Secondary Preservice Teachers' Perspectives of Their Literacy Mentoring Experiences During Professional Placement

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Abstract

Reviews into teacher education highlight the importance of the mentor teacher during preservice teachers' in school professional experience. While university programs teach theoretical concepts, the mentor teacher assists the preservice teacher to enact and refine classroom practice. The aim of this study was to explore the literacy mentoring experiences of secondary preservice teachers during professional experience. This investigation used survey design. The survey was administered to 108 secondary preservice teachers' from seven Australian universities. Data were analysed and reported using Hudson's Five Factor Model for Mentoring. Results indicated over half of the preservice teachers noted their mentor teachers had the personal attributes for mentoring, modelled practices for effective literacy teaching and provided feedback. However, approximately one third self-reported that their mentor teachers shared the system requirements for teaching literacy. This research suggests the need for professional learning for mentor teachers and further emphasis on literacy teaching in secondary preservice teacher preparation.

Keywords: Initial teacher education; professional experience; mentoring; teaching; literacy

Introduction

Recent reviews into teacher education in Australia (Caldwell & Sutton, 2010; Carter, 2015; Craven et al., 2014; Hartsuyker, 2007; Masters, 2009) have highlighted the importance of the role of the mentor teacher (MT) during professional experience. It is noted that while university programs teach theoretical concepts, the role of the MT

during professional experience assists preservice teachers (PSTs) to enact theories and knowledge learned at university. While studies about mentoring exist (Ambrosetti, 2014; Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2014; Hudson, 2004b; Kemmis, Heikkinen, Fransson, Aspfors, & Edwards-Groves, 2014), there is a lack of research focused on how mentor teachers may support preservice teachers to enact literacy in the classroom.

Mentoring in initial teacher education is recognised as a collegial process whereby an teacher (mentor) supports a PST (mentee) to develop the beliefs, skills, knowledge and practices for the teaching profession (Ambrosetti, Knight & Dekkars, 2013). Mentoring requires the MT to have the personal attributes to be supportive, with strategies to share the system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, model best practice, and provide feedback for teaching whilst being amenable to the PST's learning needs (Hudson, 2004b; Wang & Ha, 2012). Ambrosetti, Knight, and Dekkers (2013, p. 79) delineate that mentoring is a holistic process where relational, developmental and contextual components combine, noting that "mentoring practices that do not encompass all three components cannot be defined as mentoring in the true sense of the word".

Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010) suggest that while typically more accomplished than PSTs in the school context, a MT possesses knowledge and skills that the PST may desire or hopes to develop for teaching. Morrison (2016) highlights that in order to develop knowledge and skills for teaching, the PST needs to be supported under the direct guidance of experienced teachers during professional experience. As highlighted by Ambrosetti, Knight and Dekkers, "It is during the professional experience that the preservice teachers engage in observations and reflections, planning and teaching as well as developing their skills, knowledge and philosophies of teaching" (2014. p. 78). Hence, the role of the mentor is important in guiding PST development, but the role is also multifaceted as MTs need to differentiate for each PST (Le Cornu, 2015). Orland-Barak (2014, p. 180) outlines this complexity by stating, "mentoring is not just about mentors' competencies and behaviours, it is also about their reasoning, beliefs and identity formation and the place of culture, context and discourse in mentoring".

The complexity of mentoring extends to assisting PSTs to enact curriculum imperatives and policy imperatives. Indeed, literacy is a priority in the Australian educational setting (Bean, 2015; Gavrielatos & Hopgood, 2013; Luke, 2010). Emphasis on literacy has been driven by national (The National Assessment - Literacy and Numeracy: NAPLAN) and international test results (Program for International Student Assessment: PISA). While Australia is performing adequately against other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, literacy results remain a concern (ACARA, 2016; Thomson, De Bortoli, & Buckley, 2013). For example, in 2016 NAPLAN (ACARA, 2016) results for reading indicated that across grades 3, 5, 7 and 9, little improvement was evident for students throughout Australia (ACARA, 2016). The trend of minimal improvements in literacy is again highlighted with the NAPLAN 2019 data showing that reading literacy progression has stagnated (ACARA, 2019). PISA assesses students' knowledge and how proficient these young people are, in potentially meeting future life experiences and encounters. In a similar trend to that demonstrated by NAPLAN, Australian PISA results in 2000 compared to those in 2012 showed a decline in mean reading literacy scores. Again in 2018, literacy results presented a further decline from 2015 (OECD, 2019). The results presented by NAPLAN and PISA have provided evidence of the national standard and have been influential in forging a focus on literacy across Australia's educational context (ACARA, 2019).

As a way to address the NAPLAN and PISA results, emphasis has been placed on the effective teaching of literacy in Australian schools. Producing graduate teachers who can effectively teach literacy is imperative, and educational policy has a strong focus on students having strong literacy capabilities (Hardy, 2014). It follows that learning how to teach literacy is essential in initial teacher education, and university programs are therefore required to provide key theories and concepts for teaching literacy. In addition, sound mentoring of PSTs specific to literacy during professional experience is paramount if they are to graduate as effective teachers.

Literacy defined for this study

The definition of literacy for this investigation is aligned to that which is expressed by the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (2010b), which provides the requirements for teachers across Australia. It is highlighted that Literacy as a General Capability should be included in all teaching. A General Capability is a behaviour, disposition, knowledge or skill that is embedded in all syllabi across the Australian Curriculum. The purpose of including General Capabilities in the curriculum is so that students are equipped with essential life and work competencies beyond discipline specific imperatives (ACARA, 2010a; 2010b).

The General Capability Literacy as defined by ACARA, can be categorised into six interrelated domains – reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and creating (ACARA, 2010a). These domains relate to opportunities for students to: compose texts through listening, reading and viewing; and compose texts through speaking, writing and creating. Also for consideration by teachers is the inclusion of: Grammar Knowledge, Text Knowledge, Word Knowledge and Visual Knowledge. Literacy is meant to be incorporated into all learning areas in the Australian Curriculum to build the capacity of students to understand literacy and how it is applied in a range of contexts across society (ACARA, 2010a; 2010b). For example, in the secondary school, teaching literacy is not just the responsibility of an English teacher but teachers of all learning areas such as Science, the Arts, History and Geography, as they incorporate literacy into their subject domains. Subject-appropriate strategies can be incorporated by all learning area teachers in order to ensure literacy is addressed. Hence in this study when defining literacy, the broader notion of how the General Capability Literacy is being mentored to PSTs is the focus. While there is robust research in mentoring, there is little that focuses on how literacy is mentored in secondary settings in Australia.

Much of the research to date asserts that the mentoring of PSTs in literacy can be described as weak (Kitson, 2015; Moyle, 2010; Wassell, 2015). There are examples of research in mentoring PSTs in the learning area of Science (Hudson, Savran-Gencer, & Usak, 2009; Nilsson & van Driel, 2010) however, there is a dearth of research that focuses on the mentoring of literacy. Given the curriculum focus on literacy and the importance of mentoring, it is timely to explore PST mentoring in literacy. Constable, Jasinski-Schneider, and Blosser-Scheckelhoff (2012) emphasise that literacy teacher educators have been reprimanding learning area teachers to be more calculated in their incorporation of specialised, subject-appropriate literacies. Lenski and Thieman (2013) further address this point as they contend that for many decades, research reflects minimal application of literacy strategies in the teaching of learning areas by both preservice and practicing teachers (Conley, 2008; Fisher & Ivey, 2012).

It is recognised that "in the absence of preparation or training, many classroom teachers revert to their own experiences as preservice teachers and duplicate the methods used by their own supervising teachers" (Ambrosetti, 2014, p. 32). The duplication of ineffective methods or haphazard approaches to teaching and mentoring literacy is therefore an area of concern. Additionally, there is little evidence to date as to whether the mentoring of literacy as a General Capability is reflected in the teaching and mentoring approaches of teachers who support PSTs during professional experience. This study is therefore significant as it addresses these gaps in the extisting research.

Conceptual framework of this study

Hudson's Five Factor Model for Mentoring (2003, 2010) is the conceptual framework adopted for this study. The five factors as Hudson describes them relate to the mentor, that is, to what extent the mentor engages and demonstrates personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling and feedback to support PSTs' understanding and skill development for teaching. Hudson's model represents an approach to mentoring that is conducive to a reciprocal, collaborative mentor-mentee relationship and offers a contemporary approach to mentoring (Hudson, 2010).
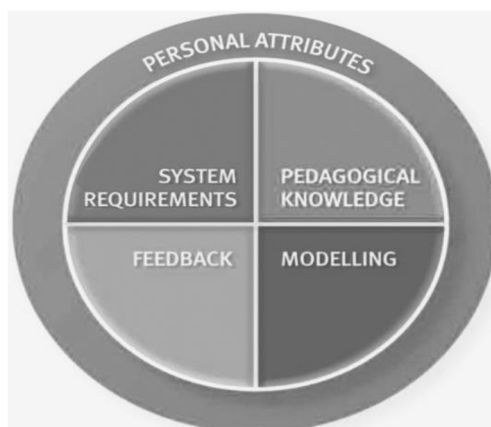

Figure 1. Hudson's Five Factor Model of Mentoring (2003;2010)

Figure 1 illustrates the Five Factor Model of Mentoring that was developed by Hudson (2003; 2010) through his research and the research literature. Each factor has associated attributes and practices. Encircling the model are the MT's **Personal Attributes**, which refers to how the MT supports the PSTs to assist them to be reflective through attentive listening, comfortable talking, the development of positive attitudes and instilling confidence for teaching. Hudson (2003, 2010) highlights that the MT should present the **System Requirements** for teaching, which refers to sharing the aims of teaching, the key policy documents that are relevant to the learning area as well as the key curriculum documents and how these are enacted in the school setting. It is suggested that the mentoring of **Pedagogical Knowledge** for teaching includes key practices that comprise of the sharing of planning, timetabling, preparation, teaching strategies, content knowledge, problem solving, classroom management, questioning skills, implementation, assessment and the sharing of viewpoints. Hudson also highlights the importance of the MT **Modelling** practices such as enthusiasm for teaching, language usage, effective teaching, suitably designed lessons and developing rapport with students. Finally, **Feedback** as the last factor, is highlighted as an essential practice where the MT outlines clear expectations, reviews lesson plans, undertakes formal observations and provides oral and written evaluative feedback that supports the progress of the PST (Hudson, 2003, 2004a, 2010).

Hudson's model has evolved since its conception in 2003. This research represents the contemporary version as evidenced by Hudson (2010). The conceptual nature of Hudson's model reflects the 'doing' of the mentoring and the interactions between the PST and the MT as a collaborative process that facilitates development. It should be noted that for the purpose of this study, Hudson's (2003; 2010) five factors were viewed through a literacy lens as literature supporting the specific focus on mentoring of literacy is limited. Sundry studies discuss mentoring in general (Kemmis et al., 2014), the mentoring of PSTs (Churchward & Willis, 2019; Graves, 2010), mentoring in technology (Charbonneau-Gowdy, Capredoni, Gonzalez, Jayo, & Raby, 2016), mentoring in science (Abed & Abd-El-Khalick, 2015; Hudson, Skamp, & Brooks, 2005; Miller, Hanley, & Brobst, 2019) and mentoring in mathematics (Cavanagh & Prescott, 2011; Hudson, 2007). As this literature indicates, whilst mentoring seems to be undertaken, what is also apparent is a lack of research about the mentoring of PSTs in secondary settings specifically for effective literacy teaching. This research therefore focuses on the mentoring of literacy in secondary cohorts, by engaging Hudson's model (2003; 2010), which provided a framework for gathering and analysing the data for each factor as it relates to literacy.

Research design

This study used survey design (Creswell, 2018) research to gather quantitative data to present the perspectives of the secondary preservice teachers about their literacy mentoring experiences during professional experience. The overarching aim of the research was to explore the literacy mentoring of secondary PSTs during professional experience. Specifically, the following research question was posed. *From the perspective of preservice teachers, what attributes and practices do secondary mentor teachers demonstrate when mentoring literacy teaching during professional experience?*

A survey was administered to final-year secondary preservice teachers. The survey was derived from Hudson's research into mentoring PST in Science (Hudson, 2003) and MTs' reporting on their own mentoring (Hudson, 2010). Hudson's peer reviewed survey instrument that included the attributes and practices for effective mentoring as noted above, was adapted to form the mentoring for effective literacy teaching (MELT) survey. The MELT survey used a five-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with 34 items developed to investigate secondary PSTs' self-reported perspectives through the lens of Hudson's model. Once ethics approvals were gained, the MELT survey was administered to 108 final-year secondary PSTs across seven Australian universities. The survey data were analysed using SPSS and descriptive statistics generated and organised using Hudson's five factors to present the participants' responses. The results demonstrated the overall PST's perspectives about their mentoring experiences and then each of the attributes and practices for effective mentoring associated to each factor were analysed to further address the research question.

Results and Discussion

Mentoring of Overall Factors

The overall results for each of Hudson's factor are presented in Table.1 and detail the secondary preservice teachers' self-reported perspectives of mentoring for effective literacy teaching. Tables 2 – 6 present more

detailed information about the PSTs' perspectives about their MT's attributes and practices for literacy mentoring that fall under each of the five factors.

Table. 1 *Overall results of each MELT factor*

MELT Factor	Secondary (*n*=108)		
	%	*M*	*SD*
Personal Attributes for Effective Literacy Teaching	**57.9**	3.51	1.07
System Requirements for Effective Literacy Teaching	**35.2**	2.86	1.16
Pedagogical Knowledge for Effective Literacy Teaching	**44.9**	3.18	1.12
Modelling for Effective Literacy Teaching	**58.7**	3.53	1.07
Feedback for Effective Literacy Teaching	**55.1**	3.35	1.19

Personal attributes

As can be seen in Table 1, more than half of the secondary PSTs agreed or strongly agreed that their MT displayed *personal attributes* (57.9%) for mentoring literacy. Misigo, Hezhorn, Kodero and Jackson (2014) contend that the affective qualities of a secondary teacher includes being caring, understanding, fair, respectful, friendly and patient. These attributes are supported and extended by Hudson and Bird (2015) when they posit that a good mentor is gentle, authentic, patient, enthusiastic, consistent and has a positive attitude. With over 40% of PSTs being uncertain or disagreeing that their MTs had the *personal attributes* for effective literacy mentoring, it may be assumed that in the secondary school context mentoring related to *personal attributes* requires further development. It may be that these secondary PSTs had multiple MTs, which is often the case in Australian secondary schools. Alternatively, these PSTs may have been based in various staffrooms with teachers who work across numerous classrooms and year levels. Hence, the specifics of each secondary school's organisation may have hindered or not been conducive for MTs to demonstrate the attributes for being a supportive mentor. Additionally, if a PST has multiple mentors it can make it more difficult to form a deep relationship, which may impact on the MT's ability to demonstrate their personal attributes.

System requirements

In the factor *system requirements*, over 60% of the secondary PSTs disagreed or were uncertain they were mentored in this factor. These results indicated that less than 40% of the PSTs were exposed to the *system requirements* for how literacy is embedded into their learning area. Perhaps the secondary MTs were focussed on the subject matter rather than explaining the *system requirements* of literacy. Scales et al. (2018) highlights that many secondary teachers have long-held views that they need to focus on teaching a subject's content. While there are procedures and practices that aid in unpacking the literacy requirements of a learning area, secondary teachers indicate that time constraints may impact mentoring literacy related to the *system requirements* (Scales et al., 2018). However, referring to curriculum documents and key policies such as the inclusion of the General Capability Literacy should be seen as core business in the mentoring process as PSTs need to experience how curriculum and policies are enacted in classroom settings.

Pedagogical Knowledge

The data indicated that 44.9% of PSTs agreed or strongly agreed that MTs shared the *pedagogical knowledge* practices for effective literacy teaching. This percentage reveals that over half (55.1%) of the secondary participants were uncertain, disagreed or strongly disagreed that MTs engaged with pedagogical literacy practices. This data is consistent with numerous scholars' findings that underscore the disassociation between subject matter and literacy by secondary teachers (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014; Faulkner, Oakley, Rohl, Lopes, & Solosy, 2012; Schoenbach & Greenleaf, 2017, p. 61). The results could imply that there was a lack of mentoring pedagogical practices for teaching literacy, shadowed by a more targeted focus on content or subject matter. Schoenbach and Greenleaf (2017, p. 61) propose that literacy is rarely taught in secondary learning area classes other than English and "when teachers do try to implement literacy strategies, they often struggle to balance content and strategy instruction". Also hindering the embedding of literacy across learning areas may be the overcrowded curriculum that Australian teachers often purport as making it difficult to teach all of the curriculum requirements. Taylor, Taylor and Hill (2018) confirm that what is taught in the classroom is severely saturated by

an overcrowded curriculum with teachers having to select and make choices about what is imperative to teach simply so they can fit everything into a school week.

Modelling

The secondary PSTs' responses highlighted that 58.7% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that their mentor teacher modelled effective literacy teaching. Perhaps the 41.3% of Secondary PSTs who were uncertain, disagreed or strongly disagreed were placed with MTs who lacked confidence to model or teach rich, meaningful literacy experiences as part of their learning area. Alternatively, the MTs may believe that it is not their role to embed literacy mentoring into their learning area. ACARA (2010c, p. 2) notes that while the English learning area has "a direct role in the development or language and literacy skills", the General Capability Literacy is to be included across all learning areas. Naylor, Campbell-Evans and Maloney (2015, p. 131) support the importance of MTs modelling literacy practices for PSTs and this may be done as part of their teaching. However, if a MT does not feel confident to include literacy into their learning area it may not be part of their pedagogy, hence, it will not be modelled.

Further inferences pertaining to the lack of mentoring for literacy via *modelling* could include that the MT is not explicit in the intent of the literacy focus. That is, the PST was not guided to observe a particular literacy skill or strategy and therefore did not notice it occurring. Pre and post mentoring conversations are a vital component of guiding the PST (Loughland & Ellis, 2016). Such conversations provide the PST with a clear direction and allow for a conscious focus on a particular area of investigation, in this case, literacy. The lack of experience of the PST may mean that their observations of *modelling* needs to be focussed through professional conversations with their MT. The conversations between the MT and PST are vital for explicit identification of literacy *modelling*.

Feedback

Secondary PSTs indicated that 55.1% agreed or strongly agreed that they were provided with *feedback* from their MT for effective literacy teaching. This percentage reflected that approximately half reported there was limited literacy mentoring using the practice of *feedback*. This suggested that potentially, there is a high percentage of PSTs entering the workforce who have had minimal *feedback* which may impact on their awareness of their literacy knowledge, skills and planning capabilities. *Feedback* is deemed to be an important practice for MTs as it has the potential to support PSTs to refine, develop and improve their teaching (Coogle, Ottley, Storie, Rahn, & Kurowski-Burt, 2020). While nearly half of the PSTs experienced feedback, the other half did not, which could potentially hinder their development and improvement towards effective teaching, of literacy inn their subject area.

Mentor teacher's Attributes and Practices

While Table 1 provided the overall information about literacy mentoring experiences of the PSTs in relation to the five factors, Tables 2 – 6 provide further information related to the PST's responses about their MT's specific attributes and practices for mentoring effective literacy teaching.

Personal Attributes

Table 2. *Mentoring personal attributes for mentoring effective literacy teaching in the secondary sector*

Mentoring practice /attributes	Secondary		
	%	*M*	*SD*
Supportive of teaching literacy	**69.4**	3.81	1.03
Comfortable talking about literacy	**71.3**	3.79	0.97
Instilled positive attitudes for teaching literacy	**54.7**	3.47	1.11
Reflection on improving literacy	**52.7**	3.41	1.11
Instilled confidence as a literacy teacher	**52.8**	3.31	1.11
Listened attentively about literacy matters	**46.3**	3.29	1.09

While close to 60% of the PSTs highlighted in the overall data that their MT had the *personal attributes* for mentoring literacy (Table 1), drilling down to the actual practices provided more in-depth information. Close to 70% of the PSTs reported their MTs were *supportive of teaching literacy* indicating that the majority of the PST were provided with guidance for including literacy into their learning area. In a similar result, the PST self-

reported that 71.3% of their MTs were *Comfortable talking about literacy* (71.3%) while 46.3% of the PSTs felt their MTs *Listened attentively about literacy matters*. This seems to indicate that while the majority of the MTs had conversations with their PST, less than half of the participants felt they were listened to and had their queries addressed. This may be because of the busyness of the secondary schools where teachers move from class to class thus limiting the time for actively listening to PSTs' concerns. Kourmousi, Amanaki, Tzavara, and Koutras (2017, p. 2) note that, "communication skills are essential in the workplace, for the effective management of interpersonal skills in the professional environment". The data reflected that perhaps the listening skills of the secondary MTs during professional experience may require further focus and development.

PSTs revealed that of the 6 *personal attributes*, 4 reflected percentages of 54.7% or below. It seemed that only around half of the secondary PSTs could self-report they received mentoring in the attributes of, *Instilling positive attitudes for literacy teaching* (54.7%); *Reflecting on improving literacy* (52.7%); *Instilled confidence as a literacy teacher* (52.9%) and *Listened attentively about literacy matters* (46.3%). This may be representative of the organisation and dynamics of secondary schools in Australia that are often geographically large with teachers in multiple roles who teach at least two learning areas or more. PSTs may have more than one MT across learning areas. Conceivably, it may be difficult for the mentor and mentee to always have time to have conversations to reflect on practice and spend time building the confidence of the PST. Despite the recognition that the relationship between the MT and PST is at the centre of the mentoring process (Ambrosetti, 2014), school organisation, geography and the busyness of schools can affect the MT's ability to demonstrate the attributes for effective literacy mentoring.

System Requirements

Table 3. Mentoring system requirements for effective literacy teaching in the secondary sector

Mentoring practice	Secondary		
	*%	M	SD
Discussed Policies related to literacy teaching	32.4	2.81	1.18
Outlined Curriculum for literacy teaching	36.2	2.81	1.16
Discussed Aims related to literacy teaching	37	2.96	1.14

The overall percentage score for *System requirements* (37.2%) demonstrated the lowest response rate of all of the five factors. It was evident that from the perspectives of the PSTs that the majority of the MTs may not have shared the system requirements for effective literacy teaching. Observing the associated practices related to *System requirements* showed similar response rates. In the practice of *Discussed policies related to literacy teaching* the percentages indicated that 67.6% of participants were unsure or disagreed that mentoring related to the discussion of literacy policies was experienced by the PSTs. Gonski et al. (2018); Deluca and Bellara (2013) and the OECD (2013) all highlight the current accountability movement surrounding literacy, noting documentation and resources for literacy teaching are available and MTs should share these documents with PSTs during professional experience. Hudson (2004b) and Spires, Kerkhoff, Graham, Thompson and Lee (2018) confirm that for effective mentoring to occur, key policies, current curriculum documents and the aims for teaching should be discussed so they can be enacted in the classroom. The responses from these secondary PSTs reflect that many of the characteristics as outlined by Hudson (2004b) may have been overlooked by the MTs.

The responses of the PSTs for the items *Outlined curriculum documents for literacy teaching* (36.2%) and *Sharing the aims for teaching literacy* (37%) further reflected that perhaps there was a lack of attention to these practices by MTs in the associated secondary schools. It is difficult to speculate the reasons behind these low response rates; however, it may be because of a lack of time or inadequate knowledge relating to the Australian Curriculum and the implementation of the General Capability Literacy (ACARA, 2010a). It seems professional learning related to Literacy as a General Capability maybe required so that MTs understand the associated curriculum documents and can share them confidently with their PST. Numerous researchers have identified an absence of studies pertaining to professional development and how it can support literacy teaching (Anders,

Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Kirsten, 2019; Reed, 2009). Therefore, it seems particularly vital to investigate how teachers could be aided in integrating literacy into their learning area and the professional activities and support that will assist them to do so. Such an approach would emphasise the objectives of the curriculum requirements for teaching literacy and benefit the mentoring process (Kirsten, 2019).

Pedagogical Knowledge

Table 4. *Mentoring pedagogical knowledge for effective literacy teaching in the secondary sector*

Mentoring practice	Secondary		
	***%**	M	SD
Preparation for literacy teaching	**40.8**	3.11	1.11
Classroom management for literacy teaching	**56.5**	3.47	1.11
Implementation of literacy	**53.7**	3.43	1.04
Timetabling of literacy teaching	**29.6**	2.90	1.07
Teaching strategies for literacy teaching	**47.2**	3.20	1.22

Less than half of the PSTs noted their MT engaged in the overall factor of sharing the *Pedagogical knowledge for effective literacy teaching* (Table 1). This response rate was consistent across the 11 pedagogical practices (Table 4) except for *Classroom management for literacy teaching* (56.5%), *Implementation of literacy* (53.7%) and *Questioning skills for teaching literacy* (56.4%) where more than half of the PSTs experienced these practices. It is positive that the majority of MTs supported the PST to develop classroom management as this is an area of concern for many PSTs and beginning teachers (Sempowicz & Hudson, 2011). Additionally, guiding PSTs to develop questioning skills aids students' thinking and promotes student-centred learning (Gunel, 2008; Weston, Kosko, Amador, & Estapa, 2018). Of interest in these results was that only 40.8% of PSTs noted their MT shared the practice of *Preparation for literacy teaching*; however, 53.7% noted their mentor teachers shared the *Implementation for effective literacy teaching*. While this was only a slight difference, it seemed that over half of the MTs were teaching literacy as part of their learning area, yet many were not sharing their preparation practices. Preparation is important for MTs to share as PSTs need to be aware of how this groundwork can inform effective literacy teaching (Kavanagh & Rainey, 2017).

Just over one third of the PSTs noted they experienced their MT *Problem solving for literacy teaching* (36.1%). Perhaps this is a reflection that the MT's approach was more subject-directed with the focus placed on their particular learning area content rather than strategising about the incorporation of literacy pedagogical practices. Miller, Thompson and Xu (2012) assert that students will benefit when teachers implement problem solving into their literacy activities as it generates critical thinking. Furthermore, the implementation of such strategies will also support PST development as they observe how such approaches can support effective literacy teaching. Greenleaf, Litman, and Marple (2018) confirm that the inclusion

of problem solving strategies "integrated into subject area teaching, rather than being an instructional add-on or additional curriculum" can aid the students in the classroom and at the same time benefit PST who are learning to incorporate literacy into their teaching (Greenleaf, Litman, & Marple, 2018, p. 229).

Reflected in this study was a possible inconsistency between the theory of effective pedagogical practices and how literacy was mentored in secondary schools. Scott, McTigue, Miller and Washburn (2018) propose that instructional researchers have advocated for pedagogy that integrate literacy instruction into learning areas. Although such approaches are advocated (ACARA, 2010a; Gonski et al., 2018; Kavanagh & Rainey, 2017), the current research suggests that the sharing of pedagogical practices for teaching literacy may be limited in some secondary classrooms. Perhaps MTs require further information about the research evidence that highlights the benefits of such pedagogical practices for teaching literacy and approaches for sharing them with PSTs during professional experience.

Modelling

Table 5. *Mentoring modelling for effective literacy teaching in the secondary sector*

Mentoring practice	Secondary		
	*%	M	SD
Used **syllabus language** related to literacy	**65.7**	3.77	1.02
Modelled teaching literacy	**55.6**	3.44	1.16
Modelled rapport with students doing literacy	**70.3**	3.82	0.93
Displayed enthusiasm for literacy	**57.4**	3.59	1.01
Modelled classroom management for teaching literacy	**63**	3.60	1.12
Modelled Effective Teaching for literacy	**63.9**	3.64	0.99
Modelled hands-on teaching of literacy	**44.4**	3.17	1.16
Modelled well-designed lessons for literacy	**49.1**	3.23	1.20

Modelling as an overall factor was supported by close to 60% of participants who agreed or strongly agreed they were supported by their MT through the modelling of literacy (Table 1). Table 5 provides more insight into the specific practices of the MTs. It seems that many of the PSTs experienced the modelling of *Using syllabus language related to literacy* (65.7%), and the *Modelling of effective teaching for literacy* (63.9%). For effective classroom management to be enacted there is evidence to suggest that a good rapport with students needs to be developed (Reichenberg & McVee, 2019). For most of these PSTs they had the opportunity to experience both of these practices with 63% *(Modelled classroom management for teaching literacy)* and 70.3% (*Modelled rapport with students doing literacy*) of the participants respectively agreeing their MT modelled these practices in literacy. Noted by Hudson and Millwater (2008), *modelling* reflects core practical features of teaching that may assist in setting the foundation of a teachers' career.

While 44.4% of secondary PSTs agreed or strongly agreed their MT *Modelled hands-on teaching of literacy* it highlights that over half of the PSTs disagreed or were unsure they experienced this mentoring practice. This may have been because many of the MTs were undertaking the teaching of literacy that did not require hands-on activities. While hands-on learning can increase student participation and engagement (Staats, 2011), it is a strategy that may not be appropriate depending on what is being taught hence, the MTs may have had limited opportunities to model this practice. In a similar result, just under half of the PSTs agreed or strongly agreed they *Experienced well-designed lessons for literacy* (49.1%). While it is hard to determine the cause of such results, this may relate to the PST not having the opportunity to see the MT's planning or, due to their lack of experience, may not recognise a well-designed literacy lesson when it is modelled. To guide the identification of what is being modelled, it is advocated by Hoffman et al. (2015) that pre- and post-modelling conversations that highlight the enacted effective practices are led by the MT.

Feedback

Table 6. *Mentoring feedback for effective literacy teaching in the secondary sector.*

Mentoring practice	Secondary		
	*%	M	SD
Discussed evaluation of my teaching of literacy	**55.5**	3.25	1.22
Provided oral feedback on my teaching of literacy	**66.7**	3.64	1.19
Provided me with written feedback on my teaching of literacy	**48.1**	3.18	1.27
Reviewed my literacy lesson plans before teaching literacy	**44.4**	3.06	1.16

Table 1 highlights that 55.1% of these secondary PSTs agreed or strongly agreed that overall they received feedback from their MT for literacy teaching. However, Table 6 provides a more in-depth viewpoint of the PSTs' experiences. The secondary PSTs indicated they were *Provided with oral feedback on my teaching* (66.7%) and *Observed me teach literacy* (65.8%). These percentages displayed that there was an apparent correlation between being observed and the presence of oral feedback with around 66% of PSTs' acknowledging they experienced both practices from their MTs during their professional experience. Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) further highlight that *Feedback* from observations assists teachers to translate theoretical principles into practice.

While the majority of PSTs reported they were *Provided with oral feedback* (66.7%) only 48.1% agreed or strongly agreed they were *Provided with written feedback.* This may be because oral feedback can be given quickly straight after the lesson however, written feedback needs to be scheduled with a meeting required at a time when both the MT and PST are available. If they are not located in the same Faculty or staff room, this may be a challenge. Jones and Tones (2018, p. 127) discuss feedback in initial teacher education, highlighting that, "a key feature of the mentor's role is to provide formative feedback to ATs (Associate Teachers) on their ability to plan, teach and assess learning…". It is noted that perhaps these feedback conversations as proposed by Jones and Tones (2018) are not occurring consistently in some secondary schools or as often as they should.

Professional conversations where the MT and PST evaluate teaching and ways to improve are important practices in the mentoring process (Jones & Tones, 2018). However, the results showed that only 50% of PSTs experienced their MT *Articulating how they could improve the teaching of literacy* and only 55.5% *Discussed evaluations of literacy teaching.* These results may again indicate the busyness of secondary school settings in Australia and the lack of time available to participate in professional conversations. It may also demonstrate the need for secondary MTs to understand the importance of their role as well as a need for professional learning for MTs, so they develop a deep understanding about the commitment required when supporting a PST to develop during professional experience. Additionally, it may be that the MT did not discuss and articulate literacy teaching because they were focussed on the content knowledge of their learning area rather than explicit feedback for literacy teaching. Explicit feedback as noted by Hattie (2012, p. 14), is when there is "deliberate practice aimed at attaining mastery of a goal, when there is *feedback* given and sought and when there is active, passionate and engaging people involved" such as between the MT and PST. This insight from Hattie about the importance of feedback as a practice, does not seem to be experienced by all of these secondary PSTs in this study. Hence, there is evidence from this study to suggest that secondary MTs need to consider the "deliberate practice" of providing feedback for literacy teaching so PSTs gain robust understandings that will support them for their future development.

Conclusions

For the most part, the results of this study indicate mentor teachers' attributes and practices for effective literacy mentoring are largely inconsistent. Many of the preservice teachers surveyed reported limited mentoring experiences across Hudson's Five Factors (2010). There seemed to be limited mentoring of the *System requirements* for literacy teaching reported by preservice teachers and close to 50% of preservice teachers reported they had limited mentoring across the pedagogical practices. While the mentor teachers seemed to speak comfortably with the preservice teacher, there appeared to be little mentoring that included listening to the preservice teachers' viewpoints about literacy matters. This research suggests that a more comprehensive approach to secondary mentor preparation and a deeper awareness of the Australian Curriculum and the General Capability Literacy (ACARA, 2010a) is required.

Secondary schools in Australia are busy and dynamic contexts and for many mentor teachers it can be challenging to find the time to truly support a preservice teacher during professional experience. This research advocates professional learning for mentor teachers to build their capacity in mentoring and gain a deep understanding about how they can enact literacy into their learning area. Such professional learning could unpack the desirable attributes and practices for mentoring, as well as how to incorporate the General Capability Literacy into their learning area. Further, such learning could provide information about how the mentor teacher can refine the mentoring process to strategically allocate time to their assigned preservice teacher.

It needs to be considered that this study, like other investigations, had limitations in that the preservice teachers self-reported the attributes and practices of their mentor teacher on a survey. The preservice teachers may not have experienced deep knowledge about how to enact the General Capability Literacy into their learning area so may not have recognised this when the mentor teacher modelled the practices or incorporated particular pedagogies into their teaching. It is imperative that secondary preservice teachers learn to teach in their area of specialisation, yet it is also important they learn to enact the Australian Curriculum and associated policy documents such as the General Capability Literacy (ACARA, 2010a). It may be that the mentor teachers in this study assumed that literacy was being taught at university as part of the preservice teachers' university coursework hence, they did not feel the need to incorporate or discuss literacy with them.

The recent Australian NAPLAN and PISA results demonstrate there is a need to improve literacy outcomes for students. Having high quality secondary teachers who are well-versed in embedding literacy into their learning areas will support students to attain desired literacy capabilities that will support them at school and in their future lives (ACARA, 2010a). Preservice teachers who undertake professional experience under the care of a mentor teacher need to have opportunities to enact literacy teaching as part of their learning area. Hence, mentor teachers require the attributes and practices for effective literacy teaching. This research has illuminated areas that can be improved and suggested ways forward to ensure the mentoring of literacy is on the agenda for future professional experience practices in Australia.

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