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Making Connections within the Asia-Pacific Region: Case Study around the Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET) program

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Abstract

University strategic plans emphasise the essential nature of partnerships at national and international levels. Along with establishing collaborative research partnerships, providing professional development to key stakeholders is considered a crucial activity for making and sustaining partnerships. Utilising knowledge from professional development in Australian contexts can be managed creatively for making connections internationally. Indeed, knowledge transfer is a cornerstone for the globalisation of education and needs to occur as a multiplex dialogue between participating countries. This paper presents a qualitative study around the Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET) program, its growth and development nationally (e.g., scope and impact) along with insights into making connections within the Asia-Pacific region. At a national level, we outline how to facilitate a program though relationship building and face-to-face implementation of professional learning**.** Internationally, we highlight how to mould and shape Australian professional learning for the Asia-Pacific region, particularly with regard to facilitating fluid interactions within environments outside of Australia. The contexts for the study include a university in Hong Kong and another university in the Philippines. In this presentation, examples will be provided from the MET program to demonstrate contextual differences and similarities for implementation in Australian and Asian contexts. For instance, determining strategies for mentoring pedagogical knowledge can elicit viewpoints that align between cultures (e.g., use of specific teaching and questioning strategies) and also present alternative ideas as a result of cultural differences. We have learnt about having a structured program that draws on the research yet has sufficient flexibility to cater for cultures and contexts. With open-mindedness, facilitating professional learning can become a two-way knowledge transfer, where learnings from other cultures and contexts can be refined for advancing programs in Australia.

Introduction

Mentoring is crucial for advancing early-career teachers' practices, despite mentoring being reported for years as being haphazard (e.g., Ganser, 1997; Hudson, 2010). Only recently, mentoring has been embraced in Australia with government support, although considerable work is required to ensure that mentoring is embedded nationally. Nevertheless, many countries are yet to develop system-wide mentoring programs to support the teaching profession. This paper presents a multi-case study around the Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET) program, its growth and development nationally (e.g., scope and impact) along with insights into making connections within the Asia-Pacific region. At a national level, we present current information about the MET program and outline face-to-face implementation of professional learning. Internationally, we highlight how to mould and shape Australian professional learning for the Asia-Pacific region, particularly with regard to facilitating fluid interactions within environments outside of Australia.

Literature review

Across Australia, university strategic plans emphasise the essential nature of partnerships at national and international levels (e.g., https://cms.qut.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/71113/qut-blueprint.pdf). For instance, at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), along with establishing collaborative research partnerships, it is emphasised that providing professional development to key stakeholders is considered a crucial activity for making and sustaining partnerships. Knowledge transfer is an extensive activity that aims to build capacity between nations (e.g., Sutrisno, Pillay, & Hudson, 2012). Although knowledge transfer can include professional development programs that target specific areas of need, the social construction of knowledge (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978) can assist in facilitating common understandings around concepts under development. Thus engaging with new knowledge must be considered as a two-way interaction where facilitation requires active learner participation.

Multi-directional information between universities has increased the connectedness between nations globally (Burnett & Huisman, 2010). Knowledge exchange is a cornerstone for the globalisation of education and needs to occur as a multiplex dialogue between participating countries. Jasimuddin and Zhang (2009) claim that a symbiotic relationship between international university partners can occur when knowledge evolves after developing trust and providing effective communication that has mutual benefits. Matzler, Renzl, Mooradian, von Krogh, and Mueller (2011) emphasise that individual personality characteristics (e.g., agreeableness and conscientiousness) can assist in facilitating professional learning. Undoubtedly, universities involved in international knowledge transfer (and exchange) must be culturally aware and recognise that it is not simply reproducing knowledge but rather adjusting knowledge to suit cultural contexts (Abou-Zeid, 2005). Undeniably, international partnerships need to be based on common purposes and goals with an awareness of cultural differences, particularly with culturally-based learning styles (Heffernan, Morrison, Basu, & Sweeney, 2010).

The benefit for academics facilitating programs with other nations include providing ways for developing presentation skills and knowledge with feedback from culturally-diverse groups that allow for further development of programs (Currie & Vidovich, 2009). It may also increase the opportunities for forging common research agendas between nations (Courtney & Anderson, 2009). Indeed, interacting with research-intensive universities can become advantageous to both parties (Altbach, 2004). The benefit for recipient nations of professional learning is the engagement with new information that may assist agendas for achieving desirable goals, and may become a strategic alliance for both nations (Chauvel, Rolland, & Despres, 2003). The shared purpose of preparing to use knowledge from professional learning programs becomes a linchpin of the partnership (Courtney & Anderson, 2009). Additionally, international and intercultural interactions can provide unique ways for learning about communicating and working with different cultures (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

There are many new professional learning programs that can be presented globally. For example, Australia has developed and facilitated mentoring programs for effective teaching, though such programs are new and are continually refined by incorporating participant feedback and recent research studies (e.g., Hudson 2013). To illustrate, the Victoria Government developed a teacher mentor support program to assist beginning teachers (State of Victoria, 2010) and Queensland University of Technology, in partnership with the

Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE, 2013) developed and facilitated a mentoring beginning teacher program for educating over 1100 mentor teachers.

Yet, there is a continued call in Australia for mentoring programs to support early-career teachers. For instance, a NSW Government (2014) report advocates the need to fund policies that support the mentoring of beginning teachers and the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group [TEMAG] (2014) highlights "a lack of quality assurance and a lack of structured training for supervising and mentoring teachers to ensure that they have the necessary skills to supervise, provide support and feedback, and assess professional experience placements" (p. 26). Other nations (e.g., Hong Kong and the Philippines) are also yet to develop systematic mentoring plans to boost the education potential, although the Philippines has developed a manual for use by the faculty in field study courses and preservice teaching. The Carter Review (2015) has identified the need for effective mentoring by recruiting mentors who can explain and demonstrate outstanding and provide "rigorous training for mentors that goes beyond briefing about the structure and nature of the course, and focusses on how teachers learn and the skills of effective mentoring" (p. 68). The purpose of this current paper is to provide insight around how a mentoring program from another country (Australia) is used within other cultural environments as a catalyst for professional learning.

Early-career teachers (preservice teachers and beginning teachers) are new to the profession and those allocated teaching positions will more than likely enter unique school contexts. Thus, it is advocated profusely that mentoring be employed to support their capacities for teaching (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Although general induction processes are important, particularly around the school culture and infrastructure, the focus for mentoring needs to be on developing effective teaching practices. Yet, this mentoring is variable and early-career teachers may not receive ongoing support (Hudson, 2010, 2013). The attrition rate for beginning teachers continues to be high in the first years of teaching (Queensland College of Teachers, 2013) and formalised mentoring may assist in building resilience (Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Vong & Wong, 2009) to encourage teachers to stay in the profession.

In Australia, a report from the Australian Council for Educational Research (Weldon, 2015) outlines the continued increase in classes across the country between 2011-2020 (Figure 1), resulting in an increase in the number of early-career teachers requiring mentoring. As populations increase around the world, more teachers will be needed and as a result, mentoring needs to be an ongoing process. Teacher education reviews (e.g., New South Wales [NSW] Government, 2013; TEMAG, 2014) highlight the need for mentoring programs to provide consistency in supporting beginning teachers. TEMAG recommends that "schools identify highly skilled teachers to mentor" (p. xvii), as mentoring needs to be facilitated by highly-skilled teachers who have the capacity to work with other adults. However, many countries do not have mentor training programs and policies in place.

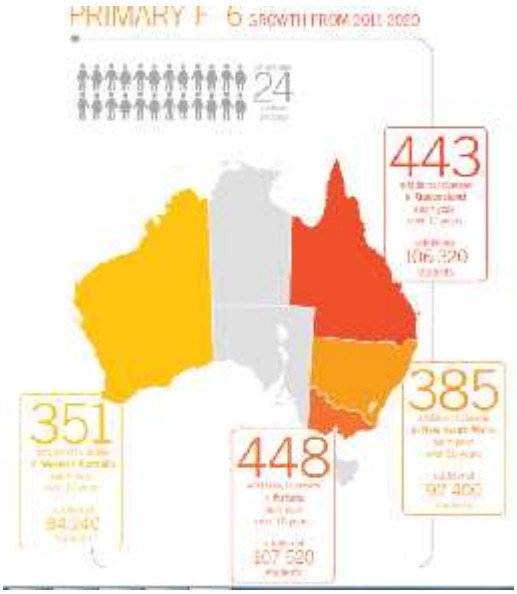

Figure 1. Increase in Australian primary classes between 2011 and 2020 (Weldon, 2015)

The research question for this study was: How can an Australian-based mentoring program be relevant and applicable (or not) to other culturally-diverse contexts?

Terminology for this study

There are many facilitators of education reform, including curriculum writers, university lecturers, non-teaching staff and departmental personnel but reform is enacted by teachers in the classroom, including early-career teachers (i.e., preservice teachers and beginning teachers). Where these teachers meet can become a powerful way for engaging with reform measures and forging understandings about the implementation of reform measures. When referring to experienced teachers assisting early-career teachers, there are a few key terms such as induction, supervision, coaching and mentoring that require clarification, particularly for positioning mentoring in this study.

Induction is a process that needs to occur over a period of a year or more. More than likely, a beginning teacher has not experienced a whole school year. Preservice teacher have had field experiences, practicum in blocks, and internships; however they may not have had the opportunity to see the first day of a school year or engage in assessment and reporting, or communicate formally with parents. Induction includes the school culture and its infrastructure, along with policies and practices, and it also includes mentoring. The TEMAG report states that "Effective induction is critical to successful transition into classroom teaching practice. It includes structured mentoring, observation and feedback" (p. xix). Supervision can have different meanings in different contexts. In crude terminology, it involves more senior staff scrutinising a junior staff member's work to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and safety. However, the teaching profession has used the term supervision more widely.

Coaching may be noted as facilitating the attainment of goals. It can include coaching for performance, for transitions, and for developmental purposes. In education, cognitive coaching has strategies for encouraging reflection on teaching. There are considerable skills employed by coaches to develop another person's abilities, especially with the use of questioning strategies (Costa & Garmston, 1994). Once more, in different contexts, coaching may be noted as more than what occurs in sports and sporting events. However, both

supervision and coaching as terms do not infer a two-way dialogue or modelling of practices. Supervision (as a term) appears as a top down model while coaching may have a little more equity in the arrangement; yet both terms seem to project a one-way process even though educators can use these in different ways.

Mentoring in teacher education involves an experienced and knowledgeable teacher who supports a mentee (e.g., preservice teacher, beginning teacher) and facilitates professional growth through a mutually beneficial relationship. It infers a two-way dialogue, it infers modelling of practices and the articulation of practices and, importantly it focuses on facilitating a supportive culture. Mentoring is part of induction and coaching can also be part of mentoring. The terms *mentoring* and *mentor teacher* project intended roles transcending the last century's notions around supervision.

Mentoring program context

Renshaw's (2012) report to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) outlines three models for mentoring in Australia, namely, "Mentoring for Effective Teaching" model, "Professional Learning for Supervisors of Preservice Teachers", and "Growth Coaching International" (p. 33). Each model aims to support the mentoring process as do other government documents around Australia (e.g., NSW Government, 2013). Many Australian universities have been involved in the Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET) program, as it has an empirically-tested model that targets mentoring practices predominantly for assisting preservice teachers (see http://tedd.net.au/mentoring-for-effective-teaching/). As a key part of an Australian award-winning program (Office of Learning and Teaching, 2013), MET provides professional learning for mentor teachers to enhance the quantity and quality of mentoring during practicum experiences. The MET program (facilitated in partnership with more than 30 universities and institutes across Australia) has been used to train over 1200 MET facilitators to enhance preservice teacher development in over 300 Australian schools. Australian universities (e.g., Edith Cowan University: http://www.ecu.edu.au/schools/education/professional-practice/mentoring/other-resources) and other countries have used the MET program as their foundational support mechanism for advancing preservice teachers' practices. For example, the University of Colorado uses the five-factor mentoring model to support their mentors (see http://www.uccs.edu/Documents/CAEP/Standard%202/Mentor%20Teacher%20Training%20Handbook_2014-5-16.pdf).

The Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET) program provides ideas for experienced teachers to develop their mentoring practices. MET allows mentor teachers to gain insight into mentoring by analysing current attributes and practices considered successful for mentoring early-career teachers. There are issues around mentor selection and the variability of the mentoring, which is a key reason for ensuring that mentors are trained with current knowledge and skills for effective mentoring. The MET program comprises of ten modules that explore the mentor-mentee relationship, address each factor of the mentoring model (i.e., personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling, and feedback) and introduces action research as a means for teachers to examine and enhance their mentoring practices. The program can be delivered as a two-day course or for an hour or two per week in an after-school program. Participants completing the MET program become certified facilitators and can return to their own schools with resources (e.g., PowerPoints, module plans, DVD) to engage colleagues in professional learning about mentoring for effective teaching. The program can be tailored to suit the schools' needs and has been

viewed by various school executives as a prerequisite professional learning for teachers wanting to mentor early-career teachers.

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks

The Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET) program is theoretically based within the concepts of Dewey's (1933) guided discovery learning, Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, Schön's (1987) reflective practitioner, Shulman's (1986) competence and Bandura's (1997) notions around the development of self-efficacy. The MET program provides content knowledge and facilitate ways for participants to discover new ideas with further social interactions to generate meaningful concepts. In the program, participants are required to reflect on their mentoring practices to determine effectiveness (and competence) with collegial discussions and activities aimed to facilitate self-efficacy in mentoring (i.e., the confidence to successfully undertake a mentoring role).

This research draws upon a conceptual framework around one of the five factors (i.e., pedagogical knowledge practices), as outlined in the journal *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* (Hudson, 2013). In brief, the framework focuses on 11 pedagogical knowledge practices elicited from the research literature around mentoring and teaching (Figure 2). The practices are interrelated theoretically and statistically (see Hudson, Skamp, & Brooks, 2005) and provide a conceptual framework for mentors to access and as a framework for collecting data on mentoring pedagogical knowledge practices. Differentiation of student learning needs connects each of the pedagogical knowledge practices. For instance, mentoring for planning to teach effectively requires the mentee to consider the various needs of students in the classroom.

Figure 2. Pedagogical knowledge practices for mentoring

Methods

This interpretive study involves 57 participants who were involved in the Mentoring for Effective Teaching (MET) program from two different nations. This is a multi-case study (Flyvbjerg, 2011) as it includes participants from two different universities across two different nations (i.e., Hong Kong and the Philippines). Participants were involved in the two-day MET program and data collection involved gathering participant responses around one of the 10 sessions. Session five focused on pedagogical knowledge practices (see Figure 2). Participants from both Hong Kong and the Philippines included those from a variety of universities and institutes, schools and departments of education with an interest in mentoring preservice teachers. In facilitating professional learning, participants were asked to discuss, analyse and evaluate strategies for mentoring pedagogical knowledge to preservice teachers, which was an hour-long activity. For data analysis, strategies were analysed according to possible similarities and differences. In addition, the researchers reflected on the interaction processes and recorded information that may

assist in interpreting any written data. The researchers were involved in the program as participant-observer (Creswell, 2014) and as such provided observational insights into participant interaction and their presentation of information around pedagogical knowledge practices. Findings are presented within each of the pedagogical knowledge practices (Figure 1) followed by a discussion section.

Findings

The findings focus on participant information provided within the MET program around the aforementioned pedagogical knowledge practices and whether the program was relevant for application to the country. Strategies for each practice are presented as indicated by both the Hong Kong and Filipino participants.

Hong Kong participants provided strategies for mentoring preservice teachers' pedagogical knowledge around planning for teaching, which included having "a co-planning approach", "providing sample lesson plans", and allowing preservice teachers to join planning groups at school. Strategies Hong Kong participants could employ for timetabling involved designating "meeting and planning times" and providing the teaching timetable (schedule) to the mentee. The Filipino group mentioned that mentors could assist their mentees in planning by having a "planning flowchart", "determining specific learning outcomes", "setting specific goals and objectives", and "scheduling or calendaring". One mentor suggested an alliteration to assist the mentee to develop a broader concept about planning, that is, "Proper planning prevents poor performance", though it was not elaborated on whether the poor performance would relate to the teacher, the student or both. The Filipinos suggested mentoring strategies for understanding timetabling that included developing a "calendar of activities" or a "matrix chart" and an "action plan." Mentoring strategies needed to involve prioritising within timetables and outlining lesson blocks and timelines.

There were several mentor strategies outlined by the Hongkongers to assist mentees to understand preparation requirements, such as to: "co-teach and prepare the lesson together", "share resources (e.g., powerpoints, references, lesson plans, preparation documents)", "share students' portfolios", "shadowing the mentor", and ideas around students' seating plans along with students' specialised needs. The Filipinos suggested that the mentor assist the mentee with preparation for teaching by referring to the "planning matrix", "syllabus", "course outline with effective motivation strategies", "use of a scope and sequence chart", and ensuring there was a "needs assessment or analysis". Observations indicated cohesion with participant interactions along with general participant acceptance of viewpoints around mentoring strategies.

Considerable discussion from the Hong Kong group revolved around mentoring practices that could assist preservice teachers with their teaching strategies. They highlighted the mentor's modelling of teaching strategies along with the mentor observation of the mentee's teaching strategies followed by discussion. It was also considered important that mentors need to provide a range of specific teaching strategies (e.g., jig saw, case study, role playing, action learning, and use of media - videos) for the mentee to develop a teaching strategy toolkit. Similarly, the Filipinos recorded that mentoring for developing teaching strategies could involve brainstorming and explaining effective teaching strategies with the mentee for "reciprocal teaching", "experiment with teaching strategies" and "make the strategies learner-centered." It was also outlined that mentors could present a range of teaching strategies for the mentee to consider in teaching (e.g.,

think-pair-share, field trip, use of resources, using graphic organisers); however the mentee would also need to explore the "marketplace for teaching strategies". It was observed that participant strategies were diverse in nature and could add to the knowledge around ideas for mentoring teaching strategies.

All Hongkongers emphasised the necessity for mentees to have strong content knowledge. Strategies that participants presented involved using curriculum guidelines, accurate references to the syllabus, the use of teachers' reference books and textbooks, "e-resources", "extensive & intensive readings", and the "use of different modalities (visual, audio) [for] content in different forms". It was emphasised by the Filipino group that mentees need to have understanding of content knowledge and they outlined many different ways for mentoring content knowledge, such as using "KWL", "concept mapping", "graphic organizers", and the "art of questioning and effective motivation".

Hong Kong ideas around mentoring problem-solving strategies included showing how to anticipate and "identify the problem", "arrange debriefing session every week", "provide a survival manual", and "identify resources available". It was considered useful to have the "mentee suggest a solution and gather mentor's feedback" around problems and problem resolutions. The Filipino group considered mentoring strategies that may allow the mentee to develop problem-solving skills, which included "brainstorming alternative solutions" or having a "shared inquiry", providing a "problem solution planner matrix", use of role playing and case studies and considering the "scientific processes" for working out how to solve problems.

Classroom management is a key focus area for preservice teachers, as many struggle with management strategies that allow them to progress with facilitating learning. It was suggested by the Hongkongers that mentors can assist mentees' classroom management practices by: "providing tips on building [a] rapport with students", "video analysis [of the mentee's teaching] for significant events in the classroom", awareness of "classroom diversity and individual traits", sharing classroom management practices, inviting "the mentee to observe the mentor's behavioural management", and understanding the "background of students' behavioural problems" along with "reflection on causes of classroom problems". Most of the comments written by the Filipinos were representative of the literature, such as mentoring around "establishing routines", "improve the physical setting", "setting up a reward system and set standards", considering "positive discipline", and working on "individual management with little supervision for completing the task". Observed interactions between participants suggested the mentoring of classroom management as a key priority for assisting mentees' practices. Indeed, there were conversations around various early-career teachers struggling with management problems that may lead towards unfavourable experiences in the teaching profession.

Most Hong Kong participants considered the need for mentors to provide mentees with "contrasting between good and not so good questioning examples". It was observed that Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) could be used to deepen the questioning techniques. Mentors need to predict potential issues and questions from their mentees so they can assist in addressing these points. Filipino ideas for mentoring strategies that may assist the mentee develop questioning skills presented many diverse ways to consider questioning, such as "reciprocal questioning", "Gradual Psychological Unfolding (GPU)", "semantic questioning", "HOTS (higher-order thinking skills", "constructing realistic and relevant

questions", and the "use of classroom observation tasks, focusing on the art of questioning and reacting techniques." Indeed, this cohort provided specific examples of a toolkit of questioning skills that can be used by a mentee, including the Socratic method of questioning and "WIIFM (What's In It For Me?)".

There were several strategies for mentoring preservice teachers on how to implement a lesson presented by the Hongkongers. In the first instance, it was considered important to invite the mentee to observe a mentor's lesson and having a session for the mentee to reflect on past lessons. Other strategies included collecting evidence of the mentee's implementation through video recordings of the mentee teaching a lesson for post-observation purposes, collecting articles informing effective implementation practices and providing opportunities to repeat lessons where practicable (e.g., to another class). The Filipino participants claimed that mentoring around the implementation of teaching required "sharing best practices", providing "teaching demonstrations", showing ideas around "student-centered learning" and "diagnostic teaching" with "benchmarking of student performance".

Assessment is crucial for planning and reporting purposes. Hong Kong strategies for mentoring assessment practices included providing the mentee with ideas around peer, group and individual assessment along with "briefing mentees on assessment policies in the school". Other ideas involved analysing "students' past performance showing their weaknesses for future assessment" and "providing [mentees] with rubrics". The mentor's modelling of assessment strategies, such as "constructing assessment criteria" was discussed as assisting the mentee's development. It was suggested by the Filipino cohort that mentoring strategies for understanding assessment needed to include providing examples of rubrics, portfolios, narrative reports, "teacher-made tests", checklists, "summative tests" and "concept mapping". Observations and written material indicated that the mentee needed to understand the use of journals, informal assessment and the actual student output or outcome.

All mentors have viewpoints on what and how to mentor. The Hongkongers in this study suggested strongly that being observed and observing the mentee teach, followed by discussion of practices would be essential. Other mentoring ideas included "using mind maps", providing "visual pictures: charts, graphs…", gathering "feedback from students" and developing the "whole person: spiritual, psychological, behavioural". The Filipinos shared that mentors can present their personal viewpoints around effective teaching with ideas they use themselves in the classroom. For example, some suggested being the "devil's advocate", use of "exit cards" for students in the classroom, "brainwriting" and "one-sentence summaries" as specific teaching ideas they had found to work well in the classroom.

Discussion

Determining whether an Australian-based mentoring program was relevant and applicable (or not) to the countries' contexts required an analysis of the strategies presented by both nations. Many different strategies were advocated by participants from Hong Kong and the Philippines. Observations and written documentation revealed that every strategy presented a way for mentors to consider how to most effectively facilitate an early-career teacher's development. The pedagogical knowledge practices appeared to be acceptable in both cultural contexts. Participants from Hong Kong and the Philippines considered mentoring strategies for planning as a pedagogical knowledge practice with

supportive actions, such as co-planning and the mentor providing sample plans. Mentoring discussions around planning specific goals and determining learning outcomes provided further ways to assist the mentee. Indeed, most of the pedagogical practice strategies suggested by both groups were diverse, which may have allowed for contextualising mentoring for the cultures, but also indicated a flexible framework that enabled the breadth of suggestions to materialise.

Observations and written evidence suggested similarities between the strategies for mentoring from both participant groups. To illustrate, when participants considered mentoring teaching strategies, both groups provided specific teaching strategies that could be articulated or demonstrated to the mentee. The Hongkongers outlined jigsaw, role playing and case studies while the Filipinos suggested think-pair-share, graphic organisers, and ensuring the strategies were learner-centred. Indeed, the combination of the two participant groups provided a more comprehensive understanding around possible strategies that mentors can draw upon when assisting the mentee. There were several similar suggestions for mentoring strategies across the pedagogical knowledge practices. For example, both groups considered the mentor's modelling of practices (observing a mentor's lesson and "teaching demonstrations") as important, and for assessment strategies, both suggested providing the mentee with examples of assessment rubrics. This inferred that both groups had access to information sources about the positive influences of modelling practices and providing examples to the mentee.

Mentoring classroom management was emphasised by both groups, particularly as classroom management can be a reason for early-career teachers leaving the profession (Darling-Hammond**,** 2010). Australia has around 20% leaving in the first five years, with a recent Queensland State report showing 14.5% of males leaving in the first four years (Queensland College of Teachers [QCT], 2013). Although this may not relate directly to beginning teacher attrition rate, the Hong Kong Education Bureau reports that 4.9% trained teachers who taught the previous year did not teach in 2012-13 and 4.7% did not teach in 2013-2014 (see http://www.budget.gov.hk/2014/eng/pdf/head156.pdf). Nevertheless, these figures indicate that considerable expense has been outlaid in training teachers with departments not capitalising on this expertise. Mentoring may assist teachers to maintain their positions.

The facilitators of the MET program acknowledged that the transfer of knowledge was a two-way interaction, a social construction of knowledge and produced a richer, deeper understanding of the concepts associated with mentoring. To ensure that all parties gain benefits, knowledge transfer was considered a fluid interaction that drew upon fundamental concepts in the first instance but developed further complex understandings of the mentoring process. Importantly, each of the pedagogical knowledge practices could be aligned with the country's curriculum standards (i.e., outcomes and objectives). For instance, the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching (APST) graduate career stage (AITSL, 2015) outlines focus area 3.2 teaching strategies. Similarly, the Hong Kong curriculum presents a set of competencies and the Philippines' National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS, 2009) has 44 teaching methods, learning activities and instructional materials or resources to support early-career teachers. Consequently, there appeared to be alignment between the countries' pedagogical knowledge practices, which may have facilitated a more fluid interaction on the MET topics.

Limitations and further research

The study focused on one MET factor (pedagogical knowledge) only to determine whether an Australian-based mentoring program was relevant and applicable to other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. It used written documentation and research reflections to gather and interpret data. Other data collection methods could enhance the current study, particularly interview data that may have elaborated on the findings. Apart from investigating the other MET sessions to determine relevancy and applicability to other diverse contexts, further research may include the complementarity of programs devised in one country for applicability to another country, whether it is an Australian-based program on beginning teacher resilience or the Philippine's "Teacher-Induction Program and the Teacher Education and Development Program: Pre-Service Teacher Performance and Development Framework". Investigating knowledge transfer to and from countries may open up growth potential and present further opportunities between nations.

All participants demonstrated strong interests in mentoring and, as model that allows participants to facilitate professional learning to their constituencies; the mentoring program may have potential for further sustainability within other nations. The research shows the value of international collaboration and the sharing of resources across borders. This type of collaboration provided an example of knowledge exchange with three clear messages: 1) There was mutual benefit in sharing resources and expertise between institutions; 2) Cultural sensitivity was required when exporting a program from one context to another; and 3) Course designers gained additional knowledge by facilitating the same program in other cultural contexts, which can help reflection and further program development. However, each of these three messages necessitates further research to determine: the level of mutual benefit, what specific cultural sensitivities are required for particular contexts, and what course designers' knowledge is used to advance programs.

Mentoring early-career professionals into their employment is paramount towards building a profession. In Australia, lawyers and medical practitioners have extensive support systems to guide the development of their new employees. Further research is required on mentoring programs emerging around the world that addresses issues surrounding the development of future teachers and towards embedding new ideas on mentoring within the teaching profession. Facilitating mentoring programs across borders can help to understand effectiveness in mentoring practices. For teaching and teacher education, most mentoring programs target preservice teachers or beginning teachers, so finding commonalities between nations can advance collective knowledge.

Conclusion

As a result of investigating whether an Australian-based mentoring program is relevant and applicable to other nations, we learnt that symbiotic international relationships can assist mutual advancement of educational concepts around mentoring early-career teachers. All researchers in this study gained from involvement in the professional learning program, as did the participants in the program. Extending beyond studies conducted in Australia about mentoring pedagogical knowledge practices (e.g., Hudson, 2013), both Hong Kong and the Philippines presented strategies that also could be utilised in the Australian context to advance mentoring programs. The mutual benefits of this knowledge exchange allowed Hong Kong and the Philippines to access new

information and at the same time, as a result of facilitating the program in these contexts, provided new ideas that could be embedded in Australian mentoring programs.

It seems that successful interactions within the professional learning are based on having a semi-structured program that draws on current research yet with sufficient flexibility to cater for cultures and contexts. Combining the viewpoints from different contexts provide a more comprehensive collection of mentoring strategies. With open-mindedness, facilitating professional learning can become a two-way knowledge exchange, where learnings from other cultures and contexts can be refined for advancing programs in Australia. Mutual respect, diplomacy, and a willingness to integrate viewpoints can position a positive and fruitful international collaboration.

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