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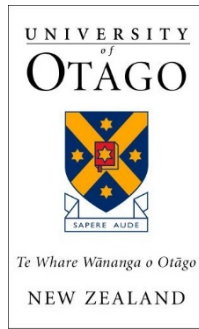
Project Report

Using mentor and peer observation to enhance the practice of short term contractual (tutoring) staff

Dr Rob Wass, Dr Tracy Rogers, Angela Howell,
Dr Catherine Hartung, Dr Gwynaeth McIntyre

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Research undertaken at University of Otago
Report prepared by: Dr Rob Wass
Other team members: Dr Tracy Rogers, Angela Howell,
Dr Catherine Hartung, Dr Gwynaeth McIntyre

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Abstract

This project describes an initiative where tutors, students, professional, and academic staff work together in a supportive environment to provide professional development for short-term, contractual (tutoring) staff.

Casual, short-term teachers have an important and increasing role in New Zealand and Australia in the post-compulsory education sector, which includes adult and community education and workplace education, in addition to formal institutional context such as in Universities and Polytechnics. However, casual, short-term teaching staff often have little opportunity for formal training, or improvement of their teaching compared with full-time staff and their role is also very different. For this study, we piloted a combination of peer observation, videotaping reflection, and mentoring to support the development of casual, short-term staff, within a university context. Our framework, however, can transfer to other TEIs, to offer a more effective training programme for tutors and more support for tutors in their role.

The project is unique in that it spans multiple divisions within the University of Otago and covers a range of teaching situations – laboratories, teaching in residential colleges, one-to-one tutorials, and departmental tutorials. Although, this project was carried out in one institution, the generic nature of the framework means that we believe it can be successfully applied to the broader post-compulsory education sector.

Six tutor-mentors and 12 mentees took part in the project. The mentors and mentees were from diverse ethnicities (New Zealand European, New Zealand Māori, Indian, Chinese, Latin American, other European and other Southeast Asian). The mentors were current tutors, selected by staff within their school/division/department as being suitable for the position. Mentees were student tutors, appointed by the respective Departments through casual contracting, who volunteered to participate in the study.

An important aspect of the mentoring programme was that it was formative and non-judgemental. After an initial meeting with their mentor to identify areas for improvement, the mentees video recorded and annotated short video segments (5-10 minutes) of their tutorials. These videos became the basis of a reflection/recall interview and provided opportunities for the mentors to provide advice on strategies for improving teaching.

Data was collected through focus group interviews with mentors and mentees, and audiotaped mentoring sessions. Transcript data were imported into the qualitative research software HyperResearch, and an inductive process was used to identify key themes.

We found that both mentors and mentees benefitted from participating in the programme. The mentees felt that the video provided insight and feedback on their teaching by 'seeing the tutorial through the eyes of students', whereas the mentors helped identify areas for enhancement and provided confidence to try new teaching approaches. Similarly, the mentors gained insights into

their own teaching through video observations and collegial conversations with peer tutors. We suggest that collegial peer support combined with constructive feedback (from students and mentors) addresses the existing gap in the provision of contextually relevant professional development for sessional teaching staff.

Recommendations summary

The project team has found that there is great potential in a peer mentoring programme for sessional staff based on video observation of the teacher's practice. This report identifies nine significant 'tips' for academic developers to consider when establishing such a programme.

1. Support your mentors

Being an effective mentor is a challenging yet rewarding role. In our study, we have tried to make the steps involved with mentoring explicit by providing the mentors with a framework (see appendix 1). In addition to providing consistency between mentors, this framework helps to reinforce the notion that we are all looking at ways to enhance our teaching – rather than thinking of teaching as being either 'good' or 'bad'.

2. Be flexible

Some mentees will be more comfortable than others with video recording their session on their mobile devices. Although there is a great benefit in teachers being able to see themselves as their students see them and also seeing how students react to their teaching, video recording is not fundamental to the mentoring role. Instead, mentees may wish to invite their mentor to observe their teaching. Likewise, mentors should also be open to their mentee observing their tutorial. Similarly, mentees' self-reflection can include using annotated video recordings (using TurboNote) or paper-based reflections whilst reviewing the video. The important step is for mentees to review the video before meeting with their mentor.

3. Match teaching context but not content

Mentors should have experience with the type of teaching that the mentee is doing; whether it be one-to-one tutorials, laboratory-based work, or group-based discussion tutorials. To ensure that teaching is the focus of discussion/observation, we recommend that the mentors and mentees be partnered based on their different subject areas. This was a clear recommendation that came from the participants in the study and differs from many studies that investigate peer mentoring and video observation. It was very helpful for the mentees to have a clearly identified 'area of focus' or something that they wished to enhance in their teaching before their first meeting with their mentor. It was also helpful when the mentees were provided with a job description of what was expected of them in their role as a tutor.

4. Select mentors carefully

The literature clearly states the characteristics of a good mentor, which were echoed in our project. For instance, mentors should be knowledgeable, approachable and good communicators. Additionally, our findings revealed that mentors need to be good at managing schedules and coordinating their mentees' milestones. Effective mentors display great attention to detail, including booking rooms in advance for meetings

5. Use staff champions

Staff champions are key to identifying suitable mentors and assisting with the pairing of mentors and mentees. However, for the programme to succeed, staff champions need to believe in the programme and care about teaching.

6. Provide a timeline

Providing a timeline was crucial to the success of the programme. Our timeline took into consideration busy times of semester, including when assignment deadlines or mid-semester breaks. We strongly suggest that you try to avoid running your programme during the busiest teaching times, if possible, and recommend confining the mentoring programme to the first five weeks of the semester. In addition, we suggest having regular check-in meetings with the mentors to ensure that milestones are being met, and to discuss any problems that may arise.

7. Start, Stop, Continue exercise extremely valuable

Our mentees commented that they often felt that they were 'teaching in a vacuum'. They were not encouraged or expected to get constructive, formative feedback on their teaching. The 'Start, Stop, Continue' exercise to get informal, anonymous feedback from students was invaluable in gaining the students' perspectives into what was going well and what could be enhanced. This technique simply involves students anonymously writing down something that they wish their tutor would *start* doing in the tutorials, *stop* doing, or *continue* doing in their teaching. The tutors collate the responses, decide on the appropriate actions, and disseminate this information to their students in a subsequent session.

8. Formal recognition of programme important

For our study, we provided our mentors and mentees with a certificate of participation. Many of the participants commented that formal recognition was an important piece of evidence regarding their commitment to professional development.

9. The ratio of mentor to mentee and level of commitment

Our recommendation is one mentor per two mentees. The workload for each mentor is at least 2-4 hours of work. Although this is highly variable and contextually dependent, it is helpful for budgeting purposes to have a rough figure, to begin with.

Key areas of support needed as identified by short-term contractual teaching staff

- Casual teaching staff want informal feedback from their students which they can then use for their professional development. One possible method is the 'Start, Stop, Continue' exercise.
- Casual teaching staff want help to identify areas that they can enhance, and they want to work with a more experienced teacher to offer suggestions on how they might change their teaching.
- Academic staff running a mentoring programme should treat the mentor/mentee relationship as a co-inquiry into teaching. What is working well? Why? What can we learn when things do not go as expected?
- If professional development is a requirement for employment, then casual teaching staff should get paid for this.
- Video filming a teaching session can offer valuable insight into teaching practice, but it needs to be handled sensitively (for students and teachers).
- To be effective, mentoring of casual staff needs to be done from a position of reflection and enhancement, not compliance or quality checking.

Introduction

The peer tutor mentoring project is an initiative where tutors, students, professional, and academic staff work together in a supportive environment to provide professional development for short-term, contractual (tutoring) staff.

Casual, short-term teachers have an important and increasing role in New Zealand and Australia in the post-compulsory education sector. This sector includes adult and community education, workplace education, and formal institutions such as in universities and polytechnics. However, sessional teaching staff often have little opportunity for formal training, or improvement of their teaching compared with full-time staff (Anderson, 2007; Ryan & Bhattacharyya, 2012) and their role is also very different (Sockalingam, Rotgans, & Schmidt, 2011). In one study, over 25 per cent of sessional staff reported that they received no professional development support from their institution (Heffernan, 2018) despite significant teaching loads and high levels of contact with students. The support sessional staff receive is usually in the format of workshops or seminars, which are one of the most widely used, yet reportedly least effective, form of academic development because in these contexts, the tutors are removed from their teaching context (Levinson-Rose & Menges, 1981; Stes, Min-Leliveld, Gijbels, & Van Petegem, 2010). With the current emphasis on quality teaching and learning (Kirley, 2006) tutors are in need of professional development that is contextual, on-going, and individualised (Anderson, 2007; Wass & Moskal, 2017).

For this study, we sought to pilot a combination of videotaped reflection and peer mentoring to support sessional staff in the teaching development, within a university context.

Our peer mentoring and observation environment aims to recognise Ako values of Awhitanga (inclusiveness) and Whanaungatanga (positive relationships) for all involved (project team members and participants) through constructive and supportive dialogue. We are particularly interested in the personal development of the mentors in their mentoring role. We are especially mindful and guided by the tuakana-teina relationship, which will be especially relevant for Maori and Pacific learners (mentors, mentees, and students).

We begin this report by reviewing the literature on peer observation and mentoring, followed by literature which looks specifically at video observation as a way of obtaining objective evidence of teaching practice for developmental purposes. Next, we describe our study which used our mentoring/observation framework with tutor mentors and mentees. Although mentors have a lot of experience teaching in a specific subject area, they are often not formally trained as teachers. Our findings, therefore, build on previous research which looks at peer mentoring / observation frameworks but in an entirely new context. Our findings report on the usefulness of the peer mentoring/observation project in terms of what the participants learned about their teaching. The report also includes participants' feedback about the framework itself.

Peer observation and mentoring literature

The potential benefits of peer observation and mentoring for improving teaching practice have been well documented, but surprisingly have not been routinely used for supporting casual teaching staff in the tertiary sector. Peer observation encourages reflection on teaching and fosters debate and dissemination around best practice (Gosling, 2002). Other reported benefits include developing confidence as a teacher, increased awareness of students' learning experiences, and providing unexpected insights into one's teaching practice (Bell & Mladenovic, 2015; Wass & Moskal, 2017). Peer observation has also been reported to lead to increased collegiality amongst teaching staff and decreased feelings of isolation (Bell & Mladenovic, 2015; Bell & Thomson, 2016). In addition to benefits from being observed, there have also been noted benefits for the observer (Bell & Mladenovic, 2015).

In one study, tutors and demonstrators rated peer observation as the most useful and valuable component of professional development project that included induction and training sessions, workshops, self-assessment tasks and expert observations (Kirley, 2006). For peer observation/mentoring programmes to be effective, they need to be framed in a non-judgemental, developmental manner (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008), and careful attention and training needs to be provided to ensure this happens (Semiyu Adejare & Folorunso Adekemi, 2013).

Video reflection and annotation literature

In addition to peer observation, with the advances in video technology, there is also a growing interest in using video to support teachers in their teaching practice (Tripp & Rich, 2012). Video recording of tutorials allows the tutor to revisit their teaching from the perspective of their students (Laurillard, 2002; Sandretto, Kane, & Heath, 2002) and offers tutors opportunities to reflect on experiences not usually available in the moment itself (Lyle, 2003; Merriam, 1998).

A review of the literature from teacher education programmes suggests that teachers prefer to engage in video analysis in collaboration rather than viewing the footage alone and they prefer to choose their own focus for enhancement (Tripp & Rich, 2012). The ubiquitous use of mobile devices makes video observation even more attractive for teachers to record their teaching, review the footage, and discuss it with a peer. There has also been increasing interest in video annotation tools to support both the reflection and analysis of one's teaching (Rich & Hannafin, 2009).

Some published research that has used video for professional development have rated this as the most useful aspect of training (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008). In addition to supporting tutors using peer observation, videoing, and mentoring, our unique contribution is to encourage tutors to reflect more deeply on their teaching through video annotation using the Chrome plug-in extension 'TurboNote' (http://www.turbonote.co)

Our study

The overall aim of our study was to enhance tutors' teaching through video-reflection, informal student feedback, and formative, constructive, and non-judgemental collegial conversations with peer tutor-mentors.

Twelve mentees and six mentors from diverse ethnicities (New Zealand European, New Zealand Māori, Indian, Chinese, Latin American, other European and other Southeast Asian) participated in the pilot project. The mentees taught in a range of disciplines and included first-time tutors and tutors with up to three years of teaching experience. Similarly, the mentors were from multiple disciplines and had up to nine years of teaching experience. The mentors were nominated by paper co-ordinators involved in this project, based on their knowledge of the mentors' personality, teaching experience, and ability to effectively manage a mentoring relationship.

The mentees and mentors were matched based on their different discipline; allowing the focus of observation to remain on the process of teaching rather than the content (Beaty, 1998). This partnership was recommended by the paper co-ordinators involved in this project and later affirmed by mentors and mentees' feedback on the structure of the programme.

The research team held a preliminary meeting with the mentors and mentees to outline the structure and expectations of the pilot programme. Each participant received an information pack describing the process, potential benefits, specific details for the mentor and mentee roles, guidelines for video observation and annotation (using TurboNote), and student information and consent forms (for video recordings of tutorials).

The peer tutor mentoring process involved five stages (See Figure 1).

First, the mentees obtained anonymous feedback from the students in their tutorial, using a 'start, stop, continue' exercise ("The Centre for Teaching and Learning: Start, Stop, Continue,"). Students were instructed to record on pieces of paper what they would like their tutor to start, stop, and continue doing in their teaching. This informal feedback provided additional insight into the tutors' teaching practice and often complimented the video observations.

Second, the mentor and mentee met to discuss what was going well and what to enhance, based on the student feedback and the tutor's own area of focus. They then created a timeline for obtaining the video recording and viewing and discussing the video footage with regard to making changes to the mentee's teaching practice.

Figure 1: A five-stage model for sessional staff professional development

At stage 3, the mentees obtained consent from their students to record their tutorial session. There were no reported issues with gaining student consent, although one mentee had to seek permission from her paper co-ordinator before approaching the students. The video recordings were annotated using TurboNote, a free software built into YouTube that allows segments of a video to be coded (Stage 3, figure 1). The mentees used the tool to foster self-reflection and provide a basis for discussion with their mentors.

At stage 4, the mentees used their video reflections to develop a teaching plan, in conjunction with their mentors (who provide guidance or suggestions where necessary).

At stage 5, the mentees 'closed the loop' by providing feedback to the students on the changes they proposed to make to their teaching practice.

Date Collection and Analysis

Data included audio recordings of the pre- and post-observation meetings between mentors and mentees, and focus group discussions with mentors and mentees, separately. The audio recordings were transcribed by a professional transcription typist who understands the importance of confidentiality. The transcriptions were thematically analysed, initially individually by the first two

authors, and subsequently collaboratively, using Thomas's general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006).

Findings

The mentors and mentees were very enthusiastic about the project and the benefits that ensued. In the remainder of this section, we focus on the four benefits we identified for tutors who participated in this academic development project.

They include enhanced self-reflection, collegiality, increased confidence in teaching ability, and positive outcomes for their students' learning. The findings highlight the strength in combining annotated video observation, mentoring, and informal student feedback for providing contextualised and personalised academic development to sessional staff. The second findings section focusses on what the participants thought of our peer mentoring and video reflection model and how it might be used more broadly to support casual teaching staff.

What the participants learned about their teaching from peer mentoring/observation

Enhanced self-reflection

Enhanced self-reflection was enabled through the use of annotated video reflections. The video recordings gave the tutors a new perspective on their teaching:

> *It was a great experience as you can see yourself the way students see you. You can notice things you don't notice, for example, a lot of gesticulation or lack of intonation when it is really needed. You may notice that you speak too fast and don't stress the things that need to be stressed. Then you are able to analyse and try to improve. (Natalie, mentee)*

> *This project was a great way to analyse your own teaching in a way you wouldn't normally. Videoing yourself tutoring was a great way to reflect on your teaching style. (Sally, mentee)*

For many of the students, the video allowed them to notice their communication skills, such as not maintaining eye contact or speaking too fast. For example, Anna provides one-to-one tutoring to students with learning needs. She remarked, "I didn't realise that I didn't make eye contact. He's looking at me but I'm looking somewhere else and just imagining it all in my head." For Anna, the video observation encouraged her to reflect on her body language and communication with her students.

The combination of the video recording and mentors' support provided contextualised, constructive support that enabled tutors to identify areas of strength as well as areas that could be enhanced.

> *It's the first time I've ever videoed my teaching. So I thought it was really valuable because first I went away and I had a look at [the video] and saw what I thought and then with my mentor looking at it as well, it just gives you a really objective kind of a*

view. I had a group of four students in the video and we talked about the different
types of students within that group and really picked up where they were at, and
that was really valuable, like something that I wouldn't have picked up without the
mentor or without the video. (Rebecca, mentee)

The literature on the benefits of video stimulated recall/video observations highlight the sentiments expressed by the tutors; namely the ability to observe oneself from the perspective of students (Laurillard, 2002; Sandretto et al., 2002). The ability of the teacher to reflect on their teaching and identify areas to enhance is considered a hallmark of excellent teaching (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2004).

However, not all the participants attributed increased self-reflection to the use of video or mentoring. For instance, one participant reported increased self-reflection because he was new to teaching. Therefore, he said that it was natural for him to reflect on his teaching and to try to improve. He stated that he would find it difficult to attribute what skills were developed during the project and what would have developed naturally.

Collegiality in a non-hierarchical framework

The tutors and mentors stated that the programme allowed them to have a collegial conversation about teaching which addressed the sense of isolation some sessional teaching staff experience. The topics of discussion varied greatly but included establishing professional boundaries between tutors and students, particularly with the use of social media.

These discussions may have been more difficult to have if mentors where from the same discipline or responsible for their mentees' employment contracts and continuing employment. When asked to share her reflections on the project, one of the project champions shared the following email reflection on this tension.

Observing how the project has evolved over the last year, I've been really impressed
with how well tutors have worked together and how open they've been to identifying
areas for improvement. Professional development is a lot easier to participate in
when you're in a permanent job, and not just because more PD is available to you.
Arguably it is 'safer' to admit areas of weakness when your overall job is secure;
many casual tutors don't have such a 'bumper' and are aware that they're
potentially working for people who may later sit on an interview panel for a job that
they apply for. Consequently, connecting tutors with peers for their professional
learning is a far more valuable and reasonable approach that avoids such power
imbalances. (Project champion)

When asked what it was like to be mentored from someone outside their discipline, one of the mentees had the following response regarding power dynamics:

It's an interesting structural choice. On the one hand, there's no departmental
politics - not that there necessarily would be, but it means you're not dealing with
someone in your department who's sort of got a professional stake in the matter.
The power dynamics are super different too because it's not someone who considers

themselves 'above you' in the dept. It's someone from a different discipline, so there's a bit more distance, and things are just more professional & there's less potential for politicking. (John, mentee)

Although conversations could not focus of content, the mentee has highlighted the main aim of the mentoring relationship; namely collegial conversations about teaching practices. Other mentees agreed that conversations that focused on teaching rather than content knowledge was a huge strength of the programme. Additionally, the focus on effective teaching allowed for feedback from a different perspective in a non-hierarchical structure.

We further argue that having feedback from mentors outside of the discipline is something that might help address the feelings of isolation experienced by casual staff. If casual staff are marginalised then their effectiveness is limited (Anderson, 2007) and it is, therefore, important to find ways to integrate casual teaching staff into an institution's community and culture (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013)

Increased self-confidence

In the focus group interviews some tutors spoke of gaining confidence in their teaching as a result of working with a supportive mentor. The tutor's confidence in teaching was enhanced simply through supportive conversations with their mentors.

I have adopted a number of things suggested by my mentor to improve conversation within tutorials. It has also given me more confidence to change aspects of my teaching (Sally, mentee)

It has influenced my teaching in many ways, firstly I became much more confident after receiving feedback from my mentee. It was almost like, now I actually know what I am doing because I have an understanding of what is working and what is not. (Sarah, mentee)

The increased confidence, however, did not come about solely from the feedback they received from their mentor. In some of the video observation discussions, mentors would share similar teaching experiences or demonstrate empathy when a tutor had a difficult teaching moment. Added confidence was also derived from the video reflections, which were instrumental in confirming what tutors were doing well or needed to improve upon.

I became aware of things that I don't even realize that I was doing. I also think that I am much more comfortable in class room now because after watching my video and the feedback I have received; I could identify what I was doing right or wrong. Resulting in increased efficiency and self-confidence. (Sarah, mentee)

I was surprised by the video - I felt I explained things better than I thought which gave me a lot more confidence in my teaching (Sally, mentee)

One of the mentors observed the increased levels of confidence gained by her mentee:

It was so enjoyable to see [Alice's] confidence grow the more she reflected on that process and could bounce ideas off me without judgment. That was so, pleasing. (Mentor focus group)

The research literature highlights the links between peer mentoring and increased confidence in teaching (Bell & Mladenovic, 2015) (Bell & Thomson, 2016) (Lomas & Kinchin, 2006; Mathias, 2005) and our research supports these studies. Increased confidence seems to have resulted from the tutors having confirmed, either from video reflection, the mentor, or a combination of both, what they were hoping to achieve in the classroom, was actually done in practice (Sandretto et al., 2002; Wass & Moskal, 2017).

Boyle (1998) suggests that increased confidence in teaching is an outcome sought by mentees participating in a mentoring programme. Teachers' confidence in their teaching and subject knowledge is an important aspect of identify formation (McIntyre & Hobson, 2016), and is necessary if teachers wish to try different teaching approaches to their teaching and genuinely listen to students' needs (Berry, 2004).

Positive outcomes for students

The start-stop-continue component of the programme valorised the voice of students by allowing them to provide immediate and contextually-relevant feedback to enhance their tutors' teaching and subsequently, their own learning. Based on this feedback, the mentees worked with their mentors to talk through possible approaches to enhance their teaching. One tutor, Anna, found the informal feedback invaluable when working with students with learning needs. She was able to adjust her teaching approach in a way that had a direct impact on her students' ability to understand concepts.

[The student] told me straight forward that 'it's hard for me to understand words and that's what I find difficult with learning.' So I started drawing things from the second session like I would just do videos and drawings and explain things to her. But then, I didn't realise that she needs to know the words as well, so maybe that's why she's like, 'write the words down as well so that I know that those are the words that I'm supposed to know' (Anna, mentee)

As Anna explains, she would not have been aware that her student required written words along images to help her learning. It is possible that the student may have mentioned this informally during the sessions, but the start-stop-continue provided the student with a mechanism to comment on teaching approaches specific to her learning needs.

One tutor (Natalie) participated in both rounds of the programme. In the first round of start-stop-continue feedback, the students suggested changes to her management of group discussions. After consulting with her mentor, during the second semester, she was able to implement these changes and was pleased to note that the students responded favourably to her new approach.

In the following quote, Sarah reflects on what she has learned about her teaching from taking part in the programme.

I have seen now the perspective of my students now. I have actually recorded 4 hours of my workshops. I found that I need to emphasise more some important information. I learned to be more specific and talk slowly when delivering activities instructions. I learned that I have a good interaction with my students and that the eye contact and encouragement I give them into participate is good and I can keep it the way it is. (Sarah, mentee)

Participants' thoughts about the programme framework and suggestions for implementation

Mentors and mentees were highly engaged with the programme. The mentees identified that gaining feedback from the start, stop, continue exercise was extremely valuable and something that had not been suggested to them previously. Many felt that they were not well-supported in their role and were grateful to have feedback which was targeted, individualised and framed as 'enhancement' rather than 'quality control'.

This project was the first teaching development opportunity that I have participated in. It was an open eye experience, firstly to be able to watch my video and secondly to share it with a more knowledgeable other. The advantage was that I could evaluate myself and receive some constructive feedback about what is working and what is not. (Sarah, mentee)

I found the videotape very useful! I was nervous at first but doing it provided a really good way to analyse your own teaching. It meant you could see how the students see you. I found I was repeating the same phrases A LOT, something I wouldn't otherwise notice (Sally, mentee)

Additionally, the pre-observation discussions between mentors and their mentees revealed that new tutors struggled to identify their strengths and weaknesses. John, for instance, explained that he had no way of gauging that his teaching was effective for student learning as this was his first time stepping into a teaching role.

I'm a first-time tutor…so you could probably almost even say I don't know enough about how I'm teaching yet to have any specific awareness of [my] weaknesses or that kind of thing. (John, mentee)

John added that "especially when you're starting out, it's good to have active opportunities to kind of like reflect on what you're doing and when you're forming those habits rather than like 20 years down the track."

The mentees noted that the voluntary nature of the programme was important as it meant that they were there for the 'right reasons'. The research team hold a different view as we strongly believe that all staff should be compensated for their time involved in professional/academic development, if this is an expectation from the University.

In terms of participation, however, one mentee commented that the video-component, might be enough to exclude some people from taking part. She suggested offering alternative forms of

observation. For instance, mentees may instead invite their mentor to observe their teaching, or mentees may engage in writing reflective notes after their teaching session.

Conclusion

The participants in this project signalled from the outset that they wanted individualised feedback on their teaching, but this was not available to them. Many spoke of teaching 'in a vacuum', particularly those that were completely new to teaching. Some felt isolated and unsure in their approach. This research sought to address this gap in their professional development by taking the bold step to assign tutor-mentors from different subject areas to these mentees. The conventional approach would be to assign a mentor from the same subject area. However, our process meant that feedback was on the mentee as a teacher – what he or she did in the classroom and how it impacted the students, rather than feedback on how a particular topic should be taught. The participants noted that our approach was very successful. It also addressed an inherent tension as it was not an academic responsible for the mentees' employment giving feedback on the mentees teaching performance.

The study had its challenges; it was more successful when the various mentoring steps were completed early in the semester before timing became an issue. Despite success with cross-discipline mentoring, some mentors were not familiar with the type of teaching that their mentee was involved with. For instance; teaching one to one requires different skill sets than for teaching a large class of 20.

Despite these limitations, both mentors and mentees reported benefiting from participating in the programme. The mentees felt that the video provided insight and feedback on their teaching by 'seeing the tutorial through the eyes of students', whereas the mentors helped identify areas for enhancement and provided confidence to try new teaching approaches. Similarly, the mentors gained insights into their own teaching through video observations and collegial conversations with peer tutors. We suggest that collegial peer support combined with constructive feedback (from students and mentors) addresses the existing gap in the provision of contextually relevant professional development for sessional teaching staff. Moreover, there is no reason why our framework cannot be used in a variety of post-compulsory teaching environments.

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