

**Experiences of first-time mentor teachers in New Zealand  
primary schools**

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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## **Abstract**

Mentors hold the significant position of being able to influence the induction of beginning teachers into the profession. A mentor is usually the person who is closest to the beginning teacher in the professional context, who has the most direct contact with them, and has the responsibility of assisting them develop into the future of the teaching profession. The role the mentor plays in the induction programme has been acknowledged as one of the most important for beginning teachers and has been linked to important issues such as retention and professionalism. While there is considerable literature focusing on mentoring practices within New Zealand primary schools (children aged 5 to 12), there appears to be limited information regarding teachers who are new to mentoring (completing this role for the first time), and it is this gap in the literature that this thesis addresses.

This research explores the experiences of a small group of first-time mentors within the New Zealand primary school environment. This study was undertaken in order to explore first-time mentors' understanding of the roles and responsibilities inherent in being a mentor and additionally, to explore any challenges or tensions that exist between these roles and responsibilities, and lastly, to look at the implications of this in order to ascertain how better to assist novice mentors in the future. The study draws from social constructionism and interpretivism, whilst employing a qualitative approach. A case study method was used. The findings revealed some similarity to veteran mentors' experiences, that mentoring is a complex and often challenging experience. Additionally the findings also identified that the needs of the first-time mentors mirrored those of a beginning teacher's first year of teaching. Stark similarities of the peaks and troughs notably recognised in a beginning teacher's first year, resonated with the novice mentors in this study and demonstrated the need for greater interpersonal, affective and cognitive support when fulfilling this role for the first time.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

This study explores the experiences of first-time mentors who work with New Zealand provisionally registered primary teachers in their first year of teaching. Previous research acknowledges that the initiation of beginning teachers into the profession is of the utmost importance as it bridges initial teacher education (ITE) and the first year of professional employment (Totterdell, Heilbronn, Bubb, & Jones, 2002) and is crucial to the well-being and retention of beginning teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Strong, 2005; Strong & Villar, 2007). Additionally, Moir (2012) suggests that induction programmes assist in the professionalisation of teaching, and it is the mentor who plays a major role in this process. The mentor commonly works most closely with the beginning teacher and can have the greatest influence on developing the new teacher into what the teaching profession is to look like in the future (Cameron, 2007; Kelley, 2004). Findlay (2006) and Serpell and Bozeman (1999) contend that the mentor is one of the most important components within any induction programme.

The plethora of research pertaining to mentors is reflective of the importance of this role within the profession. Much research has been conducted on the particular qualities of an effective mentor, the skills they require and the varied nature of mentoring identified throughout the world. The New Zealand Teachers Council (2011) contends that mentoring involves specific skills and that these should be explicitly supported in order to be developed fully. Ensuring the continued development of the neophyte teacher's pedagogy is one of the key aims of mentoring but is often overshadowed by the need to assist in their survival throughout the initial months of teaching. Mentors need to be skilled at promoting further professional learning that enables beginning teachers to become instructionally reflective of their practice and therefore, shift the focus from survival to instructional excellence. This is often referred to as being *educative* (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Mentors should ideally demonstrate skill in critiquing practice and offering feedback in order for the beginning teacher to continue to grow and develop (Rippon & Martin, 2003). However, such practices can be complicated as they involve both interpersonal and professional capabilities.

Further to facilitating professional development and affective support (emotional/pastoral care), in some countries (including New Zealand and Scotland), the mentor is also charged with the formal assessment of the beginning teacher. In the New Zealand context, normal assessments conducted by the mentor are considered “high stakes” as they lead directly to the attestation of the new teacher becoming a full member of the profession. This attempt to negotiate the roles of professional and affective support, as well as recognised formal assessor, have been acknowledged as areas of tension for the mentor (Arends & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000; Cameron, 2007; Findlay, 2006; Talley, 2008; Timperley, 2001). This complex mix of pedagogical and personal skills necessary in the mentor is well documented both internationally and within New Zealand (Cameron, Baker, & Lovett, 2006) and illustrates the diverse nature of being a mentor.

Within the literature regarding mentoring there appears to be limited consideration of how teachers, who are new to being mentors, negotiate their way through the induction period. Most of the literature pertaining to mentoring is based upon information from those who are experienced in the role and those who have been working in a management role themselves and have considerable experience of working as a teacher of teachers. What appears to be less researched are the experiences of teachers who are attempting to be mentors for the first time. There is limited insight into how these novice mentors perceive the roles asked of them. Additionally, the differentiation of professional development, affective support and assessment as experienced by novice mentors, is not reflected in mentoring literature. There appears to be limited previous dialogue pertaining to how new mentors view these tasks and whether or not the variety of roles they are asked to enact are at odds with each other or are completed in harmony.

It is acknowledged in educational mentoring literature that the initial stage of a beginning teacher’s professional journey is highly important. Such importance should also be placed on the journey to becoming a mentor, a teacher of teachers, for the first time. Justification for such inquiry is the need to examine mentoring in its entirety, not just after the mentor has become established in the role. It is important to gain insight from someone who is new to mentoring and to view their experiences from this fresh perspective in order to fully understand the practices of mentoring beginning teachers. To date little national or international research

has adopted this frame of reference. A focus specific to novice mentors is timely in New Zealand as the New Zealand Teachers Council (the professional and regulatory body for teaching) turns its attention to the nature of mentoring within schools and works toward greater consistency and quality of professional development provided to beginning teachers.

## **1.1 Personal connection**

The catalyst for my interest in mentoring stems from my own experiences on being mentored as a beginning teacher. These experiences were not positive and left deep professional scars which have caused me to question the induction processes. As an academic, the research decision to delve more deeply into the role of mentor was not a difficult choice. I work with student teachers in their final year of a Bachelor of Education degree and assist them in their preparations for the realities of their first year of teaching. I often hear back from these young teachers and unfortunately, not much appears to have changed in mentoring over the last twenty years. Many of these new teachers speak of their experiences with non-existent mentors, limited support from the schools and difficulties in forming professionally (guiding) relationships. I have been saddened and frustrated to hear that mentoring of beginning teachers continues to be as problematic as my own experience. This also caused me to question what other countries are experiencing: is New Zealand alone in these challenges and, additionally, why do these challenges arise? My concern for mentors is the potential ambiguity within and around the roles they are being asked to enact. Was there, in fact, clarity in the role of mentor within primary schools, and in particular, to those who were new to being mentors? How did mentors learn the ropes? Who was responsible for developing the mentors of the future or did this happen by chance?

## **1.2 Belief into action**

It was my belief that something was not working for the mentors within New Zealand primary schools, and that these difficulties (whatever they may be) could be exacerbated for teachers who were novice mentors. For those who had not experienced a leadership role previously, the responsibility for making an assessment of someone else's practice could be daunting; the notion of having to give critical feedback and professional guidance to another teacher, a colleague,

more so. Surely it would be of value to hear from mentors at the very beginning of their journey into this field, obtaining fresh, clear voices, where unadulterated perspectives may be ascertained? Such input could offer some illumination on mentoring from those with no previous experiences to reflect on. My beliefs about mentoring ignited the above questions and further prompted me to take action in order to establish an informed understanding of what was happening for mentors in New Zealand primary schools. My research focus was born.

After consulting both international and national literature, I propose the need for an investigation of primary school mentors who are completing the role for the very first time. The purpose of this study was generated deliberately to focus on teachers who were new to the role of mentor, to clearly hear the experiences of first-time mentors and move to understand their own induction into this role; to appreciate their journey over the first year of being mentors. Although initially tempted to also include the voices of the beginning teachers, I decided to focus only on the mentor and their experiences, as they came to understand the intricacies of their role as mentors. My intention in particularising this focus was to highlight the perspectives of the novice mentor without clouding interpretations with the experiences and perspectives of the beginning teachers as well; a clear focus was desired. Additionally, the perspectives and experiences of beginning teachers both nationally and internationally are already very well documented, and so I believed it more important to highlight the voices of the first-time mentor. This perspective would add an important dimension to the knowledge base and existing literature on New Zealand primary school mentors as most of the literature to date refers to beginning teachers and experienced mentors. Such a study will add the missing element to the induction and mentoring literature base, particularly in New Zealand. The primary-school-specific focus was chosen for this research (rather than secondary education or early childhood) due to primary education being my passion. Having worked in this area of education for over 20 years it is my previous and current area of work.

By focussing on the specific experiences of novice mentors, this study will enhance the most recent focus on mentors by the Teachers Council. It will demonstrate a novice mentor's point of view when attempting to understand and enact the mentoring role for the first time, therefore drawing attention to any

specific needs of this particular group. And lastly, such a study will offer insight into the challenges and highlights of being a first-time mentor working with a novice teacher. Additionally, due to this research being under construction as new initiatives from the Teachers Council are implemented, novice mentors may offer insight into how effective the new *Guidelines* are when used by those who are new to the role. A study of this nature will highlight the experiences of mentors from a fresh perspective.

### **1.3 Aim and research questions**

The primary purpose of this investigation was to investigate the experiences of first-time mentors who worked with provisionally registered primary teachers in their first year of teaching. In order to achieve this, the following question focussed my investigation: How is mentoring understood and experienced by teachers completing the role for the first time in the New Zealand context?

To seek answers to this question, the following sub-questions were posed:

1. What are the first-time mentors' understanding of their roles and responsibilities?
2. What (if any) are the challenges and tensions which arise from the interplay between the first-time mentor's roles and responsibilities?
3. What implications can be drawn from the above, and how might these assist first-time mentors in the future?

### **1.4 The study**

To understand how novice mentors interpret the role of mentor and their experiences over the space of a year, a case study method was chosen, within a qualitative methodological approach. The study reflects an epistemological positioning drawing from social constructionism and interpretivism. My intention was to get to know the participants as people rather than merely subjects of a study and to gather rich, descriptive, detailed information. Taking the Greater Auckland area as the geographical context and primary schools as the specific domain, I interviewed seven first-time mentors twice during their first year of

mentoring. Additionally, the mentors kept personal journals of their experiences which were submitted by the majority at the end of the year. Two focus groups met at the middle and end of their first year, and documents from a national perspective and from within each school were analysed. All participants (coincidentally) were women and all worked in the primary sector; the majority came from schools reflecting a high socio-economic area of the community (high-decile schools) and all had very different stories to tell.

## **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is presented in eight chapters. This chapter (Chapter 1) briefly introduces the study by outlining the background information on mentoring, my connection to the topic, setting the scene for the research, and lastly, providing an overview of the structure of the thesis.

### ***Chapter 2: An international overview of induction and mentoring.***

This chapter offers a synthesis of international literature which provides the theoretical landscape for this study. Induction and mentoring processes are explored from a variety of perspectives and literature outlining the roles within mentoring is investigated and critiqued.

### ***Chapter 3: Induction and mentoring in Aotearoa New Zealand.***

This chapter situates my study further by refining the focus of induction and mentoring to a New Zealand perspective and defines what mentoring means within New Zealand primary schools. Current New Zealand research is explored and new developments critiqued. Gaps within the literature base are further identified and the significance of my study affirmed.

### ***Chapter 4: Research Design.***

A theoretical framework drawing from social constructionism and interpretivism is presented for this study and is justified within this chapter. A qualitative methodology is identified and developed. The research design aligns with a case study approach. The participants, data-collection methods and data analysis processes are described and justified. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the quality assurance methods and ethical elements that were considered.

***Chapter 5: Research in Action: Gathering information.***

This chapter outlines the journey of data collection for this research. Description of the study in action is reviewed, from initial recruitment of participants through to discussion of the ways in which data were collected and managed. Lastly, issues and limitations of data collection are summarised and concepts of quality reviewed.

***Chapter 6: Exploring the data.***

This chapter allows the voices of the mentors to emerge from the data. The findings are categorised and presented for interpretation using three headings: “understanding the role of mentor”, “fulfilling the role of mentor” and “challenges and successes from completing the role of mentor’. Within each section, attention is specifically drawn to the national context, the school context, and the mentor perspective. These sections encapsulate key themes identified within, and derived from, the analysis of the gathered data.

***Chapter 7: Interpreting the data.***

This chapter discusses and critiques the findings of this study and orientates these within the wider international and national literature base. The chapter is presented in two sections: “understanding the role of mentor”, and “fulfilling the role of mentor” and, as for the previous chapter, attention is drawn to the key themes of national context, the school context and the mentor perspective.

***Chapter 8: Conclusion.***

This final chapter provides an overview of the study, a summary of the key findings, the implications noted from my study and the potential contributions resulting from these. The limitations of this study are identified and additional research possibilities resulting from this work are also presented. Lastly, a summary of my personal journey is recorded.

## **Chapter 2 An international overview of induction and mentoring**

Induction of beginning teachers into the profession has long been of interest to those in education. The importance of this initial phase of a teacher's life has been noted by the wealth of research which includes discussions of the key components involved in induction and mentoring, such as the differentiation of elements of professional development and affective support. The mentor has often been noted as the most influential aspect of inducting a new teacher into the profession, as they are often the person who works most closely with the beginning teacher and therefore has day-to-day impact on their professional development and practice. In order to understand the role of the mentor, a broader picture is desirable and this is provided in the next two chapters that incorporate a review of the literature pertaining to induction and the processes involved from both international and national perspectives. Finally, the rewards and challenges of being a mentor are reviewed.

### **2.1 Induction: What is it?**

The induction of beginning teachers is a process in which new teachers are supported to become skilled, confident professionals, with a clear purpose of improving student learning and providing quality classroom instruction (Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInerney, & O'Brien, 1995; Moir, 2005). The support is provided either within the school by a more experienced colleague or externally, through an off-site experienced teacher who is contracted to provide the support.

Although noted as being more akin to a process whereby the beginning teacher is initiated into the ways of the school, internationally the term used in the literature for introducing a new teacher into their role is an "induction programme". In many instances around the world this induction programme is a requirement, and is mandated for all teachers new to the profession. The provision of an induction programme is obligatory in New Zealand (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2012), England (Spindler & Biott, 2000), Israel (Lazovsky & Reichenberg, 2006), Scotland and Wales (Killeavy, 2006), Japan (Collinson & Ono, 2001) and some Australian states (McCormack & Thomas, 2003). However, the elements of these

programmes differ enormously; there is no internationally defined formal induction programme (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). While each country initiates new teachers into the profession differently, induction programmes are noted for the targeted support, guidance and orientation being offered (Anthony, Bell, Haigh, & Kane, 2007). According to Smith and Ingersoll (2004), the intricacies of an induction programme vary from a one-off orientation meeting at the start of the school term, to an organised and structured programme which could involve more formal meetings throughout the first year of teaching or more. For some, the induction programme contains a variety of organised activities for the beginning teacher, such as attending courses, professional networking or lesson observations (McIntyre, Hobson, & Mitchell, 2009; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004).

Even though there is diversity in what is mandated or offered as induction for teachers new to the profession, there is strong agreement on the need for such a process. Strong (2006) confirms it is widely acclaimed that inducting beginning teachers into the profession is a necessity. Induction as an essential way of supporting beginning teachers and is outlined in the following section.

## **2.2 Induction: A necessary support for new teachers**

Teaching is a complex and demanding career; beginning teachers are not ready, nor are they equipped to contend with the various demands and challenges that come with their first year of teaching (Bradbury, 2010; Klug & Salzman, 1991). This unpreparedness, according to Bubb and Earley (2006), can lead to a “survival of the fittest” scenario, where new teachers are left to “sink or swim”. New teachers can struggle to fit into the school community and lack the freedom to be authentic professionals. In a similar vein, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) advise that critics of education have long seen teaching as an occupation that endangers its novice teachers, where initiation into the profession is at times akin to either a boot camp experience or trial by fire. Gold (1996) describes the early experiences of new teachers as significant:

Few experiences in life have such a tremendous impact on the personal and professional life of a teacher as does the first year of teaching. The initial experiences are imprinted, embedding perceptions and behaviours regarding teaching, students, the school environment, and their role as a teacher. (p. 548)

Over the years induction programmes have changed, but as previously stated, the necessity of having them in place has not. Strong and Villar (2007) suggest that the impact of the initial years in teaching is crucial, and comprehensive induction programmes produce a range of outcomes for the beginning teacher. These initial years (most commonly the first two) are a decisive time for a new teacher—not only to establish the foundations of what a beginning teacher may become—but even more importantly, whether or not the beginning teacher will actually stay in the profession (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development, 2005). One of the most troubling international concerns regarding beginning teachers in the primary sector is the high rates of attrition among newcomers to the profession (Kelley, 2004; Moir, 2005, Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Strong, 2006).

Findlay (2006) has suggested that a possible reason for high attrition rates is the transition from what he calls “the semi-protected environment of initial teacher training” (p. 526) into the realities of a classroom, and all that this entails.

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) contend that beginning teachers go through a form of “praxis shock”. This phrase refers to the new teacher becoming aware of the realities and responsibilities of teaching which may challenge the beliefs and ideas they brought with them from initial teacher education programmes. It is for this reason that induction programmes for beginning teachers are seen as a way to bridge the structured world of initial teacher education programmes to the often isolated world of primary teaching and provide support and guidance through what is sometimes a difficult transition (Bradbury, 2010; Carroll, 2005; Findlay, 2006; Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005; Totterdell, Heilbronn, Bubb & Jones 2002).

Bubb (2003) takes this discussion to another level by suggesting that induction is intended, not only to bridge initial teacher education and entry into the profession, but is also a catalyst for the rest of a teacher’s career. This implies that induction goes beyond what Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005) suggest as the imparting of mere survival skills. Induction of beginning teachers should be framed as the transition from being a student of teaching to the teaching of students (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Yet, as stated earlier in this chapter, the intricacies of how this induction is enacted are varied. However, research has revealed that there are various common components in the process.

### **2.3 Induction: Key components**

Induction programmes are as varied as their participants. One aspect agreed upon within the literature is that the culture or ethos of professional development within the school will greatly influence the professional growth of the new teacher (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Heilbronn, Jones, Bubb, & Totterdell, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2009; Sundli, 2007). As observed by these authors, if the school has a strong vision of teachers continuing to grow professionally throughout their careers, this will enhance the experiences offered within the induction programme—but sadly, if the school does not prioritise or value continued professional growth, this, too, will be reflected within the induction programme and what is offered to the beginning teacher. Hobson (2009) suggests that a school that has a strong vision for teachers is characterised by a supportive, collegial learning culture where beginning teachers are part of a professional learning community.

Lieberman and Miller (2011) describe a professional learning community as a group who meets regularly with the purpose of increasing their own learning through the promotion of a culture of collaboration. Professional learning communities reduce the isolation that teachers often feel by promoting productive, honest interactions with commitment to personal development and growth of the group as a whole (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012). Within this type of school environment or culture, a more communal developmental focus is evident. Being part of a supportive community where multiple opportunities are provided to learn from one another, offers the beginning teacher a rich environment to grow and develop as a professional. Such an environment is in keeping with what is considered an ecological perspective (McMahon, Mason, Daluga-Guenther & Ruiz, 2014). A school environment consists of many subsystems which all interact, interrelate and interconnect with each other from both a relational perspective and from a procedural perspective. When one aspect does not work efficiently or is out of balance with the rest, the ripple effect of this becomes evident throughout the entire ecosystem.

While it is acknowledged that school environment has a direct influence on the induction programme offered, there is less agreement on the ideal key components within an induction programme. The three commonly identified characteristics

within such a programme focus on professional, instructional development, collegial support of the new teacher (both emotionally and psychologically) and the personnel chosen to assist in these tasks (Abell et al., 1995; Cain, 2009; Cameron, Lovett, & Garvey Berger, 2007; O'Brien & Christie, 2005). The balance of these elements within an induction programme has been observed as skewed in some instances, where one component is more heavily weighted than the others. Examples include induction programmes that focus purely on the professional learning dimension with emphasis on ensuring growth and professionalism (Wong et al., 2005). In contrast, other induction programmes have been noted as improving beginning teacher effectiveness and a sense of wellbeing in new teachers (Arends & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000; Totterdell, Woodroffe, Bubb, & Hanrahan, 2004). The ideal is for all aspects to be balanced (teacher support, professional development and accountability). Talley (2008) emphasises that “the importance of providing a supportive environment that enhances and facilitates conceptual and practical learning cannot be ignored” (p. 331). In order to achieve such a balance, a further key component of the induction programme is discussed: that of mentoring and the mentor. The personnel who are chosen to work with the beginning teacher out of all of the components of induction, the mentor and how they mentor are seen to be most crucial (Serpell & Bozeman, 1999).

## **2.4 The framing of mentor and mentoring**

“Mentoring is identified by researchers as the most critical component of induction programs and by teachers as the most helpful” (Serpell & Bozeman, 1999, p. 6). Even so, Hansford, Tennent, and Ehrich (2003) suggest that there are very few studies of mentors which align themselves with a precise definition of the mentor. More specifically, these authors discuss that there is a lack of consensus within the educational literature regarding just what actually equates to mentoring. Contradictions abound regarding what mentoring is according to a number of researchers (O'Brien & Christie, 2005; Sundli, 2007; Young, Bullough, Draper, Smith, & Erickson, 2005) but there are also some alignments within the research. A common consideration within educational literature is that mentoring entails adult development and learning, involving a novice and an experienced participant: a beginning teacher and a mentor. Scott (2005) defines mentoring as a

helping relationship which is aimed at achieving set goals, involving a more experienced practitioner and a protégé; whereas Bradbury (2010) defines mentoring as experienced veterans promoting professional growth through working with new teachers. To take this one step further, St George and Robinson (2011) add the word “guide” to the equation, where a mentor acts as a guide to the beginning teacher, assisting in the transition from novice to committed, professional educator. Therefore, in the process of transitioning, induction is often seen as a bridge between initial teacher education and the realities of the school (Carroll, Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005). Di Vito-Thomas’s (1998) definition of mentoring mirrors the use of induction programmes to bridge the learning of the beginning teacher, by stating that mentoring is “a process that helps individuals adapt to new and expanded professional roles” (p. 110). Lingren (2005) helpfully summarises the goal of mentoring, which involves a more experienced teacher (the mentor) passing on their experiences of and possibilities in the teaching profession to a novice teacher.

Although numerous definitions of mentoring exist, one aspect agreed upon is that the mentor is a fundamentally crucial element of induction (Fulton et al., 2005; Heilbronn et al., 2002). The mentor is an important factor first and foremost in the career survival of beginning teachers, and secondly in relationship to their career success; the mentor has a formative and key influence on a beginning teacher’s future within the profession (Heilbronn et al., 2002; Knouse, 2001). Hobson (2009) agrees with these authors and asserts that the mentor has a major influence not only on shaping the novice to becoming a teacher but also *continuing to be a teacher* intimating that the influence of a mentors may not always be a positive one.

The issue of retaining new teachers in the profession is well documented (Scott, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), with much written regarding beginning teachers developing greater competence, confidence and personal and professional growth because of the influence and impact of the mentor. Further, the mentor acts as a guide to beginning teachers as they adjust to the expectations and norms within a school, in essence the mentor assists in the socialisation of the novice into the new workplace (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Lindgren, 2005; Rippon & Martin, 2006; Wang & Odell, 2002). Additionally, this form of socialisation assists in

promoting higher career satisfaction for the beginning teacher and contributes to a greater desire to stay in the profession (Ramanan, Taylor, Davis, & Phillips, 2006). Therefore, if beginning teachers are supported through the early challenges of transitioning from initial teacher education, and are inducted into schools in a supportive and considered manner with the attention of a mentor to assist them, attrition rates are likely to be lower. Additionally the opposite must also be considered; should the mentor not support and aid the beginning teacher to develop in such ways, they may choose to leave the profession altogether.

Rippon and Martin (2003) found that mentor support was considered an important element in induction for reasons far beyond simply providing information on policy and processes. Support by mentors is suggested by Strong (2005) to contribute to the decline in feelings of stress, lack of support systems and poor communication with administration. Thus determining that the act of mentoring actually consists of more than purely professional support and development—it is not solely used to further enhance what was learnt at university. According to Carver and Katz (2004) and Lindgren (2005) the value of mentors is that they can promote the ideals which underpin the profession, mentors then promote the styles of practice which reflect these ideals. Thus mentors are in a prime position to contribute to the future of the teaching profession; in effect, mentors could be seen as the gatekeepers to the profession (Rippon & Martin, 2006). What should also be considered if viewing mentoring from this perspective is that mentors are also in a prime position to instil a ‘teach as I teach’ doctrine, creating in effect a ‘mini-me’ scenario to the detriment of the beginning teacher. Such gatekeeping cannot be assumed as always presenting in a positive vein. As discussed earlier, the influence of the mentor is widely acknowledged; this implicit expectation that the influence will be to the betterment of the beginning teacher may be misplaced.

Furlong (2000) claims that mentors are in a position to sharpen the focus of a beginning teacher, to guide the beginning teacher’s field of vision and help them enter what can be a challenging profession. Although this can be achieved in a variety of ways, two prominent models are suggested by Klug and Salzman (1991): a team approach and a buddy approach. The team approach is generally indicative of being more formal. Professional development is a priority and in this approach, the mentor is supported by a team (the rest of the staff and at times,

representatives from the initial teacher education programme). Such professional development is planned, focussed and specific. In contrast to the team approach, the buddy approach is more informal and involves the mentor offering peer support rather than professional development. Moir and Gless (2001) advise that this buddy approach is characterised by occasional mentoring and feel-good support. The buddy approach is often seen as offering a safety net, where the mentor responds to day-to-day survival, offering interim technical advice in order for the beginning teacher to feel positive and supported with the immediate needs of teaching (Wong et al., 2005).

These two models indicate an exclusive professional form of development, but there is a further aspect to mentoring. The mentor is seen as enhancing beginning teachers both personally and professionally, indicating that other more intrapersonal elements might also be of importance within this working relationship (Hansford et al., 2003; Long, 1997). The work of a mentor involves a complex interplay of interpersonal, intellectual and emotional factors; supporting but also challenging the beginning teacher to further develop within the profession (Cain, 2009). The complexities of mentoring are multidimensional; this begs the question: Who is able to carry out such a role?

## **2.5 Job description of a mentor**

### **Who is the mentor?**

“Good mentoring (like good writing, like good teaching) should not be seen as a product solely of talent and goodwill, something the lucky stumble upon” (Reid, 2008, p. 51). Although research on mentors and mentoring acknowledges that the mentor is an experienced teacher in their own right, it must also be stated that this is not the single measure of what constitutes a person destined to be a mentor, nor should this depth of experience be the sole reason for the person being chosen to become a mentor. It is well documented within mentoring literature that just because a teacher is a highly experienced and effective teacher of children does not automatically suggest that this person will be an effective teacher of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 1998; Lindgren, 2005; Langdon, 2009; Orland, 2001; Worthy, 2005). Research has shown that the focus of a mentor is to develop and assist the learning of an adult; therefore, it is essential

that the person chosen to be a mentor must be skilled at specific processes (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Hobson, 2002). Langdon (2009) indicates that teachers chosen to be mentors need to have an understanding of, not only teacher development, but also of developing teacher expertise. I propose that, too often, principals overlook the fact that many experienced teachers are novices when it comes to mentoring and the skilled processes inherent in this role. Such an oversight by principals could lead to heightened challenges for the mentor, and particularly so if they have had limited experience working with other adult learners such as student teachers.

### *The skills of a mentor*

The teacher chosen to be mentor needs to have a wide range of both personal and professional skills in order to undertake such important roles as are seen within mentoring (Rippon & Martin, 2006). Achinstein and Athanases (2006) suggest that an effective mentor employs a *specialised* skill-set. These authors stipulate the need for an extensive knowledge base and in particular, one of the key components of is the ability to work with adult learners. Such a skill, they suggest, cannot be taken for granted and must be taught. One such example of the skill set required to be a mentor is presented by Moir, Barlin, Gless, and Miles (2009), who suggest eight criteria be considered:

1. Evidence of outstanding teaching practice;
2. Strong interpersonal skills;
3. Experience with adult learners;
4. At least five years of teaching experience;
5. Respect of peers;
6. Current knowledge of curriculum and professional development;
7. History of advocacy leading to change;
8. Commitment to lifelong learning (p. 33).

When consulting this list, it is noted that the skills suggested by the authors are very broad and not specifically related to the development of a new teacher. In comparison, Rippon and Martin (2003) offer a very full list of specifications created around three headings: “Approachability”, “Teaching credibility”, and “Professional knowledge and authority”. The elements outlined by these authors

in each section offer a very specific and direct view of mentoring skills; specific skills which are not evident in every expert teacher who may consider being a mentor. As beginning teachers require help to learn in and from practice, a mentor needs to be skilled in this regard (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). In addition, Rippon and Martin (2006) believe that the personal qualities and interpersonal skills of a mentor are crucial as these will greatly assist in the development of an effective mentor-mentee relationship. It does appear though that a mentor needs to be all things to the beginning teacher (Bullough & Draper, 2004).

*What does a mentor do?*

While numerous attributes can be identified as crucial for a mentor, Knouse (2001) and Long (1997) clearly delineate the basic mentoring functions within teaching. They propose that mentoring is made up of two basic and complementary functions, both of which enhance the beginning teacher, but in different ways. They state that career enhancement is the primary function which deals with job-related activities, on-the-job professional development, technical development and the providing of feedback on performance. The second function of mentoring comprises interpersonal enhancement which involves developing interpersonal work skills and reducing stress by discussing problems. Lee and Feng (2007) point to mentoring as two sides of the same coin: instructional support and psychological support. Instructional support refers to assisting the beginning teacher with developing the knowledge, skills and strategies necessary in teaching. Whereas growing the self-worth, self-efficacy and self-confidence within the beginning teacher is referred to as the psychological support offered by the mentor. Although these functions appear to show straightforward delineation of the roles mentors enact, there are ambiguities embedded within their inter-relationship.

The role of mentor is complex and challenging, and many believe it is not as straightforward as Knouse (2001) and Long (1997) purport. Authors in this field often reflect upon the multiple and perplexing challenges of being a mentor within a school (Young et al., 2005). For example, Bullough and Draper (2004) suggest a mentor must be: an expert teacher, sometimes a mother figure, consistently responsive and open to whatever the beginning teacher needs; skilled at maintaining involvement but also distance; and have a thorough understanding of

how beginning teachers develop. Additionally, this inventory is presented by St George and Robinson (2011): supporter, listener, mother, assistant, friend, collaborator, consultant, counsellor, guide, protector and advocator. These descriptions differ considerably from what was presented by Knouse (2001). Even though it would be very easy to present a long list of what constitutes the job description of mentor, Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) present a more focussed discussion. In their review of research, these authors conclude that a mentor appears to utilise one of three approaches:

- 1) humanistic: offering of support, ensuring retention of the novice;
- 2) situated apprentice: assisting with support and techniques of how things are done, the 'norms'; novice is socialised into the profession; and
- 3) critical constructivist: encouraging professional self-reflection through collaboration between novice and mentor.

Although the approaches described above assist with understanding what a mentor does, such an outline is still broad and unspecific. Cain (2009) has been able to further encapsulate the role in a more concise manner, whilst still acknowledging the complicated nature of this role.

Cain (2009) describes the role of mentoring as involving an extremely complex interplay of three particular components of support:

- 1) interpersonal support;
- 2) affective support; and
- 3) cognitive support.

While these components appear to be clear-cut, he recognises that, when each is magnified, they are exceptionally multifaceted and this is further complicated as each component cannot be completed in isolation, all components are constantly interacting. Since Talley (2008) suggests that "mentoring is a creative method of promoting professional development that set in motion the process of self-actualization and growth" (p. 331), mentoring cannot be purely focussed on developing professional capabilities; it is more holistic and empowering. These multifaceted components require further extrapolation in order to fully understand their complexity and interconnectedness.

### **Interpersonal support**

Interpersonal support constitutes a variety of elements. One of the most commonly discussed elements is socialization. The mentor is charged with assisting the beginning teacher to become familiar with and be able to function within the school and staff (Abell et al., 1995; Furlong, 2000; Lee & Feng, 2007; Wang & Odell, 2002). As Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1993) point out, the mentor acts as the local guide for the beginning teacher, attempting to smooth entry into the school environment by sharing how things are done in that particular school, the policies, procedures and practices distinctive to their working environment. One negative aspect of this socialisation role Long (1997) warns, is the danger of the mentor constraining the beginning teacher, where only the status quo is accepted, where the beginning teacher is inducted into the “rules of the game” and where new ways are negated. Arends and Rigazio-DiGilio (2000) observed a similar factor since “most mentors will carry and promote conventional norms and ways of doing things” (p. 18), knowingly or not. As most mentors are experienced teachers, they are accustomed to the ways of the school and the day-to-day workings of this environment and may instinctually and subconsciously promote a “do as I do” doctrine.

In addition to advising on the procedural workings of a school, the mentor plays a major role in assisting the beginning teacher to fit in, to understand how things are done within the school and to become established within the staff: working with colleagues and building networks. As previously discussed, the mentor who has institutional knowledge is able to support the beginning teacher to move from the security of an initial teacher education environment (well-known and comfortable with routines), across the bridge into the different realities of the school environment (where things can change moment to moment). Furlong (2000) identifies the mentor as “the insider” who can teach the beginning teacher the established ways of practice, for they know the school, the students and the community, and thus assist the beginning teacher to become comfortable within this new and challenging environment. Interpersonal support, often mentioned as a type of nurturing relationship, is not possible without the mentor being seen as someone who the beginning teacher can respect and trust. This form of

relationship cannot exist without the mentor possessing strong interpersonal skills and an ability to show empathy.

### **Affective support**

The affective component of mentoring (at times referred to as emotional or psychological support) is usually one of the most evident and commonly identified, likened to a parenting role—being protective and advocating for the beginning teacher, almost to the point of mothering them. McIntyre et al. (2009) describe a mentor as the main supporter and champion of the beginning teacher and, as such, the mentor often takes on a type of parenting role with the new teacher; even if there is an age discrepancy, the mentor is seen as the nurturer. Abell et al. (1995) observe that there appears to be a fine line between mothering and mentoring. Although affective support of the new teacher is helpful, some would even say essential (Hobson, 2009), it is also conceded that providing this type of support is sometimes a heavy burden (Bullough & Draper, 2004). Mentors have reported not wanting to hurt their beginning teacher's feelings and so have restricted themselves to an affective supportive role, choosing to ignore that the mentor is also charged with the professional development of the beginning teacher (Bullough & Draper, 2004). This provides difficult terrain for the mentor: a desire to ensure emotional stability yet also needing to challenge and to promote professional growth. Rather than being critical of this behaviour, Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) concede that it is a natural human response by mentors to the challenges their beginning teachers face within the first year of teaching. The mentor wants to lessen the load of the beginning teacher and to protect them, suggesting that the influence of mentoring is not one sided.

### *Reciprocity*

It would appear that the impact of mentoring is reciprocal—the mentors themselves are affected by the act of mentoring and especially by the emotional complexities of the role. Arends and Rigazio-DiGilio (2000) in their examination of the research literature from the Asia-Pacific region relating to beginning teacher induction programmes, identified that mentors can view the role of mentoring beginning teachers as a professional responsibility, a way to give back to the profession and to share their knowledge, experiences and skills; mentoring can be viewed as a way to further develop and enhance teaching for, and of, the

future. A similar trend was noted by Wong et al. (2005) since “many of those who provide support for new teachers view their assistance as a commitment to the teaching profession” (p. 380).

These observations suggest that the survival and success of the beginning teacher can be a particularly pressing issue for the mentor, as the achievements or failures of the beginning teacher may be seen as reflective of their own professional abilities and this may weigh heavily (Heilbronn et al., 2002). The mentor can be deeply and personally invested in their beginning teacher succeeding (Bullough & Draper, 2004). The spin-off from this is that, while some mentors may provide high levels of affective support, they do not challenge the beginning teacher to grow professionally. This raises a complex problem for any induction programme as the aim is a balance of both elements. Carver and Katz (2004) attempt to explain this occurrence, suggesting that it is always easier to help with minor, less risky issues, than to confront incompetent teaching practices. Such tensions raise the possibility that mentors may inadvertently be undermining beginning teacher development.

### **Cognitive support**

Consistent with the previous two elements, cognitive support is complex and can be challenging for the mentor. Cain (2009) maintains that cognitive support is the assisting of professional skill development, the enhancement of the art of teaching per se. The professional development of the beginning teacher is a crucial objective for a mentor yet encompasses many complex elements and is a considerable undertaking. Rippon and Martin (2003) discuss the variety of expectations for mentors, including holding regular meetings with the beginning teacher, providing support, facilitating professional development activities and carrying out assessment observations (both informal and formal) of the new teacher's practice.

As part of the professional development aspect of support, mentors need to be knowledgeable, experienced and proficient at observing other teachers' practice and in giving feedback. They need to be able to ascertain the learning needed for the children within the beginning teacher's class but also to be knowledgeable, experienced and proficient in communicating such information to the beginning

teacher. According to Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1993), the value of mentoring is not in the psychological support, but in the capacity to foster a commitment to good practice. What these authors are referring to is being educative, where the mentor prioritises the professional, instructional growth of the beginning teacher with the affective and interpersonal support still present but not the driving force. Lindgren (2005) agrees with this balance, in that mentoring should be focussed more on educative components rather than just emotional support. Such affective support as discussed earlier, takes for granted that the beginning teacher will be able to identify the areas of growth needed for professional development (Carver & Katz, 2004) and does not recognise the influence and importance of an educative approach.

### **Insight into educative mentoring**

Educative mentoring refers to assisting the beginning teacher with the knowledge, strategies and skills needed to become an effective teacher (Lee & Feng, 2007). More specifically, this form of mentoring promotes *co-constructed* professional learning (rather than the mentor *prescribing*) through the mentor facilitating evidence-informed learning conversations with the beginning teacher to ensure their future independence as a professional (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011). An educative approach differs from the critical constructivist approach outlined by Timperley et al. (2007) earlier in this chapter, in that although professional learning is co-constructed, educative mentoring emphasises the use of evidence to inform the professional learning, particularly evidence of children's learning. An educative focus promotes the use of self-reflection by the beginning teacher so that they learn to enquire into and recognise elements for development within their own practice, and are then able to critique these with their mentor. The mentor draws out ideas from the beginning teacher and encourages them to interrogate these, with the outcome being deeper self-reflection, informed and improved practice and greater personal ownership by the beginning teacher of this learning and development.

Educative mentoring means the mentor is the active listener who challenges and encourages the reflections and thoughts of the beginning teacher so that they come to their own decisions (Lindgren, 2005). It is about enabling the beginning teacher to become an active inquirer into their own practice. An integral component of

educative mentoring is observing practice, evaluating and providing feedback of professional development to the beginning teacher, both informally and formally, promoting the types of learning conversations discussed above. This assessment of the mentee is noted by Talley (2008) as yet another important responsibility for the mentor. As there is much discussion as to whether or not the mentor should act in an assessor capacity, the following section addresses this debate.

## **2.6 Debating assessment**

Commonly referred to as the assistance-versus-assessment debate, researchers such as Heilbronn et al. (2002), Hobson (2009), Williams and Prestage (2010) and Carver and Katz (2004) present compelling cases for both viewpoints on formally assessing as well as assisting/supporting the beginning teacher. As discussed above, the mentor is intended to be the support person for the beginning teacher, nurturing them as teachers but also being the provider of their professional development. However, there is evidence that tension may be created when this same person is also the one to critique and assess performance.

Although not every induction programme insists on assessment being included in the role of mentor, in New Zealand both formal and informal evaluation and assessment are considered vital components. It was acknowledged earlier that new teachers need professional guidance (and assessment is a necessary part of this) but Bullough and Draper (2004) observe how mentors fear being pushy or overbearing and find it difficult to know when critical feedback is required. While mentors are often given the responsibility of carrying out regular formal assessments, Rippon and Martin (2003) point out that there is limited evidence to support the idea that mentors are actually able to further the skills displayed by the beginning teachers past day-to-day survival techniques. In fact, some researchers declare that having to assess and assist can influence or alter the working relationship. "Evaluation and assessment has been of some debate and influences what role the mentor is expected to serve" (Serpell & Bozeman, 1999, p. 9). In addition, the beginning teacher will be less inclined to approach their mentor for support, to share concerns and problems if this person is also charged with completing their assessments (Carver & Feiman- Nemser, 2009). This role ambiguity can lead to raised levels of stress for the mentor and tension and

conflict within the mentor/mentee relationship (Abell et al., 1995; McIntyre et al., 2009; Williams & Prestage, 2010) and is one of the main reasons for the conflict between assistance and assessment. Findlay (2006) agrees, suggesting that expecting mentors to complete both the assessor and supporter role, places the mentor in a potentially contradictory role. A hesitant relationship may result from this duality, which could be potentially destructive, and certainly not produce or enhance positive outcomes for either party (Hobson, 2009).

There are always two sides to an issue and Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) contend that being a mentor involves the blending of development, assessment, support and accountability. Their position is that assistance cannot exist without assessment and vice versa. It is the striking of a balance between support and challenge, Bradbury (2010) and Rippon and Martin (2006) insist, which is required of the mentor; the ultimate success of this objective is dependent upon the person chosen as mentor as discussed earlier in this chapter. While the combination of assistance and assessment changes the nature of the relationship, this is not insurmountable if the right person is in the role. Although the skills necessary for being a mentor are not usually inherent in all teachers, most can be taught. Therefore the need to offer professional support to the mentor to enhance the growth of more specific professional capabilities becomes necessary.

## **2.7 Mentor professional development and support structures**

Orland (2001) in her Israeli study of a novice mentor revealed that for those who are new to mentoring, their development is almost akin to induction of the beginning teacher—the experienced teacher does not just emerge naturally into being a mentor, but must consciously go through a process into a different teaching context, that of being a guide/supporter/model/instructor (and for some, assessor) to another teacher. Orland continues by suggesting novice mentors require not only formal professional development for this role, but the support/assistance/guidance (and possibly assessment) of an experienced mentor themselves, again in parallel with beginning teacher development and induction. In some countries, for example within the United States of America, the ‘training’ or professional development of mentors is widely acclaimed. Abell et al. (1995) confirm that many mentors in America are educated in adult learning theory, how

to observe and how to effectively give constructive feedback. Rippon and Martin (2003) support the need for mentors to be skilled in being able to establish a relationship where “criticism is welcomed and sought out, rather than something to be feared” (p. 221). What would be favourable would be a strong professional relationship where techniques for handling feedback are fully explored rather than shied away from, where personal and psychological support is not the dominant driving force of mentoring.

Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009) recommend that if mentors are to nurture effective teaching and learning practices with their beginning teacher, then it is imperative that the mentor themselves learn to fit in with the intentions of policy surrounding induction (nationally as well as within each school). Policy intentions should then shape mentors’ thinking, expectations and the way they approach working with their beginning teacher. This is especially necessary if the mentor is charged with formally assessing for registration purposes. It is essential that mentors have an in-depth understanding of such policy and the requirements within it if placed in this situation (Bubb, 2003). Hansford et al. (2003) have identified that a lack of mentor professional development is congruent with ineffective or negative outcomes of mentoring. What can be surmised here is the connection back to how mentoring an adult is different from the teaching of children; different skills are required since the mentors’ work is now different to that of their classroom teaching, especially in the context of educative mentoring, as discussed earlier (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993).

### **Structures of support**

It has already been identified that mentors require a specific skill-set, but they also need structures in place to support them in this role. One way noted is the proximity of the mentor to the beginning teacher within the school environment. In order to establish and maintain a close working relationship and affective support of the beginning teacher, it is deemed important for the mentor to be teaching in the same vicinity or even directly next door to the beginning teacher within the school. Further outcomes are even more positive if the mentor and beginning teacher teach the same grade level (school age level) (Abell et al., 1995). Although this closeness of relationship between the mentor and beginning teacher is acknowledged as important, Hansford et al. (2003) suggest that

mentoring of a beginning teacher should be considered a whole-school activity, where it is not just one person who takes on the responsibility of supporting the beginning teacher, but the entire staff. These authors pose that this form of mentoring assists the mentor to feel less isolated and alone in their role, that there are others to turn to for support and, additionally, other staff for the beginning teacher to also turn to for support. This supportive environment could then alleviate mentors' feelings of loneliness within the role, feeling unappreciated for what they are doing and the contributions being made to the profession.

## **2.8 Peaks and troughs of being a mentor**

The role of mentor is extremely significant, not only for the beginning teacher but also for the school and the teaching profession (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Lee & Feng, 2007). The impact of mentoring appears to be reciprocal, producing rewards and challenges (both peaks and troughs) for both beginning teacher and mentor. As noted in the section discussing reciprocity, some of the literature surrounding this topic identifies how the role of mentor can be hugely rewarding; Serpell and Bozeman (1999) affirm that many mentors feel that they are giving back to the profession by sharing their years of knowledge and practice, and assisting in the growth of beginning teachers. This sharing of their journey often leads the mentor to self-reflect, resulting in the realisation of the depth of their own teaching skills (Simpson, Hastings, & Hill, 2007). Lopez-Real and Kwan (2005) concur that mentors become compelled to review their own teaching more critically, examining their own teaching techniques (pedagogy) and their attitudes toward teaching, when in the position of advisor or role model. In addition to this, these authors attest to mentors learning from their beginning teachers; the learning relationship becomes reciprocal. In effect, the mentor receives a form of professional development too.

Although there are acknowledged benefits to being a mentor, there are also numerous challenges identified. Trends noted in the literature consist of not only the difficulties already discussed around the professional development needs of mentors, but also a range of additional elements, such as the large amounts of time and effort mentor teachers are expected to find when working with the beginning teachers in addition to completing their own professional responsibilities (Arends

& Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000). Some mentors instil a “teach as I teach” doctrine with beginning teachers (Arends & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000), which can lead to the repetition of ineffective practice or mismatched professional philosophy, with the beginning teacher not being able to develop authenticity as an independent professional. The additional requirement of being both assessor and supporter of the beginning teacher is a juxtaposition many mentors find difficult (Findlay, 2006; Talley, 2008) with some mentors lacking the communication skills necessary to both support the beginning teacher emotionally and develop them professionally (Cameron, 2007). Consequently, the conversations and professional development completed with beginning teachers lack depth and quality, become informal rather than in-depth instructional development (Timperley, 2001); the mentor becomes seen as a buddy teacher rather than a professional mentor. Orland (2001) raises the need for mentors to be able to change their interpretive lenses as they encounter different situations within mentoring—for example, starting off mentoring with concerns about having to model their teaching to another person, through to growing more concerned with how the workings of the environment (the school) affect the relationship between mentor and beginning teacher. Some concerns identified by mentors, may in fact dissipate or change foci as the mentor becomes more experienced.

## **2.9 Discussion**

It is acknowledged throughout this chapter that the responsibility of being a mentor is complex and can significantly influence the beginning teacher in their first year in the profession. The individual aspects noted particularly by Cain (2009) attempt to divide this role into manageable and understandable components however, further insight into how these aspects intersect is required in order to construct a complete picture. It is not just the roles themselves which are of interest, but how the mentor, experiences them and attempts to manage their intersection which is my core focus. When considering the multifaceted components of a mentor providing interpersonal, cognitive and affective support Cain (2009) acknowledges that these are constantly interacting, but there is less consideration of neither how this interplay takes place nor how such interplay is managed by a mentor. Discussion by authors such as Bullough and Draper (2004), George and Robinson (2011) and Rippon and Martin (2006) have analysed the

combination of affective support and the cognitive development with challenges noted between being emotionally close to the beginning teacher (being the ‘friend’) and at the same time, being the promoter of professional growth. This relationship has been shown to be more complex when an assessment component of the beginning teacher is included, since consideration needs to be given to how to balance being the supporter and assessor at the same time. This is particularly important when the assessment component is formal or high-stakes, such as leading to teacher registration.

In addition is the consideration of a mentor’s previous experiences; acknowledging that all mentors come to the role with a professional ‘life’ behind them, they may or may not be ready to cope with the demands of implementing the components presented by Cain (2009). Although authors such as Achinstein and Athanases (2006), Hobson (2002) and Moir, et al., (2009) discuss the need for a variety of skills and suggest these would be the reason the person has been chosen, it is acknowledged that the mentor may be given the role due to being solely an expert teacher of children. A variety of authors noted in this chapter (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 1998; Lindgren, 2005; Langdon, 2009; Orland, 2001; Worthy, 2005) suggest that this reasoning is not enough; that an expert teacher of children does not necessarily translate to an expert teacher of teachers. When critiquing the components presented by Cain (2009) with this in mind, the experiences of a novice mentor become of significant interest. Mentors with a variety of experiences behind them, possibly working with adult learners such as student teachers, may not feel challenged by the multifaceted world of mentoring. However, I contend that a first-time mentor is likely to experience significant challenges while attempting to undertake the role of mentor and in particular, when the various role components begin to intersect.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

In summary, the literature demonstrates that there is much more to being a mentor than solely guiding the beginning teacher through the professional dimensions of working within a school. The complex balancing of interpersonal support, affective support and cognitive support is essential, with the identified peaks and troughs equating to a challenging role. It has already been acknowledged that the

right person needs to be identified for mentoring in order for the complex components within this important role to work together equating to a positive outcome. It is not enough for an experienced teacher to step into this role, although effective in extending children, the literature discussed within this chapter suggests that the skills of developing adults are quite different. This chapter has presented a number of areas where focussed professional development and support structures are necessary in order for mentoring to be a positive, professionally productive endeavour for both mentor and beginning teacher. A review of relevant international literature reviewed various approaches to mentoring confirming the value of mentoring and considering the multiplicity of components in an effective mentoring process in generic terms.

The next chapter will detail a more specific viewpoint, positioning induction and the mentoring from a purely New Zealand perspective. This separation from international literature is considered important for two reasons. Firstly, the research presented in this thesis is based in New Zealand and is representative of the New Zealand mentors who participated. Secondly, from an international perspective, induction of New Zealand beginning teachers into the profession is noted as being more structured in nature than in other countries (Wong et al., 2005). Therefore, the following chapter discusses induction and mentoring within the Aotearoa New Zealand context, orientating this study and the remaining chapters within a New Zealand framework.

## **Chapter 3 Induction and mentoring in Aotearoa New Zealand**

The previous chapter reviewed relevant international literature on induction and mentoring and demonstrated the complexity of the mentor's role. This chapter presents an overview of induction and mentoring within a focussed, New Zealand, context. This study was conducted by examining the experiences of novice mentors in New Zealand—therefore it is important to consider literature and current research from within this context. This chapter reviews policy and regulations pertaining to induction and mentoring in New Zealand, and presents a historical development of mentoring within New Zealand primary schools. Lastly recent and significant New Zealand research and projects are reviewed along with a crucial initiative from the New Zealand Teachers Council.

### **3.1 Induction – Setting the New Zealand scene**

In New Zealand, a newly qualified teacher must fulfil a delegated phase of professional development, mandated by the Ministry of Education but carried out within the school environment, prior to being eligible to apply to become a fully registered member of the teaching profession. Registration is acquired through the New Zealand Teachers Council. In order to contextualise the educational regulatory bodies within New Zealand, an outline of the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Council are provided below.

#### **The Ministry of Education**

The Ministry functions include seven key areas: strategic leadership in the tertiary system; interventions for target student groups; support and resources for teachers; school property portfolio management (of Crown-owned property); support and resources for education providers; support and resources for the community and lastly, strategic leadership in the sector (Ministry of Education, n.d.; a). Sector strategic leadership includes development of strategic policy, and in particular necessitates coordination with other sector and government agencies, such as the Teachers Council. One of the key personnel working with the Teachers Council is the Minister of Education. This person is considered to be the lead advisor to the Government on all matters to do with the New Zealand education system and is

heavily involved in shaping the direction of the sectors (early childhood, primary, secondary and Māori-medium schools (bi-lingual and/or full immersion schools)) and providers (Ministry of Education, n.d.; a).

### **The Teachers Council**

The New Zealand Teachers Council is a professional and regulatory body that stretches across all education sectors and represents the teachers within these, including both Māori and English settings. Although it reports to the Crown, the Teachers Council act as an *autonomous Crown entity*, meaning the Council must have regard to government policy when directed by the Minister of Education, as stipulated in the Crown Entities Act 2004 No 115 (New Zealand Government, 2004). The Teachers Council comprises 11 members who are either appointed by the Minister of Education or elected by members of the teaching profession. The functions of the Teachers Council consist of: development and implementation of regulatory standards and requirements; disciplinary; to provide leadership to education personnel and to promote best teaching practice; and lastly, to complete research. Such functions are stipulated in the Education Act 139AD&AE (New Zealand Government, 1989). Although this list appears very formal, the Teachers Council themselves describe their role as being to “support the professional status of teachers along with high quality teaching and learning through our mandated functions” (New Zealand Teachers Council, n.d.). Teachers interact more often with the Teachers Council for two of the functions outlined above: either for disciplinary reasons or more commonly, for registration purposes.

### **Registration of teachers**

The New Zealand Teachers Council regulates applications for both provisional registration (beginning teachers) and for full registration (formally applied for after approximately two years of professional development) (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2012). Throughout this phase of development, the beginning teacher is recognised as a provisionally registered teacher, but is a fully functioning member of a school’s staff; they are responsible for their own class and are accountable for the learning of the children within this class.

### **Beginning teacher professional support and development**

The professional development phase is referred to as an induction programme and has been mandated and supported through funding by successive New Zealand governments since 1985 (Grudnoff, 2012). Support is identified through what Langdon (2010) states as the provision of comprehensively resourced programmes, supported through external professional development (out of the school environment), Ministerial support, and internal support (within the school environment), each of which are outlined below.

External professional development for beginning teachers occurs in off-site (out of school) workshops often run by universities around the country (Learning 4at Waikato University; Kohia Education Centre at Auckland University; Education Plus of Canterbury University). Ministerial support comes in the form of government resourcing through staffing entitlement funding, for which principals are eligible to apply after employing a beginning teacher. The staffing entitlement funding is equivalent to a percentage of a full-time staff member's workload, 20% (0.2) of a full-time teacher equivalent (FTTE) for the first year of a beginning teacher's career (Ministry of Education, n.d.; b). This 0.2 entitlement equates to funding of one day per week for the first year of a beginning teacher's employment. The staffing entitlement ensures release time for either the mentors or the beginning teacher to assist in the implementation/facilitation/participation of the induction programme and more specifically to assist the on-site mentor to work with the beginning teacher. The use of the 0.2 time is not governed by the Ministry of Education but is to be utilised as each school sees fit within their induction programmes (a practice which is in accordance with the self-management policies of New Zealand schools). Additionally, a mentor receives a stipend of \$4000 for their work with the provisionally registered teacher throughout their first year of teaching (Langdon, Flint, Kromer, Ryde, & Karl, 2011).

Induction programmes in New Zealand are noted as being complex learning systems (Anthony et al., 2007) and also noted by many as being quite structured (United States Department of Education, 1998; Wong et al., 2005). Induction in New Zealand consists of elements such as observation of practice, targeted feedback on teaching, professional development and assessments (Lind, 2007).

One of the key components of induction practices within New Zealand, which is mirrored in the international literature discussed in the previous chapter, is the experienced teacher who supports the beginning teacher. In New Zealand this teacher is referred to as the tutor teacher or mentor (Cameron, 2007; Grudnoff, 2012). This person holds many responsibilities, some of which have been discussed earlier, but a key aspect of the mentor role in New Zealand is the gathering of information, which is then used as evidence toward the provisionally registered teacher gaining full registration. The mentor uses this information in conjunction with the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010) to decide if the beginning teacher meets the New Zealand Teachers Council requirements to apply to become a full member of the profession; a fully registered teacher. The *Registered Teacher Criteria* outline what satisfactory teaching looks like, and are used to show that beginning teachers are ready to gain full registration but they are also criteria against which all New Zealand teachers are measured. It is on the basis of the attestation by the mentor and principal, who are satisfied that the beginning teacher has met all the conditions including those of the *Registered Teacher Criteria*, that the Council grants full registration to the teacher (Sankar, Brown, Teague, & Harding, 2011). These authors advise that, due to registration being the ultimate outcome, it is crucial that every beginning teacher receives a quality induction programme and in particular, quality mentoring.

### **3.2 Purpose of induction in New Zealand**

Induction in New Zealand has been perceived as similar to that which is noted internationally. Firstly the induction programme is seen as an extension of the beginning teacher's initial training in university, and also the first step in a lengthy learning process throughout their career in education (Aitken, Bruce Ferguson, McGrath, Piggot-Irvine, & Ritchie, 2008). In New Zealand, primary teachers are recognised as being “committed to on-going inquiry” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011), that of a journey of learners, a continuation of growth seen from initial teacher education. Secondly, induction is seen to play a significant role in the retention and future professional success of beginning teachers (Cameron et al., 2006; Renwick, 2001), thus impacting on the quality of the profession as a whole in future years (Sankar et al., 2011). Lastly, the components of induction

programmes and mentoring roles are varied and often directly connected to the environment in which they occur (Piggot-Irvine, Aitken, Ritchie, Bruce Ferguson, & McGrath, 2009). According to an Education Workforce Advisory Group (New Zealand Government, 2010), without quality induction and mentoring, New Zealand teachers would not develop appropriate professional practices.

One of the key differences noted when comparing international research to that of New Zealand, is the support shown by historical and current New Zealand governments. In New Zealand the induction of new teachers is considered significant enough to continue to be resourced by successive governments. Cameron, Dingle, and Brooking (2007) affirm that New Zealand has been considered a world leader in the provision of support (particularly in the form of funding) for induction and mentoring of beginning teachers. Keeping in mind that induction is considered not only a means to full registration of the teacher but also as a means to “support a high quality teaching profession” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011, p. 1), it is therefore not surprising that induction and mentoring are seen to be held in high regard in this country. The support of induction programmes has been further strengthened through recent developments noted by New Zealand Teachers Council (discussed later in this chapter). It is due to the importance placed on induction and mentoring that continued support is available to schools and that the New Zealand Teachers Council continues to be responsive to research in this field. In order to appreciate this responsiveness, a historical focus is presented below which then leads to the more current New Zealand initiatives being outlined.

### **3.3 Historical focus—understanding what has come before**

Prior to 2009, New Zealand primary schools found direction for induction programmes and the role of mentoring in the resource prepared by the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Teachers Council, entitled *Towards Full Registration: A Support Kit* (2004, revised and updated in 2006 and 2009). This manual describes induction and mentoring characteristics that were considered effective and offered many practical templates and ideas for the mentor to utilise in their work with beginning teachers. Much of the information focussed on assisting the mentor to ensure the beginning teacher moved from the provisional

registration status to gaining full registration in the profession. The support kit was intended to act as the instructional document, offering clear direction and guidelines (Lind & Sewell, 2009). The focus of the material is very clearly the directing of mentors, to give advice and guidance. And so, the mentoring of beginning teachers within the induction programme came to be referred to as the advice and guidance programme.

### **Advice and guidance programmes**

Advice and guidance support structures have long been acknowledged as a continuation of preparation from teacher training providers (Lang, 2001; Renwick & Vize, 1993) and, prior to 2009, were noted as providing the supportive bridge that eased students of teaching into the realms of teachers of children (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997). The advice and guidance programme was characterised as supporting, advising and guiding the beginning teacher through to full registration (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2006). Mentors were able to promote professional learning due to knowing the schools' resources and how school systems operated, assisting the beginning teacher in working with other professionals and assisting the beginning teacher to develop self-management skills (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2006). The *Towards Full Registration* support kit describes the responsibilities of the mentor as developing a programme of professional learning that would meet the needs of the beginning teacher. This programme would include completing observations of their practice and offering feedback, encouraging reflection and offering on-going support (personal and professional) on a one-on-one basis. The approach taken was collaborative; it was acknowledged that this relationship was reciprocal between beginning teacher and mentor, involving "sharing and demonstrating rather than instructing, and discussing rather than telling" (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2006, p. 8).

While the mentor took the primary role, induction and mentoring was considered a school responsibility, promoting a wide variety in programmes and focus. Mentors were given the freedom to create advice and guidance programmes as befitting their own school practices (Moskowitz & Kennedy, 1997). Feiman-Nemser (2001) observed that there was no set syllabus for these induction programmes, with mentoring often being characterised as being distinctly

individualistic. This individualisation would usually reflect the capabilities and learning conditions within a school, the school culture (learning environment) and was a major factor in the nature and quality of support received (Cameron et al., 2007). Each school would do things differently and would see importance in different aspects of the induction process (Bubb & Earley, 2006), as was the prerogative of New Zealand's self-managing school system. As international research continued to grow in the area of beginning teacher induction, the variety noted within New Zealand advice and guidance programmes became more closely scrutinised.

### **3.4 Moving forward**

International research showed that New Zealand was doing well with developing their beginning teachers (Britton, 2006), but research continued to reveal ambiguities within and between programmes, which varied widely across schools and even across beginning teachers within the same school (Main & Hill, 2007). Although variety was not necessarily seen in a negative light, the research showed inconsistencies in the nature, content and quality of induction and mentoring programmes, and it was this factor that was concerning the policymakers and the New Zealand Teachers Council (Anthony et al., 2007; Britton, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2003; Cameron et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Education Review Office, 2004; Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development, 2005; Wong et al., 2005). Depth of technical advice and guidance was seen to be lacking, with a predominant focus for many mentors on beginning teacher survival rather than continued in-depth professional growth (Timperley, 2001). The 1997 Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation report demonstrates the limited focus during this time. This report followed research into teacher training and development across 11 countries with particular focus on policy and practices of teacher induction. It is stated that mentors typically:

provide hints and suggestions about approaches and resources that have or have not worked for them, explain how to plan more effectively, listen to and comment on ideas that the new teacher is thinking about trying, provide support with classroom and individual student-management issues, and generally are there with a "shoulder to cry on". (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997, p. 144)

The nature of mentoring within the advice and guidance programme was on ensuring the beginning teacher made it through the day, term and year (survival), with the final outcome being that the beginning teacher becomes a registered member of the profession.

As international and national research on mentoring and induction in schools began to advance, critique began to be directed toward mentoring practices which acknowledged beginning teachers as being capable of more than just survival and that they actually wanted to further their professional skills. Mentoring needed to become more focussed on the need to support the learning capabilities of beginning teachers beyond pure survival throughout their first years in teaching (Britton, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 1996, 2003; Tickle, 2000; Timperley, 2001). In order to achieve this enhanced focus, it was recognised that some features of mentoring and induction needed to change. Some of the trends noted within the literature were the need for skilled mentors to ensure provision of sustained and intensive support (Moir & Gless, 2001), the need for all participants to have clarity around policy expectations (especially where funding was allocated) (Cameron et al., 2007), and provision of a high quality, systematic approach to induction and mentoring (Cameron, Lovett, & Garvey Berger, 2007). Due to the now acknowledged inconsistencies seen within New Zealand induction and mentoring programmes, the New Zealand Teachers Council took the above trends seriously and responded to such considerations by commissioning a wide-scale research project. The aim of the project was to establish a more in-depth evidence base for the Teachers Council with which to construct future policy and advice for a purely New Zealand context (Aitkin et al., 2008). The overarching focus of the project was to investigate the quality of advice and guidance provided to beginning teachers across the country (Cameron et al., 2007) whilst situating New Zealand within the international research base (Cameron, 2007). This research project was entitled *Learning to Teach* and has been the foundation for significant changes in induction and mentoring practices within New Zealand.

### **3.5 The Learning to Teach project**

The *Learning to Teach* research comprised three individual research projects: a literature review (national and international) (Cameron, 2007); a national survey

of provisionally registered teachers on advice and guidance programmes and practices in New Zealand (Cameron et al., 2007); and case studies of exemplary induction and mentoring programmes and practices across a range of sectors (early childhood, primary and secondary school sectors). Additionally, this study also presented concerns with induction practices in its findings (Aitken et al., 2008).

Although these studies confirmed previous international research that, on the whole, New Zealand primary schools actually do well by their beginning teachers, a number of worrying areas were noted regarding both induction and mentoring. Of particular concern was the level of inconsistencies noted in the support given to beginning teachers, the quality and consistency of mentoring practices, and the assessment of beginning teachers—a number of beginning teachers felt they had been left to “sink or swim” (Langdon et al., 2011). Sankar et al. (2011), who were contracted to evaluate the Teachers Council pilot programmes, observed that the findings of the project highlighted the necessity for strengthening how induction and mentoring was enacted in New Zealand, and in particular, the need for mentors themselves to have professional development in the necessary skills associated with mentoring and to be better supported in this role. This finding is consistent with historical research into mentoring in New Zealand (Main & Hill, 2007; Renwick & Vize, 1993).

### **Upskilling New Zealand mentors**

Over a number of years and in numerous studies, the notion of specific mentor professional development has been consistently recommended, yet in New Zealand, mentors continue to perform the role with limited knowledge about the skills of mentoring or the role itself, and often have limited professional support to fall back on. Martin and Rippon (2005) state that “many induction supporters are working extremely hard to do their best by probationer teachers, but have had insufficient support and guidance themselves” (p. 542). The lack of recognised mentor education and support has been well documented as being as detrimental to the mentor as to the beginning teachers (Bubb, 2003; Cameron, 2007; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Findlay, 2006; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Kelley, 2004; Martin & Rippon, 2003, 2005; Strong, 2005; Totterdell et al., 2004). This was again noted throughout the *Learning to Teach* project.

The concept of professional development for mentors is one that, although it appears to have much support within the literature (both internationally and within New Zealand), has still not yet been realised as a necessary factor. It is not a common, mandated occurrence within New Zealand. Cameron (2007) is in agreement that there are a variety of skills (professional, personal, and interpersonal) which are needed in order for mentors to promote learning in new teachers and that professional development is indeed necessary for this to occur (as was asserted by previous authors: Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Hansford et al., 2003). The New Zealand Government (2010) is also in agreement, suggesting that, in order for mentors to be effective, specific learning is necessary; it is not sufficient to be solely an effective classroom teacher. Some mentors in the third *Learning to Teach* project (*Success Case Studies of Teacher Induction in Aotearoa New Zealand*) felt specific professional development was unnecessary, due to their feelings of professional competence. However, it must be acknowledged that these mentors were experienced in working with novice teachers, for example as associate teachers who work with student teachers (Aitken et al., 2008) and therefore already had much experience in teaching adult learners. It may also be assumed that, as associate teachers, they may have already undertaken some professional development in working with student teachers and may have been able to instinctively transfer these skills when working with beginning teachers.

Langdon (2011) confirms the need for mentor professional development due to a lack of understanding of the role being evidenced, and the knowledge/skills required to effectively support the professional growth of beginning teachers being limited. She further concedes that often school principals forget that the experienced teacher chosen to be a mentor needs to be recognised as a novice in their own right, a novice mentor. The consequence of this lack of recognition is that knowledge of teacher development and the ability to develop teacher expertise could very well be hit and miss (Langdon, 2011). The realisation that many mentors are actually new to developing teaching expertise in peers prompted increased focus on mentors and mentoring for the Teachers Council.

Although there appears to be support for ensuring New Zealand mentors receive professional development and are effectively supported, to date there has been no

formally recognised process for this to take place; there is no mandate from the Ministry of Education. The consequences of the *Learning to Teach* project may propel the Teachers Council to take the initiative to ensure that professional development of mentors becomes a reality.

### **3.6 Outcomes of *Learning to Teach***

In response to the findings of the *Learning to Teach* research, the Teachers Council consulted with the profession, facilitated workshops throughout the country and invited school principals and those who worked with beginning teachers to attend and offer responses to the research findings. This led to the construction of cross-sector guidelines for induction and mentoring (early childhood, primary, secondary and Māori-medium schools (bi-lingual and/or full immersion schools)), a first for New Zealand. Entitled *Draft Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring Programmes and for Mentor Teacher Development in Aotearoa New Zealand* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009), these guidelines differed in structure, language and strategy to the previous *Towards Full Registration* support kit; these guidelines were created to effectively shift what had been known as advice and guidance to a more in-depth level—to be transformative in nature.

Aitken et al. (2008) acknowledged in the *Learning to Teach* literature that New Zealand induction and mentoring practices varied greatly in nature and quality, a finding which paralleled earlier research. The practices ranged in nature from informal through to highly structured. It was further identified that New Zealand mentoring practices focussed too strongly toward support (mostly affective) and the advice and guidance of beginning teachers. This research stated that “intensive, pedagogically-oriented mentoring” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011, p. 2) should now become the focus of induction programmes and mentoring practices. This was referred to as an educative model of induction and mentoring (Langdon et al., 2011) and moved New Zealand mentoring practices closer to what was being seen internationally (as discussed previously).

#### **Educative focus**

As noted within international research, educative mentoring (or mentoring for instructional excellence) differs from the traditional “buddy system” that is seen in

many induction programmes (Moir, 2005). Feiman-Nemser (2001) indicates that some mentors describe what they do as technical scaffolding and emotional support. Although this may be the case, New Zealand studies found that one was outweighing the other: affective support was taken to the forefront ahead of professional scaffolding. Timperley (2001), a New Zealand researcher, argues the need for mentors to balance out such affective support with a more grounded developmental stance. She describes a preoccupation “with immediate issues of practical performance, rather than inquiry into, or expansion of, a rationale for that performance” (p. 111). These considerations align with the findings of the *Learning to Teach* project, that the focus of good induction and mentoring should be educative. Therefore, the intense directive toward educative practices noted within the draft guidelines for induction and mentoring programmes and for mentor teacher development in Aotearoa New Zealand (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009) was intentional and had the potential to move mentoring practices significantly from the historical focus of advice and guidance.

In addition to the draft guidelines and in conjunction with their release, the Teachers Council contracted pilot programmes across each sector (early childhood, primary, secondary and Māori-medium schools (bi-lingual and/or full immersion schools)). The pilot programmes aimed to explore New Zealand models of development and support for mentor teachers whilst trialling the new guidelines. One of the main aims of the pilot was to begin to equip mentors with the understanding of skills necessary to facilitate educative mentoring practices.

### **3.7 Induction and mentoring pilot programme**

Following the *Learning to Teach* findings, the Teachers Council contracted a number of research projects aimed at bringing to life the focus of educative mentoring. These projects were contracted to one educational provider per sector (early childhood, primary, secondary and Māori-medium), to design and deliver induction and mentoring programmes specific to each sector setting. The intended outcome of these pilots was that all induction and mentoring programmes would be modified and eventually be considered high quality, responsive to the needs of beginning teachers, with high degrees of support evident from all principals. Additionally, it was hoped that, through the pilot programme, future induction and

mentoring programmes would be executed by effectively trained mentor teachers within each educational environment (Sankar et al., 2011). The pilot programmes began in 2009 with most concluding in 2011 and differing in the length of time taken for each: early childhood (one year), primary (two years), secondary (two years) and Māori-medium (one-and-a-half years).

### **3.8 Primary pilot programme**

The primary pilot programme consisting of six Auckland schools was constructed and implemented by a team at the University of Auckland who were chosen by the Teachers Council as having the most successful proposal for the pilot programme. Consultation with the Teachers Council identified the types of schools to be selected for the pilot: two urban and two rural primary schools, and two urban intermediate schools (upper primary, children aged 11-12). Potential schools were identified by the researchers and confirmed after meetings with principals. The participants involved during the two years of the programme (2009-2010) included six principals, 22 mentors (eight completing the full two years), 31 beginning teachers and approximately 134 teachers (Langdon et al., 2011). This programme was a comprehensive, school-wide approach to induction and mentoring in that professional development was activated for all staff, including the principal (Sankar et al., 2011). This professional development was intended to build mentoring knowledge, capacity and leadership, and was aimed at aligning the school's current induction and mentoring programme with the draft guidelines and towards educative mentoring as identified in the literature (Langdon et al., 2011).

#### **Primary pilot programme: Mentors' early perspectives**

The mentors within the primary pilot programme reflected on what has been previously discussed within this literature review: the varied nature of induction and mentoring programmes, the emphasis on affective support and technical or practical assistance (advice and guidance focus), and informal structures (Langdon et al., 2011). It was noted that the mentors in the programme lacked the skill-set to be educative and typically lacked understanding of what was expected of them within the mentoring role as a whole (Langdon et al., 2011). Common concerns recorded in the initial stages of the pilot were the limited

knowledge/understanding of practices used for assessment of beginning teachers (focussed observation; learning conversations), and the need to improve communication and interpersonal skills (wanting to support and not hurt the feelings of the beginning teacher). Additionally, mentors demonstrated an inability to provide open and honest feedback, deliver the hard messages or ask difficult questions of their beginning teachers (Langdon et al., 2011; McDonald & Flint, 2011). McDonald and Flint (2011) identified that the mentors needed to be reflective practitioners who possessed a clear understanding of what excellent teaching and learning comprised. Cameron (2007) supported this contention, suggesting that effective mentoring requires a vision of what constitutes good teaching. It can be ascertained from the early perspectives of the mentors in this pilot programme that they were not confident of their abilities to effectively enact the mentoring role they had been given.

Following the collation of their perspectives, the professional development intervention programme (training), designed by the research team, commenced. The programme included goal setting and critical self-analysis, as well as 10 two-hour targeted professional development sessions for the mentors throughout each year of the project. The results shifted mentors' practices to being educative through the building of further knowledge and skills (Langdon et al., 2011). This development was particularly noted in the second year of their participation.

### **Mentor concluding perspectives**

At the conclusion of their time working with the pilot programme team, mentors discussed the growth in their skills and knowledge. These included specific goal setting for active growth, being effective at using evidence to promote development (such as focussed observations and specific learning conversations) and an ability to communicate more effectively (to promote serious professional dialogue, active listening and use of open questions). Development in practice also included not taking over and giving advice/guidance, but taking a step back and assisting the beginning teacher to inquire into their own practice. It was noted that mentors had learnt to focus on themselves, their own mentoring abilities/practices and how these then impacted on the beginning teacher. These developments were a change from the advice and guidance stance where the focus was directed to the beginning teacher and solving their challenges. In addition, a

conceptual change was noted from problem solving to assisting in the development of personal professional autonomy. Essentially, one outcome was that the mentors focussed on themselves as learners (Langdon et al., 2011).

### **Outcome of the pilot**

Sankar et al. (2011), in their evaluation of the pilot programme, state that the results had led to “significant shifts in mentors’ ... and school leaders’ understanding of what constitutes effective mentoring and provided the knowledge and theoretical basis that influenced, supported, and shaped mentoring practice” (p. x). The mentors within this pilot programme strongly expressed the importance of having clarity of their role and the expectations of mentoring within New Zealand primary schools. Langdon et al. (2011) identified that the mentor participants in the pilot stated that they would not have had the understanding of being a mentor or the expectations of mentoring a beginning teacher within their school had it not been for the pilot programme. Additionally, Langdon et al. note that this growth was the outcome of “sustained and serious engagement” (p. 49) by the mentors, reaffirming the need for specific and focussed professional development for mentors.

A further outcome of this pilot project was the identified necessity for clear documentation. Schools needed to have documentation pertaining to their vision of mentoring and induction, which aligned with, and connected to, the national vision from the Teachers Council. The documentation provided by the Teachers Council needed to be fully understood and analysed within schools—there was a need for mentors to be assisted in understanding the criteria presented and how this would be evidenced in the realities of teaching practice (Langdon et al., 2011). The *Draft Guidelines* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009) along with the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010) were considered daunting on their first read. In fact Langdon et al. (2011) made a recommendation from the pilot programme for principals and mentors to receive further professional development based on these two documents. Once fully understood, the *Draft Guidelines* were considered to be effective in the promotion of educative mentoring, but again, recommendations were made from this pilot programme to strengthen, and make more explicit, certain aspects of the draft.

### **3.9 The Guidelines**

The development of the Teachers Council (2009) *Draft Guidelines* provided a platform for schools and mentors to shift the focus of induction from advice and guidance to educative. The final reworking of the *Guidelines* demonstrated that the Council had taken note of the recommendations mentioned above (from the pilot programme) before being fully released across the country during 2011, coincidentally part-way through this research. The confirmation of the *Guidelines* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011) and their implementation nationwide added an extra dimension to my research as I was able to observe their initiation first-hand with my participants and yet also be part of the professional development opportunities offered by the Teachers Council.

To introduce the newly released *Guidelines* and to assist mentors and principals to fully scrutinise and understand the document, the Teachers Council provided workshops across the country. After attending one such workshop and interacting with the principals and mentors who attended, it became clear to me that even with this assistance, many mentors were still unclear about the new direction of their role (that of being educative), many still had unsupportive teams and principals within their schools, and there was still considerable confusion as to how to enact the *Guidelines* back in the realities of their sectors. Continued research into interpretations of this new document by mentors and professional leaders would be required to identify any fluctuations in the variety and quality of induction and mentoring programmes. It was timely that my research and thesis straddled the introduction and early implementation of the *Guidelines*, and could offer insight into how novice mentors worked with these new initiatives from the Teachers Council. Additionally, comparative research into the shift of focus, from advice and guidance to educative, and the impact of this on mentors and beginning teachers would also prove beneficial in the future.

#### **A missing component in the research**

The majority of research presented within New Zealand appeared to focus on experienced mentors who had worked with beginning teachers and had clear opinions of what worked and did not (for them, their beginning teachers and the school in general). Only Langdon (2011) specifically referred to some participants

as being “first-time mentors” (p. 71) in her study of how school leadership and mentoring strengthened beginning teachers’ focus on student learning. Of her 35 mentor participants, only three were identified as being new to the role. The consideration within research of different experiences between novice and veteran mentors seems to have been overlooked. In order to gain a more comprehensive picture of mentoring and mentors within New Zealand, perspectives of those new to the role arguably should be more evident within the literature. This could offer insight into mentors and mentoring, untainted by past experience or learning. I believe this is a gap in both international and national literature.

To gain understanding of mentoring from the perspective of a novice, their experiences and what school support they may need and/or receive, would potentially provide a relatively new perspective on mentoring. An investigation of this kind could potentially highlight anomalies not yet considered, or overlooked by those mentors with more experience. The experiences of someone completing the mentor role for the first time would become more evident in the wider literature, thus offering a more comprehensive picture of this role. In addition, research of this kind within New Zealand would allow novice mentors to add a fresh perspective to the usability and direction of the Teachers Council *Guidelines*, as it is, in essence, these mentors who are in most need of the support and guidance which the Teachers Council suggest the *Guidelines* provide. Additional research from the novice-mentor perspective could ascertain the value of the new *Guidelines* and would add greater depth to the New Zealand mentor and induction discussion within the literature base. If the current emphasis from the Teachers Council is to ensure professional growth of beginning teachers, then surely a study relating to novice mentors would greatly assist in this.

### **3.10 Discussion**

As outlined in this chapter, New Zealand has not experienced such in-depth attention to induction programmes and mentoring practices; the quantity of research and initiation of new pedagogy for mentoring, an educative approach, was without parallel in New Zealand primary schools. Considerable change in focus is noted as a result of extensive New Zealand-focussed research (Learning to Teach series) initiated by the Teachers Council. This change in focus has seen

mentoring move from an ‘advice and guidance’ programme and ‘buddy mentoring’ of the past, to a pedagogically-focussed method as now portrayed in the Teachers Council Guidelines. The research presented in this chapter portrays the Guidelines as directive and clear about this shift in mentoring focus.

The strong advocacy for educative mentoring noted throughout the Guidelines has implications for both the mentor and the beginning teacher with whom they work. The Teachers Council (2011) have stated that a stronger emphasis now be placed on intensive, evidence-based learning conversations. Such an emphasis appears to compel the mentor to ensure professional growth of the novice teacher is to the fore rather than primarily supporting for survival during their first year (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). Additionally, Rippon and Martin (2003) have questioned whether or not mentors are actually able to further the skills of a beginning teachers past techniques of day-to-day survival, although it is unclear as to whether this inability may be due to the mentor or limited capacity to learn on the part of the beginning teacher. The shift in focus from advice and guidance to educative might appear insignificant but the implications are that a mentor also be knowledgeable and skilled in how to promote and facilitate such professional learning with the beginning teacher. The research presented within this chapter suggests that such a level of skill being evident with mentors may not always the case.

There is evidence that a mentor with experience in working with adult learners (s for example) would be better prepared to make this pedagogical shift in focus from advice and guidance to educative (Abell et al., 1995; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993). Conversely, limited evidence exists of someone who has had little experience being a teacher of teachers, a novice mentor for example, being able to fulfil this role as effectively (Orland, 2001). In seeking to understand mentoring and the interplay of the various components outlined within this role, I propose seeking insight from those who are new to being a mentor. Insight into the first year experience of a novice mentor would add a further dimension to the literature on mentoring by offering an alternative perspective, that of the first-time mentor.

### 3.11 Conclusion

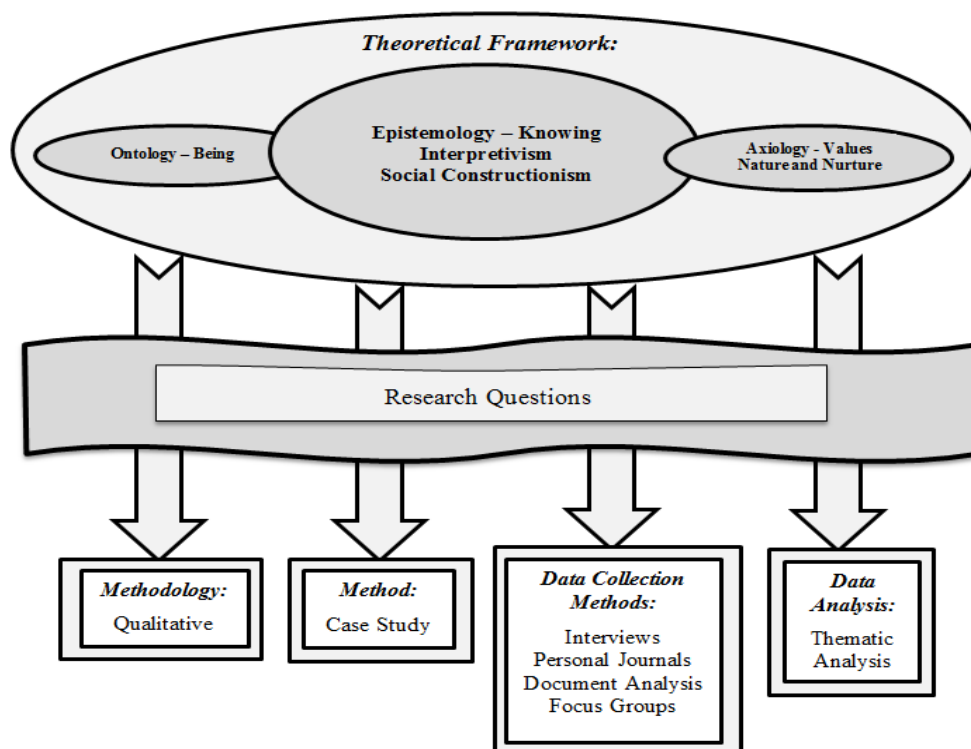
This chapter began with the acknowledgement that New Zealand induction and mentoring programmes were ultimately effective but known to be widely variable in quality, nature and content. The Teachers Council *Guidelines*, along with the pilot programmes and subsequent research from these, aimed to address this variety; not so that blanket uniformity could be instigated but to ensure “nationally consistent, high quality, and comprehensive support” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011, p.1) for all beginning teachers across the country. Further to this, the nationally consistent expectations attempted to provide support for all mentors working with these beginning teachers. Although not mandated professional development as such, the *Guidelines* appeared to be a step in the right direction to assist mentors to fully understand and complete their role effectively. One point of view which appeared to be absent from both international and national research was that of the novice mentor. Understanding the experiences of this cohort could offer new insight into the practices of mentoring and the professional development needs of mentors, and therefore strengthen not only the literature surrounding this topic but also resources such as the Teachers Council *Guidelines*.

The following chapter will provide an overview of the research design identifying the philosophical basis of this study and the methodological framework around which the study was shaped.

## Chapter 4 Research design

This chapter documents my research design. The diagram below gives an overview of each component and demonstrates how they are connected. The theoretical framework of my research was created from my ontological, epistemological and axiological positioning. My epistemology particularly shaped the design of this research and drew from social constructionism and interpretivism. A qualitative research approach was selected to emphasise human experiences and values (Stake, 2010).

**Figure 1** Diagrammatical Overview Of Research Design



### 4.1 Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework describes a way of looking at the world and making sense of it (Crotty, 1998). Included within this framework are considerations of “being” and what constitutes “knowledge”, therefore a discussion situating my ontological and epistemological positioning follows. Researchers hold assumptions, beliefs about the world and an understanding of what is “real” and often begin with the question: What constitutes reality? As we go about our daily activities, this is not often a question for consideration; we rarely think about what

constitutes our reality (Maykut & Morehouse, 2004). However, it should be acknowledged that the answer affects the way research is conceptualised and leads to forming the bedrock from which the project is built, for, as Holden and Lynch (2004) have noted, “the researcher’s view of reality is the cornerstone to all other assumptions” (p. 5).

My view of reality within this research is the combination of my epistemological and axiological positioning. To me, reality is not viewed as objective, a single entity “out there to be discovered”, or a truth to be tested—it is my own individual interpretations. My explanation of reality aligns with the belief that there are multiple realities, that people understand and internally construct their own realities, and that each person’s reality is subjective. Each person has an understanding of their world reflective of personal experiences; they create understanding or interpretations through everyday social interactions (Neuman, 2006; Sarantakos, 1998). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Mertens (2005), realities are local and specific. I believe that we are the beings who attach meaning to our world, thus making it meaningful by consciously engaging with it, additionally I do not believe we do this alone; it is only through interactions with others that meanings are formed.

### **Epistemology**

Epistemology is defined by Creswell (2007) as “how the researcher knows what she or he knows” (p. 16). According to Maykut and Morehouse (2004) “the way we understand the nature of reality directly affects the way we see ourselves in relation to knowledge” (p. 11). Social constructionism is the mode of interpretation I use to make sense of the world we live in and our place in it, not simply and evidently as *being there*, but that the world of everyday life and all the components within it, are actively constructed *by us* as participants (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008). Being interested in analysing the meaning people attach to their own actions is defined as interpretivism by Lichtman (2010). I align with the belief that people view reality as being created from their own interpretations, that points of view will be interpreted differently by others, even if experiencing the same situations or phenomena (Burr, 1995). Techniques of meaning-making are time-and place-specific, being as they are inherently embedded in socio-cultural processes (Lock & Strong, 2010), thus, meanings of specific happenings and ways

of making sense of them vary with each different situation (ibid.). Exploring the personal meanings attached to experiences was of the utmost importance to this study, thus drawing from social constructionism and interpretivism aligns with the context of my study. Interpretivist researchers, according to Neuman (2006), aim to “acquire an in-depth understanding of other people, appreciate the wide diversity of lived human experience, and better acknowledge shared humanity” (p. 93). Stake (2010) concurs, and further suggests that it is interpretive research that emphasises human experiences and values; interpretivism is characterised as being subjective. “People act according to the meaning they attribute to things and persons” (Kratwohl, 2009, p. 242). When drawing from social constructionism, the meanings people convey about their world emerge as a direct result of social conventions established through interaction with others. This *meaning* is also the subconscious combination of personal, cultural, social and historical interactions/experiences which have been developed throughout the person’s lifetime.

Foucault (1987) states:

The way in which the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion, by the practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group. (p. 11)

Researchers make interpretations of the variety of situations provided by participants, which again, are but interpretations based upon their own positioning. Within this study, I was not looking for definitive answers to explain the reality experienced by my participants; rather, the focus was on understanding their interpretations of the reality specific to each of them. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that “there are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed” (p. 24), thus the researcher and researched will draw from their own personal experiences when interpreting their world. Yin (2010) discusses the terms *emic* and *etic* to reflect such considerations; *emic* to describe the participants’ unique meanings of their experiences; and *etic* which describes my view of the same experiences but from my external positioning i.e., that of the researcher. Accepting this, I acknowledge that my gaze is always a personally filtered view, filtered by language, gender,

social class, race and ethnicity; all that has gone before, has merged to form my epistemological and axiological positioning. We are who we are due to our interactions with others, due to the instinctive and active sharing and programming of values and protocols from those around whom we grew up, from the culture of which we were a part.

### **Axiology**

Acknowledging that values impact on each person's view and understanding of the world around them aligns with interpretivism where there is a reliance on interpretations which are recognised as being value-laden. Maykut and Morehouse (2004) suggest that values further assist in shaping who we are and will influence what is understood; thus begins a discussion of my axiological or values positioning. As a researcher, I acknowledge that I am "value-laden", thus, I come to this research with an inherent bias which reflects my beliefs, values, background, interests and status (Hunt, 1993); I am influenced by my ontological, epistemological and axiological positioning; I am the amalgamation of both nature and nurture. All that I have experienced (nature) combines with how I was raised (nurture) to become my intrinsic positioning, who I am to the world. Although such influence may not necessarily be seen explicitly, it will be embedded subconsciously throughout and within the research process. I cannot suddenly change the inherent conditioning of my past which makes me see the world in a certain way; but I can show awareness of this and ensure I am mindful of its influence throughout the research period. Having been a mentor myself, I must be cognisant that my subconscious expectations or considerations of my mentor participants' experiences, or my assumptions based on my own experiences may influence my interpretations. Additionally though, such background may also assist in the interpretation of participants' experiences. Stake (2010) suggests that triangulation increases confidence in the correct interpretations, therefore, in order to mediate the above considerations, it will be important to ensure interpretations of participant experiences are multi-faceted. The research design will reflect this intention.

In summary, I have identified how I have drawn from social constructionism and interpretivism, reflecting understanding of multiple realities immersed in each

person's experiences, that these realities are influenced, self-defined and socially constructed, and ultimately, value-laden.

Due to my personal positioning as researcher and the research questions posed, careful consideration of methodology was necessary. For me "methodology specifies how the researcher may go about practically studying whatever he or she believes can be known" (Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 6); it is the framework for positioning the researcher and the researched. The following sections review my research questions and the methodological choices for investigating these.

## **4.2 Research Questions**

As outlined in Chapter 1, I aimed to gather and interpret multiple forms of data in order to build a multifaceted picture of the experiences of a novice mentor. To accomplish this, the following research question guided the study: How is mentoring understood and experienced by teachers completing the role for the first time?

In order to seek answers this question, the following sub-questions were posed:

1. What are the first-time mentors' understanding of their roles and responsibilities?
2. What (if any) are the challenges and tensions which arise from the interplay between the roles and responsibilities?
3. What implications can be drawn from the above, and how might these assist first-time mentors in the future?

### **Additional consideration for the project**

It was coincidental that the New Zealand Teachers Council released their new initiative for mentors and mentoring (the *Guidelines*) part way through my research in 2011, but the introduction provided additional motivation to see what reaction this inclusion prompted from my novice participants. Additionally, the initiation of this support structure, indicated that mentoring within our country was not necessarily as successful as some literature purports, therefore validating the need for further research within this field from a New Zealand perspective.

The positioning of my study, the clear, boundaries of the topic (investigating the experiences of first-time mentors) and the desire for rich descriptions of participants' realities, aligned with the use of qualitative research.

### **4.3 Methodology**

I approached this study with the primary intention of understanding participants and their practices, to capture “richly detailed description” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p. 214), to comprehend their interpretations of experiences, not to quantify them; emphasising exploration rather than the testing of a set hypothesis within a prestructured model (Sarantakos, 1998). This study was inductive (as opposed to deductive) which means that there was no set answer being sought or verified. It was very much about understanding what the participants were experiencing, in their own way, which was why I chose a qualitative approach for this study. Stake (2010) identifies that qualitative research uses “personal experiences and relationships to inquire how others see how things work” (p. 47). This approach enabled in-depth connection and description of the meaning participants attached to their experiences to be explored using a variety of sources of information. Patton (1990) suggests that “the whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than the sum of its parts” (pp. 40-41). Participants bring a multitude of perspectives which cannot be reduced to a single entity of importance; each brings a wealth and depth of understanding of their own context and experiences.

#### **Qualitative**

Qualitative research embraces a mosaic of methodological choices. Yin (2010) suggests that, within this mosaic, three conditions in particular needed to be noted. Firstly, that the interpretations of human events show a multiplicity, that we interpret the same event in multiple ways. Secondly, that the events being studied offer unique potential; and thirdly, that the variations of methodological variations are extensive. The use of a qualitative approach aligned with my positioning for this study in that reality (in a qualitative sense) is understood from the *inside*, from the point of view of the participants (Sarantakos, 1998). Stake (2010) states that qualitative research aims to “generate description and situational interpretations” (p. 57), and provide the opportunities to understand and discover

insightful revelations which contribute to understanding. Qualitative research as defined by Merriam (2009) is the construction of meaning through understanding how people make sense of their everyday experiences; the principal task of a qualitative study is to bring to light these meanings and allow interpretation of them; which was my intention with this study. Aligning with this definition, Janesick (1994) asserts that understanding the meaning of participants' experiences from their perspective, in their terms, is what qualitative research is all about. My positioning of this study connects with these authors' contentions because I began this study with no definitive, pre-conceived answers; my desire was to capture the participants' meanings of events from their personal perspectives; my practices were inductive in nature, and aligned with my theoretical framework.

To summarise, this research design was chosen in order to understand the multiple perceptions of participants' experiences; to explore what people say and do, but also to interpret how they make meaning of these experiences. The design drew from social constructionism and interpretivism whilst acknowledging that the views of the researcher and participants are subjective and value-laden. There was no attempt to pretend that the research was value-free as this adds depth and richness to the complexity of what we seek to understand as qualitative researchers. A qualitative approach was chosen as the methodology for my study as descriptive information was sought, in order to see experiences from the perspective of the participants. Such decisions then guided the way in which my research was to be conducted. The aim was to comprehend the complexity of the phenomena (Maykut & Morehouse, 2004), to employ research procedures that "produce descriptive data, presenting in the respondents' own words their views and experiences" (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 46). The discussion in the next section outlines the method employed to gather the multiple forms of data necessary to inform the conclusions drawn in my study.

#### **4.4 Method**

"Sometimes an insight into people's lives is what is required for better understanding" (Gillham, 2000, p. 102). Case study research offers the opportunity to understand something up close and in depth (Yin, 2012). A case

study approach within qualitative research involves holistic and intense descriptions of single entities or phenomena; and relies on multiple sources of evidence which are collected through real-life contexts (Simons, 2009). The aim is to uncover elements which are characteristic of the event or entity as well as seeking latent elements which may not have been previously seen as important, through use of holistic description (“what” type questions) and explanation (such as “how/why” questions). Insights and understanding of the case are gained through analysis and interpretation of how people think, feel and act (Simons, 2009). “A case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories of principles” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 289). The case study approach was appropriate for this study as I wanted to understand a complex social occurrence, that of mentoring, to understand how it worked and if and why novice mentors’ experiences might be different from those who are experienced mentors. I wanted to be able to identify patterns or themes from multiple perspectives but yet “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2009, p. 4). This type of study is labelled as a “single case study” consisting of one case, rather than investigating two or more cases (Yin, 2012). Creswell (2007) further clarifies this by identifying three variations of case study to be considered: intrinsic, collective and instrumental. Intrinsic case study refers to a focus of study on the case itself which reflects something unusual or unique; for example an evaluation of a programme (Creswell, 2007). Collective case study, at times referred to as a multiple case study approach, may involve one area of focus but the researcher chooses multiple cases in order to illustrate it and demonstrate varied perspectives of the issue under investigation (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2012). Instrumental case study is where the researcher chooses one bounded case in order to focus on one issue and clearly highlight this through deeper insight (Creswell, 2007). It is this final variation of case study which is reflected in my study.

Although mentoring itself could have been studied using a variety of methods, by defining the more specific focus on first-time mentors, by ensuring the research questions ring-fenced this defined area within mentoring, instrumental case study becomes appropriate. Yin (2009) states that moving from the abstract concept to

the more specific case to be studied, aligns with using the case study method. In order to define and clearly identify the boundaries of my study, it was necessary to specify the case under investigation. My instrumental case study necessitated gaining an in-depth understanding of my participants, their experiences and their specific contexts (Yin, 2005), seeking to understand their perceptions over the space of one year, utilising a range of data collection methods. Cohen et al. (2011) state that case studies are descriptive, have a narrow focus and combine objective and subjective data (p. 290). My choice of case study determined what data to collect and the strategies for considering the data, eventually leading to a strengthening of interpretation (Yin, 2009). Berg (2007) suggests that the type of information gathered within case study research is “extremely rich, detailed, and in-depth” (p. 283). This correlates with the qualitative nature of my research.

### **Strengths and limitations of case study**

The documenting of multiple perspectives is noted as a strength of this research method. By utilising a range of data gathering methods, a variety of information is collected, offering the opportunity to explore differing points of view, identify the influences of key participants and their interactions; explaining the *how* and *why* of things (Simons, 2009). “Case studies recognise and accept that there are many variables operating in a single case, and hence, to catch the implications of these variables usually requires more than one tool for data collection and many sources of evidence” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289). Additionally, this mass of data can also be noted as a limitation, as it could be difficult to process.

An additional strength of case study noted by Simons (2009) is recognition of the potential shift in who controls knowledge; the researcher recognises the “importance of co-constructing perceived reality through relationships and joint understandings” (Simons, 2009, p. 23). This acknowledgement of knowledge about the case being co-constructed particularly aligns with my study. Simons (2009) suggests that some find this subjectivity within the case study method to be problematic, that the researcher becomes too personally involved. Yin (2012) agrees that for some there is a lack of trust in the credibility of processes and that there is little protection from the bias of the researcher. “The researcher is integrally involved in the case, and the case study may be linked to the personality of the researcher” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 290). My personal involvement is

acknowledged up front in the nature of my theoretical framework which confirms the type of researcher I am; I am always going to be a part of this study. As Simons (2009) emphasises I am an inescapable part of the situation I am studying. In order to fully understand and interpret the case, I believe I need to be present in the research relationship; I am the main data gathering instrument as I am the person who interacts with my participants. By acknowledging and staying mindful of the potential influence my values and judgements/interpretations may have on my portrayal of the case, and further, ensuring systematic data collection and analysis procedures, I aim to ensure greater rigour. Thus, reducing the potential for skewed reporting of the case under investigation (Yin, 2012).

The ability to generalise case study information is also seen to be difficult due to the capturing of experiences so specific to the participants at that time and space (ibid.), thus the scope to my case study might be perceived by some as limiting. Within my study, I see this specificity as a strength. The aim is to “present a rich portrayal of a single setting to inform practice, establish the value of the case and/or add to knowledge of a specific topic” (Simons, 2009, p. 24).

#### **4.5 Sampling and criteria for recruitment**

I decided that purposive sampling was fitting for selecting my sample as there were some sectors of the wider schooling community which needed to be excluded. Oliver (2008) discusses this type of sampling as being a form of non-probability sampling which is common to research drawing from an interpretive perspective. I determined that a random sample would be inappropriate as certain statistics needed to be selected and then collated prior to the creation of my sample (such as firstly being a primary school teacher and secondly, a first-time mentor within such a school). Somekh and Lewin (2009) discuss purposive sampling as identifying the sample as being hand-picked for a specific reason, as is the case in this study (only primary teachers who were first-time mentors of first-year beginning teachers). The sample criteria were therefore narrowed to only those who taught children between 5 and 12 years old. These teachers could work in a primary (new entrants to year 6), intermediate (year 7 and 8) or full primary school (new entrants up to year 8 pupils). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) suggest that purposive sampling avoids deliberate representation from the

wider population and seeks to only represent a specific group; in this case, teachers only in the primary school sector. Thus a specific group within the wider population was specifically targeted and purposely selected.

In order to invite participants to be part of this study, the Ministry of Education national website, Education Counts (<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/directories/list-of-nz-schools>) was utilised. Education Counts is an open access website which facilitates the availability and accessibility of information about education research; statistics in this site were utilised as the recruitment tool. The website allowed access to a national school directory in spread-sheet form, which contained a multitude of information from all schools (secondary, intermediate, primary, special character) across the country. My research solely focussed on primary school mentors, and only those within the greater Auckland region; this region was chosen for the target sample due to time and travel considerations. Additionally, this region offered a large base population of primary teachers assisting in the recruitment of specific participants. This factor indeed became important when recruiting, as will be explained later. In order to obtain the information pertaining only to primary schools in the greater Auckland region, a copy of the spread-sheet was saved to my personal computer and all irrelevant information (i.e., not pertaining to the greater Auckland region) was deleted. This left 417 primary schools within the region from which I aimed to recruit. A small number of participants (a maximum of eight) were sought due to the depth of information that would be gathered from each participant; I was seeking depth and quality rather than a large quantity of information.

Although only a small sample of mentors was sought for this study, this was reflective of my methodology in that it would present in-depth descriptions of participants' experiences. A sample size of 100 schools was chosen as the nature of the participant required was very specific (that of only first-time mentors and only those working with beginning teachers) and it was likely that only a few schools would have appropriate candidates. Unfortunately the national directory did not offer information on schools with new teachers or mentors. In order to create the sample, every fifth school on the compacted spread-sheet was highlighted, until a sample of 100 schools was produced. The list of 100 schools received an invitation pack for the study via postal mail.

The invitation pack was addressed to the principal of the school, and contained a letter introducing myself as researcher and outlining my study. Further to this, within the principal's pack was a sealed pack for prospective participants which contained an information letter detailing my study (including an outline of the purpose of the research, how the research would unfold and ethical considerations), a letter of consent for those who wished to participate and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to encourage the return of the consent form. Although the pack was addressed to the principal of each school, being the school leader and the person who knew the staff responsibilities, it was anticipated that they would be able to disseminate the packs to mentors within their schools.

Two levels of selection criteria for participants were utilised (see Table 1). If eight participants responded to the initial recruitment, Level One Criteria would be utilised. Should more than eight participants have responded to recruitment, Level One Selection Criteria would be utilised followed by Level Two Selection Criteria, until the required eight participants were obtained.

**Table 1** Selection Criteria for Participants

<b>Level One Selection Criteria (required for all responses)</b>	<b>Level Two Selection Criteria (only required if <u>more</u> than eight responses were received)</b>
<i>The teachers need to be:</i>	<i>The teachers need to be:</i>
(1) working in a primary or intermediate school in the greater Auckland area	(1) a range of primary schools represented (size of school; decile rating)
(2) first-time mentors (having not worked with provisionally registered teachers previously)	(2) a mix of gender represented
(3) working with provisionally registered teachers (beginning teachers) who are in their first year of teaching	

In summary, primary school teachers who were working in the greater Auckland area and who were first-time mentors working with beginning teachers for the first time were sought for this study. The recruitment sample was found through purposive sampling utilising information from a national database. One hundred invitational packs were distributed in search of eight participants. The number of participants to be recruited for this study was kept small as a variety of *in-depth* information was sought.

A study which aims to understand and interpret participants' experiences necessitated the consideration of data-collection techniques that were focussed on achieving an empathic understanding, rather than testing human behaviour laws but yet were shown to be sensitive to the context of each participant (Neuman, 2006). Further to this, to ensure the experiences of the participants were made visible in different ways and in keeping with the positioning of my study, the need for using multiple sources and interpretive practices was identified. Yin (2006) supports this approach stating that multiple sources of evidence are advantageous to good case studies. The following section identifies and provides a theoretical justification for the selection of data-collection methods.

#### **4.6 Data-collection Methods**

Qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. It is understood, however, that each practice makes the world visible in a different way. Hence there is frequently a commitment to using more than one interpretive practice in any study. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 5)

The data-collection methods chosen for this study were twofold: primary sources and secondary supporting sources. Table 2 (on the following page) provides an overview of these data-collection methods. The timing of data collection was scheduled for the duration of one calendar school year, which in New Zealand is from February through to December.

The primary sources of data-collection methods were semi-structured interviews, document analysis and personal journals. Semi-structured interviews enabled face-to-face interaction with the researcher and individual mentor at the start of the project to gather preconceptions/early experiences, and then again at the end of the project to gather conclusive perceptions of the mentoring experience.

**Table 2**

*Overview of Data-collection Methods and Duration throughout Year of Data Collection*

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Intention</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Semi-structured Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish relationship with participants</li> <li>• Obtain focussed, specific information on context and individual preconceptions and conclusive thoughts</li> </ul>	Beginning of data collection (March) and end of data collection (Nov) lasting for approximately 30 minute
Document Analysis:		
i) <b>National</b> Ministry of Education and the Teachers Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information regarding mandated expectations</li> </ul>	Ministry of Education & the Teachers Council information on-going throughout data-collection year
ii) <b>School</b> Participants' individual schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather school specific information—local policy/support manuals</li> <li>• Gather situational information regarding each specific school <i>(All the above information is publically available; it is not of a sensitive or confidential nature)</i></li> </ul>	School-specific information gathered throughout the year of data collection when visiting each participant's school
Personal Journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughts from participants recorded on an on-going basis (monthly)</li> <li>• Not heavily directed by researcher; will offer glimpses into the participants day-to-day experiences</li> <li>• Will add depth and richness to other data collected</li> </ul>	Participants will submit entries once a month (Feb/March through to Dec). Entries should take participants approximately 10 minutes to complete
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunity to elaborate on information from other data collected</li> <li>• Allow participants to interact with each other and share experiences</li> <li>• Gather descriptive, intense but informal, guided discussion from all participants</li> <li>• Generation of wider range of responses to add depth and breadth to the data-collection process</li> </ul>	End of second and third school terms (July & Oct) for approximately 90 minutes long

Further, the use of individual interviews at the beginning of the data-collection phase offered the opportunity for me as the researcher to establish a relationship with each participant, to make some form of connection with them, in order to ensure participants felt a valued part of the research and would therefore feel more comfortable in sharing their experiences. Janesick (1994) suggests that:

By establishing trust and rapport at the beginning of the study, the researcher is better able to capture the nuance and meaning of each participant's life from the participant's point of view. This also ensures that participants will be more willing to share everything, warts and all, with the researcher. (p. 211)

The analysis of documents aimed to review both national and school-specific formal documentation regarding mentoring. This documentation provided the regulatory framework at a national level and the policy/procedural framework utilised within the school environment.

In addition, personal journals were instigated to gain the unstructured and unsolicited reflections of ongoing experiences by participants. The use of these data-collection methods was expected to assist in gathering individual views of the participant's day-to-day experiences in a variety of ways. Additional to the primary sources above, focus groups were chosen as a secondary and supporting source of data collection to add greater depth to the individual information already gathered and to add a social dimension to the data-collection process. Teachers are known to enjoy each other's company and are usually eager to share their stories in a group atmosphere. Discussion topics were debated or more fully developed through participant social interaction in these gatherings. In combination, the data-collection methods provided insight into the varied dimensions of the participant experiences and context. Each data-collection method is individually explored in the following sections of this chapter.

### **Interviews**

Semi-structured, individual interviews were chosen to capture the initial and concluding perceptions and experiences of the first-time mentors participating in this study. Through the use of an interview, researchers can gain "privileged access to people's basic experience of the lived world" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 29). The use of a semi-structured interview seemed to create a social

situation, an informal dialogue, where researcher and participant could meet, form a connection, and develop rapport and build a relationship (especially in the initial stages of the research) (Berg, 2007; Darlington & Scott, 2002). This was an important consideration as in keeping with the positioning of this study, it was imperative that some form of affinity and trust was developed between myself as the researcher and my participants. Grant and Giddings (2002) profess that it is through making an effort to interact and relate to participants that the researcher comes to understand participants' experiences and the meaning personally ascribed to them. The reflective nature of this form of interview captures uniqueness, explores from the inside, and can be illuminative (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). "By using interviews, the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 529); participants' reality can be more fully explored through the interview process. Simons (2009) recognises that perceived reality can only be co-constructed through the relationships and joint understandings created when working with participants in their context. This exploration though, is dependent upon the rapport established with each participant.

The semi-structured interview was guided by a schedule of questions or issues to be explored, but in the knowledge that there is always room for elaboration on, and diversion from, these questions; the richness of data collected is dependent on the types of questions posed, therefore there needed to be room to expand or redirect when necessary. Merriam (2009) suggests that well-considered, open-ended questions are essential and that these be followed up with probes for greater detail. The questions utilised for this study were not absolute, with predetermined outcomes, nor to be asked strictly in a precise order; rather a collection of indicative questions. Some questions were utilised as prompts, in order to extend the line of thinking or dig deeper on a theme. This type of interview, Simons (2009) proposes, is inherently flexible, it offered the opportunity to "change direction to pursue emergent issues, to probe a topic or deepen a response, and to engage in dialogue with participants" (p. 43). By having this flexibility, a wider range of information was possible, as the relationship with participants was less formal encouraging them to feel more comfortable in sharing their experiences.

As mentioned above, and due to its less formal procedures, the semi-structured interview offered greater opportunities for additional elaboration from participants through further questioning to assist with clarification and confirmation (Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006). As gaining insight into each participant's perceptions of their experiences was the aim of this study, it seemed appropriate that a range of descriptive questions be included in order to elicit experiential data from the semi-structured interviews. Darlington and Scott (2002) assert that "descriptive questions about what and how things happened are particularly useful in encouraging people to describe their experiences" (p. 57). Ensuring an open research relationship is established with participants assists with the depth of information they are willing to share. As Mariampolski (1989) suggests it is the researcher's job to ensure participants are facilitated in "their ability to be open, honest and unembarrassed" (p. 6) when participating in this form of data gathering. It was important to me that participants felt themselves to be a valued part of my research, to which they had something to contribute. I acknowledged that the research was about *their* experiences—their 'realities'; thus the focus was on researching *with* them, rather than gathering data *on or about* them (Simons, 2009). It was also necessary to ensure consistency when working with each participant, each was given the same information and participants understood that the same prompting questions were asked of each; although it was accepted that on occasion, some questions may deviate due to the varied nature of each participant's discussion. This consistency was to ensure greater reliability of data collection and to make sure all participants felt equally treated and that the process was fair to all. My aim was for participants to feel actively part of and valued in the research process; this was ensured through participants reviewing and considering transcripts of their interviews as a valid representation of their involvement. This attempt at consistency can be a challenge when using interviewing as a data collection method, as there is always the possibility of participants behaving in unexpected ways or not being as open to the answering questions as others. Kvale and Brinkmann, (2009) suggest that such challenges can be overcome by careful questioning and being sure of the process to be used, such as including beginning with settling questions. Additional to people challenges are the complexities of equipment advises Creswell (2007). Interviewers must place their trust in recording devices working effectively and in

their own ability to negotiate the equipment when retrieving the information for transcribing. Such challenges do not negate the value of using interviews as a data collection method, but highlights the need for researchers to be mindful and ensure such things have been well considered before proceeding.

Although interviews provided a range of information from participants, in order to gain a richer description of participants' experiences, personal journals were utilised as the second method of data collection.

### **Personal journals**

Personal journals written by each participant throughout the year of data collection yielded a greater expanse of informal and personal data. Through reflecting on and recording their thoughts, feelings and experiences over a length of time (each month for a year), participants provided insight into their experiences and individual school environments; snapshots of time and place would provide windows into their experiences as first-time mentors as these were taking place. Although reflection is considered vital within the teaching profession and specifically to enhance teachers' growth in the field (Marsh, 2010), it is not something which comes naturally to all, and is something which requires time for consideration and construction. It must be conceded that for some, reflection is not always a comfortable process; to confront one's inner thoughts and feelings, to analyse one's values and attitudes can be difficult and unsettling (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing, & Le Cornu, 2006). However, reflection provides an opportunity to look inward and explore opinions and beliefs, a chance to come to terms with personal attitudes, biases and assumptions; "you have to decide what the experiences mean to you" (Whitton, Sinclair, Barker, Nanlohy, & Nosworthy, 2004, p. 223). Personal journal entries were to be completed through whatever means participants viewed as comfortable (written, digital, voice), as and when they were able to complete an entry within each month of data collection.

Assuring this time and space for deliberate reflection, introspection and retrospection, provided opportunity for the deeper consideration of thoughts, feelings and experiences, something which most teachers value. Creswell (2007) advises that although journaling as a data collection method is often used within case studies, challenges within the field may emerge of which the researcher must be cognisant. It is taken for granted that the participants will be skilled at

reflective practice and that they will fully understand what is being asked of them. Careful consideration must be given to what instructions will be given to participants, how much direction will be offered. Additionally, Creswell (2007) suggests a challenge for researchers using journal entries as data collection could be the medium chosen to record thoughts. Handwriting could be unreadable, personal shorthand might be included, or if digital recording devices are utilised, there is a possibility that these may be corrupted through transfer. A difficult balance must be considered between the needs of the researcher and allowing participant choice.

Cohen et al. (2011) identify that, within the interpretive paradigm, case studies tend to use certain data-collection methods, two of which include diaries and documents. Yin (2009) agrees, and further suggests that documents play an explicit role in any data collection within case study approaches. He suggests that documentation is considered a stable form of data in that it can be repeatedly reviewed, but that it must be understood to contain bias of the author.

Additionally, documentation can have a weakness in that relevant material may be difficult to find or retrieve.

### **Document analysis**

Documents exist in many forms and have multiple uses. Specifically within this study, two forms of documents were utilised: formal, nationally prescribed material, and school-specific material. The use of documentation in this study was primarily to corroborate and augment information from other sources (Yin, 2009). A challenge posed by choosing to utilise this form of data collection Creswell (2007) states is that documents may be difficult to source, may not be forthcoming or may be inappropriate. Scott (2000) proposes that documents should be evaluated before being selected for analysis, thus ensuring the material is fitting for the intended research.

The use of nationally prescribed documentation (there is no mandated documentation) took the form of support material which is sent to all schools within New Zealand from both the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Council. These organisations created the resource folder touched on earlier, entitled *Towards Full Registration – A Support Kit* (Ministry of Education & the

New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009), and also been made available on-line. This resource contains sector-specific material, information pertaining to the national expectations for the induction and mentoring of beginning teachers and additional guiding documents for schools to utilise as part of their own procedural practices. Further, the Teachers Council *Guidelines* were created “to support the provision of nationally consistent, high quality, and comprehensive support for provisionally registered teachers in their first few years of practice” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011, p. 1). As discussed earlier in this thesis, this particular document provides information of the key principles, the recommended expectations and essential components of induction and mentoring for all schools and early childhood facilities within New Zealand. Of particular interest to my study was the information pertaining to the mentor and the specifying of this role within a primary school setting.

The nationally prescribed documentation was compared to the school-specific information to identify parallels, conflicting or corroborating factors between the sets of documents. School-specific documentation provided data about the environment participants worked in and how they might have been supported in the role of mentor within their own schools.

In addition to the primary sources of data collected (semi-structured interviews, document analysis and personal journals), a secondary and supporting mode of data collection was chosen to allow participants to interact with each other and to add further depth to the discussion of being a first-time mentor. Through the use of focus groups, the participants were brought together, stimulating further thinking from group discussions and potentially bringing to consciousness elements that had not previously been considered. It was anticipated that the use of focus groups would add greater richness to the primary sources of data.

### **Focus groups**

The use of focus groups promotes the generation of a wider range of responses and can bring together people of similar or varying opinions (Cohen et al., 2000). Thus this mode of data collection was used to not only elaborate on the information being gleaned from the individual interviews and the documentation (in particular the personal journals), but also to allow the participants to interact in

a less formal manner, discussing a phenomenon that was common to them all—being a first-time mentor. Janesick (1994) suggests that focus groups allow the researcher to moderate and observe such interactions among participants which can add to other sources of evidence. Focus groups can have an added bonus of providing group solidarity, support and even future networking prospects. Conducting two focus groups throughout the data-collection phase offered the opportunity to delve deeper into information which had been presented through other forms of data collection, to further explore or to explain anomalies or uncertainties. Further, it must be remembered that, as a focus group facilitator, I was not looking to determine whether or not my participants' information was "true", I was interested more in the dialogue—the experiences presented and social construction of further data (Somekh & Lewin, 2009).

In order for participants to be comfortable enough to participate, a safe, trustworthy environment needed to be established, otherwise participants would not feel comfortable enough to open up and share in any depth. Such an environment was created through negotiating the time/place for meeting (through email conversations with participants), being clear about the purpose of the focus group and ensuring it was structured appropriately (Newby, 2010). For example, I ensured that each participant was introduced, that a common understanding of the purpose for the focus group was clearly outlined, and initiated the discussion with non-intrusive questions. Mariampolski (1989) recommends that this process of beginning with *safe* questions encourages everyone in the group to speak early on, the researcher is then able to move to more probing questions as and when participants appear comfortable. Within a focus group there is a reliance on the participants being involved in a discussion around a topic supplied by the researcher. The interactions are between the participants themselves, rather than participant and researcher; my intention was that I became almost unnoticed by the participants. This limited involvement ensured participants conversed freely and were unencumbered by interruptions from me as the researcher. Any questioning by me flowed from or built upon previous comments by participants, or sought further clarification, but was used sparingly. The voices of the participants were the important focus for this study. Darlington and Scott (2002) have discussed the importance of letting participants exhaust what they have to

say on a particular aspect of the topic, before prompting them to move on, and that at times this may include letting disagreements be fully discussed, but also respecting participants' silences. Cohen et al. (2011) discuss how focus groups seek to yield collective rather than individual views, as gained from interviews and thus added a different dimension to the data already collected.

The focus group allowed me to observe the struggle for clarification when others used key terms which were unfamiliar, as well as participants' alternative interpretations of the topics being discussed (Mertens, 2005). As Patton (2002) explains, "the object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others" (p. 386). It is from this interaction of perspectives that rich data arises. Focus groups can be quite empowering for participants as they come together and share opinions on a common theme, where their own voice in the matters presented is of utmost importance. A word of caution must be noted here as although collective views are sought, a challenge when conducting a focus group discussion could be one dominant participant. Should this take place, a more reluctant participant may be left out of the conversation. It was therefore the role of the researcher to try to prevent one person's views being heard over others of the group. A further challenge when conducting a focus group suggests Cohen et al. (2011) is ensuring a balance between being overly directive and having participants deviate too far from the point being discussed. Such enthusiastic discussions often happen when educators get together and passionately discuss a topic, and can be very difficult to manage. In order to achieve an appropriate flow to the discussion, I kept notes as the topic progressed and refocused the participants only if they were clearly deviating from the area of research.

The focus groups created a positive, supportive network for the mentors to share their work; the mentors further encouraged this by swapping contact details with each other in order to continue their connections. In addition, the use of focus groups encouraged participants to observe both growth in understanding and development of practice. This growth was noted through the depth of discussion, not only personally by the mentors themselves, but also in the other participants who attended. This added a further dimension to the data collected and assisted in the gathering of more robust data.

In summary, the primary data-gathering methods of semi-structured interviews and document analysis were conducted. To add further depth to this information, focus groups were chosen as the secondary form of data gathering. It was anticipated that these methods would yield a lot of information and I believed this to be a strength of the case study design. Yin (2009) concurs by stating that one of the major advantages of using a case study approach is the opportunity to utilise many different sources of evidence. This then assists in forming a clearer picture of the first-time mentors' experiences and thus, addresses the research question more fully. To ensure participants' experiences were correctly represented prior to working with the data, all transcripts of interviews and focus groups were reviewed by the participants. Following this process, in order to interpret the data it was necessary to develop a way to ensure well-structured coding of data and to consider clear, unambiguous methods of analysis.

#### **4.7 Data coding and analysis**

The aim of analysing the data was to understand the experiences of my participants through their offerings of information and clearly connect these to answering the research question. "The challenge is one of illuminating and clarifying the everyday theories that people have that inform their conduct and their response to life experiences" (Radnor, 2002, p. 91). To ensure clarity and consistency when working with the data, it was necessary to ensure a systematic coding of all information that was collected. As Krueger and Casey (2000) advise, this needed to be deliberately planned to occur in a sequential and incremental way, as information was collected throughout a full teaching year.

In order to complete this process in an organised manner, electronic folders were constructed for each participant (utilising pseudonyms for each), capturing all information and correspondence in one place. Within each folder, subfolders were created for each form of data collected. For example, within Norma's folder, subfolders for personal journal entries, initial and concluding interview transcripts and any transcript from a focus group were constructed. For the analysis of this data I have drawn from what Janesick (1994) describes as "inductive analysis"; the creation of categories, themes, and patterns which emerge from reading the data in a bottom-up style (reading the data and then considering themes); thus not

pre-constructed or executed prior to data collection, no predetermined topics. I have further drawn from the thematic analysis process (a way of encoding qualitative data), and in particular, a model outlined by Mutch (2005). This model comprises of ways to code, develop categories within data, check for consistency and resonance; this model is fully outlined with specific reference to my study in the next chapter. In correlation with my positioning of this study, Boyatzis (1998) suggests that thematic analysis was an appropriate choice as it offered the opportunity for exploration, interpretation through “seeing” the data and social construction of meaning. Further, Boyatzis (1998) discusses the need for researchers using thematic analysis to *see* the raw data for what it is and sense the themes within it, rather than actively looking for them. From this point, the themes and patterns are then coded (a process Boyatzis calls “seeing as”); allowing for interpretation illuminating aspects of the experiences. This description correlates with an inductive process as themes come from reviewing participants’ information, rather than being predetermined.

The use of the computer software program NVivo was chosen as a tool to assist with organisation and analysis of the qualitative data collected in this study. The use of material in an electronic format was seen to be much easier to manoeuvre and reorganise as different data eventuated. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that such a program is better suited as a tool in the organisation of data rather than in completing the actual interpretation of it, as such programs are but aids for structuring the qualitative material (for example interview data) for further analysis. The task (and responsibility) of interpretation, however, remained my own.

Topic ordering and constructing of categories/themes was planned to follow interview transcription. This early analysis of data into themes was supplemented by the incremental analysis of the personal journal entries. It was anticipated that the personal journal entries would be submitted on a monthly basis, providing the opportunity to review and analyse the information on an on-going basis (this did not eventuate as anticipated and will be explained in Chapter 5). From additional re-reading of the material presented from the initial interviews and personal journal entries, code sheets were constructed using the identified themes in keeping with thematic analysis procedures, to ensure that systematic but

manageable analysis took place. These sheets would form the basis of data analysis and interpretation, and acted as a guide to working with the data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Further discussion on coding will be emphasised in Chapter 5.

Each of the focus group transcripts was analysed for themes using the code sheets and for the identification of further themes which may not have been evident from previous readings of the data. Responsiveness was necessary to the identification of any anomalies or issues which might require further investigation (Merriam, 2009) and the identification of additional themes which had not previously been considered. The positioning of my study necessitated a mindfulness of my personal bias and assumptions within/of this field, and so careful attention was paid to seeing the data for what it was, rather than anticipating or pre-empting. This correlates with Boyatzis (1998) description of “seeing” the themes and patterns within data and then “seeing as”, where upon further reviewing of the data, additional patterns emerge and can be coded. At the completion of the data-collection phase of this study, I anticipated reviewing the data collected and refining the coding where necessary (Creswell, 2007); interpretive summary statements for the findings within the each category would be constructed (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Within case study research it is imperative that the investigator is aware of, and follows, certain procedures to ensure quality control of the process, the findings and the outcome of the research. Due to the nature of this study and the foundations it was built upon, the definitions of “quality” differ from those seen in quantitative work. Simons (2009) discusses a move in qualitative research toward concepts of authenticity, containing such criteria as fairness, respecting participants’ perspectives and empowering them to act. Within this qualitative work, concepts of quality are considered in terms of credibility, internal validity, construct validity and triangulation, transferability, dependability and reliability. Each of these are outlined in the following section.

#### **4.8 Quality assurance**

Quality assurance procedures add to the credibility of my research. Merriam (1998) states that credibility refers to the consideration of how congruent my

findings and conclusions are with participants' experiences. It is accepted that the findings and conclusions of any investigation are purely a representation by the author (Creswell, 2007). The end product of any research and overall interpretations made in this will be the researcher's comprehension and construction of, the participants' understanding of their own experiences (Merriam, 2009). Case study research such as mine, is not looking for a definitive  $x + y = z$  correlation; but more so what has been under investigation is represented in a reliable manner, or as Bush (2002) maintains, that I have honestly represented the phenomena under examination. This necessitates ensuring interpretations made are able to be tracked back to the data collected, ensuring internal validity (Yin, 2009).

### **Internal validity**

Internal validity is described by Yin (2009) as safeguarding a "clarity of connection", that a researcher's inferences and interpretations can be directly connected back to the actual data collected; thus going some way to showing that the experiences of participants were represented honestly through my interpretations. Krueger and Casey (2000) advocate the need for the researcher to be aware of selective perception—the influence of bias; the need to ensure a trail of evidence with processes and data collection as "our training, our background and our experiences influence what we notice and what we attend to" (p. 128). Every care was taken to ensure that the presentation of participants' experiences and understanding of these, were not formulated by the researcher but could be directly related back to the participant; therefore were borne out of the data (Cohen et al., 2011). As this study was fundamentally concerned with the participants' experiences, the use of personal voice was essential in order to portray what Merriam (2009) considers to be rich descriptions. The use of direct quotes from participants is integral to the presentation of this qualitative research as they bring the research to life, and ensure participant voice is heard, an important factor in interpretive research. The use of these direct quotes also show the reader that the researcher's interpretations are directly based upon the evidence (Darlington & Scott, 2002), reinforcing the notion of internal validity. Further, personal assumptions and positioning were made clear early within this thesis to ensure clarity, transparency and limiting the favouring of one element

over another. Recognition of limitations within this study is also presented at a later stage within this thesis.

### **Construct validity and triangulation**

In relation to internal validity is the need to make sure that the sets of measures used in the study, effectively reflect or match what is actually being investigated; that the chosen methods of data collection are appropriate to the construction of the study. My study is not looking for statistical correlations but a far more qualitative design focussed on understanding and interpreting, therefore the methods of collecting data must be reflective of this. Additionally, as my interpretations would come from representations of the phenomena, the use of multiple forms of data collection are recommended by Yin (2009) and connect with the concept of construct validity; through different lines of inquiry converging, corroborating evidence from different sources created the opportunity to make stronger inferences from the data (Yin, 2009). Construct validity informs the process of triangulation. According to Stake (2003), triangulation can also serve to clarify meaning within data by identifying the different ways the phenomenon is being seen. Triangulation in this study, can be seen in a variety of ways—from the analysis of multiple forms of information, through to the participants themselves in the focus group dialogue verifying points of view and the reviewing of transcripts. All lead to opportunities to scrutinise the data and look for inconsistencies, leading to higher levels of validity. The scrutiny of multiple sources of data reassured me that the information being presented and the inferences being made were consistent (Charles & Mertler, 2002).

### **Transferability**

Ensuring the provision of thick descriptions when constructing the sections of this thesis aids in conveying for the reader a full picture of the investigation, allowing the reader to have as much insight as possible adding to the credibility of the study (Shenton, 2004). By providing sufficient information, readers can then determine if the phenomenon under study is representative of phenomena seen in their own environment, thus considering transferability, the second concept related to quality assurance. In qualitative research, transferability can be difficult and particularly in a study such as this one. Due to the positioning of this investigation where each participant attaches meaning to their experiences of the

world from their own perspective (i.e., multiple realities are reflected), to replicate the findings of the study would be unrealistic as participants would present different understandings of their experiences and contexts. It is thus left up to the reader to determine the confidence in transferring my results and conclusions to that of another environment.

### **Dependability and Reliability**

The concept of transferability is often seen in relation to dependability. The notion of being able to replicate my study in another place and time, follow exactly the processes and procedures of my study and conclude with the same outcomes, is unlikely. As this study involves people and a social context, for a specific time in their lives, it would be difficult to replicate with exactness, the conditions, the participants and the perspectives at a different time. That is not to say that the study itself, the design and method, could not be replicated to provide findings that could be compared and contrasted with my findings and conclusions; it could possibly even be used to corroborate or contest my conclusions, which is referred to as “reliability” by Yin (2009). To ensure reliability it was necessary to construct and present clear and concise procedures relating to data collection, thus the process could be replicated and therefore be reliable. Processes were documented throughout the investigation and these were reported in detail to enable the reader to be able to have a thorough understanding and be able to follow all procedures presented (Shenton, 2004; Yin, 2009). In addition, as a researcher I had to be conscious of my own bias and work almost as if an auditor is watching over me, thus ensuring a more accurate representation of the study and therefore further ensuring reliability.

When completing any research, there are going to be areas of concern in addition to the concepts of quality outlined above. The responsibilities of the researcher and the rights of the participants necessitate discussion of ethical considerations.

## **4.9 Ethical Considerations**

The integrity and sensitivity of the investigator can be limiting factors within qualitative case studies suggests Merriam (2009). Therefore I believed it was essential that from the very beginning of this study, ethical considerations were considered carefully. At the conception of the research proposal, it was important

to fully consider why the study was to be undertaken (the purpose), to clarify and disclose assumptions and bias (as mentioned earlier), and to clearly define how the study was to be undertaken (the procedures). Thus, it was necessary to ensure the positioning of the researcher throughout the study. Prior to any information being viewed by prospective participants, full disclosure of material relating to this study was reviewed and approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee.

One of the core principles of research ethics is that of obtaining voluntary and informed consent from potential participants. This was a threefold process as endorsed by Mertens (2005). Firstly, all potential participants were volunteers (i.e., invited to participate without threat, undue enticement or incentive). Secondly, that they were given all the necessary information in writing (i.e., full disclosure with no deception about the nature of the study) (Creswell, 2007). Lastly, there was an explicit agreement to participate in the study (i.e., signing of a consent form) although it was acknowledged that participants should have the right to “terminate their involvement” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 71). In addition, my own duty of care was outlined (incorporating such elements as respecting of participants, anonymity (where possible and desired) and the ability to review data-collection contributions). Within this study, anonymity and confidentiality were assured through the use of pseudonyms for the schools’ and the participants’ names (Creswell, 2007). Due to the size of the education sector in New Zealand, and especially the small size of the primary school sector in Auckland, it was essential that all possible care be taken to ensure participants were not identifiable, throughout the study and after it was completed.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

Research such as in this project can be considered a chain of interpretations that must be documented for others to judge the credibility, validity and reliability of the meanings and conclusions. The ability to gather the vivid descriptions of participants’ experiences was my core objective within this study and this was made possible by the positioning of this research. A case study approach allowed the phenomenon under investigation to be clearly specified, with the experiences of participants to be explored through a variety of data-collection methods. This

chapter has reviewed the necessary concepts of quality control which directly relate to the use of case study and assisted with quality assurance. Coding and analysis of the data offered insight into how the data was made ready for interpretation and finally, ethical considerations of my study were outlined and reflected upon. The next chapter maps my journey of data collection, depicting the specifics of research in action.

## **Chapter 5 Research in action: Gathering information**

This chapter outlines the journey of data collection, the hearing of first-time mentors' voices for this research. It describes and reviews the study in action, from initial recruitment of participants through to discussion of the ways in which data was collected and managed. Lastly, issues and limitations of data collection are summarised with concepts of quality reviewed.

This study aimed to explore firstly, what first-time mentors' understandings of their roles and responsibilities were when they worked with provisionally registered teachers (beginning teachers). Secondly, what (if any) were the challenges and tensions which arose from the interplay between the roles and responsibilities of a first-time mentor? A maximum of eight participants were sought for this study. The criterion for selection was that participants had to be first-time mentors of beginning teachers (who were in their first year of teaching). In order to gain understanding of participant experiences and to examine these from their point of view, a range of data-collection methods were employed: individual interviews, document analysis, personal journals, and focus groups. The following sections outline how this study unfolded in practice over the year of data collection.

### **5.1 Recruitment**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the New Zealand Ministry of Education provides open access to their website which contains a national school directory in the form of a Microsoft Excel spread-sheet. As my research focussed solely on primary school mentors within the greater Auckland region, the directory was copied and the information edited to show only primary and intermediate schools from the region. As I wanted participants to be able to come together in focus groups throughout the year of data collection, having participants all over the country did not seem realistic, thus I decided that the sample would only be from the Auckland region which has a large population from which to draw participants.

My recruitment sample containing 100 schools was generated through "purposive" sampling. This form of sampling involved identifying specific participants who were potentially able to provide data on my topic. Cohen et al.

(2011) suggest that purposive sampling is utilised to gain in-depth information from those who are in the position to offer it, as is the case with the first-time mentors within this study.

By creating a sample in this way a further consideration of the study was addressed; this was the intention to obtain information from a variety of school contexts or decile ratings (socio-economic rating of the area surrounding the school as designated by the Ministry of Education). Although schools were ordered alphabetically within the directory, they were not additionally ordered by decile rating. Therefore, a range of school contexts was identified.

Early in the first school term (March), the schools identified in the sample received invitation packs via postal mail, which seemed more formal than sending invitations electronically through email. These packs were discussed in the previous chapter; they were addressed to the principal of the school, contained an introductory letter, and a sealed information pack specifically for participants. The pack was to be disseminated by the principal to appropriate people (first-time mentors) within each school, who would then contact the researcher directly by returning the consent form or through email, should they be interested in participating in the study.

### **First responses**

After a month, three responses were returned; two informed me of choosing not to participate in the study and the third was a positive response to being a participant. The dates of all responses were recorded next to the school on the collated directory spread-sheet. Upon contacting the positive respondent, it became evident that they were not an appropriate candidate due to not meeting the criterion of mentoring a first-year teacher; this respondent was currently mentoring a provisionally registered teacher who was in their second year of teaching (nearing full registration). As the response to invitations from sample one was extremely limited, another 50 schools were selected from the directory spread-sheet to be contacted as a second sample.

### **Second mail-out and responses**

This second mail-out was established through similar means as the first but began with the first non-highlighted school (meaning the second school on the directory

spreadsheet, as the first was in the first sample). On the spread-sheet every fifth school onward was then highlighted electronically using a different colour from the first sample in order to show clear differentiation between samples. In addition, I cut and pasted all schools which had been highlighted creating a list in a sample spread-sheet, thus having a clear record only showing the schools which had been contacted. This allowed ease of access to the information when viewing either sample one schools or sample two schools, rather than scrolling through the entire directory.

As occurred with the first mail-out, these 50 schools received an invitation pack. This second mail-out resulted in nine responses being received, of these three were positive; all others thanked me for the opportunity but identified that they did not meet the participation criterion. One participant was enthusiastic about being part of the study and was the first person to return a completed consent form to be a participant. The two other positive responders completed and returned their consent forms after a period of time. This brought the total number of confirmed participants, after two sample mail-outs to 150 schools in the area, to three.

It became apparent that this mechanism for sampling was not as effective as planned. Additional forms of sampling needed to be initiated; three other forms of sampling then took place to attempt to increase the potential for a full sample. The first additional form of this was initiated through my work as a lecturer within a Bachelor of Education degree. I work with students in their last year of study and so upon graduating, they seek employment within primary schools. I decided to directly contact my cohort of recently graduated teachers whom I knew had been successful in gaining a position within a primary school. These new teachers were now classed as first-year provisionally registered teachers and would have (hopefully) been assigned a mentor from within their schools. The possibility existed that the mentor they were now working with might be a first-time mentor. I saw this form of sampling as drawing from the snowball technique of sampling in that by sending out feelers to a group known to me, they then forwarded the information regarding my study to any who were within the criterion for participating, thus snowballing the available network of possible participants at my disposal (Bouma & Ling, 2004). Contact was completed via email and resulted in two positive responses. From this initial contact, I mailed out invitation

packs to the principals of these specific schools and again, asked them to forward the invitation packs to any first-time mentors within their schools. Upon recording this information on the sample spread-sheet, it was noted that one of the schools was already in the second sample. Neither pack yielded a confirmed response and after additional contact with both candidates, no further information was received.

I then began cold-calling every tenth school from sample one to inquire if they had received the invitation packs and if there were in fact any possible candidates for my study within their school. It was a way of touching base with the school and having a conversation rather than just sending a pack out into the ether. Notes of this cold-call were recorded next to the schools on the sample spread-sheet. This yielded three possible participants. The potential participants were then contacted directly (by phone), two agreed to participate and invitation packs were sent out to them specifically—even though their schools had been in the first sample and I thought they would have received a pack from their principals. The third contact, although enthusiastic about participating, did not meet the selection criterion. At this stage, there were five confirmed participants.

Lastly I had been notified by personal contacts at work that certain principals had shown an interest in receiving information about my study and that they may have potential participants on their staff. This form of sampling I believe to be akin to “opportunity” or “convenience” sampling (Somekh & Lewin, 2009), where personal relationships ease the acquisition of potential participants. The schools of these particular principals were highlighted using a separate colour on the directory spread-sheet; this information was then transferred to the sample spread-sheet and invitation packs sent out to them. This sampling yielded a further interested candidate, who was contacted directly and a consent form completed and received. The participants for my study now numbered six.

In order to pursue additional candidates, further cold-calling by phone of sample two schools was initiated (as per sample one) but did not result in positive contacts and so after four months of recruitment, the sample of participants remained at six. After collating all participant information, it was noted that all but one of the six participants were from a similar school context (decile rating). As stated earlier, a range of school environments had been envisioned for the study,

and so the decision was made to send out invitations specifically to low-decile schools (schools which were part of a low socio-economic area) in the greater Auckland area. This was completed through a process similar to that seen for sample one and two. The list of low-decile schools was extracted from the compacted Ministry of Education directory spread-sheet; every tenth school was highlighted and then imported onto the sample spread-sheet. I have drawn from “quota” sampling here where certain characteristics are identified from the wider population and sampling is used to ensure representation of these within the study (Cohen et al., 2011).

Instead of sending out further invitation packs, I made the decision to personally call each school as this would reduce the time waiting for a response via mail or email, and would ascertain directly if the school had potential candidates for my study. From this communication, one positive response was found but after mailing out an invitation pack, no further response was received. Information pertaining to date of contact and responses from all potential participants was recorded next to their school on the sample spread-sheet. The participant numbers remained at six.

In addition to recording information next to participants’ schools, a personal researchers’ journal of events (what happened, when) was kept, so as to keep a record for myself. This documenting proved invaluable when attempting to keep track of direct contact with schools and their responses. Further to this, it became a valuable tool when following up positive contacts, as some participants had shown interest in being part of the study, but were slow to return completed consent forms. This was not seen as a reflection of their interest but a reflection of how busy they were as teachers.

After five months of attempting to complete my sample of eight participants, the focus of my work moved from obtaining additional candidates, to that of data collection. At this time I then received an email from one of my past students who was a first-year provisionally registered teacher and had a first-time mentor working with her. Upon contacting this new candidate directly, she was happy to participate and subsequently, completed and returned a consent form. This brought the total number of participants to seven and this became the final cohort

in my research. All participants were women; although this was pure coincidence, the securing of just women participants could be seen as reflective of the profession, due to 83% of New Zealand primary school teachers being women as of 2011 (The World Bank, n.d.). Table 3 below offers a brief overview of each person in order for them to be seen as real people as opposed to purely a data source. Participants are recorded as pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

**Table 3** Introducing the Mentors of this Study

<b>Participant (pseudonyms)</b>	<b>Time in the profession</b>	<b>Reason for becoming a mentor</b>
1. Kay	20 years	Aspirations toward leadership
2. Kelli	9 and a half years	Aspirations toward leadership
3. Eden	9 years	Shoulder-tapped by principal (no one else for the role)
4. Norma	9 years	Passionate about assisting in the development of a new teacher
5. Jane	4 years	Asked by principal (felt she couldn't say no)
6. Esther	Over 20 years	Enjoys working with teachers new to the profession
7. Abby	Over 20 years	Asked by principal (no one else for the role)

Although all but one of the schools where the mentors worked were classed as high decile (being within a high socio-economic area), the nature of each school and its culture were quite different. A rural school, a school of special character (independent of the state system), an inner city school and a bilingual school (delivery in both Māori and English languages) were all represented within this study. This was important as it offered the opportunity for rich data to be collected from a variety of environments and therefore, perspectives. Additionally, it was interesting to note that, even though all seven participants considered themselves teachers first and foremost, of the seven all but two were currently in a leadership position within their school. This offered the opportunity to investigate mentoring from a variety of perspectives and the possibility of noting if such leadership expertise actually assisted the mentors in this new role.

Throughout the data-collection phase, all participants were able to contribute to the data collection and although not all could attend both focus groups, their

contributions in other areas assisted in the collection of vivid and insightful data. Table 4 below shows the data contribution of each participant throughout the data collection phase of this study.

**Table 4** Overview of Participant Data Contribution

<b>Data-collection method</b>	<b>Kay</b>	<b>Kelli</b>	<b>Eden</b>	<b>Norma</b>	<b>Jane</b>	<b>Esther</b>	<b>Abby</b>
Initial interview	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Document analysis – personal journal	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Document analysis – school specific information	√	√	●	●	●	√	●
Focus group 1	●	√	√	●	●	√	●
Focus group 2	√	√	√	●	√	√	●
Concluding interview	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

KEY: √ refers to participation; ● refers to non-participation

As can be seen from the above table, all participants contributed in more than one way to the study. This proved useful in portraying a variety of experiences from each of the mentors at differing times throughout data collection. The following sections will outline the data-collection processes.

## 5.2 Initiating data collection

Although I had continued to secure participants throughout the first school term, data collection began as soon as consent forms were received from confirmed participants. I felt it was important to meet each participant as soon as possible, to develop some rapport and begin to form a professional relationship with them. A further consideration was the requirement within the study that the first-time mentors needed to be working with a first-year teacher. Due to the challenges of obtaining participants, I did not want to have to continue data collection into a second (new) year, as the nature of the beginning teacher's experience would be different. It was also imperative that participants began their reflective journals as soon as possible, due to the busy nature of working in a school during the first term. Therefore, as soon as signed consent forms were returned, participants were

contacted directly (by phone or email) in order to establish a suitable time and place to conduct the initial interviews.

### **5.3 Initial interviews**

Throughout this initial phase of establishing a positive relationship with the participants, I was cognisant of ensuring their comfort and the creation of a trusting environment. As Cohen et al. (2011) assert, an interview is an interpersonal and social encounter, not just a data-collection exercise, and as such, participants should be assisted to feel secure to talk freely. To this end, participants were able to choose where and when the initial interview would be held. All participants chose to conduct the initial interviews at their school sites, some in their own classrooms, and others within a boardroom. All environments were out of high-density areas (and therefore noise), and away from other colleagues. Some participants chose to have the interview prior to school beginning at the start of the day, others during their non-contact time within the school day (mandated release time from classroom duties). The remaining participants chose to have their interview conducted after school hours. As Oliver (2008) suggests it is necessary to ensure participants feel at ease but yet to also ensure they have some control within the data-collection process; therefore I was at their disposal as to when and where the initial interviews were conducted.

All interviews followed the same procedure and organisation; all were digitally recorded, and all had the same indicative questions asked. In order to put each participant at ease at the beginning of the interview, a number of introductory questions were asked (for example: How long have you been in teaching? or What level do you teach?). Not only did these questions ease the participant into talking about themselves, but they then tended to forget the recorder was running and seemed to become more comfortable in speaking with me. Some participants were very chatty and had no trouble in sharing their thoughts and experiences leading to lengthy interview times, which often required gentle redirection of the topics discussed. Others were more direct and to the point in answering the questions asked.

Each initial interview provided insight into the participant's school environment and their personal thoughts and experiences of being a teacher and now a mentor

for the first time. As Bouma and Ling (2004) suggest, using interviews is “to get a ‘window’ on reality from the point of view of a participant and allow them to tell their story” (p. 177). Information from each initial interview assisted in the creation of personal, situational information (school environment) folders for each participant, which were housed electronically. This information was added to as I got to know each person throughout the year and helped me understand each participant as an individual within their own school environment. Further to this, the information from the initial interviews created a foundation or starting point for me as the researcher, of each participant’s understanding of being a mentor; this information provided insight into each participant as they began their journey into being a mentor from different professional places.

Through the use of open-ended questions, where the participants had room to fully explore the topic under discussion, initial interview data identified where each participant was positioned as a professional learning a new role. Since each participant had begun mentorship from different professional experiences (some as teachers, some as leaders, some willingly and some not), some participants delved deeper into some questions, others provided additional topics of discussion, and others skipped over some questions finding them not relevant to their situation or experiences. Throughout each interview I was conscious of any sensitive areas or levels of anxiety, as it was important to me that the participants enjoyed the sharing of their stories. As noted earlier, some were much more confident and assertive than others, and this was reflected in the way they approached the interview. At times this correlated with their level of teaching experience and whether they were currently in a management position, but this was not consistently the case.

All interviews were completed by the first few weeks of the second school term (May). Each interview was transcribed (by a contracted professional transcriber) and returned via email to the participant for confirmation of what was presented. This ensured that each participant felt valued and had some control over the meanings portrayed in the interview data. All participants accepted the transcriptions with no alterations requested.

After all of the initial interviews had been concluded, the personal reflective journals were discussed with each participant. This discussion took the form of asking participants how they were going with recording their thoughts, did they need any assistance or prompts with these, did they have any questions regarding the process or how the journal information would be utilised? In addition, participants were asked to locate any school documents which may pertain to mentoring and which were specific to their own school environment. These two forms of data collection (journal reflections and documentation) are further elaborated on in the next two sections.

## **5.4 Reflections**

Although all participants stated they were happy to complete the reflective journals and a brief outline of expectations was given, the challenge for me was retrieving this information from them. The expectation was that the participants recorded their experiences of being a mentor, their thoughts/feelings surrounding these experiences as an ongoing process throughout each month. It was then anticipated that they forwarded journal entries to me upon completing each entry. They had the option of using whatever media they were comfortable with (such as digital recording, email, handwritten, etc) and were able to send them to me in whatever way was easiest for them. Additionally, I also made the offer to collect them directly from each participant if this would ease the process.

All participants chose to type their reflections electronically and save them to personal computers. Out of the seven participants, only one consistently sent in her journal entries each month, via email. All other participants did not submit to the requested timeframe of each month. The remaining six participants took some time before submitting their journals; one waited until the very last week of the school year, and then sent a collation of entries all in one submission; others waited until the end of each school term to submit their entries.

The lack of journal submissions from participants particularly at the beginning of the study became worrying as there was no way of knowing if they were not writing material which correlated to the aims of the study, nor was there the chance of giving any further guidance if this was needed. For example, a number of the participants wrote freely about their beginning teachers within their

reflective journals, but omitted recording any information about themselves as mentors. Additionally, some wrote purely factual information, such as about meetings with their beginning teachers. Had this style of writing continued throughout the remaining study, the information received would have been far removed from what was needed, which was the experiences of the mentor, not the experiences of the beginning teacher through the eyes of the mentor.

Upon noting the mistaken focus in the few very early submissions of journal entries, I sent all participants further guidance in the form of some prompt questions to assist with steering the reflections toward the perspectives of the mentors, rather than focussing on the beginning teachers. This advice seemed to work as the remaining journal entries which filtered in were more personally focussed (on the actual mentors themselves) and less about the beginning teachers. This is not to say that the issue of irrelevant material disappeared altogether; participants still found it easier to discuss their perceptions of their beginning teachers' experiences rather than their own. I believe this indicated where their professional focus lay; that they were immersed in thinking about the beginning teacher, rather than themselves.

All journal entries were stored in the electronic personal folders that I had created after the initial interviews (folders were itemised using pseudonyms), and entries were dated to show when they were submitted. As discussed earlier, it became quite concerning when no reflections were submitted over a lengthy space of time, and there was no way of knowing if these were being completed. As the journals would provide insight into the professional reflections of the participants, as well as being a way to observe change over time, they were an integral part of the data-collection process. At times, I had to have faith in my participants that they would complete their journal entries and submit as agreed. I believe that it would not have been appropriate to jostle them along over the submissions.

Secondary to the dilemma of submitting the journals, was the limited amount of time the participants had in their day. Understanding that the participants were all teaching and many were also in leadership positions, their days were very full and busy with school business. I had to be aware of this throughout the study and appreciate whatever submission they could make regarding the personal journals.

## 5.5 Securing and sorting documentation

As previously mentioned, at the conclusion of the initial interviews, I discussed with each participant that, as part of the data collection, it would be appreciated if they could share any school-specific information/documentation pertaining to mentoring. Participants discussed this request with their principals, who were happy for them to discuss any documentation written by or utilised within their school specifically. Mutch (2005) concurs that it is important to seek permission and have this approved prior to using documents within a study.

Although participants passionately discussed the need for school-specific documentation, it quickly became evident that only a few of their own schools actually had any documentation regarding mentoring practices. Three of the seven participants submitted school documentation; one of these had documents which the school had created as a staff (together); the other two participants had created their own forms of documentation for their school to utilise. Much of this had been collated from national support documents (the support kit) and then redrafted into their own designs which worked for their own school environment and their beginning teacher. This documentation (or lack of it) indicated a gap between mentor needs and what the schools were providing for mentors, but also a possible gap between schools and what was being nationally provided by regulatory boards.

### **National documentation**

As discussed earlier in this thesis, the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Council provide support material to all schools which outline the national expectations for induction and mentoring. The resource folder *Towards Full Registration – A Support Kit* (Ministry of Education & the New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009) and *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011) were reviewed as part of the document analysis for this study. Additionally, the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010) handbook was also examined after being referred to within the *Guidelines* booklet. This handbook offered greater insight into the standards required of teachers and how all the information connected.

The information within these resources was examined in order to locate any specific reference to three elements of interest to this study. Firstly, to record the processes and procedures schools were required to have in place for their mentors. Secondly, the resources were reviewed to ascertain the expectations, at a national level, of mentors within the primary school sector. And lastly, any support material which mentors may have utilised was located within the resources. This information was then collated and stored for further analysis at the conclusion of data collection. The most recent handbook from the Teachers Council entitled *Registration Policy* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2012) was explored in order to ascertain concrete information pertaining to nationally mandated requirements, which had proven to be limited in the aforementioned documentation. This policy information was then added to the above collation.

The purpose of the *Towards Full Registration* folder was to provide schools with clear direction and a working set of guidelines to assist in the professional development of beginning teachers, commonly referred to as an “advice and guidance” programme. Whereas the purpose of the Teachers Council *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011) was to shift the focus of professional development away from advice and guidance to much more skilled facilitation of mentoring, the co-construction of professional learning through a more educative approach. This change in focus was discussed in Chapter 2 and within the New Zealand context in Chapter 3. Although the more current booklet purports a different form of and focus within mentoring, nevertheless the *Towards Full Registration* folder is still widely accepted as a form of support and direction by mentors and was therefore included in analysis of national documentation for this study. The outcome of document analysis is discussed in the following chapter, where this data is fully explored and brought together with the aims of this research.

## **5.6 Focus groups**

Two focus groups were conducted throughout the year of data collection, one in July and the other in September. The purpose of these events was for the participants to get together, to provide an open discussion for conversation to flow and to collect further rich data from these open discussions. The focus groups

provided interactive discussions; a social, interpersonal environment, where people of like-minds could converse and get to know others who had a common purpose (that of being a first-time mentor).

### **First gathering**

Mertens (2005) suggests that one of the goals for researchers using focus groups is to have human-to-human relationship with participants, to understand their perspective and that this requires the building of rapport. I was aware that, in order to accomplish this, a safe and trustworthy environment needed to be established, otherwise participants might not feel comfortable enough to open up and share their experiences in any depth. For the first focus group this type of environment was created through ensuring a venue was located for ease of access by participants, that refreshments were readily available and that participants were given the opportunity to get to know each other and feel comfortable as a group. This rapport was established by each participant being introduced and a common understanding of the purpose for the focus group being reviewed.

I opened each discussion with a safe “leader” question, and I was confident that every participant would feel comfortable in making a contribution without feeling pressured or unsettled by being in a group of new people. Mariampolski (1989) suggests this type of initial questioning encourages everyone in the group to speak early on, to have a say before moving to more in-depth questions when participants appear comfortable. This type of bedding in was especially necessary as the material being considered may have appeared to be of a sensitive nature to the participants and they may have been wary of divulging their feelings regarding their experiences as first-time mentors within a group of strangers. Although four participants had notified me of their ability to attend the first focus group, one participant forgot. The three participants who attended did not take long to become comfortable with each other, especially as the discussion turned toward the experiences of being a first-time mentor. The common interest sparked much discussion, questioning and debate between the participants and generated a lot of valuable data.

## **Second focus group**

In order to attract a greater number of participants for the second focus group, I sent out emails requesting participants let me know dates and times that would be most suitable for them. I also offered a variety of venues so that participants could select the easiest for them to attend. This was especially important for the participant who lived the furthest away as it was important that she felt included and appreciated within this project. After securing a venue, time and date for the second focus group closest to her wishes (but which also worked for the majority of other participants also), it was somewhat disappointing to have her cancel at the last minute but I recognise that teachers have many work pressures. The second focus group comprised of five participants, the three from the first focus group and two additional participants. Due to three already knowing each other from the first focus group, the bedding in time was minimal, as these participants confidently opened the discussions and brought the two new participants quickly into the conversations. This focus group was held in a quiet, large room and a range of refreshments was again provided. I felt this was particularly necessary as the participants had all just completed a busy day at their schools and some had come straight from school to the focus group. The refreshments were met with much appreciation and provided a social feel as the group came together.

This second focus group was at times difficult to manage as rich discussions broke out between and across participants, so on occasions, there was more than one conversation going on at a time. This also became problematic at the transcription stage later on. It was difficult to bring the group back to a cohesive discussion without squashing their natural exuberance and interest in following a line of thought with neighbouring participants. I also found this difficult as all of the discussions taking place were very worthwhile and of interest to the aims of this study. Due to the valuable nature of the varied discussions, most of the time I let it flow. If the topic of discussion was moving to an area outside the study, I refocused the group by reiterating the initial question and asking for specifics from group members. The wealth of information gathered from this second focus group was substantial; the group just wanted to keep talking! Whether this was due to the extra numbers in the group, the different topics of discussion, or the professional development of the participants since the last focus group, it is

difficult to conclude but the difference between this focus group compared to the first was significant.

## **5.7 Concluding interviews**

As the school year began to draw to an end, I emailed all participants early in term four (November) requesting a date, time and place which would suit them in order to collect the data for final interviews. Due to this being the last term of the year, it was difficult to secure participants for these interviews as many had a variety of school commitments which were viewed as high priority. I understood this difficulty and worked around participants' schedules as much as possible. After moving a few interview times repeatedly to accommodate, all but one had completed their concluding interview by the last day of the school year. The final participant arranged for her concluding interview to be in the first week of the school holidays.

As with the initial interviews, all participants chose to have their final interviews within their own school settings, either in the library after school hours, within their own classroom after school hours, or in the staff room whilst on release time. Again these places ensured a quiet, safe environment for them to answer my questions. As per the initial interviews, the questions were open ended and allowed the participants to offer as much depth of information as they were able to. The majority of the concluding interviews took only between 15 and 20 minutes as participants were more sure and forthright about their answers. This was in stark contrast to their initial interviews and suggested that they had now established themselves as mentors.

These concluding interviews were transcribed, transcripts returned via email to the participants to confirm the information presented and again, all participants signalled via email that the transcripts were reflective of what they had wanted to say.

## **5.8 Data analysis**

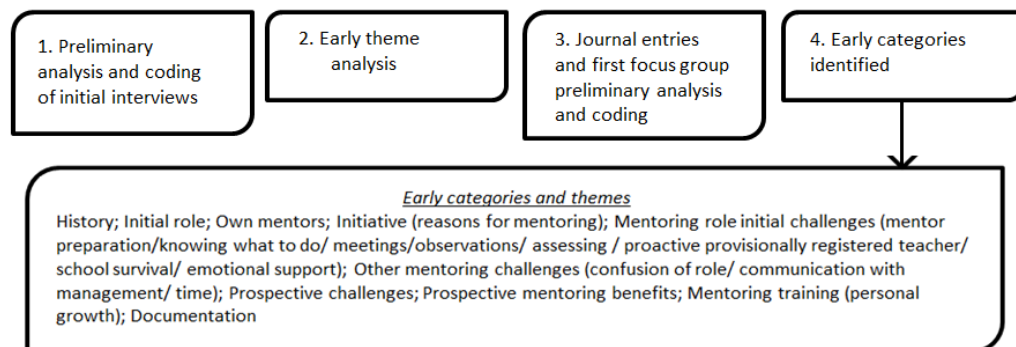
As discussed earlier the anticipated method of data analysis involved thematic analysis. I employed a model outlined by Mutch (2005) as this allowed for the

analysis process to be inductive rather than deductive, where no set themes or topics were predetermined. The model comprised eight processes: browse; highlight; code; group and label; develop themes or categories; check for consistency and resonance; select examples; and lastly, report findings (Mutch, 2005). Thematic analysis is discussed below with specific reference to how this unfolded within my study.

In addition to the above, the computer software package NVivo 9 was also utilised to assist with the organisation of data for analysis. NVivo was relatively new to me and so was not utilised from the initial data analysis stage. The early analysis of data was completed with Microsoft word documents through reviewing and electronically highlighting and annotating potential themes within the data. NVivo became the prominent method of organising data and assisted in the analysis of it at a later stage in the process. This delay was due to my learning about the program through courses and undertaking some trialling of it prior to transferring all of my data to NVivo. Once this transfer had taken place, all coding and analysis was completed using this program.

### Coding and analysis

**Figure 2** Overview of Early Theme Coding and Analysis



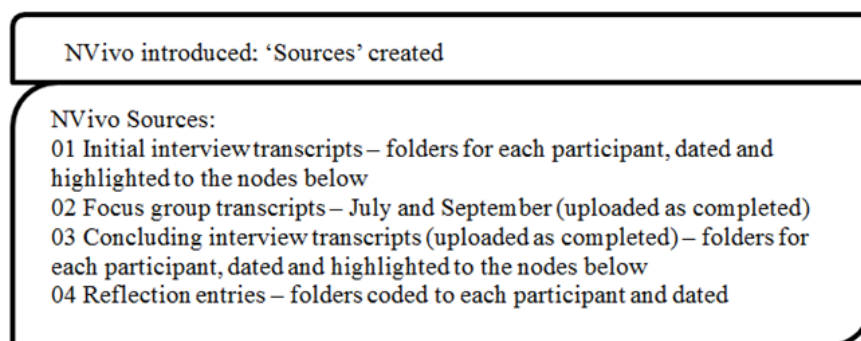
Early coding and analysis of data began as soon as initial interviews were transcribed and confirmed by participants as accurate representations. This early analysis comprised reading over each transcript (or browsing), considering what material was being discussed by the participant, noting what particular aspects of answers caught my attention and why, and electronically highlighting this with different colours (coding) (Figure 2 No. 1). Once all initial interviews were concluded and early analysis completed, I began further review of all data

provided at this stage and began to consider the connections between what had been highlighted (grouping and labelling). From this information, themes or categories began to emerge (developing themes); this was conducted by making electronic annotations (recording a key word or topic) in the margins of the transcripts. Hence as discussed above, this process was inductive rather than deductive—I did not begin analysis with concrete topics to find but let the participant voices lead me to the topic; I let the data speak for itself. In this way the themes which were most important to the participant emerged (Figure 2 No. 2). The above process was also completed as journal entries began to be submitted and after the first focus group data was transcribed and approved by those who had attended (Figure 2 No. 3). Further to this, I looked for converging lines of inquiry (consistency and resonance), where connections and patterns formed to corroborate conclusions across the data (Radnor, 2002; Yin, 2009). These patterns began to form categories which could then be further labelled to give clarity to the theme they represented (Figure 2 No. 4). This reflects the description of thematic analysis by Mutch (2005) in that I was able to group and label data, and subsequently develop themes and collate categories which could be reviewed to ensure consistency throughout the data.

### **NVivo**

It was at this stage of data analysis that I transferred from analysing the data using Microsoft word documents (transcriptions and journal entries), to utilising NVivo. This shift involved downloading all data files into a “project” within the NVivo program and creating ‘Sources’ where all information was housed (Figure 3).

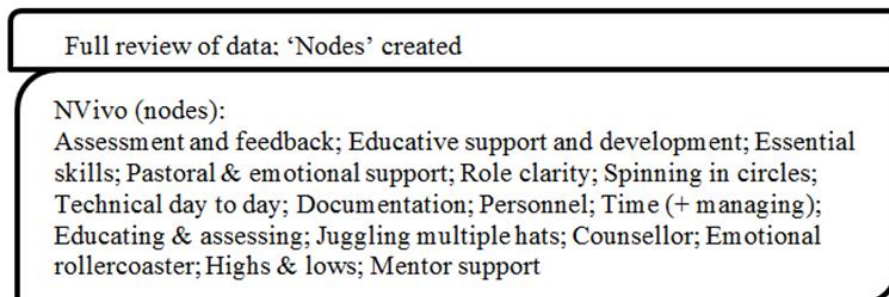
**Figure 3** NVivo Sources



From here I then worked with the software to recode all the data to show the early analysis that had already been completed and create nodes (categories) to reflect

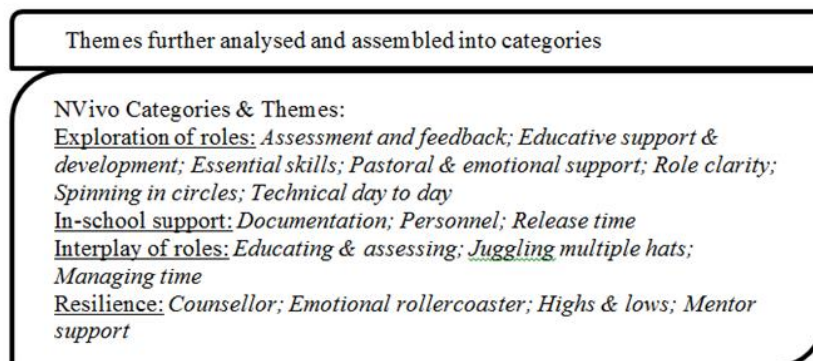
the themes which had been created (Figure 4). Bazeley (2007) discusses this type of initial coding as a necessary process of analysis where text is “chunked” to form broad topic areas which are later refined.

**Figure 4** NVivo Nodes



Although the transferring of data to the analysis tool was initially time consuming, the outcome ensured that as analysis progressed, the process was much more efficient and orderly. I was able to effectively review themes across all data, able to isolate specific themes within individual or collective data, and ensured collation of all categories and themes was viewable in one place (Figure 5).

**Figure 5** NVivo Categories and Themes



NVivo allowed me to view all entries from an individual participant across all forms of data but further allowed for a collection and collation of entries from all participants on one specific theme. The ability to select specific data based on a variety of points of view rapidly and efficiently, became invaluable when cross-checking for consistency and resonance (Mutch, 2005).

### **Analysing documents**

Although NVivo was utilised for the majority of data collected, this software was not used in the document analysis section of this research. A conscious decision

was made not to utilise a method of analysis such as content analysis, as this was seen as too restrictive and more quantitative, rather than fitting my chosen research methodology; I felt the counting and measuring of text did not reflect the qualitative nature of my study (Mutch, 2005). As I was looking for specific information from the national- and school-created documents, for my method of analysis I drew from a thematic approach but utilised a more deductive form in that I looked for three areas of interest or themes. Firstly, nationally mandated requirement information was sought; information relating to specifics that schools were required to have in place for mentors. Secondly, national expectations; information outlining what schools were expected to (but not mandated to) either provide or have in place for mentors within their school. And lastly, I was searching for support material for mentors, information which was available to assist mentors in understanding and enacting their role within schools.

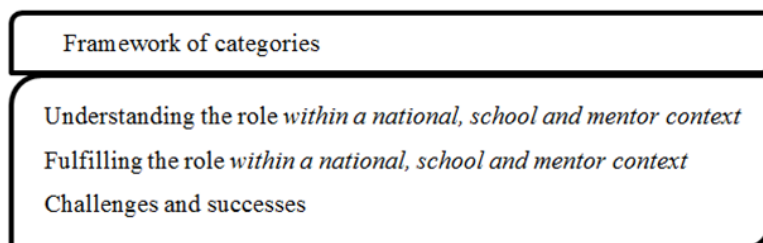
A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was created with headings of 'Requirements', 'Expectations' and 'Support'. Documents from the Ministry of Education and Teachers Council (policy and information; hard copy and web based) were systematically reviewed and coded with the above themes in mind. Additionally, participants were asked to submit any documentation their schools had regarding mentoring or being a mentor. Again, the information was reviewed with the three headings in mind and coded as above. At the conclusion of the coding phase, I was able to analyse the coded information through reviewing the spreadsheet to see any patterns or consistency across the documentation and to highlight key areas of interest relating to what is nationally required of schools, what is expected or suggested and what support material is available to assist mentors to understand and complete their role effectively. In order to corroborate some pieces of information, I made phone calls to both the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Council. This process and a final review ensured document analysis was reliable and thorough. The findings of this analysis will be fully explored in the following chapter.

### **Concluding analysis**

On completion of all data coding, I checked back through the data for consistency and to ensure I had not missed *seeing* any messages from participants, ensuring I had captured the essence of meaning without distorting the integrity of the data.

After a period of time, I re-examined the coded data and nodes to ensure both were comprehensive and complete. By completing this process after some time had passed from initial coding, I was able to see the analysis from a fresh perspective. Further review of the captured data then necessitated the re-evaluation of the categorising of some data (more appropriately placed within a new node) and the review of all nodes. A shift was noted in my thinking, from seeing micro-ideas to the bringing together of different elements which, when reviewed together, showed a meaningful relationship of a broader concept. Thus I was able to move analysis to a macro view and ensure the generation of more abstract nodes. These nodes connected a series of information by combining or linking early nodes and led to a broad but more cohesive view of the data, concluding in the creation of a broad framework for presenting findings using three categories ‘Understanding of the role’, ‘Fulfilling the role’ and ‘Challenges and successes’ (Figure 6). Cohen et al. (2011) suggest this type of analysis represents axial coding, where several codes revolve around a central category or axis, and where connections are made between sub-groups and other categories.

**Figure 6** Final Analysis Framework



A further Microsoft Excel spread-sheet was then constructed displaying the above categories and sub-categories with annotations discussing what each entailed. This action assisted in appreciating a comprehensive view of the analysed data. Additionally, quotes were extracted from the data for each category and sub-category into Microsoft Word documents. These documents would act as supporting evidence of themes when discussing the findings of this study. Lastly, utilising the above documents (analysis spread-sheet and collation of quotes), a framework of findings to guide future discussion was created. This framework would assist in presenting a clear and well-structured discussion of the experiences of the first-time mentors.

## **5.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the data coding and analysis methods used within this study. Thematic analysis and the software program NVivo 9 were reviewed with specific reference to my collected data. Additionally, the process for analysing documentation was summarised. In conclusion, this chapter has presented a structure for how data was reviewed, how themes and patterns emerged and were coded, and how this information was then organised in order to convey clear findings of my study, which are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 6 Exploring the data

Data-gathering processes outlined in the previous chapter consisted of semi-structured interviews, personal journals, focus groups and document analysis in order to seek understanding of participants' experiences. This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the aforementioned data. The exploration of this data is presented in three sections which connect to the original research questions: Understanding the role of mentor; Fulfilling the role of mentor; and Challenges and successes from completing the role of mentor. These sections encapsulate the key themes identified within, and derived from, the analysis of the gathered data.

The first section, Understanding the role of mentor, presents the results of investigation into how the role of mentor is constructed and understood at a national level, at a school level and by the mentor themselves. Results are presented using these three contexts to provide quite different perspectives to understanding the role of mentor. The second section outlines the findings of mentors actually fulfilling the role of mentor and again is presented using the three contexts of national, school and mentor. The third section illustrates the ups and downs, the personal and professional highs and lows that these mentors experienced whilst completing the role of mentor for the first time. In order to assist in bringing the data to life, direct quotes are presented throughout from the participants and are displayed using pseudonyms.

### 6.1 Understanding the role of mentor

A starting point for understanding the role of mentor in a New Zealand primary school should be consideration of national documentation. How this documentation is understood and disseminated within each school then lays the foundation for how each mentor understands and enacts their role.

#### **Understanding the role of mentor: National context**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Teachers Council over the last six years have made induction and mentoring practices a focus of research and development within this country. It was the first time in a long while that research of such a scale was conducted on induction and mentoring in New Zealand and as such, the Teachers

Council research provided recent and rich information for my study. Additionally, the outcomes of the research by the Teachers Council culminated in the launching of a new direction and new support material, which I was then able to incorporate into my study and evaluate its impact and influence on my participants. This added a further dimension to my research and I believe, gave additional weight to my conclusions.

As has been previously detailed in Chapter 3, the culmination of the Teachers Council major research project (*Learning to Teach*) resulted in the move away from updating the *Towards Full Registration* support kit (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009) to the development of the handbook *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011). The Teachers Council *Guidelines* were finalised after being trialled during the Primary Pilot Programme (2009-2010). Workshops were provided across the country to introduce the newly released *Guidelines* throughout 2011. This booklet was to assist in the refocusing of mentoring practices to a more educative approach (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), where mentors promoted skilled learning conversations utilising evidence in a professional co-constructed learning programme. To assist with the direction of these learning programmes at a national level, the Teachers Council ensured reference to the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010).

The introduction of the *Guidelines* whilst my study was under way, was an exciting addition to this research as it offered a further avenue to explore with the participants by questioning just how fitting were these new guidelines and did they offer the mentors additional direction and support? I believe the documentation surrounding induction and mentoring in New Zealand was made more comprehensive by the *Guidelines* as they provided a very clear focus of what the Teachers Council wanted to achieve, were based on recent and in-depth New Zealand research and made very bold statements about what was expected of schools when enacting induction and mentoring programmes. This was then able to be integrated as an extra component of my study, adding greater depth to the discussion.

When analysing the national documentation discussed above, three aspects assisted in refining the focus of attention: processes and procedures required of schools regarding mentoring; expectations specifically of mentors; and lastly, if the documentation included support material for mentors.

#### *Inside documentation*

Terminology seen within the booklet *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011) suggests that the *Guidelines* are “a useful framework” (p. 3) rather than a firm requirement, but places the responsibility of utilising the information squarely with the professional leaders of the school (in the case of the primary sector, this refers to the principal). It is clearly stated that each school needs to have in place a policy for induction and mentoring. Although not officially mandated by the Ministry of Education, a school-based policy is clearly expected by the Teachers Council. The message from the booklet is clear that it is the leaders of each school who must ensure their policy for induction and mentoring is based upon the *Guidelines* and that these should be interpreted for their own unique individual setting. It is due to this nature of individuality within the New Zealand primary education system that the *Guidelines* do not specify concrete processes and procedures; it is up to each school to decide how to enact the information presented.

For information specific to national policy on induction and mentoring within primary schools, the new handbook from the Teachers Council *Registration Policy* (2012) is most valuable. This booklet not only provides an overview of all policy and legislation (the New Zealand Education Act 1989) relating to teacher registration, but also specifically draws attention to the requirement of induction and mentoring. An “intensive and sustained period of induction and mentoring to embed the theory learned in the ITE (*Initial Teacher Education*) programme” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2012, p. 26) is deemed necessary and that teachers new to the profession are *entitled* to such a programme (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2012); i.e., the teacher is recognised as a priority. In addition, this document clearly demonstrates connection between the previously discussed Teachers Council documentation—the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010) and the *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011). This connection is

evidenced within the *Policy* (2012) booklet which outlines that the professional leader of the school must be able to provide evidence to the Teachers Council of using the RTC (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010) to assess a beginning teacher's performance (through observation and appraisal systems), and that this assessment has been in line with the *Guidelines* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011).

Support is offered to the professional leaders of each school through the *Guidelines* making clear the expectations of what high-quality induction and mentoring programmes might look like. Although small in size (as compared with the rather large *Towards Full Registration* support kit (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009)), this booklet offers in-depth recommendations to both the professional leader and to the mentors themselves. The second section of the booklet offers two sets of guidelines: one for establishing a programme of induction, and the second for the mentors themselves and for mentoring practices. It is this second section which offers clear explanations of what is nationally expected of mentors and which in particular, I believe resonated with my participants the most. Clear specifications of the national vision for induction and mentoring are presented including the specific role of mentor, and knowledge, skills and dispositions for mentors. Although comprehensive in nature, much of the information necessitates strong leadership and direction from the principal of the school. It would appear that a mentor with the best intentions could not be successful without clear process and procedures in place within their school; this is accomplished by the principal and management team within each individual school. In fact the *Guidelines* clearly state that mentors can only be effective if they are well supported within their professional learning community.

Further to this, many of the expectations of the mentor and mentoring practices appear to be complex and require a high degree of skill. This consideration is supported by the statement within the *Guidelines* that "the mentor teacher role involves specific skills that cannot be assumed but need to be explicitly taught and supported" (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011, p. 17). The booklet further identifies that such professional development opportunities are still being developed and that this will be something for the wider profession to ensure takes

place over time. There is no definitive suggestion of how this will take place, just how the wider profession will ensure such professional development actually occurs. Although a fantastic idea, there appears to be limited accountability to genuinely making it happen; neither the Ministry of Education nor the Teachers Council themselves have taken responsibility for instigating any professional development initiatives.

Two key concerns became evident from my review of the *Guidelines*. Although they appear to offer support to mentors, it appears to be more in the form of theoretical aspiration rather than concrete, practical support material. There are no definitive criteria to work towards, no templates or specific “how to” day-to-day or by term processes offered within this booklet. The emphasis is undeniably on developing a more educative direction and it does offer some clarification of what educative mentoring might look like in practice, but again, some suggestions made are reflective of a high degree of understanding and skill. For example, in the area of engaging the beginning teacher in professional conversations, one of the examples of practice provided is the development of “knowledge and ability to conduct learning conversations” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011, p. 25). This recommendation is reliant on the mentor understanding what the specifics of a learning conversation actually refer to! This aligns with the second key concern I raise from the review of this document, the abundant use of high-level academic language and/or professional jargon. Considering that each staff member will read these guidelines in relation to their own school environment, it can be conceived that each school will have their own definitions of such professional jargon, if in fact such terminology is understood. I am not saying that teachers will be unable to comprehend such language, simply that some teachers have been away from high-level academic work for some time and the use of such language can be intimidating or misunderstood.

Although the *Guidelines* are focussed on working with beginning teachers who are new to the profession, there does not seem to be any national benchmark or criteria offered on what the professional development needs of new teachers might be. This addition would offer some clear, practical direction for mentors to work to and with. It is understood that such guidance would be found through reviewing

and working with the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010).

Connection is made however, from the *Guidelines* to the *Registered Teacher Criteria* where there is mention of professional leaders and mentors utilising these *Criteria* to assist with assessment purposes (of beginning teachers); knowing what specifically to be looking for and directly assess. The *Registered Teacher Criteria* can be viewed from a number of perspectives; explanation is offered that the criteria be regarded and used as a “beacon”, a “compass” and a “hurdle”. As the *Criteria* must be met in order to reach full registration, teachers can view the *Criteria* as the focus for an outcome, the light in the distance; the Teachers Council suggest using the *Criteria* as a beacon. Teachers can also view the *Criteria* as a compass in that it provides direction as to how to proceed to the final outcome (individual criteria to accomplish the end goal of full registration). Finally, teachers can view the *Criteria* as a hurdle, something to get over or through due to being the national standard that teachers are measured against. Thus the *Registered Teacher Criteria* are able to be used as measuring tools to support principals and mentors in ascertaining direction for what the beginning teacher needs to be assessed against, with the final aim being meeting all of the criteria within this handbook. The *Registered Teacher Criteria* could then be viewed as the national benchmark, offering the specific criteria common to all teachers and thus supporting mentors in establishing professional development for their beginning teachers.

The document which has historically offered (and continues today to offer, I believe) the most practical, concrete support material for mentors is the *Towards Full Registration* support kit (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009), which has been discussed in previous chapters within this thesis. Although containing the expectations of just what a mentor should do and the required processes/procedures schools needed to have in place for mentors (including substantial information for principals and Boards of Trustees), the information was based upon what is now considered, outdated research. What *was* still applicable to current mentors, were the templates included in the appendices section of this kit.

The templates in the support kit contained information in clear, practical language, often in checklist style, which mentors from any school would find easy to utilise or adapt to and then implement into their school's unique induction programme. An example is a template showing how to record an overview of the advice and guidance programme (now identified as the induction programme) and use of professional development time. Although the terminology is now outdated, the template itself is clear, easy to follow and implement and offers clarity of expectations of what mentoring look like within the reality of a school. There are many such templates offered within this kit, which are not considered or even referred to within the new *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011). Although the current focus of induction and mentoring has been redeveloped, it appears some of the templates offered within the *Towards Full Registration* support kit (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009) are still relevant in today's induction programmes. Some participants discussed being able to adapt the template to their needs rather than having to think up new templates from scratch, they believed it gave them a place to start and some direction in their role.

*Mentor reflections of national documentation:*

Although the redirection of mentoring approaches from *advice and guidance* to a more educative style began in earnest in 2011 with the release of the *Guidelines*, the first-time mentors of this study were mostly uninformed of this initiative or the new handbook. Upon being asked if they knew of the developments from the Teachers Council, one of the seven participants was aware of the new *Guidelines* and was booked to attend a workshop. Another participant went to seek out information and attended a workshop. The others had not even heard of the new handbook and although intrigued, seemed to consider it something to attend to later. As one participant suggested, the *Guidelines* were something to consider when there was time to read it thoroughly (the issue of time is addressed later in this chapter). It could be suggested that such an uninterested attitude is the result of limited direct leadership on the matter from the participants' principals, although this was not researched further.

Toward the end of the study, when asked again about the national document, two further participants had obtained a booklet but comments were made regarding

being unimpressed with the contents. The mentors considered the *Guidelines* to be overly theoretical, not specific enough for them to utilise and containing limited information on that which they were seeking, pertaining to actual mandated requirements for full registration.

*There's not a lot of guidance in that to be honest; in fact, I have no idea what it's about really. I've read it and I think, ok—I still don't know.* (Abby)

*A whole lot of theory and not much practical. ... I think it could be weeded out a lot and just have the stuff that's going to be helpful.* (Eden)

*We [beginning teacher and mentor] were both looking for the same thing: what hoops must be jumped through, and what documentation must be evident for the provisionally registered teacher to gain full registration?* (Esther)

*[What's needed is] actually physically breaking down what's in their little book—having a road map.* (Jane)

The participants were disappointed with the lack of specific direction within the *Guidelines* which they considered essential for first-time mentors. One mentioned that, although the outline of high-quality induction and mentoring was strongly presented in the booklet, she suggested that a novice mentor struggles to deliver this when they:

*aren't sure of the types of goals that should be met, let alone how to address the deeper issues of the provisionally registered teacher's teaching.* (Eden)

In addition, participants discussed the need for actual specifics from a national level.

*We actually need to know some expectations, because even that workshop [Guidelines workshop] ... was too fluid, everything's all these catchphrases ... which is great ... we all get it—we need to know the nitty gritty because you're enforcing it ... you are actually playing it out.* (Jane)

Three participants had accessed and seemed to find helpful, the Teachers Council website, although one still found the intricacies of the role difficult to comprehend.

*I'm just scrolling through that web page with all the stuff.* (Eden)

*I've gone online and downloaded some stuff.* (Esther)

*Knowing not so much what's required if their folder was audited, that's fine, you can look that up on a website, but knowing the roles and the responsibility of the job? (Norma)*

One participant found her understanding of the national requirements for mentoring grew from attending one of the alternative mentor training courses for teachers offered within Auckland. The courses available are both informal (workshop based) and formal (attached to university qualifications). The more formal mentoring courses are offered by universities around the country, but in Auckland they are mostly run by Auckland University as part of their postgraduate degree. Papers are offered for both full-year and single-semester intakes. These courses offer insight into the theory behind mentoring practices, focus on reflection practices and a range of issues and practices within mentoring. Additionally, a more informal mentor professional development workshop is offered by Kohia Education Centre, which is affiliated with Auckland University. This facility provides professional development for teachers, often run by teachers. It was this mentoring workshop that Kay attended.

*What was great too was ... a lot of information about provisionally registered teacher and standards and what my role was and how to have those tough conversations; we did role-play, observations, what our legal requirements were, reporting. (Kay)*

Although the first-time mentors knew that both formal and informal courses were available, and considered that:

*Training for this role was essential. (Eden)*

Kay was the only participant to take advantage of this opportunity. Reasons for not undertaking the courses included lack of funding, time or distance to travel to the course venue. Some of the mentors would have considered participating in the courses had their school offered to pay the costs involved. It was unclear if the principals of the schools were aware of this or if they even knew of the mentoring courses.

### **Understanding the role of mentor: School context**

Although the national documentation specifically asks that school leaders ensure a clear policy regarding induction and mentoring is in place within their school, this understanding was not evident in the schools of my seven study participants.

Of the participants' seven schools only one had a policy and related documentation. This school had a senior member of staff to oversee induction and mentoring practices within the school and provide support to the first-time mentor. Two other schools appeared to understand their responsibilities for induction and mentoring as the first-time mentors received support through use of personnel or time allowances, but these schools had no formal documentation. The final four schools' understanding of national policy appeared to range from non-existent to minimal. An example of non-existent understanding was evidenced by the lack of support for the first-time mentor with no processes in place:

*Being a first time mentor teacher I didn't know anything about what I had to do and not having the support from the DP and the Principal ...even though they were aware that I was a first timer. (Abby)*

An example of the minimal understanding was evidenced by one participant's school knowing the most basic requirement of assigning a mentor to a beginning teacher, but then transferring all further responsibility to that mentor:

*Checking to see if there is a policy on provisionally registered teacher; Looking for provisionally registered teacher folder/resources in my school—nothing; Asking AP's if there are any programmes, templates or advice they can give me—nil—“just do what you want”. (Kay)*

These four schools did not have any formal policy, documentation or support material regarding induction and mentoring within their school. This resulted in considerable frustration and worry for the mentors as there was no clear-cut understanding of the schools' expectations of them.

*Policy is so important isn't it? I mean, you actually have to know...you shouldn't be troubleshooting your way through this situation. (Jane)*

*There was nothing here that I could pick up and run with. I've had to create my own templates; create my own models. And I've had to educate Senior Staff and Senior Management. (Kay)*

The most common articulation by participants was that the schools had no documentation, no systems of support and no guidelines specific to their schools. One hopeful participant noted:

*They're thinking of developing something but it's a 'something' and what does it look like?* (Eden)

Jane became frustrated after mentioning to the leader of her school the need for school-specific mentoring guidelines, only to find that the writing of these was now to be her responsibility, adding further to her workload and stress levels. Participants noted such documentation would be a way to fully understand their positioning as a mentor within the school:

*Trying to get clarity about lines of communication and accountability.* (Kay)

*The responsibility is segmented, like team leader to beginning teacher, me to beginning teacher, Principal; where do people's lines... [start and end].* (Norma)

It became apparent that, despite the documentation from the Teachers Council, not all schools either understood or prioritised the requirements of induction and mentoring, seemingly to the detriment of their mentors.

*Other than observation, suggestion, discussion, modelling; what authority does the role have and when does reporting change or should it be happening in dual form e.g. me coaching, team leader appraising—[it's] complicated.* (Esther)

Upon learning of the lack of documentation available in some schools, I met with a representative of the Teachers Council to ascertain what directives *were* actually given to school leaders and what accountability was in place to ensure the directives were being enacted out in schools. Although not in the original study design, it became apparent during the review of data that this information would be required as there appeared to be a lot of conjecture surrounding just what was mandated and what was purely recommendation. This speculation was also noted when reviewing the *Guidelines* earlier in this chapter; although the Teachers Council stated they required each school to have a policy, it appeared that this was not actually mandated or checked.

Information provided from my contact at the Teachers Council confirmed that although an induction and mentoring policy was expected and certainly would be advantageous, the Teachers Council does not have the power to mandate this. In addition, the Ministry of Education provides funding to schools with the *expectation* that an induction and mentoring programme be put in place (funding will be discussed later in this chapter). Further research regarding mandated documentation ascertained the closest mention of any specifically mandated policy relating to induction and mentoring is actually embedded in performance management systems for schools and in reference to registration requirements (moving from provisional to full requires evidence collected from an induction and mentoring programme) (Ministry of Education, 1997, 2010).

Therefore schools were only directed through the *Guidelines* and the *Registration Policy* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2012) to have in place a policy regarding induction and mentoring and appropriate support (documentation, release time, extra personnel) reflective of their specific school environment. It was the Ministry of Education which expected as a requirement (mandated) schools to have information pertaining to induction and mentoring programmes evident within their performance management systems policy documents.

In addition, when my contact at Teachers Council was asked about verifying the above edicts, it was ascertained that the Education Review Office (which monitors the quality of the policies and practices associated with school performance management systems) *could* check such documentation was in place when completing their normal review cycle (every 3-5 years). This normal review includes examination of all policy documentation within a school. The answer included a speculative *could*, as opposed to a definitive *would* giving the impression that the sighting of this specific documentation was not necessarily seen as a priority or expectation within the review. The Teachers Council communicated that it was not part of their mandate to confirm if the expectations or recommendations were, in fact, being adhered to within the primary schools of New Zealand. They considered this the professional responsibility of school leaders (principals). It can therefore be deduced from this data, that there may, in fact, be schools without appropriate induction and mentoring documentation in place, the impact of which could certainly have bearing on the understanding of

the mentoring role for the entire staff, but more specifically, for any novice mentor within those schools.

### **Understanding the role of mentor: Mentor context**

As revealed above, most participants lacked supportive documentation in their schools. The impact of this quickly became apparent as the difference between a first-time mentor from a school with appropriate systems in place and those without, was clearly evident.

The first-time mentor who was part of a school who had in place clear documentation and school specific guidelines appeared much more relaxed about being a mentor, and the actual process of mentoring. She was often visibly surprised during focus groups by what was being discussed by other participants and at one stage, apologised to the others in the group for having it so good at her school! For this participant, understanding the role of mentor was simply about gaining a better understanding of her beginning teacher:

*I think the hardest part was me needing to sit down and think, what does she [the beginning teacher] need to know? (Kelli)*

This approach was in stark comparison to the comments from the other six participants. The majority of statements were concerned with attempts to find out what it was they were supposed to be doing; they appeared to have very little comprehension of what being a mentor was all about and what this specifically meant to their school environment.

*I've spent hours working out what should I do, what shouldn't I do. (Esther)*

*I'm making it up as I go along; I just need to know what my role is. (Kay)*

The frustration and level of emotion regarding wanting to be successful and needing to understand what to do, was often evident:

*It's like you'd like to do this job well but you often just don't have the criteria. (Abby)*

*That's been the frustration of the whole thing. I kind of have been left on my own and XX doesn't know and I don't know what we're doing and no*

*one's sort of said well you should be doing this or you should be doing that. (Eden)*

For some participants, the frustration turned to feelings of guilt, and wondering if their lack of understanding about the role was their own doing; that they had not tried hard enough to get answers from within their school, or from their colleagues. For example, Abby suggested perhaps she just did not ask her principal the right questions. Whereas others became a little more blasé about their lack of clarity; it appears these participants just became tired of worrying about their understanding of the role and as a coping mechanism, just decided to get on with things in their own way.

*I don't really believe I feel that supported in the role to be fair but that's maybe a criticism that I need to own. Maybe I should have gone and said 'what shall I do? What shall I do?' (Esther)*

*I just decided now that I'll use my gut; it's my role. (Norma)*

*I've just made everything up. (Kay)*

*I just do, you know, I just go with the flow. (Abby)*

Jane suggested that she was constantly just:

*... flying by the seat of my pants!*

Many times throughout the study, it appeared that some participants were attempting to keep their heads above water, trying to figure out just what they were actually meant to be doing. This lack of understanding often appeared to cause anxiety that they were going to be able to complete the role effectively:

*Getting a really clear understanding and then being sure that I'm keeping up with it! (Kay)*

As the study progressed, it became apparent that the mentors had begun to support themselves in learning about the role of mentor. This happened through self-reflection of what they already knew about teaching adults (for example, being an associate teacher), but also through reflecting on how they themselves were mentored (not necessarily a good thing). The use of such reflections (memories)

seemed to allow the novices to now see both sides of the mentoring equation; that of the mentor and also the beginning teacher. As Eden noted:

*I actually find that reflective approach quite useful because I can remember what was done and how I felt about it but I can also see it from my side now WHY it was done.*

Many of the mentors fondly recounted their personal experiences of being mentored and treasured memories of having great mentors themselves. These memories provided some clarity of understanding about the role that the novices were searching for; their own memories had become their benchmark to mentoring. Two of the participants were still in contact with their previous mentors and used these contacts in an attempt to gain an understanding of the role. Others discussed digging out their paperwork from when they themselves were mentored, in an effort to find some direction; it was this information they were now using as a guide. These participants were quick to acknowledge that the information was now outdated, but were also quick to point out that for them, this was all they had to base their understanding of mentoring upon.

*I call a lot on what I remember my mentor doing with me. (Eden)*

*I'm going by experiences as a beginning teacher. (Jane)*

As can be seen from the above discussion, the lack of documentation within their schools added to the confusion and frustration of the first-time mentors. They were looking for clear and school-specific direction as to what this role of mentoring was all about. They were seeking the support of their school leaders to help show them the way. The one participant of this study whose school had systems in place appeared much more confident and relaxed in her understanding of not only what it meant to be a mentor, but more specifically, what she was meant to *do* as a mentor within her school. This particular school had made clear the national and school expectations; documentation was current, accessible and known to all staff, the first-time mentor was made aware of the *Guidelines* and then attended a workshop along with a senior leader who had a dedicated portfolio of overseeing induction and mentoring practices within the school. The differences between this participant's understandings of what it meant to be a

mentor and how to enact the role, and the depth of understanding of the remaining six was evident from the beginning of the study.

Clearly articulated national expectations and school expectations have been shown to be important in this section as they assist in schools (principal/wider staff) and mentors understanding of the role. In order to fully complete their task of being a mentor, clear understanding of what was expected and required of them needed to be presented. It is only through this understanding that the mentors would be able to feel security in knowing that they were mentoring in the expected way and therefore fulfilling the role effectively.

## **6.2 Fulfilling the role of mentor**

This section offers insight into how the above understandings were actually enacted in the day-to-day lives of the seven first-time mentors. As above, the national and school context will be used to focus the presentation of findings. Illumination of the mentors' own endeavours will again be supported by their personal comments collated throughout this study.

### **Fulfilling the role of mentor: National context**

In order to fulfil the role of mentor in response to national expectations, an *understanding* of educative mentoring was necessary rather than just providing advice and guidance. It became clear from the data that, although the first-time mentors of this study were aware of a change in mentoring and induction focus and that this initiative was from the Teachers Council, they were unsure of what this new initiative of educative mentoring actually meant. The closest comprehension was that they understood what it was not; that a shift had been made away from advice and guidance. They had heard of the terminology of educative mentoring, but did not know what this actually looked like in practice, or how to enact it.

Due to the more expansive challenges of not fully understanding their role as mentor, the additional worry of wondering what this educative focus actually meant appeared too daunting. As seen earlier, the participants were just trying to keep their heads above water and were using their own past experiences as a guide to fulfilling the role. This limited access to current information and up-skilling

appears to have led to a further difficulty enacting national expectations. All of the mentors discussed issues around having enough time, specifically time for the purposes of mentoring, and it was made evident from the data that schools were not clear on expectations surrounding time allocation for mentoring either. Therefore, it appeared that the national expectations of release time were not adequately being facilitated.

#### *National expectations of release time*

Analysis of national documentation provided evidence that time is recommended to be made available within the school timetable for the professional development of the beginning teacher (including meeting with and working with the mentor) (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2012). This time, referred to as 0.2 (equivalent of one school day), was outlined in Chapter 3 and is utilised by both mentor and the beginning teacher. Usage of this time is supposed to be negotiated/planned between all parties (the principal, the mentor and the beginning teacher) (Renwick, 2001).

Although this time and its usage are suggested, even recommended as a requirement by the Teachers Council, there again is no mandated basis for this. Extensive research referring to documentation from the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office, the New Zealand Education Act (1989) and the Teachers Council material did not produce any legislative document on which time recommendations are founded. Reference is made within the Ministry of Education website policy documentation surrounding school operations (<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/SchoolOperations/Resourcing/ResourcingHandbook/Chapter2.aspx>) to schools applying for additional funding, but there is no evidence within this policy of specific mentoring or time requirements. In addition, this information makes specific connection to the terms and conditions of the *Primary Teachers Collective Agreement*, which actually contains no reference to mentoring or time allocations. Further, this documentation continues to make use of the *advice and guidance* terminology, all of which suggests that the documentation is in need of updating. This interpretation was later confirmed through personal communication with the resourcing division of the Ministry of Education.

The Teachers Council documentation has much information pertaining to the use of school time for mentors and beginning teachers, but again, as I was reminded by my Teachers Council contact, this is not, nor could be, considered mandated policy; in reality such information is merely suggestion.

The New Zealand Education Act(1989) (139AE)

(<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM181735.html>)

reminds us that a function of the Teachers Council is to provide professional leadership to teachers. It could be surmised then that this may be the connection to national policy which strengthens Teachers Council “suggestion” to the stronger position of “requirement”, in that if the Teachers Council is the schools’ professional leader and that they suggest a certain way to use time for mentors, then perhaps principals view this as a directive.

### **Fulfilling the role of mentor: School context**

The lack of clarity around allocation of release time (0.2) and its usage for mentors was not only noted in the documentation but also within the school context, where participants discussed how varied their experiences were with being offered and being able to utilise, specific release time.

#### *Release time*

There appeared to be confusion between schools as to what the expectations regarding release time were and how these should be enacted. Some participants declared not receiving any release time and others commented on how disorganised their release was.

*Yeah, it’s a big role, especially without release. (Norma)*

*There’s been no consideration that his release time is used by the tutor teacher. It’s been given to other people. I think if the school has that really clearly [how release time will be used]... everybody understands it in those leadership roles and there’s respect for it and value. (Kay)*

One of the most common themes from participants was the lack of consideration by the school leaders to arrange release time for both mentor and beginning teacher at the same time. This naturally did not assist the mentoring process.

*I've had to ask for my Year 2 release time to coincide with her BT time, just so we have that time together. One of the hardest things is not having release time to go and observe. (Abby)*

Participants wanted their leaders to be proactive in organising this release time so that they knew exactly what time they were able to manipulate within their programme. As one participant stated she needed it all set up at the beginning of the year ... but it was not.

*We all want to work smart and you can get isolated in your school and you don't have time and it's got to be planned for. It's got to be diarised and up there saying it's coming up. (Kay)*

One first-time mentor commented on how lucky she was as she had a team leader who released her to complete observations. This led to the feeling of whole-school support for her efforts in mentoring and knowledge that she was able to call on other staff for assistance; she was not isolated in fulfilling this role.

#### *Individual or involvement of all*

From the data it became clear that schools had two main interpretations of enacting mentoring, either they considered mentoring to be purely between the mentor and the beginning teacher, or mentoring was considered part of the entire staff responsibility.

Evidence of whole-school mentoring practices was demonstrated when participants discussed staff in their school not only supporting them as mentors, but also their beginning teacher. Support was seen in offering advice, professional development opportunities for the beginning teacher (modelling different subjects), and as mentioned above, offering to release the mentor in order for them to work together with their beginning teacher. The mentors acknowledged that this form of whole-school mentoring offered much more to the beginning teacher but also gave them as mentors peace of mind that they did not have to be “all things” (Eden) to this new teacher. The mentors commented on how it was advantageous for their beginning teacher to have others to go to, acknowledging that:

*they can't just be getting all their information from me because I only do things my way. (Jane)*

In addition, this support from others within the school assisted one participant in particular to find her way within mentoring:

*At times I haven't really known what I was doing as part of my mentor role but at least I have always known I have had support in the other past and present mentors at my school and from the AP that is in charge of all the mentors and mentees.* (Kelli)

The importance of a school-wide approach to mentoring was not lost on the participants as this mentor elaborated:

*But what I've really realised is ... I think for a mentor to be really effective, you can't do it on your own. The school has to have systems in place or has to even care enough about the role; take interest in the role, to sit down and say "how are you going?"* (Kay)

The flip-side of whole-school involvement is that fulfilling the role of mentor is seen purely as an individual responsibility. This was evident from several of participants in this study. As Abby stated, sometimes there was no support shown at all from within her school:

*... sort of not knowing what to look for ... I've had nothing; I didn't even know there was a folder ... until last week. So that's been one of the hardest things; kind of not having the support from someone else around that knows what they're doing.*

Even if they did actually seek out advice from those who they expected to be most supportive, notably the leadership team of the school, not all found the support they were looking for:

*...the latest advice is "do what you want. You're an experienced teacher." So, you know? I'm a mentor that does not have a lot of leadership advice.* (Kay)

*I did go at times to the Principal but mostly he was going "mm, well, I don't know."* (Eden)

One arrangement which may have been evidence of schools attempting to involve the entire staff in the mentoring process was through the use of "split teams". Split teams refer to when the mentor teaches in part of one area of the school and the beginning teacher exists in another, thus they fall under different syndicates (or classroom clusters/teams within the school) and therefore syndicate leadership.

For example: the mentor may teach in the junior syndicate, whereas the beginning teacher may be teaching in the senior area of the school. This concept of mentor and beginning teacher working in separate areas within the school environment may have been put into action as a means of ensuring whole-school involvement; meaning the beginning teacher would have to interact with a variety of staff, who would also be considered responsible for supporting them in their development.

If the above was indeed the case, the comments made by the mentors of this study indicated that it was less than successful. The feedback from those participants who were involved in this sort of arrangement strongly denounced the split team organisation; they suggested that this system created further problems rather than being a form of support. It became clear that, although other staff were involved with the beginning teacher and mentoring, often this involvement equated to more work for the mentors.

*So my extra work is in going back to management every week or chasing up these AP's to check and reading minutes of the senior school to see what they're saying and what advice they're giving. Because at times he'll come to me (the beginning teacher) and the advice is quite different. He's been told he doesn't need to do certain things and I'm saying "you should be doing it". (Kay)*

Lack of clarity around split-team organisation and mentoring expectations was a clear theme from the mentors. It appeared that the schools had underestimated the difficulties of the mentor and beginning teacher working within separate syndicate structures; especially when in completely separate teams and working with children of different age ranges where expectations are quite different.

*I think the team thing again has made it tricky because I know really well what my team leader likes whereas I don't know really what another team leader would like. (Kelli)*

*All my experiences are more senior orientated, which I found challenging and I've also sort of thought at times, "Gosh, I wish she'd had someone that had more expertise in that junior school". (Norma)*

*A couple of things are making my job as a tutor teacher [mentor] more challenging: one is that I am working in a different syndicate, the other is that I have a completely different set of children to her and that means my "head-space" is quite different. (Jane)*

This type of cross-team arrangement often led to confusion regarding split responsibilities for mentoring. Lines appeared to get blurred when the mentor worked in another area of the school as to who was responsible for what within the mentoring role.

*So I was left thinking, to what extent am I responsible for making sure she's read the information she needs? (Kelli)*

Participant Norma discussed the need for clear lines of communication between the principal, team leaders and the mentor. She felt confused about who wanted to see what, and felt there was potential for duplication. She wanted to know where each person's responsibilities lay, ensuring open communication and transparency saying that without such clarity she wondered ...

*How much of it is my problem? (Norma)*

The challenges with split responsibilities appeared to be exacerbated when involving members of the leadership team (principal, deputy principal or associate principal):

*You've got the AP who is responsible for this area. You've got an AP responsible for the senior school and then you've got the Principal and then you've got me as a tutor teacher [mentor]. So I'm trying to get through their heads, right, I'm the mentor, I'm giving advice, I need to be sure that the advice is consistent with [that from] everybody else. (Kay)*

*I didn't get release time to go and observe "X" so the Principal and DP took that over...which was a bit difficult. (Abby)*

Abby found it difficult to challenge or question the arrangement where she was not released to observe her beginning teacher, even though she felt that this should have been part of her role as mentor.

It would appear that for the schools in my study, the use of mentors across teams and the involvement of other staff in the mentoring process resulted in challenges the school leadership had not anticipated. As noted in earlier sections, fulfilling the mentoring role is at times made more complex unless clear procedures are present within the school and all are aware of these. In addition, it seems that the understanding and interaction of the whole staff is needed in order to support the novice mentor, and therefore indirectly the beginning teacher within the school.

### **Fulfilling the role of mentor: Mentor perspective**

The role of mentor is complex and at times, challenging. The following section outlines the day-to-day support, the juggling of responsibilities and the interplay of different roles that the first-time mentors experienced.

#### *Day-to-day support*

All of the mentors in this study strongly identified with the need to support their beginning teacher and ensure they were “looked after”. The mentors spoke quite personally of the bond they felt with their beginning teacher and many of their comments reflected their feelings of nurturing and protecting. Comments related to needing to “be there for their beginning teacher”, to ensure they “knew the ropes” and further, to ensure they were not overloaded by the expectations of the profession. Eden saw her role as:

*Having my eyes and ears out for my person.*

She saw the beginning teacher as her responsibility and wanted to protect her. The mentors discussed understanding the need to monitor their beginning teachers but were at times perplexed by just where their support might be actually needed.

*You just don't know in which area they're going to need support. So I guess for me it was making sure they had all the systems that the school needed, the paperwork that the school needed, upfront. (Eden)*

*It's hard to pre-empt her needs when life at X school is so busy in general. (Jane)*

*Like many things on this journey, I hadn't even thought about checking that she knew! (Kelli)*

The participants understood that teaching is a busy and often complex job, made especially so if new to a school. They wanted to assist their new teacher to assimilate but were often a little unsure just how to do this. As one participant noted this was often a case of being over-prepared herself:

*...being aware that XX's new and that she might not know how things work so I have to make sure I know what's going on to let her know. (Abby)*

In conjunction with this day-to-day aspect of mentoring and the busy nature of school life, a further element which came to light, was the mentor's desire to preempt overloading their new teacher; as Esther said:

*... trying to ensure I spend as much time as she needs to understand all that is required of her without overloading her with information. At times I have felt I haven't got the mix quite right.*

Most participants talked of providing support for their beginning teacher, this comprised being a friend or buddy within the school, catching up over morning tea and chatting about how life was going. The informal nature of these discussions was evident and appeared to assist in building a rapport of trust and support.

*Meeting with [my] provisionally registered teacher every day after school for mini-chats, informal discussions on daily events/experiences... to reflect and support. (Kay)*

*Even if we just sit down and have a cup of tea and say "how's it going?" ... yeah, just keep on it really. (Norma)*

*I'm just trying to keep in touch with what she's doing. (Jane)*

Many of the mentors discussed how they regularly "touched base" with their beginning teacher to ensure they had insight into how the beginning teacher was doing and seemed to hold themselves responsible for this. Kelli spoke of checking that her beginning teacher was happy, and settled into the school and not "drowning". This personal monitoring became apparent in a further aspect as the study progressed; the first-time mentors began to comment on needing to help their beginning teacher to maintain balance.

#### *Overseeing balance*

Mentors attempted to work with school system so that their beginning teacher did not become overwhelmed with the professional demands of a teacher. This entailed monitoring their teacher's workload but also to some degree, overseeing its impact on their personal lives. A number of the participants spoke of their beginning teacher having some major life upheaval throughout this year, and as such, they themselves felt the need to monitor this situation and its impact on

what took place at school. For example, one participant commented on how her beginning teacher:

*... needed help to maintain a good measure between her input at school and the needs of her own children and herself. (Eden)*

A further participant identified feeling like a counsellor at times. Interestingly, another participant stated that she did not think that anything except counselling training would have prepared her to deal with the situation she was faced with. This comment was made in relation to the mentor managing the fall-out from a particularly difficult home-life challenge that her beginning teacher had experienced. The mentors often discussed how they worried about this notion of balance—not for themselves, but for their beginning teacher.

*... if anything, you don't have to worry about how hard she's working, you had to worry about the life/work balance and all those sorts of things. (Norma)*

*I need to make sure that she doesn't over-do whatever she needs to do. (Eden)*

*It's that support there; where she knows that she can come and see me about things if things are too much and I can say "it's ok, don't worry about that". Yeah, so I think that is actually probably one of the most important things actually, that you can do that. (Kelli)*

All of the mentors seemed to appreciate the enormous task of beginning teachers developing as teachers in their first year and wanted to alleviate any stresses as much as possible for their new teacher. Their support reflected the affective side to mentoring, where the mentor was not only seen in a professional light, but was also a provider of emotional support.

#### *Affective support*

Reflecting on the mentors' discussions and comments made it clear that supporting the beginning teacher entailed much more than just purely professional discussions and support. All of the mentors had at one time or another, provided affective support (emotional support and pastoral care) to their beginning teacher. For many, this type of support was strongly indicated throughout their first year as mentor; as Eden stated:

*... in some senses, they become a friend and they want to also share maybe parts of their private life with you ... and I don't know that you're always prepared for that.*

As exemplified by this comment, the mentors were not always aware of this emotional side to mentoring, and what became obvious through their comments, was that this was one area many found overwhelming at times.

*I've had to spend a bit of time this week ensuring she's okay and reassuring her. (Norma)*

*She's had times when it's been just so emotionally difficult and we've just been dealing with that. (Eden)*

*She's very sensitive so it's not an easy job. It's not an easy job. (Esther)*

Often the mentors felt that being the “shoulder to cry” on enabled them to complete the more professional aspects of their role, that with the affective support in place, the professional expectations could then also be supported. When the mentors discussed the more professional expectations of fulfilling their roles, focussing on being educative, assessing and delivering feedback, it was suggested that being invested in the personal life and affective support of the beginning teacher created tension.

*The educative approach or just advice and guidance?*

All of the participants described how they wanted the very best for their beginning teacher and were determined to do whatever they could to assist in their development and success at being a teacher. The mentors were unsure of when to step in and advise (or even do things *for* the beginning teacher), and when to step back and let the beginning teacher to find their own way. As Jane noted:

*... the challenge was to provide professional advice and not try to fix the problems for her but allow her to find solutions through discussion. It would have been easier to relieve her of the burdens and apply solutions I had used when in the same situation.*

Although all the mentors stated they struggled to identify when their help was required, one in particular was actually being what would be classed as “educative” without even being aware of this. For example:

*I felt our discussion was far more collegial than instructional and that I was not needed so much as a crutch. (Eden)*

*Drawing a provisionally registered teacher, via discussion, through self-discovery and reflection of herself as a teacher is a skilled art. (Eden)*

By assisting the beginning teacher to come to their own conclusions through self-reflection and professional dialogue (rather than just telling them how to do things), Eden was actually being educative as opposed to providing advice and guidance.

For the remaining mentors, it became obvious that they struggled with fulfilling this aspect of their role.

*I tried to help her with everything and someone said to me that some things are not for me to [do]. (Norma)*

*That whole thing about expectations...has been a big issue with me...my expectations ... so different to the provisionally registered teacher and having to work through that...and not get personal about it and keep it professional; I've found that really challenging. (Kay)*

*All her ideas were great but, as a fellow teacher and her mentor, I felt I needed to help her rationalize her ideas. How to address this well, and without dampening her enthusiasm, was challenging. (Jane)*

The mentors noted being cautious of the emotional impact when having to assess their beginning teacher and give feedback regarding their observations. This appeared to cause much concern for the mentors as firstly they were somewhat unsure of what they were meant to be assessing and how to do this; and secondly, they did not want to upset their beginning teacher.

#### *Assessment and giving feedback*

When discussing the assessment aspect of their role it became evident that some of the mentors often did not fully comprehend this responsibility. Knowing what to assess and how to assess correctly was identified by most of the participants as troubling. The mentors talked of “making it up” and calling a lot on what they remembered their own mentors doing with them. Although they were reasonably familiar with being assessed themselves (for performance appraisal purposes), one

mentioned that it was quite different when one is on the other side of the fence as the assessor!

Although the majority of the participants discussed concerns over what they were assessing, one commented on referring to the Teachers Council materials:

*I need to have some criteria. I mean, I looked up the Teachers Council criteria and there's actually no specialised criteria for a provisionally registered teacher. So am I then supposed to assess her against the criteria of others [experienced teachers] being assessed against and then how do I go about starting a report? (Jane)*

Others remarked about their concern regarding expectations of what the new teacher should be doing, stating:

*I actually don't think I expect enough of my provisionally registered teacher. (Kelli)*

For those new to being an assessor, stepping out of the supporting and assisting role was a challenge. One participant discussed this as being one of the hardest things to do. Eden found it difficult to stay on track when observing her beginning teacher, and not

*... just go "ooh, she could do with a hand" and jump in.*

A further participant agreed with this sentiment but also considered it from the teacher's point of view, in that by assisting it could give the new teacher the impression that they were not doing well. As Kelli noted,

*... holding off at the right times is a bit of an art form I think.*

Of the seven participants, only one felt comfortable with the assessment process, and this was due to her previous work as an RTLB (Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour; a supplemental teacher contracted to assist specific children and teachers within a school). She noted that this had helped as she had been trained in observation and the gathering of data, and so was a "real stickler" when it came to assessment of other teachers. She could clearly identify having brought these skills back into the classroom situation with her beginning teacher.

Interestingly, it was this particular participant who appeared to have the most difficulties with having her teacher utilise the feedback given from such assessments; but she was not alone in this regard. The majority of the participants reported difficulties about giving feedback from assessments. Even the one participant who stated that she did not find this challenging, actually offered some insight into the emotional conflict embedded in her comments:

*I'm really lucky, mine's really open towards every piece of feedback that she can get but I felt really bad telling her the bad things. (Kelli)*

So although she knew her beginning teacher reacted positively toward feedback, she herself still felt some emotional turmoil. This reaction reflects the affective role that the mentors fulfilled, as when the relationship became more of a friendship, it becomes difficult for the mentors to offer what might be seen as negative comments. One participant used phrases such as “a level of edginess” to describe the discussion or attempting to “steel yourself to do it in a gentle way”. Jane described her experiences as having

*... to be so careful that you don't hurt people's feelings or that you do things in the right way.*

Due to their relationships with their teachers, they did not want to upset them, but at the same time, the mentors understood that there was a professional task to be completed appropriately. For the participants of this study, the affective support of the beginning teacher appeared to be in conflict with the need to be educative.

Some mentors appeared to be more staunch about the task, saying that they just “bit the bullet” and informed their beginning teacher what needed to be done. All of the mentors wanted to be honest and upfront with their teachers, and not “cotton-wool them”, but often were unsure how to do this, in effect they lacked the skills of appraising directly. Their concern was how to give constructive criticism/feedback and yet maintain the relationship and the rapport where the beginning teacher still felt comfortable enough to approach them. This role ambiguity became one of the most repeated themes, as all the participants discussed attempting to differentiate just what type of mentor to be and when. They talked of the multiple roles of being a mentor, often referring to the wearing

of “hats” and having to decipher which hat they needed to wear at differing times. For example, Eden noted that she had particularly,

*... been wearing the supportive/emotional “hat”.*

Whereas Esther stated she tried to keep everything at a professional level due to:

*... wearing lots of hats.*

She then went on to discuss how she had been wearing the “mothering hat” because that is what she felt her beginning teacher needed at that specific time.

*The interplay of roles: juggling responsibilities*

In drawing the above themes together, the mentors understood their role as consisting of separate but connected aspects. They needed to be supportive, and provide professional development; they needed to formally assess their beginning teacher, and also to monitor the emotional stability of the new teacher; they needed to help the beginning teacher settle into being in a new school, and ensure professional accountability and see that the requirements of teaching were accomplished. At times these contrasting expectations were very confusing and concerning for the first-time mentors, both in what was being asked of them but also just how they would be able to segregate them in order to achieve them.

*There’s sort of like the admin side and then there’s the curriculum side and then there’s the behaviour side and then there’s personal development. So we’re running almost these four categories of things, which are all huge within themselves and I actually hadn’t sat down beforehand and thought what’s she going to need, what will she need most urgently, when will she need it and how will I tell her about it? And when will we get the time to meet? (Jane)*

Jane identified the complexity of working with her beginning teacher but others went further and reflected how these roles interacted and the consequences of this for them as first-time mentors. For example:

*Knowing which hat to wear. Sussing the situation and knowing what do I need to be here? You know, do I need to do this or do I need to do this; you know, what is needed here? (Kay)*

Often the concern was ensuring their relationship stayed convivial, and yet still being seen as a leader and sometimes getting difficult messages across. As Kelli noted, this was sometimes an area of great confusion.

*What is my role? Is my role just as the buddy or is my role as a mentor teacher?*

*With my provisionally registered teacher I've got to communicate with her in a different way; like, how do I approach this and how do I be firm but understanding and how do I encourage that she does these things? (Jane)*

*I have to be a friend and I have to be a team leader at times. (Esther)*

Additional confusion was noted when the mentor was also the beginning teacher's team/syndicate leader. The first-time mentors found it difficult to separate the different expectations of their leadership position and of their role as mentor.

*I'm busy; I am a busy, busy person and sometimes I need to stop and say "Whoa, I need to suss this situation out" so I know which hat to put on. That's the most difficult thing. (Esther)*

As Kay stated:

*I'm doing PD as a Senior Teacher but I'm also his mentor. And it just felt like a lot of double handling.*

Alternatively, Eden found that being in a leadership position whilst being a mentor actually could be used to her advantage, as she was in the position to:

*Just make a decision.*

Identifying each aspect of their mentoring role as separate entities (affective support, professional development, assessment/feedback, and day-to-day support), and yet at times needing to cross between these, concerned the mentors. Kay discussed how she would have liked to have been prepared for the confusion and challenge of how to make the different "hats" work together:

*It's a lot of juggling ... you need to be talked through that I think. I mean, I had to work it out for myself.*

A further area of which the mentors were previously unaware became apparent towards the end of the study, as they began reflecting on their year. After

discussing the complex nature of being a mentor amidst their own busy professional lives, release time was again raised. Their comments offer insight into the feelings of guilt which surrounded the use of release time:

*I only took her time to observe her. (Kelli);*

*it breaks my heart every time you take that hour away (Norma); and*

*I don't feel right taking his time. (Kay)*

Some of the participants spoke of having no release time at all within their working week and that this proved extremely difficult to enact a full mentoring role:

*We have to do a lot of thinking about how the hell you can make this happen. (Eden)*

*It's finding the time to sit with him to debrief. (Kay)*

*It's hard when you're so busy yourself! (Kelli)*

This lack of clarity surrounding process and procedure appears to have led to additional challenges and stresses within the mentoring role.

### **6.3 The ups and downs of completing the role**

One notable finding from this study was the tensions the mentors experienced within the role. Such tensions were expressed in the range of emotions the first-time mentors experienced. The highs (pride and excitement), and lows (worry, self-doubt and guilt) equated to an emotional rollercoaster for these novice mentors, which peaked and troughed throughout the year. These emotions reflected both personal and professional tensions, noted as the challenges and successes of the first-time mentors and are explored in the following sections.

#### **Emotional rollercoaster**

Although all identified this emotional rollercoaster throughout their year as novices, some experienced more peaks than troughs, and one participant in particular stood out as having to work through more frequent challenges. This participant worked with a particularly challenging beginning teacher and had very

little support from her school. Her struggles of working with this teacher were clearly reflected in the comments she provided for this study.

Every participant, at some stage in the study, expressed feelings of worry and guilt when discussing themselves as mentors.

### *Worry*

Worry presented itself in many forms: being concerned about not knowing what they were really meant to be doing as a mentor and being “found out”; levels of self-doubt; being anxious about saying and doing the right things; being apprehensive about the responsibility of the role and fretting for their beginning teacher. The depth of concern shocked some mentors as they began to reflect on their experiences during interviews and focus groups. They had not expected this emotional ride to be part of the role.

*Until you do it you don't know how big it was and you don't know what a responsibility it is for someone else's success; the level of responsibility.*  
(Eden)

*I didn't expect to worry about her quite as much as I do and that's no reflection on her; it's just that responsibility of having to look after someone that's new to a profession ...you just want her to be fine and happy.* (Norma)

Feelings of not knowing if they were doing things the right way, and being worried about being put in the spotlight if it was not, permeated participant comments. The worry of their inadequacies being seen by other staff and judging their mentoring abilities came through as a concern for these mentors. As Eden stated:

*I was trepiditious; trepiditious because I thought, “Oh God, they're going to be able to see right through me”.*

Interestingly, other staff members did not appear to instinctively offer any assistance to the new mentors, but were particularly helpful if mentors specifically asked for their help.

Jane states that she was often feeling “stressed out” due to “always feeling behind the eight-ball and playing catch-up”, and that she should have pre-empted certain things, but sometimes not even realising what those *things* should have been. This

uncertainty was a compelling theme for all mentors throughout the study. Even those who presented as very strong and capable women still offered comments reflecting such doubts. As Kelli noted:

*I think that's the whole thing. You don't know what you don't know. I can see why people would get quite put off by it to be fair because it's a really big responsibility.*

### *Guilt*

Coinciding with these feelings of self-doubt and worry, were feelings of guilt. The mentors understood that they could not offer their support in every instance the beginning teacher might need (for example giving of their time), but this still did not alleviate feeling guilty that they were not there when needed. As participants noted, feelings of doubt sneak in quickly:

*Before you took on this role you were really, really busy and nothing's changed. I've taken on the Syndicate Leader as well so that's like aargh, where do you breathe? But they need you to see them properly. (Eden)*

*When you are busy you kind of think, "ohh, now?" (Kelli)*

Kay commented:

*I feel very responsible for his career—for me, his failure is my failure.*

It became obvious from the data the level of responsibility these women felt for their beginning teacher; they wanted to be all things to them and ensure they had everything they needed, thus tension between the aspects of their role was experienced. The reality was that the mentors could not solely focus on their teacher; they also had classroom and school responsibilities of their own. This seemed to cause further tension between what they wanted to achieve and what they were actually capable of achieving.

*You still have those pressure times where you can't stop, you can't give them the time but you feel a bit bad about it. You know, you think they really need me and it's like, ... sometimes you just feel that you've put them off a bit. (Jane)*

*Guilt is pretty big when you can't....cause they want it all the time; before school, morning tea, lunchtime, after school. (Esther)*

*It's that guilt of "Am I doing enough?"* (Norma)

Although there were times throughout the year during focus groups and interviews when the mentors seemed stuck in negativity and self-doubt, there were also times when they came alive talking about the more positive, resilient nature of being a mentor and working with a new teacher.

#### *Affirmations*

Some participants talked of feeling complimented that they had been chosen for the role, that their principal thought so well of them professionally that they were given this opportunity. Further, they spoke of an increase in self-reflection and being surprised by just what they did know and could share within their role.

*I've thought oh, actually I know quite a lot.* (Eden)

*You reflect on your own teaching as well and it gives you a little bit of an ego boost I guess because you're "Oh, I know all this stuff".* (Kelli)

They not only admitted to feeling good about their own abilities as a teacher but were able to identify their part in the successes of their beginning teacher. Participants talked of feeling really proud when things went well for their beginning teachers and discussed how they felt, in some small way, that they could share the success; that they had a hand in it to some degree. As Jane states:

*I think it's been such a rewarding experience, a provisionally registered teacher pretty much comes into a school knowing nothing really about "real life" teaching and in a short time you can help them have a successful first classroom experience.*

Not all the highlights for the mentors were about seeing the beginning teacher developing. Discussions by the mentors became particularly energetic when commenting on how the influence of their beginning teachers had motivated them. The enthusiasm and excitement noted in the mentors' comments confirmed that they felt very strongly about sharing how much the beginning teachers had impacted on them all, making them remember what they used to feel about teaching and seeing it now in a new light.

*Seeing the vibrancy and interest and passion for teaching through new eyes, ... you know, I can then feed off that as well.* (Esther)

*One of the highs is just having someone who wants to do things and be energetic about things. (Abby)*

Interestingly (and surprisingly), a comment was made that it was lovely to have someone around who wanted to talk about education! Participants spoke of learning from their beginning teachers, getting fresh ideas and enjoying the collegiality of working together. The mentors had not anticipated just how much of this new energy for teaching would rub off on them but revelled in the new awareness. It appeared to inspire them to become resilient to some of the challenges they verbalized about mentoring.

### **Personal/professional challenges**

The mentors all discussed how they managed the challenges and tensions they experienced. Even the one participant who acknowledged that her school appeared to be the most organised and supportive of mentors, identified with a range of challenges presented by the mentors during the focus groups. These challenges seemed to fall into three distinct categories: being fully aware of what the role entails; workload; and isolation/lack of support.

As has been discussed, the mentors felt they were underprepared for the role. Toward the end of the study some of the participants continued to reflect upon this. Norma stated:

*I don't know that we really knew what the job fully entailed. I have personally been surprised by what it's required but I really don't think I had an idea.*

Others concurred with this sentiment and described feelings of frustration at not completing the role in the way that they really wanted.

*Those times when you felt bogged down by your own stuff and not feeling aware that there was stuff that she was having to deal with and for whatever reason not able to connect and to alleviate. (Eden)*

All of the participants talked of overload and the enormous amount of work they put into their mentoring. In Jane's words,

*...it's been a huge workload!*

Not only did a lack of understanding of paperwork appear to be an issue, but also the time spent on completing such requirements as paperwork was a concern. As busy teachers themselves, they often felt the challenge of getting everything done, but also felt that being recognised and valued was important. Kay noted that she felt quite cheated when she realised that no one in the school was actually going to check to see if she was doing a good job; as a mentor she appeared to be answerable to no one. This really annoyed her as she was a conscientious professional but was fully aware of others who might be in this same role who were not so professional.

*Am I doing the job properly? That's really what it comes down to ... there have been times when I've felt like I could just throw it in and just take the money and no one would ever know. No accountability! (Kay)*

This sentiment was backed up by another participant who stated:

*I feel sorry for the provisionally registered teachers that don't have the right person standing beside them, because you could make or break a provisionally registered teacher in this role, you really could! (Norma)*

Most participants were surprised by this lack of accountability to ensure a high standard of mentoring. Only one participant discussed how her senior management team kept in touch to see the progress of both mentor and beginning teacher. For the majority of the participants, no one in their school checked up on them, in either a professional or personal sense. The mentors discussed feelings of isolation, of being in this role on their own, being left to sink or swim. It appeared everyone had forgotten that this was the first time they had been in this role and therefore might need some form of support. This situation was especially the case for the one participant who struggled with her beginning teacher and with the systems of her school.

One mentor in particular (Kay) spoke passionately of her challenges and the almost total lack of support from within her school. This became particularly apparent when having created her own systems of accountability (which clearly demonstrated the beginning teacher at risk), her management team then ignored her pleas for support. She was basically told to ignore the evidence and sign the beginning teacher as being competent for full registration. Her openness in the mentor focus groups certainly added a new dimension to some participants' views

of mentoring that had not been previously considered; that the leadership of the school would show such a lack of support for their mentor and the beginning teacher. These discussions turned out to become a positive learning experience for both Kay and the rest of the group. Kay acknowledged how grateful she was to be able to meet with others and to hear more positive accounts of being a first-time mentor. Not only did she gain a better perspective of being a mentor, but she also found out about information she had not been aware of (including getting remuneration for being a mentor); in her words,

*Working with that group of ladies; that was incredibly informative. (Kay)*

Such outcomes demonstrated that, although the mentors experienced some challenging and difficult aspects in this role, they were quick to acknowledge the highlights as well.

### **Personal/professional gains**

Many positive aspects of their first year of being a mentor were recognised by the participants. They identified advantages such as learning from their beginning teacher and gaining specific skills which could be seen as management skills. One of the most frequently discussed aspects of being a first-time mentor was self-reflection. The participants all spoke of “taking stock” of their own professional capabilities due to having to model and discuss their own pedagogy with the beginning teacher. Additionally, the mentors indicated that participation in this research had assisted with this by completing their journals and through discussion at the focus groups. Self-reflection by the mentors enabled them to see how far they themselves had progressed within their careers and to celebrate this enlightenment. As Kelli noted:

*I think for me it's ... it's empowered me; I know lots and I know what to do in those situations and I can think back and see how far that I have come as well.*

It was almost as if through mentoring their beginning teacher, the mentors had become aware of how professionally successful they were. This resulted in further professional growth for the mentors as they examined the efficacy of their own practice.

*It's made me look at my own teaching. It's made me kind of think about I guess updating the way I was teaching. It's interesting that it kept me on my toes and I have to be a lot more organised. (Abby)*

*I think as an experienced teacher you take for granted things you know so it's been good for me to take a step back as well and reflect on my own teaching. (Kelli)*

*It's keeping me on my toes because I have to keep my planning and everything up to play because I believe you've got to practise what you preach. So that's been a plus because it motivates me more. (Eden)*

*I think having to explain clarifies your thinking. You don't know what you don't know and you don't know what you do know until you have to explain to someone else. (Esther)*

Many of the mentors discussed the professional learning they felt they had gained as mentors and acknowledged that these new skills would potentially set them up for promotion. Although self-reflection was high on their list of professional gains, so too were inter-personal skills and communication skills.

*I'm feeling more assertive about applying for an AP position; like, I'm feeling like I could be ready for this actually. I could do this. (Kay)*

*It made me want the Senior Teacher job more because I liked all that kind of management and all the personal relationship with her ... and yeah, because I realised how much I knew. (Kelli)*

Kay noted how her experiences of being a first-time mentor had prompted her to consider further study within the field of mentoring. She felt that her experiences had opened up a new professional world in which she was interested in learning more.

*It's created more questions for me as a professional about my ability to communicate effectively with adults; I've never consciously studied mentoring and that but I'm curious about it now and I value it more; just what a big job it is if you want to do it well.*

Although some had thoughts of leadership and further professional study, others spoke of different aspects such as being better now at organisational skills, time management, at being more strategic and working alongside others.

*It's helped me in my Syndicate role I think. (Eden)*

*I've learnt along the way so much about being ... diplomatic and how to approach people about issues. (Jane)*

Kelli commented on how being a mentor for the first time had opened her eyes to just what she was capable of coping with:

*...you're finding out about yourself as well, that you can do this plus all the other stuff you're doing! (Kelli)*

All of the mentors expressed satisfaction that they had completed the role to the best of their abilities, often within quite challenging situations and environments. They were clear about the reciprocal value of the experiences they had had; all the learning had not been one sided, and they were pleasantly surprised about this. The participants acknowledged that their hard work had also resulted in personal and professional gains for themselves, and that this would stand them in good stead should they look to progress their careers.

Although their own professional growth had been an outcome, all of the mentors had not gone into mentoring for this reason; they made it very clear the reason they took on the mentoring role was to aid in the development of a new teacher.

*Highs are seeing the huge learning growth that she's had and seeing her become happier teaching and seeing her master some of the skills as well. It doesn't happen straight away, and seeing that gradual process ... she's made it; you know, she's done so well and that's been satisfying. (Norma)*

## **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated, through the use of the mentors' own words, the complex nature of, and the inherent tensions within, the roles and responsibilities of being a mentor. For the principal of the school and the mentor, understanding the role comprised interpreting the nationally mandated requirements and expectations. Fulfilling the role of mentor became reflective of how principals had scrutinised the information and customised it for their specific school; if the leader of the school presented a clear understanding and expectation of mentoring, the mentor was much more confident and secure in understanding their role. The aim of this customisation was to enable clear direction for the first-time mentor when enacting their role. In fulfilling the role of mentor, participants offered insight into both the positive experiences and tensions they had felt as mentors. In addition,

aspects of personal and professional growth were identified and reviewed. In order to relate these findings to the research questions, the following chapter will present interpretation and resonance with appropriate supporting literature.

## **Chapter 7 Making meaning from the data**

This chapter presents a discussion of key findings in relation to the research questions which shaped this study. In addition, the significant aspects of the findings are considered within the context of existing literature, both national and international. The structure of this chapter is similarly presented to that of the previous chapter, where discussion of the key findings is located under two main headings: “Understanding the role of mentor” and “Fulfilling the role of mentor”. Within both sections, a national, school and specific mentor perspective will be presented.

### **7.1 Understanding the role of mentor**

To complete their work with beginning teachers, first-time mentors required a clear understanding of what comprised their role and its parameters within the school context. Policy, guidelines and expectations outlining the role of a mentor within a New Zealand primary school were located at a national level yet clear direction was found wanting.

#### **Understanding the role of mentor: National focus**

According to Cameron et al. (2007), New Zealand is considered one of the world leaders in supporting the induction of beginning teachers, however, the participants of this study found a number of deficiencies in support offered at a national level. These mentors explicitly stated and indirectly inferred their need for clearer directions regarding what was expected of them in the role of mentor. Their sense of confusion as to what was a requirement, an expectation, or a suggestion was evident throughout.

This confusion had also been experienced by myself as researcher when searching for clear and specific policies or guidelines regarding mentoring within the primary sector. There appeared to be a lot of smoke and mirrors (vagueness) as to just what was the national requirement (policy) as opposed to pure suggestion. Even attempting to decipher this with personal contacts at the Ministry of Education did not yield much success.

Principals and primary teachers appeared to be under the impression that certain aspects of the mentoring role were mandated through policy, and yet this was actually not the case. What was considered policy by some was, in fact, an expectation/suggestion from the Teachers Council. The misperception noted in this study reinforces the call by Cameron et al. (2007) for greater clarity around policy expectations. Unless school leaders and mentors are certain about what is nationally expected, the varied nature and quality of mentoring will continue with each school enacting what they think is required (Bubb & Earley, 2006; Piggot-Irvine et al., 2009). This lack of national consistency was to be addressed with the creation and national introduction of the Teachers Council *Guidelines* throughout 2011, which was heralded as the answer to all ambiguity surrounding mentoring and induction within New Zealand; unfortunately according to the participants in my study, this is not the case.

#### *New Zealand Teachers Council Guidelines*

The participants of the primary pilot programme commented on the need for additional support with the *Guidelines* and the findings of this study show that the mentors were in agreement with this. Langdon et al. (2011) stated as a recommendation from the primary pilot programme (discussed in Chapter 3), that the documentation needed to be fully deconstructed by school leaders, as mentors would require assistance in understanding not only the criteria but also how to actually enact what was being asked of them. The feelings demonstrated by my research participants mirrored the call for further support in understanding the intricacies of the *Guidelines*. Although the mentors agreed that the *Guidelines* were a positive intention, they neither had the time or depth of knowledge (adult learning or mentoring of another teacher) to fully decipher and get to grips with what was being asked of them within this new booklet. Due to being so new to this type of role, the mentors wanted clear and specific direction; they wanted to be able to use the national documentation as support for coming to terms with what it meant to be a mentor. Although experienced teachers themselves, they called for a guide-book, a mentoring road map as such, not only for what was expected nationally, but also what entitlements should be available to them (time, release, funding, and remuneration). This was especially so for those mentors who experienced little support and guidance in the role of mentor from within their

own school. There were times within this study when the mentors came to understand the complexities of taking on this role from each other during focus group discussions (such as one mentor finding out that they should, in fact, be getting paid). The Teachers Council *Guidelines* as presented did not offer what these mentors were hoping for. The ambiguous nature of the national direction felt by my participants was reflective of the primary pilot programme (Langdon et al., 2011), where a need for further professional development regarding the Teachers Council document had been endorsed.

#### *Understanding changing times*

Insecurity surrounding national policy and direction was also noted as mentors attempted to understand the shift from advice and guidance of the past to an educative pedagogy. The findings of this study align with what Hobson (2002) and Langdon (2009) said when they indicated the need for mentors to be skilled in specific processes, particularly around understanding teacher development. Although the mentors in my study had a natural empathy for their beginning teachers and assisted them in becoming comfortable with the ways of the school, the mentors did not fully understand what being educative referred to. For the majority of participants their introduction to this new educative focus was through the Teachers Council *Guidelines*. The messages within the *Guidelines* added to the mentors' confusion as they did not have the background knowledge to connect with the language being used within the handbook. Mentors requiring a specific skill set and depth of understanding which is quite different from their normal classroom experiences is one of the key findings of this study which resonated with previous research both in New Zealand and internationally and is further discussed below.

#### *Professional development*

The need for mentors to receive professional development has been heralded through many studies, for example Achinstein and Athanases (2006) affirmed that mentors are not born but can be developed through conscious, deliberate and ongoing learning. These authors stated the need for a specialised skill-set to be taught so mentors know how to work with adult learners. Martin and Rippon (2003) suggested mentors needed interpersonal training in order for them to establish relationships with open communication and the ability to present

difficult messages. Bubb (2003) and Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009) have identified the necessity of training, in order for mentors to understand and learn to work within the intentions of policy. The mentors of this study, most of whom had not had any experience in working with developing adult learners, specifically stated that they would have liked much greater preparation for this role. Without 'training' or professional development the mentors relied upon, and were more comfortable with, informal instructional development and affective support of their beginning teachers, which reflected a more advice and guidance mentoring method of the past.

My findings in this study paralleled the variety of previous authors' research in that the skills necessary for being a mentor are not readily learnt without direct, specific and continued professional development and support, which currently New Zealand does not insist upon (Robinson, 1993; Sinnema, 2005; Timperley, 2001). The findings also demonstrate congruence to the primary pilot programme recommendation of mentor professional development and support, as the mentors in this study demonstrated a lack of understanding of their role, limited skills and knowledge (emphasising educative pedagogy) to undertake the role effectively (Langdon, 2011; Sankar et al., 2011). These findings align with Martin and Rippon (2005) who suggested that, although mentors are working hard to support beginning teachers, they themselves often experience limited guidance and support. Such support is necessary from a national point of view for two reasons: firstly that all teachers who are new to mentoring would then be further educated with national expectations/policy and initiatives in mind, thus encouraging national consistency; and secondly, at a national level, New Zealand could be confident in presenting the very best induction and mentoring practices throughout the country. Such a national focus could only benefit all beginning teachers and their growth in the profession.

New Zealand research (the *Learning to Teach* studies in particular) states that in-school support for mentors is a strength of the induction process within our primary schools. This level of support was not identified within this study, and in fact, was notable in its absence.

### **Understanding the role of mentor: School focus**

In total and quite convincingly, the results of my study reveal a lack of support for first-time mentors, and additionally a lack of empathy from school principals to the struggles of a mentor attempting to understand and implement their role for the first time. It was astonishing to me that schools had not completed any interpretation of the national direction; there was no mutually agreed-upon schema of how mentoring was to be enacted within each specific school as this was similar to when I was a mentor many years ago. Schools not interpreting national direction was surprising as this was called for by the Teachers Council within the *Guidelines* (2011). These findings did not reflect those of previous New Zealand studies, where primary schools were noted as being co-operative, supportive professional learning communities (Aitken et al., 2008). In my study, all but one of the first-time mentors struggled to find support from professional leaders within their own environment. There was no recognition that these were *first-time* mentors, and there was minimal clarity of expectations and little scaffolding into the role.

Cameron (2007) suggested that New Zealand has promoted a collaborative approach, where all staff are involved in the development of the beginning teacher and where teacher learning is a priority throughout the whole school. This is not the conclusion of my study. The mentors felt both frustration and anxiety at the limited support given by from their principals, especially in assisting them to understand the role of mentor. It would appear that the principals of these schools fell into the trap of assuming that because these mentors were experienced teachers of children, they would instantly become experienced teachers of teachers, which is not the case as demonstrated by research outlined in Chapter 2 (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 1998; Langdon, 2009; Lindgren, 2005; Orland, 2001; Worthy, 2005).

The ambiguity of expectations and requirements became more obvious to the mentors as they interacted with each other during the focus groups. Had national policy and specific requirements been made clear, and additionally, if the professional leaders of the schools had ensured all staff were aware of these, the mentors in this study would have been more confident in understanding their role and the entitlements of being a mentor. This research has identified that there was

limited transparency of expectations both nationally and within each school context, and there had been limited involvement by staff in the creation of school-specific information pertaining to induction and mentoring. Thus for the mentors, the whole process of understanding what it meant to be completing the role of mentor for the first time was confusing and concerning both from within a school context and at a national policy level.

### **Understanding the role of mentor: The mentor perspective**

The mentors in this study acknowledged being, and indeed feeling, on a daily basis, ill-equipped for the role. Initially they were not clear on what they were getting themselves into and based their understanding of the role on how they themselves were mentored. This correlates with the findings of Langdon (2011) who suggested that despite a lack of understanding, mentors are still expected to complete the role successfully. The need for support, guidance and scaffolding from within each school environment and the need for more professional development around what being a mentor entailed was clearly demonstrated throughout this study. Ganser (1999) reaffirmed that being a mentor is a specialised role and teachers are not always prepared for the task. The mentors in my study wanted to feel secure in their understanding of this role; they felt the pressure of responsibility and they felt isolated in attempting to fulfil this. They craved the guidance of an interested and involved professional leader; someone to support them as new learners as they attempted to perform the complex role of mentor.

## **7.2 Fulfilling the role of mentor**

The mentors feeling professionally lost (out of their depth), frustrated and “spinning in circles” as one mentor stated, was the total opposite of what was desired from a national perspective. Within the *Learning to Teach* research and the construction of the Teachers Council *Guidelines*, the national directive was to alleviate the varied quality of induction and mentoring, and to further develop the professional learning of all involved (mentor, beginning teacher and the school staff as whole). The findings of this study demonstrate that this was yet to happen for most of the schools in the sample.

**Fulfilling the role: National focus**

The historical focus of advice and guidance within mentoring appeared well established in my participants' schools, and was also considered well supported through the *Toward Full Registration* support kit (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009). All of the first-time mentors in this study knew of this kit and considered it a user-friendly manual that offered instructional guidance and concrete direction. When compared to the Teachers Council *Guidelines*, a different picture emerges. It is acknowledged that the *Guidelines* were newly released during this study, but the initial reactions of the mentors were not positive. The language used within the Teachers Council *Guidelines* was considered too difficult to interpret, to instantly put into practice and the national intention of being educative was not considered effectively described for those who might be new to being a mentor, even for those who had attended the Teachers Council *Guidelines* introductory workshop. The mentors were comfortable with providing what some authors consider a more affective form of mentoring (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hansford et al., 2003; Klug & Salzman, 1991; McIntyre et al., 2009) and found it very difficult to make the mind-shift to what the Teachers Council (2011) considered a more intense and pedagogically situated mentoring style. Nationally this dissidence would be problematic, and would see a continuation of the status quo in mentoring in New Zealand.

**Fulfilling the role: School context**

Two key findings from this study demonstrate the influence that the schools had on the mentors fulfilling their role. The performance of the professional leader within each school and whether or not the school acts as a professional learning community has been shown to impact on mentors. Furthermore, the organisational structures within a school, including issues of proximity (allocated teaching space of the beginning teacher close to their mentor), affected how the mentors worked with their beginning teachers. This study endorses research findings of Heilbronn et al. (2002) and Sundli (2007) that the professional leader needs to have a strong, supportive presence within the school staff as well as promoting a culture of professional learning. Only one of the mentors felt part of such a community and it notably transformed her ability to positively complete the new role of mentor. The others felt a lack of support and guidance from the principal and staff and

considered this have negatively impacted on their ability to mentor successfully this first time. As highlighted in Chapter 6, the mentors believed that other staff were judging their limited abilities (their own words) and yet were too busy or unwilling to offer assistance to them. Hansford et al. (2003) discussed the need for mentoring to be considered as a whole-school activity; so that the mentor would be less likely to feel that they were isolated, completing this role alone.

Unfortunately, this was not represented in the findings of this study. There was little involvement by other colleagues on staff, little feeling of collegiality to working with the beginning teacher and the mentors felt development of the beginning teacher was their sole responsibility. This finding confirms what Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009) claimed, that the quality of mentoring is influenced by the environment in which it is enacted.

Additionally, organisational structures such as the proximity of teaching space (mentor to the beginning teacher) have been identified as impacting on the quality of mentoring. The mentors expressed difficulties and tension when working with a beginning teacher who was part of a different teaching team, responsible to a different team leader and had a classroom which was not close. Such elements, although appearing inconsequential, when reviewed individually, compounded the challenges and tensions of the new mentors. Due to proximity issues and participating in teaching teams which operated differently, the mentors were challenged by other staff who led the beginning teacher (such as the syndicate leader) and had to be aware of, and negotiate, different expectations. Abell et al. (1995) discussed similar challenges with vicinity and affirmed the need for mentors and beginning teachers to teach at the same level and be in close proximity to each other for a better mentoring outcome. The findings of this study have shown that these in-school factors really could have a positive impact for a first-time mentor.

#### *Time considerations*

Further in-school challenges for the mentors were time and the organisation of its use. The findings of this study identified much confusion surrounding the use of release time and the need for structures to be fully transparent and understood by all school staff, and indeed at a national level. The limited use of release time was often prompted by school leaders who at times utilised the 0.2 in other areas (for

example as a reliever for another class) which was not the intended expectation of such funding outlined by the Ministry of Education (n.d.; b). The mentors frequently commented that they would really like to see greater accountability at both a national level and within each school environment; some form of monitoring was needed to ensure that what support was intended was actually taking place and that resources such as funding were being used appropriately. Closer scrutiny of national policy and how this was implemented within school structures would also make evident the complexities of being a mentor and possibly prompt improved procedures of support for those fulfilling the role for the first time.

### **Fulfilling the role: Mentor experience**

It is clearly acknowledged in the literature that mentoring in general is complex and challenging (Young et al., 2005), and this study has illuminated the exacerbation of this complexity for those who are new to the role. The mentors demonstrated through their experiences, a number of key findings that will be discussed below: the complex nature of being new to mentoring, the tensions caused by the interplay of roles (the “juggling of hats”) and contrasting expectations, and lastly, the emotional rollercoaster of being a first-time mentor.

#### *Complex nature of being new to mentoring*

The experiences of these mentors confirm what a number of authors have alluded to, the role of mentor is multifaceted and not always straightforward (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Orland, 2001; Timperley, 2001; Young et al., 2005). The mentors experienced a number of different responsibilities within this role, many of which they were not prepared for. Moir and Gless (2001) and Wong et al. (2005) believe that the affective type of advice is necessary for the survival of the beginning teacher and additionally, for the beginning teacher to feel positive and supported in their early experiences in the profession. Although all of the mentors expected to provide support and guidance to their beginning teachers, the home/life challenges needing to be dealt with by some beginning teachers surprised them. The mentors stated that they did not have experience and/or professional development to deal with such traumatic experiences and that they often felt more like counsellors than professional, educational mentors. The mentors understood the necessity of this form of affective support in order to achieve any professional

development (as noted by Hansford et al., 2003; and Long, 1997), but were often perplexed as to how to actually provide this as well as being the educational mentor and ensuring professional growth. Thus tension was noted between the different aspects of being a mentor and in effect, the mentors needed advice and support themselves; they needed guidance of their own in how to stay resilient, to cope with this side of mentoring and the tensions caused by the interplay of contrasting roles.

Cain (2009) identified in Chapter 2 the complicated and multifaceted nature of mentoring, maintained that a mentor completes three forms of support: interpersonal, affective and cognitive. These aspects were also noted within the findings of this study. The mentors' experiences reflected each form of support noted by Cain, and acknowledged the challenges inherent within each. Furthermore, the mentors expressed difficulty in coping with the tensions and blurred lines between each aspect of support, often referring to this as the "juggling of hats".

*The interplay of roles: tension of juggling hats*

From their early interactions, the mentors became aware of the various forms of support needed and the differing roles they were to enact when working with their beginning teachers. In addition, the mentors also came to realise their own personal difficulties when each aspect of support began to intersect, a situation that came to be known as "the juggling of various hats" by the mentors. The challenges exposed by the mentors were how to ensure professional development happened, that they were still being educative, whilst still being the affective supporter. They questioned how to balance each aspect and not let one overwhelm the other; knowing when it was appropriate to wear each hat and when to juggle between them. The mentors of this study demonstrated that they were much more comfortable with the giving of advice, guidance and supporting the immediate needs of the beginning teachers, but were much more anxious about how to be approachable and supportive (affectively and interpersonally) and still ensure professional growth. Aitken et al. (2008) identify that mentoring is too heavily focussed on affective support, technical advice and guidance and they affirm what Timperley (2001) argues as the need for more balance between the promotion of a developmental stance (firmly focussed on professional development only) and that

of being a supporter. Confusion and tension regarding the negotiation of these sometime contradictory roles was evident throughout the study.

### *Contrasting expectations*

The debate surrounding assistance and assessment was outlined in Chapter 2 and the findings of this study further confirm the tension between mentors ensuring, and then measuring, the professional growth of the beginning teacher. A number of authors present cases for and against the mentor being responsible for both assisting the beginning teacher and being in charge of assessing them (Bradbury, 2010; Bullough & Draper, 2004; Hobson, 2009; Rippon & Martin, 2003, 2006), but Findlay (2006) in particular, notes the potentially contradictory roles between assistance and assessment. The findings of this study evidenced the conflicting emotions of the mentors as they struggled to come to terms with the tensions created by assisting *and* assessing. McIntyre et al. (2009) described the mentor as being the champion of the beginning teacher, taking on a parenting role almost. The mentors of this study paralleled this metaphor, speaking of wanting to unburden their beginning teacher, to solve the ills of the world and to protect them. Although Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) described this reaction as a natural human response, when coupled with having to formally assess the beginning teacher as well, confusion, tension and anxiety became more prevalent. The mentors spoke of being unclear about what or how to assess another teacher and not knowing how or when to provide clear and honest critique of another's practice. This caused much worry and consternation for the mentors; they felt bad for their beginning teacher and did not want to hurt their feelings. This reaction resonates with Bullough and Draper (2004) who have described mentors as feeling the heavy burden of both placating and developing the beginning teacher.

The findings identify that, although the mentors were able to manage each role separately, they struggled to ensure smooth interaction between and across the roles of professional/cognitive developer, affective supporter and assessor. They worried about how to make each role component work and how to ensure smooth interaction between them. These tensions stimulated many different emotions and prompted the participant's year of mentoring for the first time as being compared to an emotional roller-coaster.

*Emotional roller-coaster*

Fulfilling the role of mentor for the first time prompted an emotional roller-coaster with emotional and individual resilience being the outcome of juggling the various role components. In addition, feelings of isolation were prevalent early on in the study but were superseded as the study neared the end, by feelings of elation and affirmation. The emotional state noted by mentors is not new but, what is original is the collation of this over the space of a year. The findings demonstrate the resilience needed to be a mentor for the first time by showing the impact of the roller-coaster effect on the mentor and on the mentoring role over the space of an entire school year.

Feelings of apprehension regarding being ineffective for their beginning teacher corresponded to the findings of Bullough and Draper (2004) who suggested that mentors invest intensely in their beginning teachers' success and that they take the role very personally. Mentors considered the failures of their beginning teachers as being reflective of their own abilities, thus causing much anxiety (Heilbronn et al., 2002). The mentors felt the weight of their responsibilities and appeared desperate to do the right thing, but also felt the weight of their own professional position amidst other responsibilities.

Tension was experienced by the mentors when attempting to come to grips with mentoring, as well as fulfilling their own teaching roles. Being readily available for their beginning teachers was a constant worry and promoted feelings of guilt if they had to put themselves first on occasion. This tension was also identified by Arends and Rigazio-DiGilio (2000) who noted the difficulties of mentors finding time and energy for their own classroom work and the guilt surrounding this. Many of the mentors talked of putting the needs and wants of their beginning teachers ahead of their own, but then had continued to berate themselves for not always being available. They felt the beginning teacher was their responsibility alone and that it was not fair to ask others to assist them. This resulted in feelings of isolation and, at times, frustration.

Bubb and Earley (2006) talk about survival of the fittest with regards to beginning teachers, and how new teachers are often left to "sink or swim". The findings of this study illuminate that the same could be said for those new to mentoring; there

was no offer of support for the mentors of this study, only one acknowledged that the role was new to them and checked to see if they needed any support or guidance in the role, in effect they were left to it. There was, as Hansford et al. (2003) express, a feeling of loneliness which could have been alleviated by the rest of the staff being involved in this process and being supportive of the mentor. It could be surmised that as these mentors had been effective teachers that the staff of each school therefore assumed that they would be confident and effective in this new role as well, thus no support was offered. As the research presented earlier confirms, this assumption would be misplaced; a confident and competent classroom teacher does not necessarily equate to a confident and competent mentor. The majority of the mentors reported that no one monitored their mentoring to see if, in fact, they were effective in this new role. To the mentors, there was a lack of recognition that they were new to this important role, that they had had no professional development or preparation for it, and there seemed to be no way to find out if they were competent at it (apart from judging themselves against the successes of their beginning teacher). The mentors' demonstrated frustration at the lack of accountability shown at a national level as there seemed to be no cross-checking that induction and mentoring was being efficiently and effectively enacted in the school domain. One mentor expressed disappointment that she could have just sat in her room and not done anything, not tried so hard, and certainly not supported her beginning teacher, and yet no one would have known ... or in her eyes, cared.

Although strong at the time, these somewhat negative emotions dissipated as the study moved to completion. The mentors reflected upon their experiences within the focus groups and pondered their resilience at making it through the year. Feelings of affirmation and elation began to take centre stage. A high degree of self-reflection was evident, with mentors considering what they had got out of this experience of being a mentor for the first time. Their findings reflected those of other researchers:

- a way of showing commitment to the teaching profession, a professional responsibility to give back to the profession (Arends & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000; Serpell & Bozeman, 1999; Wong et al., 2005);

- comprehending their own teaching abilities and acknowledging their expertise as a teacher (Simpson et al., 2007);
- developing further skills and a fresh view of teaching through learning from their beginning teacher—the teaching and learning relationship became reciprocal (Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005).

The mentors felt empowered by their work with the beginning teacher and came to feel affirmed in their own professional right at being chosen to be a mentor. Additionally, the mentors expressed their elation at seeing their beginning teacher blossom into an authentic professional and knowing they had a hand in this happening; they were extremely proud. By the end of the study, many of the trials and tribulations felt at the beginning had paled and were replaced with feelings of resiliency; that they were now able to move forward as confident and capable mentors. It is my belief that these feelings were heightened due to the vigorous discussions which occurred within the focus groups of this study where the participants were asked to openly self-reflect and to further discuss their experiences. I believe this made the mentors see more clearly and connect more deeply with their experiences and thus, their growth in the mentoring role became more visible to them.

### **7.3 Reciprocity within the study**

Throughout the study all of the mentors were keen to have a say in this research and for their stories to be documented. As they had no previous experiences to measure against, their recollections of situations, conversations and emotions were all expressed without a filter of what was deemed accurate or appropriate to their role. They openly shared their ups and downs, celebrated the strengths of others in the group and helped each other where they could, offering advice and showing empathy. The reciprocal learning and support of, and between, the group members became evident by the end of the study and is reflective of the character of these women—they saw mentoring as a way to grow themselves, support each other and their profession as a whole, in a sharing/caring manner.

### **7.4 Culmination of interpretations**

From this discussion on the findings of this study and the literature a number of conclusions can be drawn. The experiences of the mentors of this study

demonstrate the necessity for clear policy and direction regarding the role of mentor from both a national and school-based perspective; a finding which is reflective of and supported by previous research outlined earlier. First-time mentors need support and guidance to understand how to fulfil policy expectations and comprehend what this new role entails. Additionally this understanding should be shared with the entire staff within a school, all should understand what the role involves and how they might be included in supporting the participants (both mentor and beginning teacher). Well-defined policies and procedures at a national level would assist schools to fully support their first-time mentors more effectively, leading to greater confidence and competence.

Gless (2012) states:

Mentoring new teachers is complex and demanding work and requires a specific set of knowledge, skills and dispositions. To become effective teachers of teachers, teachers need focused preparation, ongoing professional development, a community of practice focussed on the complexities of accelerating new teachers' practice, and opportunities to engage in formative assessment to advance their own effectiveness. (p. 3)

The complex work of being a mentor has been outlined in this chapter and shown to be exacerbated if completing the role for the first time. The mentors in this study demonstrated high levels of stress and anxiety which reflected their lack of self-efficacy. Their lack of experience in working with adult learners and fully understanding the various aspects of mentoring contributed to tensions observed as an emotional roller-coaster and feelings of self-doubt. The mentors searched for guidance and advice for themselves, on what to do, how to do it and when to do it. They craved the support of others more experienced than they, a mentor for the mentor so to speak, and specific professional development for this role. Additionally, the mentors wanted confirmation that they were doing a good job; they actually wanted monitoring and accountability for themselves in this role. Due to feeling so inexperienced, the mentors wanted someone to pay attention to their performance as mentors and to give them acknowledgment, critique and feedback, so that they could learn and grow in the role.

What became evident from the findings of this study was that the journey of being a mentor for the first time showed some stark similarities to the journey of induction for a beginning teacher; advice, guidance/development, assessment and

assistance/support were all desirable, if not necessary. As discussed earlier in this thesis, the role of mentor has been identified as providing various forms of support: interpersonal, affective and cognitive to a beginning teacher (Cain, 2009). Congruence can be seen directly from the above research to the evidence presented by the first-time mentors of this study; they too needed all of the various forms of support identified by Cain. It has been acknowledged that induction of a beginning teacher requires both assessment and assistance; again the findings of this study demonstrate that this can be directly correlated to the first-time mentors of this study. Lee and Feng (2007) suggest that the beginning teacher needs to be assisted with the appropriate knowledge, strategies and skills in order to become effective. I contend that this study illustrates the same elements are needed for the first-time mentor. Additionally, it has been made evident through this study that more importance should be placed on ensuring the 'ecosystems' of the school (McMahon, Mason, Daluga-Guenther, & Ruiz, 2014) are operating effectively. These authors demonstrated earlier in this thesis that the interaction, interrelatedness and interconnectivity of people and processes within a school impact on the entire ecological system; where one component is not working efficiently or in balance with the rest, the impact of this will ripple throughout. Therefore, if a novice mentor is struggling to fulfil their role effectively, the impact of this will be felt by not only the beginning teacher but the school as a whole, as more than just the beginning teacher is influenced by this relationship. It is of importance then, that the mentor be fully supported and inducted into their role in the same way as the beginning teacher.

To fully understand the role and to become confident, competent mentors, it is therefore the conclusion of this study that mentors completing the role for the first time require similar support and development in their first year as that which has been provided for a beginning teacher—specifically professional development, monitoring and assessment, and affective support in order to grow into being the mentor all expect them to be. In conclusion, first-time mentors require a mentor for themselves.

## Chapter 8 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of first-time mentors of New Zealand provisionally registered primary teachers, as they completed the various roles inherent in being a mentor. As part of this research I set out to ascertain any challenges and/or tensions within or between the identified mentoring roles. It was ascertained that the findings of my study offer indications of ways to assist first-time mentors in the future. As the majority of existing literature presented the perspectives of beginning teachers and experienced mentors, this study was timely as it offered an alternative view of mentoring in New Zealand at a time when the Teachers Council were reviewing practices New Zealand-wide. Indeed, the Teachers Council introduced a new initiative half-way through this study in the form of a set of guidelines for mentors and mentoring. This concluding chapter of my research provides an overview of the study, the key findings, implications and contributions resulting from it. Finally, a personal summation is presented discussing my final thoughts as a researcher.

### 8.1 The study

The study sought to explore the experiences of novice mentors. In order to achieve this, the following research question was posed: How is mentoring understood and experienced by teachers completing the role for the first time?

In order to seek answers to this question, the following sub-questions were posed:

1. What are the first-time mentors' understanding of their roles and responsibilities?
2. What (if any) are the challenges and tensions which arise from the interplay between the roles and responsibilities?
3. What implications can be drawn from the above, and how might these assist first-time mentors in the future?

Understanding the varied experiences of the seven participants and how they interpreted their experiences was crucial to this study. Drawing from social constructionism, it was recognised that each participant would understand the world differently and would construct meaning of this differently, no reality would be identical. In addition to this, the influences of interpretivism ensured

acquiring an in-depth understanding of experiences and interpretation of these to appreciate the wide diversity of lived human experience be captured using qualitative approaches. A case study approach allowed me to interpret the personal and individual meanings each participant would attach to their experiences both individually and as part of a collective group. A research design such as this allowed for each participant to be seen as authentic and individual, but yet also seen part of a collective, all being mentors for the first time.

All seven participants were women from within the Greater Auckland Area and all were classroom teachers in their own right (none were fully released from teaching duties and all had their own classrooms). All but one participant were from high-decile school environments.

Multiple forms of data (interviews, focus groups, document analysis and personal journals) were collected in this study in order to ensure a rich, descriptive collation of experiences and varied array of information was gathered.

It was not the intention of this study to provide conclusive, set-in-concrete descriptions of first-time mentors' experiences, rather, to offer some insights into the mentoring practices within New Zealand primary schools. Even though generalisation cannot be assumed, some key elements can be extrapolated from the findings of collective data from these participants' experiences and may resonate with the experiences of others from within other schools. Certainly, implications can be drawn from the findings and utilised to ensure some contribution to not only to the knowledge-base of mentoring, but to the policies defining and underpinning the practices of future first-time mentors.

## **8.2 Implications and contributions**

The implications drawn from this study are many but can be drawn together to present five key areas. These are: (1) The need for unambiguous national documentation; (2) The need for professional development to assist with understanding the role of mentor; (3) In-school support systems; (4) Personal and professional support of the novice mentor; and (5) Broadening the literature base. These first four key areas were chosen as reflective of the most compelling messages drawn from the findings of this study. The fifth key area was reflective

of the need to disseminate this new understanding of the experiences of novice mentors, due to such a specific perspective not being noted in mentoring literature to date. The recommendations which can be made from identifying the implications are offered at the end of each section.

### **Implication 1: The need for unambiguous national documentation**

The novice mentors of my study sought clear documentation about being a mentor to assist with understanding both national requirements and entitlements, as well as in-school expectations of them in order to comprehend what the role entailed. The findings of this study suggest that clearer understanding of what policy was in place nationally and more transparent requirements from the Teachers Council would have greatly assisted the novice mentors in understanding what they were expected to do and achieve.

### **Recommendation**

#### **1. Clear differentiation between mandated Ministry of Education policy and New Zealand Teachers Council expectations, recommendations and suggestions, and school documentation reflecting this information**

Policy and procedure should be reviewed at a national level by both the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Teachers Council (and additionally, at a school level), to ensure that there is clear differentiation between what is mandated for mentors and mentoring within primary schools, and what is largely recommended or expected, and lastly, what is just suggestion. It would be beneficial for schools to be clear of the national expectations – just what they have to provide regarding mentors and mentoring within their environment. Additional to this would be clear policy documenting the use of release time and how this was to be utilised by schools, as currently there appears to be much confusion surrounding this element of support provided by the Ministry of Education. Lastly but most importantly, clear national direction regarding whether or not schools should have their own policy on mentoring within their environment would be beneficial. The findings of this study reflect ambiguity around this point in particular.

Differentiation between the Ministry of Education directives, and the Teachers Council expectations and suggestions would also go some way to reduce the amount of confusion surrounding the role of mentor. There appears to be a lot of

mixed messages regarding what is required by schools for mentors, or by mentors themselves, rather than transparent documentation and leadership. A fresh review of information by the Teachers Council in light of my findings would prompt further discussions of policy and processes currently seen in schools, which need to be implemented to support novice mentors. Review and dissection of policy requirements by mentors themselves should also be part of professional development opportunities, including the scrutinizing of documents such as the *Guidelines*. In addition, current documentation provided by schools regarding the mentoring role and how it is enacted, should be made more specific in order to reflect their unique settings. This would alleviate ambiguity and conjecture for the novice mentor and allow them to feel more secure in their new role.

**Implication 2: The need for professional development to assist with understanding the role of mentor**

The mentors of this study were found to be seeking a more concrete understanding of how to enact the role and further professional support to grow as mentors. As expounded in the early sections of this thesis, the call for specific professional development of mentors has been historically identified by many researchers. The findings of this study are no different, except that this study has also identified that the complex nature of being a novice mentor has added to the need for opportunities for professional guidance, support and development in order for the novice mentor to effectively understand the role. Such needs imply that a teacher who is new to being a mentor has additional, more complex needs than those who may have been in the role of mentor for some time. With little or no previous experience in working with adult learners, the challenges of being a novice in this field were clearly evident and indicated the need to address some key elements for those who follow in the footsteps of the participants in this study.

**Recommendation**

**2. Professional development for all first-time mentors and greater support opportunities for all mentors**

Opportunities for professional development should be made available to all novice mentors, if not made a requirement for becoming a mentor. Such professional development could be cluster based, within a school area, or could be led by a

consultancy group, attached to a university. By ensuring all teachers new to mentoring participate in opportunities to enhance their skills, a more robust and professional approach to mentoring would occur. I believe that the outcome of enhanced mentoring abilities would then be reflected in the effective development of beginning teachers in the future, thus enhancing the capacity of both parties involved. A professional development programme for novice mentors could potentially include enhancement of interpersonal skills, analysis of how to work effectively with adult learners, extending assessment capabilities (for example how to complete a formal observation and how to give appropriate feedback) and examination of what it means to be educative. Lastly, but most importantly, novice mentors should receive professional development in how to be resilient and manage the complex nature of mentoring; how to emotionally and professionally cope with the interplay of roles, or as the participants noted “the juggling of hats”.

Support material should be made available within such professional development, with any required documentation being presented; it should not be left for each mentor to reconstruct forms and templates, each time “reinventing the wheel”. The construction of support documentation by the Teachers Council or an outside agency (such as consultants or a university) would offer a starting benchmark for what documentation is required but still allowing each school to then personalise and individualise. A continuation of this professional development could be the initiation of a support network for mentors, where they would meet and discuss their role and the complex challenges and tensions within it; supporting each other as they develop in their first year.

### **Implication 3: In-school support systems**

The unique perceptions of the novice mentors in this study demonstrated the variation of support noted within their school settings. Although New Zealand literature suggests that considerable support exists for primary school mentors, this was not reflected by the participants within this study. The implications were that levels of frustration, isolation and loneliness were experienced by first-time mentors. Had greater involvement of all staff within a school been in existence, I believe such heightened emotions would have been substantially reduced.

## **Recommendation**

### **3. In-depth professional dialogue within schools regarding mentoring and the role of the mentor**

It has been acknowledged in this study that the needs of those who are new to mentoring are unique and complex. It should not be taken for granted that due to being an experienced teacher of children, this person will automatically be competent in teaching and supporting an adult. Greater transparency should be evident in schools regarding aspects of responsibility when working with a beginning teacher (observation of practice/release time/differentiation of affective and cognitive support/assistance and assessment). Additionally greater accountability by principals should be evident, ensuring that mentoring programmes within their schools are effective; that the mentor understands the role and is supported in undertaking it. Principals need to be very open about how they expect mentoring to be executed within their school; this means having specific conversations with their staff (as a whole) around the elements listed above, and having clear documentation pertaining to these conversations. Roles need to be identified and made clear to all involved, thus reducing tensions, confusion and crossed lines of communication. This is also in keeping with considering a school from an ecological perspective where all factors (people's processes and relationships) all interconnect and influence each other. If something isn't working the impact of this ripples throughout the school. Additionally, principals themselves must be visible within the mentoring context; as the professional leader they should be very involved not only with supporting the mentor, but also with assisting the development of the beginning teacher. A positive outcome of such involvement is that the beginning teacher experiences a wide variety of personnel, who have varied philosophical attitudes and practical abilities which the new teacher could learn from. This type of community of practice corresponds with the maxim 'it takes a village to raise a child', so too does it take an entire staff to develop a new teacher.

#### **Implication 4: Personal and professional support of the novice mentor**

The implications of being a novice mentor for a year were very evident through the complexities and tensions of the role; the limited experience and

understanding brought to the position by first-timers were exacerbated due to their immaturity in this role. This led them to experience strong emotions, highs and lows/peaks and troughs which reflected a similar picture to that of a novice teacher, someone in their very first year within the profession. The need for high levels of support, (emotional/psychological), tempered with the need for cognitive development to ensure professional growth, and the desire to grow through critique, highlighted a concept not visible within existing literature on being a mentor. After thorough searching of the literature, only one international author presents a similar finding—Orland (2001) stated that, for those new to mentoring, their development is akin to the induction of a beginning teacher.

## **Recommendation**

### **4. First-time mentors complete an induction programme**

All novice mentors should experience an induction programme similar to that of all New Zealand beginning teachers. Due to the mentors displaying similar needs to those experienced by beginning teachers, it would make sense to then provide an induction programme which mirrored the support given to beginning teachers in this country. An example of this could be an experienced mentor working with/alongside the novice mentor throughout their first year. Such an experienced mentor could be found within the staff of the school or alternatively, an external mentor could be sought. This person could either be sourced from another school or perhaps through a mentoring consultancy group, or even in collaboration with an initial teacher education programme at university level, who could offer support and advice school-wide in both policy and practice, but also working more specifically with the needs of the new mentor. The experienced mentor could offer timely professional development for the novice, be able to offer guidance on how to reduce the challenges and tensions noted within the role, but also monitor and assess the new mentor in their role, thus effectively growing them/inducting them into the position of mentor in a more organised and structured manner than is currently seen in New Zealand. The experienced mentor could follow similar procedures to that seen in beginning teacher induction; providing affective support, cognitive development, and assessment/assistance.

**Implication 5: Broadening the literature base**

As yet, the literature base within the field of novice mentors is underdeveloped, experiences of those new to being a mentor have not yet been the focus of wide discussion. This limited attention suggests the need for greater investigation. The implication of highlighting the experiences and needs of novice mentors is that the prospect of greater debate as this is an area increases. A different aspect of mentoring, insight into the role from a novice point of view, has been made evident and is part of the contribution which this study makes.

**Recommendation****5. Continued research in this area of the mentoring field**

The needs of first-time mentors are highlighted for researchers; my research adds to the existing literature within the field both internationally and nationally. The findings of my study offer insight into the specific needs of novice mentors for the first time in New Zealand, and provide suggestions as to how to strengthen the field. In order to continue this awareness it is important that research highlighting first-time mentors is developed. This study offers a small start to what could potentially be a long journey – there is much to expand on and come to understand from a novice mentor's point of view. It is imperative that as researchers in this field we reach a deeper understanding of the experiences of novice mentors and how to ensure their development, as this can only further support the growth and development of beginning teachers. Such continued research will establish a more complete picture of mentoring and give voice to those who are new to the role.

The five key areas addressed above have the potential to strengthen the induction processes of New Zealand beginning teachers through improved consideration of first-time mentors and the practices of mentoring as a whole within New Zealand primary schools. It would seem fitting to highlight the professional needs of first-time mentors at a time when the Teachers Council are looking to establish new initiatives and directions in this field; by working with those who are new, development and entrenchment of new ideas would be easier to execute.

### 8.3 Limitations

This study presents an interpretation of the mentors' experiences through my positioning as a researcher and as an educationalist; I have attempted to stay true to the participants' data, have listened carefully to their experiences, but maintained alignment with my chosen methodology. I acknowledge that other interpretations could be made by a different researcher. While the experiences presented by the seven participants demonstrated commonalities, each must be acknowledged as an individual person in their own right, who presented their own personal experiences. The positioning of this study identifies there are multiple forms of reality and each is unique to the individual who brings with them their own assumptions, backgrounds and belief systems that directly impact on any perceptions. This, in some areas of research, may be seen as a limitation as there is no concluding, firm, or "right" answer to the research questions.

The use of decile (socio-economic classification of surrounding area) and character (rural, inner city etc.) statements to describe each school was an informed decision. Due to the close-knit world of education, any further information would have made the schools open to exposure, identification and therefore put the anonymity of the participants at risk. It is acknowledged that this omission did restrict my ability to offer a more complete picture of the participants' contexts. It could also be argued that restricting this information also reduced the ability to make connections from the mentor's experiences to the nature of the school in general. For example if the school operated as valuing a more individualised arrangement within their staff, then this may have been linked to a mentor feeling isolated. This limitation is identified as reducing the potential for comprehensive understanding of the nature of the schools where the mentors worked; hence converging lines of evidence may have been missed. A final limitation regarding the nature of the schools would be that only one low decile school was represented within this study. The experiences of the mentor within this school were particularly different to the other six and it could be suggested that this was due to the nature of the school being low decile. Had the study contained additional low decile schools, comparative information could have been analysed. This limitation meant that there was no way to verify if the experiences

of this particular mentor were reflective of the decile rating of the school environment.

Additionally, the choice to make the first-time mentors the priority of this study to the exclusion of other members of the school could be noted as a limitation as again, this lessened my ability to gather a full and entire picture of the mentor's experiences. It was accepted that the information provided by the mentors were their own personal interpretations, and it was further accepted that by excluding the principal from the study, corroborating evidence was not available. It was acknowledged that had the principal been part of the study, further information pertaining to the mentors, their situations and experiences may have come to light, and may have explained some of the concerns raised by the mentors. This is noted as a limitation of my study.

The size and sample (both participant and area) of this study limits any generalisations that could be made, although allowing for in-depth participant study within a bounded area. Additionally, this research could be perceived as showing gender-bias, as only women were represented. Unfortunately, this is representative of the teaching profession as a whole, in that the vast majority are women. The sample area could be noted as restrictive, that only the Greater Auckland area was represented. It could be perceived that different findings would be offered if the area under investigation was much wider in focus, such as using a focus on the entire North Island, or alternatively, nationwide. Nevertheless, this study provides a concentrated representation of mentors in the Auckland region, from a variety of school environments.

All limitations noted above could potentially be seen as stepping stones into further research in this field, which is discussed in the following section.

#### **8.4 Further Research**

The findings of this research promote a wider and alternative perspective to the field of mentoring. Additional focus is noted for those responsible for creating policy and those responsible for disseminating it out into New Zealand school environments. In order to ensure these findings create traction (or at least awareness and discussion) within the induction and mentoring world, additional

research is necessary. Benefits from such research have the potential to broaden the findings of this study and to cast a wider net for novice mentoring experiences. Additionally, further research would allow for greater comparative study into gender (all the participants of my study were women, therefore male participants could add an important dimension to further research), location (a wider scope than just the Auckland area could be initiated to see if the experiences of my participants were mirrored by others throughout the country, or indeed, in other countries). Lastly, a comparative study between novice and experienced mentors could bring to light common experiences/feelings/challenges. To my knowledge, no such comparative studies have been undertaken between experienced and novice mentors in New Zealand or internationally.

The field of mentoring would benefit from additional research being focussed on the professional learning needs of first-time mentors, as more extensive research would widen the identified experiences, and especially so if the research included a variety of environments (decile/socio-economic areas within New Zealand, but also include environments from other countries). Further, the inclusion of other staff members in the research process would also add greater depth and portray a more complete picture of the mentoring role from not only the perspective of the novice, but to also other staff members and particularly the principal's view of the mentoring role. Lastly, a further unique perspective adding to the findings of this study would be comparative research of a first-time mentor who actually *does* receive specialised support from an experienced mentor and one who does not. This form of research would offer further clarity on the impact of having a mentor for the novice mentor.

It is envisaged that the consideration of the implications and contributions of this study will prompt a new way of looking at mentoring, open discussions and open the door to strong mentors and strengthened mentoring practices within New Zealand primary schools.

## **8.5 Personal summation**

The completion of this Doctoral research has been challenging but yet exciting and stimulating. The ability to work with seven vibrant and dedicated women, who wanted only to ensure the best for their beginning teacher, was a privilege.

There were times when their stories frustrated me; that their school support systems were so few, that the leaders they turned to for support appeared blind to their challenges, caused me much angst. Some experiences linked directly with my own experiences so many years ago. The experiences of completing this study has opened my eyes to the complex world of policy to practice in education, has challenged my understanding of our governing bodies and has enlightened me to the confusing messages schools respond to. Through all the confusion and anguish, the excitement seen in my participants when talking of the successes of their beginning teachers made all the challenges worthwhile. My passion for sharing the participants' experiences has been the driving force through to completion; theirs is a story which needs to be told, and ultimately responded to by a number of bodies within this profession.

## **8.6 Finale**

The importance of quality induction practices is undisputed in both international and national literature; the contribution of the mentor is also strongly evident within existing literature. Noted difficulties presented by this New Zealand research include the varied nature and quality mentoring experiences for those who are new to being a mentor. In order for improvements to be made, greater clarity is needed at national and school-based levels; unless understanding of the role of mentor is unambiguous and supported by a variety of structures (such as professional development opportunities), mentoring within New Zealand primary schools will continue to be sporadic for some, inconsistently practised and greatly diverse in focus.

This chapter has recommended that improving the quality of new mentors would promote a ripple effect, where all components of the induction process are subsequently strengthened, thus producing improved outcomes for beginning teachers. This thesis has presented the insightful experiences of seven first-time mentors which demonstrated stark similarities to the needs of beginning teachers in their first year: the need for affective support, interpersonal support, and cognitive support. It is recommended by the findings of this thesis that, in order to fully develop quality mentors right from the very beginning, induction programmes for first-timers are needed. Such a mentor-induction programme

would be a new initiative and could be modelled on the current framework of induction seen in New Zealand primary schools for beginning teachers. A significant finding from this research is that novice mentors would benefit professionally and personally from having a mentor themselves; participants actually stated their need of a mentor for the mentors. Developing support mechanisms such as a mentor being available to support the first-timers (affective/professional/cognitive support) would promote a stronger, more robust style of mentor who actively practises the Teachers Council directives; this novice mentor would surely improve the learning and development of the future teachers they are working with within New Zealand primary schools.

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