of the students and the students were difficult to manage behaviourally. The beginning teachers struggled with keeping the students focused on their learning and as the coordinator I was spending a lot of time on behavior management. I started to support the beginning teachers by utilising faculty meeting times for PD in curriculum development, assessment task writing and the marking of student work, along with teaching the teachers strategies to assist them in their day-to-day management of the students.

I was not immune from the difficulties that the other staff were having with the students so I began to explore different teaching and learning strategies to improve student commitment and motivation towards their visual arts studies in particular, “Art Studying” (Board of Studies, 2009). I began to use more kinaesthetic approaches to learning (Gardner, 1999) and I structured the writing tasks into logical steps creating scaffolds to assist the students with their learning. I use the word ‘scaffold’ in a Vygotskian sense. The scaffold provided a bridge between what the students already knew and what they could achieve with the support of a teacher (Wennergren & Ronnerman, 2006). I also began to extensively use cooperative group work (Topping & Ehly, 1998) assuming that this would assist with developing students’ social skills. The cooperative group work established structures that allowed students to take responsibility for a part of the assigned work. Working in teams,

peers learnt from each other and developed a sense of cooperation and tolerance of each others' views (Betlem & Bolitho, 2002; Topping & Ehly, 1998). I had some success with these approaches, so I enthusiastically set out to share my experiences with the rest of the Creative arts staff.

The staff and I began to work collaboratively in order to develop units of work that combined curriculum expectations and social skills training in order to instigate change in the students' behaviour (Betlem & Bolitho, 2002). I received a grant from the Catholic school system I worked for at the time. This allowed me to get significant release time for the Creative arts staff from face to face teaching. During this time we worked together to develop units of study for the students within our subject areas. I saw myself as both an expert and a learner as I had extensive knowledge of programming however I had only a general knowledge of the Music, Dance and Drama syllabuses. I saw this as an opportunity to learn from colleagues about the specific content of these subjects, while professionally developing them in writing programs of study for students.

I applied my emerging epistemology of teaching and learning to organise the PD. The teachers moved from structured and directed learning experiences to those that were self-directed. First, an expert presented theoretical information about the development of adolescents to the group, second the group of teachers worked individually and/or in groups on assigned tasks that were all structured to ensure maximum learning of the requirements for program writing. Thirdly, teachers worked collaboratively in subject groups to develop units of work. I facilitated the learning of the teachers and as I was working with an enthusiastic and highly motivated group of young teachers who were willing to learn, I generalised this structure as an appropriate approach to PD.

At the same time, I was also working as the Key Learning Area resource officer, where I organised and facilitated "Network" meetings and PD for all of the Creative arts

teachers within the Catholic system I worked. PD at this level was presented in the traditional model, where staff left school for the day, met at a venue to work with experts and then returned to their schools (Burke, Marx, & Berry, 2010; Curry, 2008; Grundy, 1995). I began to question the effectiveness of this type of model and was very excited when I was given the opportunity to become a Professional development coordinator at another school in the same Catholic school system, symbolised in my artwork (see *Figure 4*. “Moving from one community of practice to another”, image from animation titled “Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”). The principal wanted to trial a model of “in house” PD.

Entering unfamiliar territory

My new school was a co-educational secondary school which had a predominantly multicultural student population. The school was challenging from a number of perspectives as: a majority of students spoke English as a second language, behaviour management was difficult and the cultural misunderstandings that can result from cultural diversity (see Mills & Keddie, 2012 for an account that resonates well) were among some of the contributing factors that caused a fluctuation of teacher retention rates over the previous years (E. C. Betlem, personal communication, March 5, 2003).

I entered my new school with great enthusiasm which included, taking for granted that all teachers wanted to learn and improve their practice. My success at the previous school with the beginning teachers had led me to assume that this was the case and that the approach I had taken was appropriate for all. But of course it was not. In my first year at the school, I had worked successfully with a few individual teachers as their mentor assisting them to improve their practice however my position was seen by most to be organisational; the “approver” of attending traditional external PD. Furthermore I very quickly got some of the experienced staff off side as my enthusiasm was interpreted as criticism. I was suddenly



Figure 4. “Moving from one community of practice to another”, image from animation titled “Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”.

in “unfamiliar territory” (Wenger, 1998, p. 153). My confidence and competence waned and I no longer felt like I belonged and was left sitting at the periphery of my new practice (Wenger, 1998) as symbolised in my artwork (see *Figure 5.* “Entering a new community of practice from the periphery”, image from animation titled “Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”). I reflected that I failed to adequately communicate with staff in order to find out what they needed and wanted from me. I also later learnt that there had been no staff consultation regarding the position I now held as PD coordinator and thus some staff were suspicious of my motives; for example, the question was raised, “was I a spy for the principal”? They were feeling threatened and did

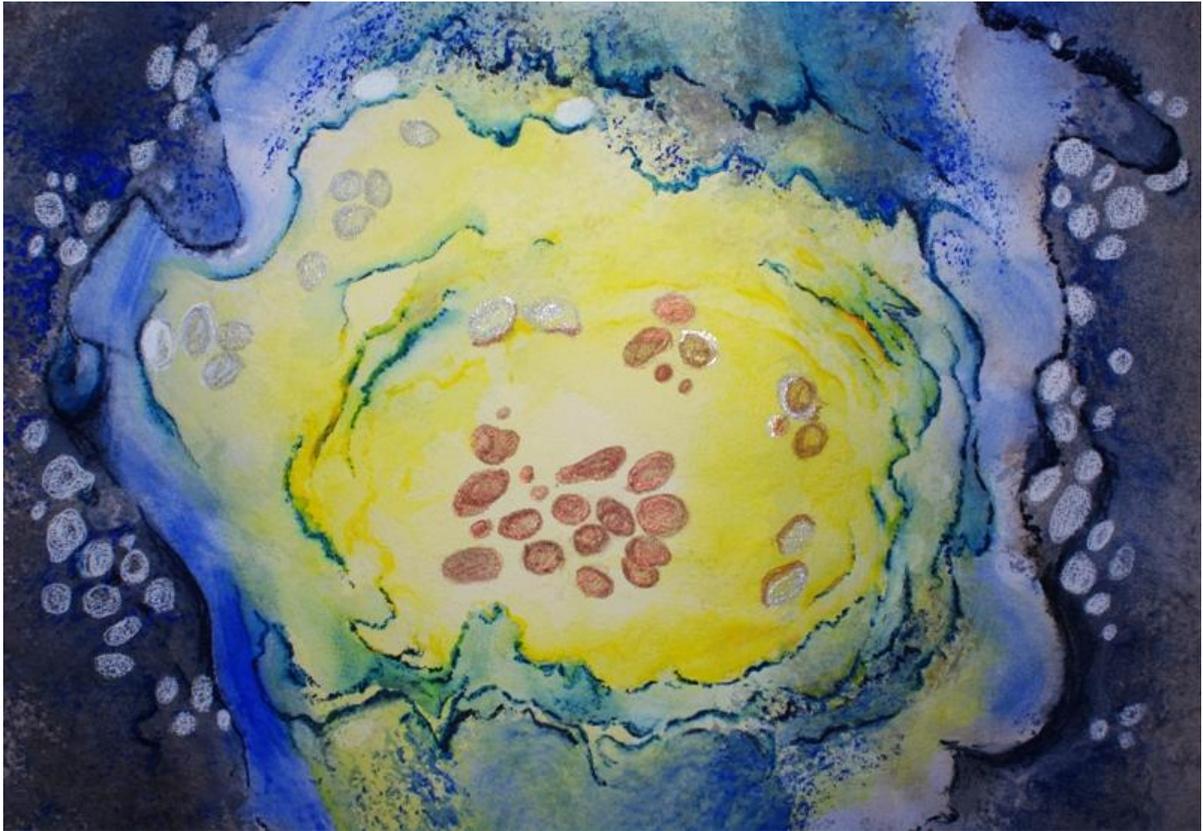


Figure 5. “Entering a new community of practice from the periphery”, image from animation titled “A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”.

not trust me (E. C. Betlem, personal communication, August 18, 2004).

These experiences revealed to me that PD should not be imposed upon teachers; they have to see the need to improve their own practice in order to take ownership of it (Wenger, 1998). The beginning teachers I worked with at my previous school had a need which they acknowledged by action and their willingness to be involved in program development. At this stage of my career I was left asking myself as a professional developer: How do I get experienced teachers to acknowledge their professional needs as teachers and how do I provide non-threatening opportunities so that they may professionally grow in their practice as teachers?

To send me on a new trajectory of learning

At this point of time a major change to our practice as teachers occurred, we witnessed the introduction of the New South Wales (NSW) Institute of Teachers. Established in 2004, this was followed in 2005 with an accreditation process for beginning teachers, based on the “Professional Teaching Standards” (NSW, Institute of Teachers, 2005). The authorities responsible for accreditation had a number of responsibilities, amongst which they were to ensure that all candidates for accreditation were “adequately supervised and mentored” (NSW Institute of Teachers - Manual, 2005, p. 23). School systems and individual schools responded by establishing mentor programs for those new to the profession. The NSW public schools sector established an external mentor program for their beginning teachers (NSW, Government., 2006). These mentors were trained and sent out to schools to work with the beginning teachers on their accreditation. However, as I was working at a school in the Catholic school system as the PD coordinator, I was quickly assigned the responsibility of overseeing the accreditation process at my school. I was to support and work with both the beginning teachers and their mentors. This provided a new focus and credibility for my PD coordinator’s position within the school.

At the time there were limited PD and support opportunities offered by my Catholic school system for teachers taking on the role of mentor and none that directly related to the position I was assigned (E. C. Betlem, personal communication, February 7, 2005). In response I utilised my acquired repertoire from my past research experiences and my PD strategies while a Creative arts coordinator. In addition, learning from my recent positive and negative experiences as a PD coordinator, I facilitated PD opportunities for both the mentors of our beginning teachers and the beginning teachers they worked alongside.

I returned to my successful PD structure based on my epistemology of teaching and learning to work in cooperative groups with my experienced colleagues who acted as

mentors to the beginning teachers. We met regularly as a small group to develop collaboratively, through considerable trial and error, a program of mentoring that supported the professional growth of the beginning teachers in their new practice. In addition the collaborative nature of our cooperative group supported the professional growth of the mentor teachers and myself as their facilitator and also supported the development of our relationship.

This brief account of some significant events in my past lived experiences as a teacher, artist, professional developer and early researcher contributes to my current identity as a critical friend (Wenger, 1998). I was presented by challenges such as: demanding school contexts; coordination of large numbers of beginning teachers as colleagues; experienced colleagues who held traditional views of the PD role and my idealist tacit assumptions that all teachers wished to learn and improve their practice. Additionally there were limited PD opportunities in the Catholic school system for mentors and those that supported the mentors such as myself. Questioning the effectiveness of the traditional approach to PD I applied my epistemology of teaching and learning as a visual arts teacher to work collaboratively with teachers in cooperative groups as a model of contextualised professional development. Wishing to formalise my anecdotal evidence of success of this model of PD, I chose to focus my Educational Doctorate research inquiry on the role I undertook over the years while working with colleagues in cooperative groups. This role I have throughout my inquiry journey, called a “critical friend”.

Embarking on my inquiry journey - Some early obstacles

Securing teachers to embark on a journey with me as their critical friend to assist them develop a reflective mentoring practice proved to be difficult. I wish to briefly outline the process I went through in order to illustrate the obstacles and frustrations I encountered

over the two year period. This will also help to explain the subsequent shifts I made to the definition of my participants for my inquiry.

The participants for my inquiry were to include teachers directly involved in mentoring beginning teachers new to the profession, working in groups with me as a critical friend. They were to come from voluntary schools within the systemic or independent Catholic school systems. I expected the schools to come from a middle-to-low socio-economic status, as they traditionally employed a greater number of beginning teachers. However, these criteria proved to be too restrictive for those I first approached.

The school system I initially approached was one I had worked in for a long time. I was introduced to several school principals by my agent (a friend who had been a principal in the system). These principals were very supportive of my ideas and readily allowed me into their schools to present them to their respective staff members. However, the system had taken on a preferred model that had the beginning teachers' immediate supervisor, the Key Learning Area (Subject) coordinator, be responsible for mentoring the beginning teacher. Subject coordinators are busy people and as I had anticipated, they were reluctant to commit their time to my study of inquiry (E. C. Betlem, personal communication, February 22, 2010).

The many teachers I approached while searching for volunteers from the various school systems did not seem to have the energy to take on work that was outside what they were expected to complete. "*They looked at me like stunned mullets*" I noted in my research journal (personal communication, March 3, 2010). Working with me required a commitment of the teachers' time and they had to actively participate during the group sessions. The benefits the teachers would gain from the experience of having a designated time period to reflect on their mentoring practice with a critical friend was over shadowed by a view that this was "*another thing to do*" (E.C Betlem, personal communication, March, 7, 2010) .

“I am feeling despondent, as I am getting concerned whether I will ever get a group of teachers interested” I reflected (E. C. Betlem, personal communication, March 17, 2010). I was revisiting an article by Messner & Rauch (1995) at the time, although now quite old they had analysed the consultant’s role of facilitating a large action research study, from both the teacher’s and consultant’s perspectives. I noted how some teachers had expectations of a consultant as someone who would take the lead, like a teacher does in class. Teachers’ professional socialisation means that the teacher is responsible for the learning situation and the learner’s progress and success. When they take on the role of learner, they tend to take on the persona of a student. *“Is my presentation making the participatory action research sound like too much work”* (E. C. personal communication, March 17, 2010)? My information session to the staff utilised a PowerPoint™ presentation I developed to explain my inquiry via a metaphor of a trip to Vietnam I had recently taken (described later in “Capitols on columns 2, 3 and 4 - Introduction to Sections 6, 7 and 8”). It emphasised my aim for the mentors to lead the way in order to address their needs and take control of the PAR. In response, I placed more emphasis on my study of inquiry, my role as a critical friend within the PAR, rather than the mentors’ role. I also broaden the audience I presented to and changed my criteria slightly to include those interested in, rather than actually, working as mentors with beginning teachers. My first voluntary school Picasso Catholic High (Picasso CH) came from the Independent school sector.

Securing a second school proved more difficult than attaining the first. My frustration is evident in this journal reflection:

... after all their promises the school seems to have disappeared. The agreed presentation was not confirmed and I did chase a lot to find this out. Then ... maybe the following Wednesday and still no news. He said he would let me know! I waited two weeks before making another call ... I rang again ... the coordinator was away

all week! I am concerned that the year is getting underway, I told the personal assistant... (E. C. Betlem, personal communication, February 2, 2011).

I was worried about getting enough participant schools for my inquiry as “*my timeline had not allowed for all the negotiations that needed to take place. First to get school systems permission, then approach schools via my agent, visit interested principals or their representative to chat about my ideas and get them on board*”. Followed by, “*a presentation to staff to inform and inspire them to join my journey*” (E. C. personal communication, February 2, 2010). I again broadened my criteria to include those generally interested in developing a mentoring practice. This seemed appropriate as my inquiry predominantly focused on my practice as a critical friend.

Today the presentation went well I practised in the morning... I sounded confident and to the point... I have one interested teacher... from Matisse Catholic High (Matisse CH) (E. C. Betlem, personal communication, February 19. 2011) ... *a second is interested ...yeah!* (E. C. Betlem, personal communication, February 28. 2011).

Embarking on my inquiry journey into my role as a critical friend within a model of contextualised PD, I had not considered the lengthy process of negotiation with school systems, school principals, and then staff. As well as overcoming teachers’ perception of PAR as “another thing to do” created difficulties with securing teachers to work with me. Overall I approached 180 schools including Catholic systemic schools and Independent schools (Catholic, Anglican, Christian and non-denominational) in the state, either by personal contact, and /or sending a letter. Securing the first school took nine months and the second a further eleven months. This resulted in me conducting two PAR studies over two school years.

Revised criteria for the participants of my inquiry journey

The participants can be holistically described as having an interest in mentoring colleagues (new or experienced to the profession of teaching) they worked with during the course of their teaching practice. Hence I have continued to refer to the participant teachers as “mentors” throughout my inquiry journey.



Step 2, Section 3

Review of Related Literature

Schools are complex social systems set up to achieve many goals. They each have their own historical, cultural and social context. The individuals in the school, the teachers, parents and students and those from the wider community all have different world views and different interpretations of their world view which they bring to the school. They develop shared understandings by working and interacting within their own school's context, resulting in the emergence of shared values, norms, beliefs, and ways of thinking that makes each school unique (Eisner, 2001; Hoy & Miskel, 1996; Wenger, 1998).

Teaching is a busy, complex and diverse profession (Liew, 2005) with many responsibilities and expectations. Teachers are expected to know the content of their subjects and have a deep understanding of how learning happens. They should have a rich repertoire of teaching strategies and know how to optimise student learning by utilising appropriate strategies. Teachers should be able to work collaboratively with others, reflect on their practices and learn from others and are considered to be lifelong learners (NSW, Government, 2012)

Teachers have many roles. They are organisers, innovators, administrators, collaborators, communicators, mediators, and much more. Teachers organise lesson content, they plan and use new technologies, keep daily rolls and student achievement records.

Teachers meet regularly with colleagues in order to make joint decisions and they supervise students in the classroom as well as on “yard duty”. They regularly mediate the behaviour between students they teach. Teachers may be called upon to supervise other colleagues including those experienced and those new to the profession (Education Service Australia, 2012). Moreover, in the changing political educational agenda in Australia with the introduction of a new National Curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2012), National Teaching Standards (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011), compulsory accreditation of all teachers (NSW, Institute of Teachers, 2013) and the proposal of annual formal feedback of teachers’ performance (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited, 2012a), the ongoing support given to both beginning teachers and experienced teachers within such a complex context is critical.

Mentoring has received significant attention in the literature as a form of support for teachers. It’s ongoing importance and value is well documented (Awaya et al., 2003; Bieler, 2013; Carter & Francis, 2001; Eddy, 2007; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Ewing et al., 2008; Hays, Gerber, & Minichiello, 1999; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Kamvounias, McGrath-Champ, & Yip, 2008). Although mentoring is extensively researched in a number of fields such as: business, nursing and as part of management, I have focused on literature from the field of teacher education. Within this field the literature largely surrounds the mentoring of pre-graduate teachers who attend the school as interns, and less often early career teachers needing to meet accreditation for a supervising body or experienced colleague teachers who have taken on leadership roles or wish to improve their practice. I have generalised and referred to these teachers as mentees. Thus a mentee can be a pre-graduate teacher, an early career teacher or an experienced colleague.

Mentor and mentoring defined

The word “mentor” comes from mythology. Mentor was the trusted counsellor of Odysseus. Before Odysseus set sail for the Trojan War he made Mentor guardian to his son Telemachus. Mentor was friend, advisor and teacher to Telemachus, helping him to grow into a noble hearted, clear thinking prince. The “relationship of Mentor to Telemachus was a role of responsibility requiring Mentor to be guide, counsellor, tutor, coach, sponsor, defender and at times protector” (Hays et al., 1999, p. 85). To this day a mentor is a guide, someone with wisdom and foresight that helps another find their path.

A mentor has been defined as a more experienced person passing on their knowledge and skills to a less experienced person (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; NSW, Institute of Teachers, 2005; Onchwari & Keengwe, 2008, p.20). It is someone who is willing to nurture, instruct and support (Ouchwari & Keengwe, 2008).

Mentoring for some time has been considered to be a “basic form of education for human development because it provides a holistic, yet individual and experiential approach to learning” (Hays et.al., 1999, p. 85). It is often referred to as “a journey” (Awaya, et al., 2003, p. 51; Fletcher, 2012; Mullen , 2012). One that is shared with another as Fletcher (2012) recently wrote about her own mentorship, “it is about sharing a journey for developing values, skills and understanding and co-creating knowledge in the process ... built upon professional and personal values about the sharing of power with the purpose of empowerment”(p. 69). Seen as a process of collaborative work (Feiman-Nemser, 1998; NSW, Institute of Teachers, 2005) mentoring involves at least “two people in a developmental relationship who are supporting mutual learning and growth” (Department of Education and Early Childhood, 2007, p. 11; see also Awaya et al., 2003) and viewed by some as “a symbiotic partnership” (Hays et.al., 1999, p. 85). Ehrich and colleagues (2004) in

their meta-analyses of formal mentor programs concluded that “mentoring is a highly complex, dynamic and interpersonal relationship” (p. 533).

The process of mentoring can be formal through “structured programs in which mentors and mentees are matched with a purpose and intentions” (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005, p. 276; for other examples see, Janas, 1996; McKenna, 2005), which can result in mandatory forms of mentoring “requir[ing] teachers to mentor and be mentored” (Mullen, 2012, p. 11). Alternatively mentoring can be informal and less structured. The relationship of the mentor and mentee occurs naturally due to “friendship, collegiality, teaching, coaching and counseling” (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005, p. 276). It is voluntary “where the mentee can choose his/her own mentor organically through a personal connection or social network” (Moore, Miller, Pitchford, & Jen, 2008, p. 77), nurturing the whole person (Varney, 2009).

Relationships within the mentoring context can be hierarchical (Awaya, et al., 2003) as language such as “mentor” and “protégé” (Awaya, et al., 2003, p. 48) or “veteran” and “neophyte” (Howe, 2006, p. 290) can lead to a presumption of rank where the mentor takes on a dominant role which results in the mentee being placed into a dependant position. Alternately it can be a relationship based on a partnership working collaboratively, as co-learners (Awaya, et al., 2003; Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005). In recent times the latter model has prevailed with more egalitarian approaches of sharing knowledge and working together to improve practice (see for example, Bradbury, 2010; Carroll, 2006; Fletcher, 2012). Hence mentoring can be seen as having an important duality requiring both a *process* and a *relationship*, (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010) involving at least two people, the mentor and the mentee.

Mentors’ perception of their role

Mentors may perceive their role as pragmatic, interpersonal and/or managerial (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). The process and pragmatics of being a mentor can include

mentors taking on the “teacher role” as they help mentees learn how to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 1998). Mentors professionally support the mentee by helping them to carry out professional responsibilities, such as creating resources and ideas for planning (Hall, Draper, Smith, & Bullough, 2008). Mentors act as “role models and the masters of knowledge, guiding [mentees] how to perform” (Leshem, 2012, p. 418). The interpersonal and relationship building aspects of the role may include mentors perceiving themselves as counsellors, equal partners (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005) or coaches who help mentees develop their strengths and improve their weak areas and thus perform as a critical friend (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Leshem, 2012). However there are mentors who do not view critical feedback as a major aspect of their mentorship practice (Hall, et al., 2008).

The increasing climate of accreditation of teachers into the profession may see mentors take on a managerial role: assessing the mentee, quality control of their practice and writing reports for accreditation bodies (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Long, 2009; Mullen, 2011; NSW, Institute of Teachers, 2005). Within this process mentors are often appointed by district or school administrators (see for example, Bullough Jr, 2005; Long, 2009; NSW, Government., 2006; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2012), selected because they are experienced teachers. This aspect of the role has raised ethical dilemmas with some mentors due to conflict of expectations. Ethical dilemmas such as the desire to be confidential and caring for colleagues versus the duty to report, professional commitment and accountability to the pedagogical process (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2012). It is nice to be reminded by Leshem (2012) that mentors are also learners of their own practice as opportunities for self reflection may occur.

Much of what researchers have learnt about how mentors perceive their role is largely from surveys conducted with beginning teachers (see for example, Koç, 2011) or pairs of mentors and beginning teachers (see for example, Hall, et al., 2008; Leshem, 2012)

or more rarely from mentors themselves (see for example, Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010). Recently, however researchers have begun to write about their own mentorship practice providing a perspective of their roles as mentors through their lived experiences. For example, E. R. Smith (2011) in her role as a university educator mentoring seven teachers new to the profession, analysed the process she worked in order to develop her identity as a faculty mentor for beginning English teachers. Fletcher (2012) exploring her mentorship as a research mentor for teachers, saw her role as a bridge between the teacher researchers in schools and researchers in the university who viewed teachers as a body to be researched (p. 72). Bieler (2013), working with four secondary English teachers enrolled in a master's level course, was committed to holistic mentoring. She explained this as mentoring that is "continually poised to explore all the factors that contribute to student teachers developing professional identities – beliefs, goals, worldviews, life experiences and expectations" (p. 24).

In a rare study that explicitly explored identity development of the mentor, Kwan & Lopez-Real (2010) were interested in "the quality of learning and identities that emerged" (p. 723) as a result of being a mentor. The mentors were interviewed after they had completed the practicum period with their mentees. They utilised a "Wengerian matrix" (p. 730) to analyse the mentors' interviews. The researchers found several factors that contributed to the development of the mentors' identity. These included "the school culture [and] the 'personalities' of the other community members" (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010, p. 722) of the mentors' work place such as, the student teacher, other teachers in the faculty, the university tutor and other significant colleagues. They also found that the mentors' involvement in "other relevant communities of practice" (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010, p. 722) influenced the development of their identity as mentors.

Benefits of mentoring relationship

Literature reveals numerous reciprocal and individual benefits of mentoring for the mentor and mentee as well as the organisations in which they work. Both mentors and mentees acknowledged the value of collaboration from being involved in a mentoring relationship (Cheng & Yeung, 2010; Ehrich, et al., 2004; Howe, 2006). Other reciprocal benefits such as: sharing ideas and knowledge, reflection and PD (Ewing, et al., 2008; Simpson, Hastings, & Hill, 2007) as well as sharing and exchanging ideas and resources (Gabriel & Kaufield, 2008) have been reported.

The benefits for mentees may include increased confidence and self esteem (Bullough Jr & Draper, 2004; Hays, et al., 1999; Long, 1997), psychological support as well as empathy and encouragement (Bullough Jr & Draper, 2004; Carter & Francis, 2001; Marable & Raimondi, 2007). Ehrich and colleagues (2004) found that 42 percent of the articles they reviewed cited support, empathy, encouragement, counselling and friendship as the most important outcomes for mentees. Mentees also have assistance with materials, ideas, suggestions and coaching when necessary (Bullough Jr & Draper, 2004) as well as constructive criticism or feedback (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). Other benefits may also include: improved classroom effectiveness, increased collaboration with peers, a perception that teaching is collegial (Fletcher & Barrett, 2004) as well as the professional growth and skill development (Howe, 2006) received from being involved in a mentoring relationship. Most importantly is the increased likelihood that mentees will stay in the profession (Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Martinez, 2004).

The benefits for mentors may include increased professional confidence and a sense of purpose and personal satisfaction (Cheng & Yeung, 2010; Ehrich, et al., 2004; Hays, et al., 1999) with their work. Mentoring may also cause mentors to reflect upon their beliefs and broaden their professional knowledge and to facilitate their PD (Carter & Francis, 2001;

Cheng & Yeung, 2010; Leshem, 2012; Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005). Other benefits may include collegiality and networking (Long, 1997), increased collaboration as well as gaining new ideas and perspectives from mentees (Simpson, et al., 2007). Also mentors may have increased motivation and confidence in their own practice as mentors of other teachers as a result of seeing improved student learning (Cheng & Yeung, 2010).

The schools in which the mentees and mentors work may also benefit from the mentoring process. Mentoring may enhance student outcomes (Ehrich, et al., 2004). It can mitigate teacher isolation and promote the concept of an educative workplace (Carter & Francis, 2001). Mentoring was also found to reduce staff turnover (T. M. Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) and increase job satisfaction (Ewing, et al., 2008) amongst those involved.

Challenges of mentoring relationship

Since Long (1997) in her review of the literature drew our attention to the “dark side” (p. 115) of mentoring, many years later she reiterates the prevalence of these same concerns and limitations (2009). Identifying them as: time and resource limitations, unsuccessful matching of mentor with mentee, lack of choices regarding involvement by the mentee in established programs, lack of availability of mentors, lack of understanding of the process of mentoring by mentors and a lack of professional development for those taking on the mentor role (Long, 1997, 2009).

The literature also reveals an ongoing concern that high levels of support for beginning teachers may result in the reproduction of the mentor’s style (Ballantyne, Hansford, & Packer, 1995; Hargreaves & Jacka, 1995; Keay, 2009; Leshem, 2012; Maynard, 2000, 2001; Simpson, et al., 2007). Reasons such as the mentors may be out of touch with new teaching pedagogy (Ballantyne, et al., 1995) or the cultural context of a faculty makes it difficult for the mentee to challenge established practices (Keay, 2009) are two examples.

The role of *power* in the relationship between the mentor and mentee can contribute to limitations of the mentoring experience. Leshem, (2012) found that due to the natural hierarchy between the mentor role and the mentee, mentees may “relinquish their views about teaching practices out of respect to the mentor’s knowledge and experience” (p. 418). Junor Clarke & Fournillier (2012) also found that mentees working on their own action research as a form of professional development were fearful of making changes in their mentor’s class, as they reported “it was not the culture of their mentor’s classroom” (p. 656) stifling their creativity to do things differently. A more serious outcome for mentees is the misuse of power by the mentor which can result in feelings of intimidation, or worse still, feeling bullied by their mentor (Maguire, 2001). Bullough Jr & Draper (2004) found some support for this, as “pleasing the mentor became an intern’s central concern” (p. 274) during their practicum experience.

Marable and Raimindi (2007) reported that a mismatch in expectations between mentee and mentor caused problems. An unproductive or destructive relationship between the mentor/mentee could lead to consequences for mentees’ sense of worth as a teacher and as a person (Maynard 2000).

Other more personal aspects can be a challenge for mentors as they can feel insecure, nervous or inadequate in presenting lessons to be observed by mentees. They may also feel inadequate at mentees presenting new ideas (Hobson, et al., 2009). Literature has also revealed “that mentors felt isolated in the role” of mentoring (Hobson, et al., 2009, p. 210).

Challenges related to *time* are, a recurring theme in the mentoring literature (Carroll, 2006; Cheng & Yeung, 2010; Gabriel & Kaufield, 2008). Challenges such as the lack of time to meet and the timing (when held during the year) of the mentor program influenced the mentee’s use of the program they were offered (Cheng & Yeung, 2010; Gabriel & Kaufield, 2008). Other researchers noted an increased workload for mentors (Simpson, et al.,

2007) and noted that this impact on workload may cause stress (Maynard, 2000). Being unavailable due to time constraints could lead to mentees' needs not being met (K. Smith & McLay, 2007). Marable & Raimondi (2007) noted a recurring comment from the mentees requesting more time with mentors and more time for observing other teachers. Ehrich and colleagues (2004) summarised that nearly 30 percent of the studies they reviewed noted time was an issue by the mentors and 15 percent by mentees. Alternatively to overcome the time demands of a study group for mentors, Carroll (2006) utilised time during the school day, provided when the interns were solo teaching. Carroll felt it was unreasonable to expect the mentor teachers to add the meeting to the end of their work day.

To date what researchers know about mentoring and the mentor's role within the practice of teaching is from personal perceptions of the mentee and at times the mentor, largely from interviews and surveys (Hobson, et al., 2009). The literature essentially focuses on the outcomes of the mentee (Ehrich, et al., 2004; Hobson, et al., 2009; Howe, 2006; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Mullen, 2012), often working within initial teacher education of pre-graduate teachers programs or at times induction programs into the profession which include a mentor or colleague teacher as part of the process. There is little literature on mentoring with teachers new to the profession needing to achieve accreditation with a professional body such as the New South Wales Institute of Teachers or mentoring with experienced colleagues. Furthermore despite the concerns and limitations I have raised about the mentoring process, such as the reproduction of the mentor's style, the role of power in the relationship, and challenges with time for mentoring, the overall benefits of mentoring as outlined in this review of the literature continues to be supported as an appropriate method of professional support within the profession.

Like other countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom (Ko, Lo, & Lee, 2012) mentoring of beginning teachers by experienced colleagues at their schools is an

important component of the process towards teachers' accreditation (NSW, Institute of Teachers, 2005). Established in 2004, the New South Wales Institute of Teachers "aimed to foster self evaluation by genuine collaboration between the beginning teacher and their colleagues" (NSW, Institute of Teachers, 2005, p. 51). The school authorities responsible for accreditation had a number of responsibilities, amongst which they were to ensure that all candidates for accreditation "are adequately supervised and mentored" (NSW Institute of Teachers - Manual, 2005, p. 23). In response, school systems and individual schools established mentor programs for those new to the profession in which "teacher mentors play a pivotal role" (NSW, Government, 2013, p.12).

More recently accreditation was offered to experienced teachers at "Professional Accomplishment and Professional Leadership" (NSW, Institute of Teachers, 2008) levels, with the view that over time, school authorities should consider formalising teacher mentor roles and aligning them with these higher standards. However recent feedback revealed there were limited opportunities for mentors to be trained in this role (NSW, Government, 2013, p. 12). Concerned about the perceived lack of PD, I examined the literature surrounding current professional development models for mentors.

Professional development models: researching successful mentorship

There is a prolific amount of literature on PD for teachers however I have limited my discussion to PD for teacher mentors, those responsible for supporting their colleagues as mentees. Mentees as defined earlier as pre-graduate teachers who attend the school as interns, graduate teachers meeting accreditation requirements or experienced colleague teachers.

Much of the PD literature identifies the necessary practices to be a successful mentor (see for example, Bullough Jr & Draper, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 1998; Hobson, et al., 2009;

Hudson, 2005). Bradbury (2010) categorised them as: defining the mentor and mentee roles, identifying beliefs about teaching, strategies for communicating and facilitating reflection, and pedagogical knowledge plus a need for training in these practices through sustained PD.

PD for mentors appears in many structures, such as mentors working in small groups with a researcher to develop their mentoring practice (see for example, Bullough Jr & Draper, 2004; Carroll, 2006; Cheng & Yeung, 2010; Zeek, Foote, & Walker, 2001). PD via multimodal approaches; such as trialled by Segal and Schuck (2001) who included workshops, online support and an action research component to their course for mentors. Mentors have attended workshops (see for example, Cheng & Yeung, 2010; Margolis, 2007); trained as part of a government program (see for example, Department of Education and Early Childhood, 2007; NSW, Government, 2006; Webb, Pachler, Mitchell, & Herrington, 2007) or further education as part of a university course (see for example, Rajuan, Tuchin, & Zuckermann, 2011; University of Technology, 2012). Some researchers have worked with mentors in groups supporting them while the mentors conducted their own action research projects as a form of PD (see for example, Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005).

There is PD that has focused on subject content and pedagogical needs as preparation for mentoring roles (see for example, Cheng & Yeung, 2010; Onchwari & Keengwe, 2008). Other PD concentrated on explicit strategies to assist the mentee to become an effective teacher (Margolis, 2007) or PD that provided mentors opportunities to reflect on their practice as mentors (Zeek, et al., 2001). Other research indicates that mentors are trained in explicit methods of mentoring such as “Reading apprenticeship based strategies” (Margolis, 2007), “Educative mentoring” (Bradbury, 2010; Carter & Francis, 2001) or the “Adaptive Mentorship” model (Ralph & Walker, 2010).

An alternative view, which receives great attention in the literature is the PD benefits from being a mentor within a program, (see for example, Giles & Wilson, 2004; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005; Margolis, 2007; Zeek, et al., 2001) that PD is achieved by the mentors as a “by product” of being engaged in mentoring. The “London providers mentoring group” (Webb, et al., 2007, p. 171) were an experienced group of mentor educators from different initial teacher educational providers. They found that developing into reasonable mentors can be achieved by learning on the job with some support, interaction and planned activities involving a small number of other colleagues. However, for many new mentors this “process of osmosis” (Webb, et al., 2007, p. 177) was too slow. Based on the assumption, that mentors achieve PD themselves from working in a mentor relationship, Cheng and Yeung (2010) recently explored the necessary environmental conditions to stimulate this new learning and found that the input from another, such as a university consultant or research team was perceived as essential for learning to take place. Conversely Simpson, et al. (2007) found that often mentors did not realise the PD potential offered them from working with mentees until the program had commenced, as they had not taken on the mentor role to a mentee for the purpose of PD.

Successful approaches of professional development for mentors

The emphasis in the teaching profession on the value of a reflective practice such as advocated by Schön (1995) is supported in the mentoring literature (see for example, Leshem, 2012; Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005; Simpson, et al., 2007). Mentors themselves hold the view that opportunities for reflection are fundamental to the overall development of an educator (Ehrich, et al., 2004) and that reflection is a critical factor of good mentoring (Leshem, 2012). However a key element for this reflection to take place is time (Howe, 2006).

The success of collaborative learning in groups by mentors is also prominent in the literature. Feiman-Nemser (1998) in a cross-cultural multi-method study of 24 mentor/novice pairs found that the most effective mentors had done some form of collaborative learning opportunity as mentors. In Australia, Carter and Francis (2001) found mentoring relationships that promote collaborative enquiry, cooperative practice and reflection were fundamental to workplace learning. Mentors in America valued sharing and working in groups with other mentors (Bullough & Draper 2004, p. 287). The London providers mentoring group's framework has a strong emphasis on collaborative group work as it "promotes professional growth, mentor empowerment and reflective practice" (Webb, et al., 2007, p. 181).

An imaginative and interactive approach by Zeek, et al. (2001) involved mentors coming together at various school sites "to tell, write, share and analyse their stories" (p. 377) about the experiences they had as mentors to mentees. The mentors worked and reflected collaboratively in groups. The researchers utilised a narrative mode they called "transactional inquiry" (Zeek, et al., 2001) as part of their PD. The mentors responses and reflections were guided by prompts, adding "the voices of the mentors and the faces of the learners" (Zeek, et al., p. 384) to the researchers findings.

Regardless of the varied PD models for mentors presented here, the delivery continues to typically involve presentations by, or working with, outside experts conducted in short spurts at various intervals throughout the year (Burke et al., 2010; Curry, 2008; Grundy, 1995). This PD is traditionally done as verbal interactions and/or written approaches (see for example, Ballantyne, et al., 1995; Cheng & Yeung, 2010; Margolis, 2007). This form of PD that gathers the mentor from various school contexts to work in groups can result in covering generic issues rather than addressing specific individual needs of the mentors which are content specific and subsequently the needs of their mentees. With

the contextualised nature of mentoring it is surprising that little research has been conducted with mentors within their school context. Furthermore the PD that the mentors experience reflects the emphasis in the mentoring literature which focuses on the outcomes of the mentees. To date little emphasis has been placed in the PD literature on the teachers who take on the mentoring role and the construction of their identities (Wenger, 1998) as mentors (see for example, Bullough Jr, 2005; Carroll, 2006; Hobson, et al., 2009; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010; Margolis, 2007).

An exception is a study reported by Carroll (2006) who revealed the potential of working with groups of mentors within their own context to support the identity development of mentors. Coupled with an empirical research study Carroll utilised a study group model as PD for the mentor teachers of mentee interns from the same school. This group analysed records and artefacts of their mentees' learning in order to develop their own practice as mentors. An unexpected outcome was the mentors' change in identity from a passive cooperating teacher to "an active school-based teacher educator" (Carroll, 2006, p. 4).

Professional developers of mentors

The PD of mentors has largely been driven by the researcher taking on the role of leader or facilitator of workshops or group sessions. This role in the mentor literature is rarely elaborated beyond straightforward statements such as: "met with the mentors" (Bullough Jr & Draper, 2004, p. 272) or as providing "ongoing support" (Margolis, 2007, p. 75) to the group. Carroll (2006) said "the participants jointly examined artifacts" (p. 6) implying the researcher and participants worked together. Others like Zeek, et al. (2001) were the "liaisons in the professional development school" (p. 378) and Cheng & Yeung (2010) lead the workshops. Rajuan, et al. (2011) were co-leaders of a university course for the PD of mentors, however they described themselves "as mentors of mentors" (p. 187)

with little elaboration. Those that have professional developed mentors rarely conceptualise their role as part of the process. There is little mention in the mentoring literature of the critical friend's role supporting mentors in developing their practice as mentors. Thus there is a need to turn to literature from other educational PD contexts in order to construct a definition/image of the critical friend role I wished to utilise as part of a contextualised PD model for those that mentored colleagues.

Critical friendship has been utilised in a variety of educational PD contexts such as: school evaluation and improvement programs; supporting researchers; PD of teachers by consultants and self support study groups (Swaffield, 2007, 2008).

The term critical friend was attributed to the British academic Desmond Nuttall (Heller, 1988 as cited in Swaffield, 2002). Although he trained in natural sciences and then psychology, he went onto make considerable contributions in sociology of education. Committed to social equity and educational improvement this led him towards school improvement and school effectiveness research (Broodfoot, 1994).

Swaffield (2002, 2007, 2008; Swaffield & MacBeath, 2005) has written extensively about the role of critical friends within the context of government funded school evaluation and improvement programs in the United Kingdom. The critical friend, called the link advisor, is an outsider coming into the school to work with head teachers in the post inspection stage. They set up and support the school's action plans. Within this context she described critical friends as people who "see the school from a different perspective compared to those from within the school and will assist them to bring the familiar into a new focus" (Swaffield, 2002, p. 5). Critical friends need to maintain "a detached and evaluative perspective" (Swaffield, 2002, p. 12). Usually the critical friend is an "outsider who assists through questioning, reflecting back and providing another viewpoint ... prompting honest reflection and re-appraisal ... [it is] a relationship that cultivates

constructive critique” (Swaffield, 2007, pp. 205-206; Swaffield, 2008). Someone who can support and challenge, working one-to-one or working with others in a group (Swaffield, 2008, p. 323), critical friendship is a flexible way of working that can be easily adapted to differing circumstances (Swaffield, 2008, p. 333). Critical friends can “facilitate ... offer reassurance ... act as a sounding board ... [use] provocative questions, ... [to] challenge, clarify, ...and deepen understanding without threatening or creating defensiveness” (Swaffield & MacBeath, 2005, pp. 249-250). Factors such as trust, values, purpose and personal qualities; communication and practical actions contribute to the constant shaping of the critical friend and partners’ relationship in the school improvement programs (Swaffield, 2005).

The critical friend in the research context has been described as someone who is the “critical eyes of an (trusted) other to test interpretations and understandings ... questioning assumptions and interpretations, but also supporting and collaborating” (Grundy, 1995, p. 10). The role can be diverse, including a number of pragmatic aspects such as the financier, project design consultant, a teaching consultant, research advisor, writing consultant and deadline enforcer but also qualities such as a builder of rapport and someone who challenges (Kember et al., 1997). The critical friend is someone who can be “a partner in the process” and not “the expert doing research from an external perspective” (Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart, & Zuber-Skerritt, 2002, p. 131).

Researchers such as Baskerville and Goldbatt (2009) have used critical friendship to support each other in their work. They benefited from utilising each other as critical friends to reflect upon and analyse their own practice as advisors in a New Zealand school improvement program. They “challenged each others’ assumptions and confronted realities” (Baskerville & Goldbatt, 2009, p. 217) to improve their practice and to develop a model of critical friendship for others. Other researchers (see for example, Foulger, 2010) have

worked with a critical friend to help make sense of data collected. Foulger (2009) found that her critical friend had different connections to the data, she had professional expertise and Foulger, as the researcher had first-hand knowledge of the research context as well as a great deal of intuitive, tacit knowledge (p. 147). This combination provided a context which allowed Foulger to see her data from a different perspective and helped her draw logical connections and interpretations (p. 147).

Costa and Kallick (1993) who worked as PD consultants with teachers defined a critical friend as someone who:

Is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through a different lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working towards.

The friend is an advocate for the success of the work (p. 50).

This is a well cited definition within past and current literature which provides a general feel of critique and support to the role. They point out that critique can be viewed as judgmental and that this can contribute "negative baggage" (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50) to the relationship. To help counteract the negative aspects they argued that a process is necessary in order to encourage critique of another's work in an environment that is supportive and based on trust.

Teachers coming together to critically reflect and engage in professional dialogue, are commonly called "Critical Friends Groups" (Burke, et al., 2010; Curry, 2008; Norman, Golian, & Hooker, 2005). In this context educators can come together to act as critical friends, to examine each other's practice through collaborative learning. Small groups (6-12) regularly meet on a voluntary basis (e.g., once a month for 2-3 hours) to form professional learning communities. Each group is facilitated by a coach (usually a school colleague) who

has been trained in the protocols that are to be followed (Burke, et al., 2010; Norman, et al., 2005). The protocols structure ensured “focused, equitable, [and] substantive conversations” (Norman, et al., 2005, p. 275) which allow teachers to discuss and solve problems they have with student learning and their teaching.

The outcome of the varied educational contexts of the critical friend’s role found in school evaluation and improvement programs, research, PD or self support study groups is that we find critical friends working together with colleagues. Through critical reflection and professional dialogue, critical friends and colleagues support and challenge each other’s professional growth and learning.

Wenger (1998) generalised this type of role as a *broker*, a person who can help others to transition knowledge from one community of practice to another (symbolised in the artwork, see *Figure 6*. Broker connects communities of practice). A broker is a person who can bring together different communities of practice, “make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination and if ... good - open new possibilities for meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 109). Thus the critical friend like the broker has the ability to link and bring together the complexity of multiple practices, such as: the mentoring practice as revealed in the literature, the school’s practice, the varied mentors’ practices and the critical friend’s own practice.

The work of a broker “involves processes of translation, coordination and alignment between perspectives” (Wenger, 1998, p. 109). This person requires “enough legitimacy to influence the development of practice, mobilize attention and address conflicting interests”(Wenger, 1998, p. 109). The broker does this “by facilitating transactions between [practices] and to cause learning by introducing new elements from one practice into another” (Wenger, 1998 , p. 109). Thus the critical friend, as a broker, brings their own



Figure 6. Broker connects communities of practice.

experiences from multi-membership and the varied experiences of the mentors of a school together, by engaging them to share the practices they have been involved.

The critical friend is an outsider who brings a different perspective and like the broker, requires to balance their need to become a full member of the practice they are working within, from being “rejected as an intruder [while at the same time has] enough legitimacy to be listened to” (Wenger, 1998, p.110).

Summary

Given the extensive use and benefits of mentoring in educational contexts for both the mentor and mentee it is surprising that the literature continues to report that mentors often take on the role of mentoring without formal training (Ehrich, et al., 2004; Howe, 2006; Leshem, 2012; Long, 2009; NSW, Government, 2013). PD is relied upon as a “by product” of being engaged as a mentor and when training is provided it is often limited in outcomes (Hobson, et al., 2009).

Current models of PD predominantly focus on the mentors' role within a process which, for the most part, focuses on improving the mentees' outcomes. While PD models vary and have revealed preferred modes of reflective practice, collaboration, collegiality and social learning, it continues to largely be done in small groups, where mentors are brought together from different contexts to interact through verbal and/or written approaches. Few research studies have investigated the development of the mentor teachers' practice which is unique to their own school context. Furthermore those who provide PD for mentors rarely conceptualise their role as part of the process.

In addition within the context of the mentoring literature, the role of the mentor continues to be constructed largely by researchers from mentees' feedback. The voice of the mentors goes relatively unheard. There is little emphasis placed on the teachers who take on the mentoring role and the construction of their identities (Wenger, 1998) as mentors (see for example, Carroll, 2006; Hobson, et al., 2009; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010; Margolis, 2007).

Mentoring continues to be an important component of the process towards accreditation with the New South Wales Institute of Teachers (NSW, Institute of Teachers, 2005) and in conjunction with more recent expectations, that "lead teachers are skilled in mentoring teachers and pre-service teachers" (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited, 2012b, p. 14) . It is a concern that teacher mentors of colleagues (beginning or experienced teachers) received limited or no PD for this role (NSW, Government, 2013).

Due to the continued use of mentor programs and the contextualised nature of mentoring there is a need to explore models of PD for mentors which are both context specific and which effectively assist the mentors' to develop their practice of mentoring as part of their identities as mentors. There is also a need to explore the potential of the critical friend's role as part of this model.

The purpose of my inquiry was to develop my practice as a critical friend while I engaged four teachers that mentored colleagues (beginning or experienced teachers) in a contextualised professional development model to develop their own practice as mentors. Working with the mentors, I assisted them to critically reflect upon and negotiate a new understanding of their practice as part of their identities in their role as mentors.

Research question

How can working in a participatory action research (as a contextualised professional development model) enhance the professional growth and learning of the mentors and myself as critical friend?

My inquiry operated on two levels, to:

- Develop my practice as a critical friend.
- Engage mentors in participatory action research as a contextualised professional development model to develop their own practice as mentors.



Step 3, Section 4

Participatory Action Research as a trajectory of learning

The methodology guiding this inquiry was Participatory Action Research (PAR). Action research evolved in recent years to become a powerful tool that allows practitioners through *action* and *research* to change and improve their own practice (Grundy, 1995; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Maxwell, 2003). Action research as PD challenges the traditional model of PD which was suitably described by Grundy (1995) as a “pit stop activity” (p. 7) where outside experts conduct PD in short spurts at various intervals throughout the year. As an alternative, action research addressed a number of needs I outlined in Step 1, Section 2 and Step 2, Section 3.

PAR allows for ongoing professional learning by teachers which is grounded in the teachers’ own practice (Grundy, 1998) enhancing opportunities for teachers to address the issues they choose to study (James, 2006). Based on collaborative inquiry, it encourages and supports individuals with the possibility for real change (Grundy, 1995). Furthermore action research “recognises the importance of institutional as well as individual improvement” (Grundy, 1994) and as a result it is prevalent in the literature of school reform and/or improvement projects (see for example, Baskerville & Goldbatt, 2009; Goodnough, 2010, 2011; McGee, 2008; Swaffield, 2008; Wennergren & Ronnerman, 2006) and the PD of individuals as a form of self reflective learning (see for example, Baskerville & Goldbatt,

2009; Casey, Dyson, & Campbell, 2009; Cook, 2009; Fletcher, 2012; Goodnough, 2003; Grundy, Robison, & Tomazos, 2001).

Participatory action research defined

Historically action research is attributed to Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist whose work related to community action programs in the United States during the 1940's (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). The emphasis is placed on the active involvement of local participants, working collectively with researchers. A well cited definition for action research is by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988).

Action research is a form of *collective* self reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. Groups of participants can be teachers, students, principals, parents and other community members – any group with a shared concern. The approach is only action research when it is *collaborative*, though it is important to realize that the action research of the group is achieved through *critically examined action* of individual group members (p. 5).

The local participants are no longer the *objects* of another's inquiry but become the driving force of the research. They identify and contextualise the problem to be explored within their own practice. The research is conducted by the individuals involved, as opposed to the more traditional Positivist approach, which has the researcher come from outside and do the research on people. In action research the researcher is “a partner in the process” (Altrichter et al., 2002, p. 131). A process of “action, reflection and collective inquiry ... [it] is a model which remains firmly rooted in [the local] participants' own conceptual worlds and the interactions between them” (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001, p. 74).

Action research is based on a structure of spirals of self reflective cycles: “planning a change; acting and observing on the process and consequences of the change; reflecting on the process and consequences; re-planning; acting and observing again and so on” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 563). The cyclical structure (see *Figure 7. Action research cycle*) creates a research model which is reflective and evolving, it is fluid, allowing for a turning in of the process, where evaluation and re-evaluation of a situation can take place.

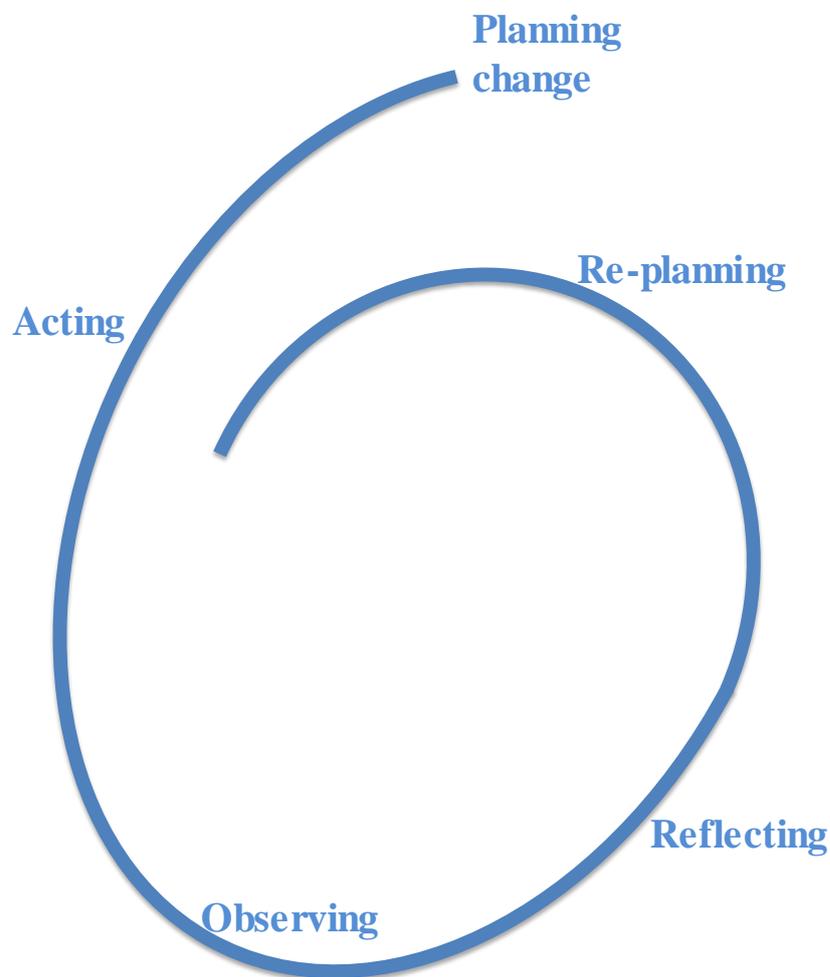


Figure 7. Action research cycle.

Action research becomes participatory when the research has been instigated by the participants “in the sense that people can only do action research ‘on’ themselves either individually or collectively” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567; Wadsworth, 1998, p. 13).

Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) described PAR as a research which:

Engages people in examining their own knowledge, (understanding, skills and values) and interpretative categories (the ways in which they interpret themselves and their action in the social and material world). It is a process in which all individuals in a group try to get a handle on the ways in which their knowledge shapes their sense of identity and agency and to reflect critically on how their current knowledge frames and constrains their action (p. 567).

PAR focuses on changing the participants’ practice, it is not research done “on” others and thus it is a model which allows for *individuality* and *subjectivity* of the person to be included in the process.

PAR as illustrated in Figure 8, aims to “transform the practitioner’s *practice*, their *understandings* of their practice and the *conditions* under which their practice is carried out” (Kemmis, 2012, p. 890). It aims to transform what the participants, the mentors and critical friend, “*do* (practices), ... what they *think* and *say* (understanding) ... and how they *relate* to others and to things and circumstances around the participants’ practice (conditions of practice that enable and constrain)” (Kemmis, 2009, p. 463) which all “emerge and develop in relation to one another” (Kemmis, 2009, p. 465). One does not work alone, each responds to the other, reshaping our practice (Kemmis, 2009). Thus it is a learning process, the mentors and critical friend in changing, for example the *doing* of their practice will also change their *understanding* of their practice as mentor/critical friend and how they *relate* to others and to the things and circumstances around their practice in the context of the school.

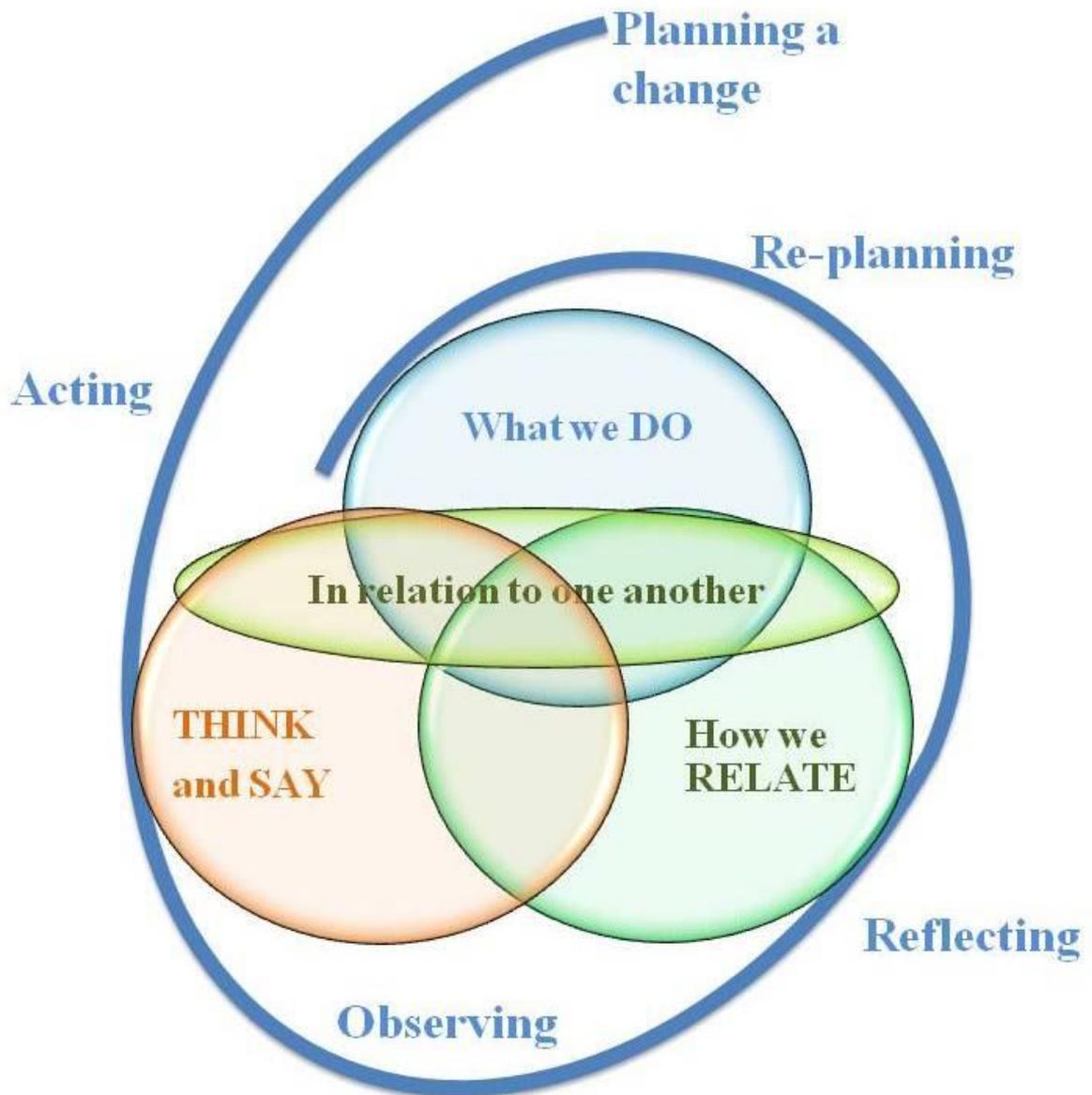


Figure 8. PAR aims to transform practice – reshaping.

Or, in changing how they *relate* to others in their mentor/critical friend practice they will change what they *do* and *think* and *say*. Change is achieved through “individual and collective self-transformation, transformation of their practices ... the way they understand their practices ... and the conditions that enable and constrain their practice” (Kemmis, 2009, p. 46).

Learning in a participatory action research is social

PAR brings different world views together. Individuals are involved in various “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. xiii) both personal and professional (Wenger, 1998), symbolised in the artwork (see *Figure 3*. “We belong to many communities of practice, image from animation titled “A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”) by the different coloured organic forms. Wenger (1998) describes how members of a practice “interact, spend time and do things together, negotiate new meanings and learn from each other” (p. 102). Coming together into a PAR the mentors and myself as critical friend each enter the research process with diverse knowledge and experiences acquired from past experiences in a number of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Knowledge in PAR is thus co-generated (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) as knowledge generation results from the ongoing interaction between the mentors as “insiders” (Wenger, 1998) of the practice, and the understanding that the critical friend as an “outsider” (Wenger, 1998) brings to the PAR. The mentors bring to the PAR, knowledge that they have acquired from working within the school’s practice. They have an understanding of the repertoire in use as part of their practice. A repertoire of “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts” (Wenger, 1998, p. 82), embodied as explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge such as: knowing who is responsible for what job at the school, the school ethos, and the language used in education and teaching programs or procedures for assessment tasks and reports. Implicit knowledge such as: the unspoken ways of doing things, subtle cues from colleagues, underlying assumptions and shared understandings of the practice of teaching within their school (Wenger, 1998, p. 47).

As critical friend, I bring to the PAR knowledge from working in the broader practice of education, other communities of practices, including past experiences in schools, as an

artist and a researcher. Myself as the critical friend, exposes the mentors to new experiences from my different practices, so that the mentors, can build and push beyond their prior knowledge and bring about learning (Wenger, 1998). I become a facilitator (Grundy, 1995; Goodnough, 2003; 2010; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Wennergren & Ronnerman, 2006), and a co-producer of the knowledge (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) or as described by Wenger (1998) a “Broker” (p. 109).

The learning achieved in each participatory group’s work is contextualised within the practice of those who are conducting the research. Thus knowledge acquired or created during a PAR is inherently context specific. Social learning within PAR can thus have limitations as “*truth* ... will always be provisional, always challenged by new experiences that alter prior results of sense-making efforts” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 103). However, it is the very nature of social learning that brings diverse views together, challenged by new experiences of the mentors and critical friend that will allow for new knowledge to be co-generated. This makes knowledge production in PAR both dialectic and dynamic (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Understanding is reified into objects

The ongoing experiences of the mentors and critical friend while working in the PAR produces “objects” (Wenger, 1998, p. 59) such as tools constructed, stories told or concepts discussed. These objects are representations of the mentors’ and critical friend’s experiences of what they *do* (activities and work produced during their practice), what they *think* and *say* (their understanding through talk of their practice) and how they *relate* (verbally and non-verbally to the conditions of practice) to others and to things and circumstances around them (Kemmis, 2009). They are a “reification” (Wenger, 1998, p. 57) of the learning process (symbolised in the artwork, see *Figure 9*. Reified objects embody the learning process,

image from animation titled “Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”) as the objects congeal the experience of the mentors and critical friend’s participation in the PAR and are used as a point of focus to negotiate a deeper understanding and develop new meanings of their practice (Wenger, 1998).

As a social process of collaborative learning, PAR aims for participants to work together with the intention of improving their shared practice. Through a sustained engagement the mentors and critical friend collectively investigate an issue, concern or theme that allows them to explore possibilities of action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). The collaborative nature of the partnership aims to set up a democratic process for dialogue where the participants are given equal *voice* (Kemmis, 2006). This empowers the mentors as

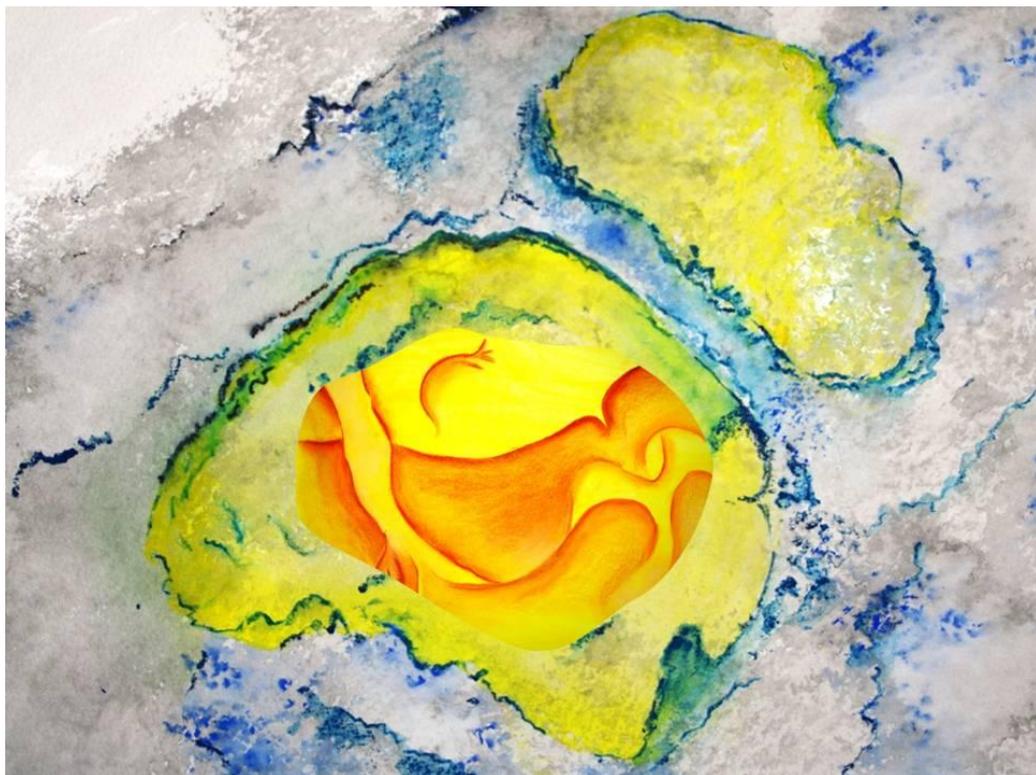


Figure 9. Reified objects embody the learning process, image from animation titled “Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”.

they are part of the decision making process and have control over of the conditions of their practice being researched in the PAR. The mentors become the driving force of the PAR. They identify and contextualise the problems to be explored within their own mentoring practice and work jointly to “act, reflect and collectively investigate” (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001, p. 74) in an “open-eyed way” (Kemmis, 2006, p. 469) their own mentor practices.

If membership of a PAR as a form of PD becomes compulsory the democratic nature can be undermined (McGee, 2008), the participation by the mentors takes on a form of “contrived collegiality” (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 165). The collaboration is reduced to enforced expectations, and boundaries of who, what, when and where learning takes place (Hargreaves, 2003). The loss of democracy may result in a lack of ownership by the mentors of the action research (McGee, 2008) and subsequently their own learning (Wenger, 1998).

Participatory action research is a practice

Doing action research is a particular kind of doing as it has to be done by someone. PAR as a form of action research can also be understood by the mentors and critical friend as a practice, in terms that PAR has a particular way of being done, there are ways of doing PAR, of understanding PAR and PAR also involves relationships between the participants and circumstances that shape it as a practice. PAR “is a practice changing practice” (Kemmis, 2009, p.464). Therefore PAR is a meta-practice. The mentors and critical friend are doing PAR (a practice) to examine their own practice and hence the mentors and critical friend are learning from two parallel reflexive practices. They are learning about the practice of PAR while working on an aspect of their own practice in a PAR.

The mentors and critical friend will need to be cautious of how their subjectivity, their diverse individual and different world views, can influence their work in the PAR and the mentoring/critical friend practices being studied. Their previous experiences, such as their memories, feelings, beliefs, ideals, assumptions, as well as their knowledge and

understanding can influence the mentoring/critical friend practices being studied. Thus the mentors and critical friend require a self-conscious awareness that they and their colleagues are having on the process as both practitioners and researchers (Kemmis, 2006), to ensure an “open and democratic dialogue” (Kemmis, 2006, p. 471) between all members of the group. Furthermore the conversation should be conducted to ensure all members of the group are given an equal voice so that they may come to a collective understanding of their mentoring/critical friend practices (Kemmis, 2006).

Participatory action research as a method

PAR was used as a method to engage the mentors in a context specific model for their PD and as a method for my investigation of my practice as a critical friend. Working together in a PAR within their community of practice, the school, PAR provided the mentors and myself a structure to critically reflect upon our practice as mentor or critical friend in order to align ourselves with our new practices. This allowed me to experience the role and develop my confidence and competence as a critical friend and gave me insight into the critical friend practice itself (Kemmis, 2012).

I previously explained (refer back to Linking paper, Section 1 Part B), a theoretical framework of social learning by Wenger (1998). Learning is placed in the context of “our lived experiences of participation in the world” (Wenger, 1998, p. 3) and is the result of our engagement in social practice (Wenger, 1998, p. i) as part of various “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998). There are three distinct modes of belonging to a community of practice: engagement, imagination and alignment. Combining them in different combinations (see *Figure 10. Combining Modes of Belonging – defined*) provides different emphases on learning, opening up possibilities that enrich both the experience and the context for learning (Wenger, 1998).

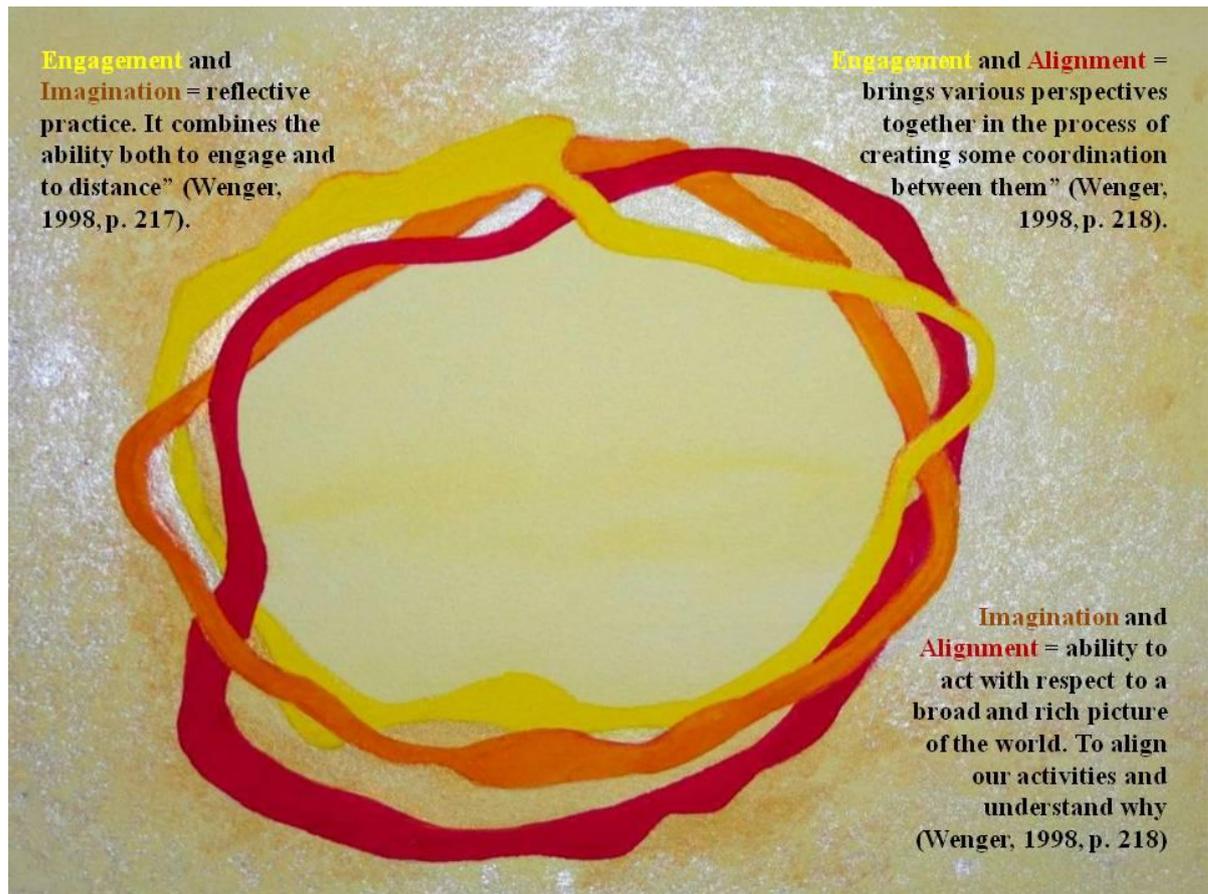


Figure 10. Combining Modes of Belonging – defined.

Engaging the mentors in a PAR and using the PAR cyclical structure to stimulate the “imagination” of both the mentors and myself as critical friend as illustrated in Figure 1, (PAR is a reflective practice – reshaping) results in a reflective practice. A practice that allowed the mentors and myself as critical friend to “view [our practice] within its context and at the same time see it from the eyes as an outsider” (Wenger, 1998, p. 217). Like the kind that Schön (1995) saw as the “main characteristic of professional creativity” (Wenger, 1998, p. 297). Schön (1995) stated that “to teach about our ‘doing’ we need to observe ourselves in the doing, reflect on what we observe, describe it, and reflect on our description” (p. 30). Much like the action research cyclical process, it was a turning back through critical analysis on the knowing that we often experience while we are in action.

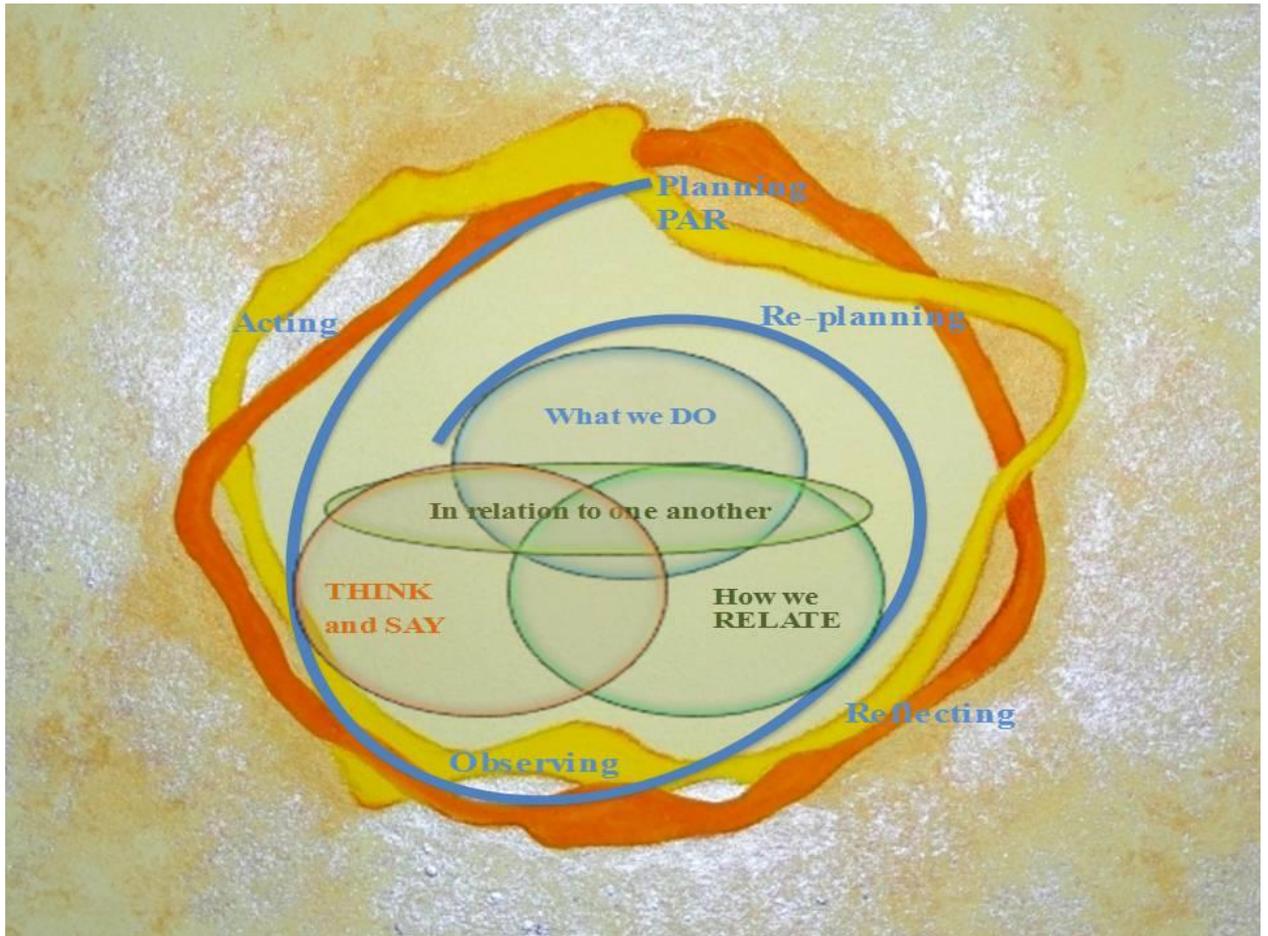


Figure 11. PAR is a reflective practice – reshaping.

Schön (1995) called this “reflecting on reflection-in-action” (p. 30). Through processes of reflection newly generated practice knowledge becomes part of the teacher’s repertoire and becomes available for projection into further situations (Schön 1995, p. 31). For this learning to become part of whom we are, our identity as mentors or critical friend, it must become part of our practice forming a new engagement (Wenger, 1998, p. 217). Thus working in a PAR and using the PAR cyclical cycle allowed us to direct our energies, actions and practices in order to align ourselves and become part of new and broader practices. In the case of mentors, mentoring and in the case of myself, the broader practice of the critical friend’s practice. It allowed us to expand ourselves and include in our identity, other meanings, possibilities and perspectives from the mentoring and critical friend practices

(Wenger. 1998).

When I entered the PAR with the mentors I did not have a political agenda, I was not employed as part of a school improvement program or by the principal. I came in as a researcher wishing to improve and learn more about critical friendship as a practice. To develop and explore the implementation of a context specific contextualised PD opportunity for teachers interested in mentoring their colleagues (beginning or experienced) to the profession, one that addressed their needs as mentors.

I have worked in the Catholic school system, both systemic and independent, for over thirty years. Thus I needed to be aware that these previous experiences could influence my objectivity and create a perception of bias towards the school contexts. Conversely these previous experiences also contributed to my rapid understanding of the specific school contexts the mentors and I were working. I was both an outsider and an insider. Outsider to the specific schools I entered to work with the mentors, but an insider to the wider community of practice of the Catholic school systems with a considerable understanding of the repertoire in use by these communities of practice.

NOTE: The mention of students and other teachers in my inquiry are an indirect consequent of the mentors reflecting upon their own practice. At no time were the students or other teachers, part of my inquiry.

My early conceptualisation of a critical friend

Going into my first PAR I defined a critical friend as someone who saw the researcher role as “a co-participant, but someone with some special expertise ... willing to establish or support a collaborative enterprise” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, pp. 594 - 595). I was not the “expert doing research from an external perspective ... [but] a partner in the process” (Altrichter et al., 2002, p. 131). I understood a critical friend to be a trusted person

(Costa & Kallick, 1993) who would support and challenge (Swaffield, 2008; Wennergren & Ronnerman, 2006) the mentors. Someone who would act as a facilitator of learning, ask provocative questions, stimulate action, assist with goal setting, critique work, provide a different viewpoint, challenge ideas and develop the knowledge (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Grundy, 1995; Swaffield, 2008) of the mentors. I also wished to be an advocate for the success of their work (Costa & Kallick, 1993) but at the same time see the school they worked in from a different perspective to “assist the mentors to bring the familiar into a new focus” (Swaffield, 2002, p. 5). I wished to work with the mentors in a process that allowed them to be part of a practice from a perspective which is both reflexive and dialectical (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 573).