Chapter 6
Mentoring as Part of a Trellis of Practices that Support Learning

Susanne Francisco

Abstract In a number of countries, including Australia, vocational education and training (VET) teachers often begin teaching without teaching qualifications or prior experience related to teaching. In such circumstances, mentoring is commonly identified as an appropriate strategy to support teacher learning. However, access to mentoring for new teachers can be complex. Further, even when mentoring is available, it does not always provide strong support for teacher learning.

Drawing on evidence from a 2-year longitudinal study of the learning of novice VET teachers, and using the theory of practice architectures, this chapter addresses two key areas related to teacher learning through mentoring: access to mentoring; and mentoring as it inter-relates with other 'practices that support learning' (PSLs). The chapter explores the practice architectures that enabled and constrained teacher access to both formal and informal mentoring. Additionally, the chapter uses the theory of ecologies of practices in a modified way to explore the practices that support learning in four of the case studies from the broader study. It does this by looking at the inter-relationships between mentoring and other PSLs. In two of these cases, inter-related PSLs that worked together to strongly support teacher learning are identified, and the concept of a trellis of PSLs is outlined.

Governments, industry, the community, and individuals have increasingly high expectations of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector in Australia as well as in other countries (Elliott 2013; Harris et al. 2009; Wheelahan and Curtin 2010). To meet these expectations, VET teachers require well developed skills and abilities. In a number of countries, including Australia, VET teachers often begin teaching with little or no experience in teaching and with no education related to learning how to teach. For some of these teachers, initial experiences of teaching can be daunting. Mentoring is one approach that has been used to support the learning of new teachers. It has been used in many countries and across a broad spectrum

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of teaching contexts (see for instance Fox et al. 2010; Guthrie 2010; Kemmis et al. 2014a; Pennanen et al. 2015).

This chapter builds on and contributes to work in mentoring to support novice teacher learning. Although mentoring has been identified as relevant to the support of VET teachers (Guthrie 2010; Wheelahan and Moodie 2011), little analytic attention has been paid to the site-based arrangements that impact on VET teacher access to mentoring. Firstly, I address this issue by using the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al. 2014b) to analyse what enables and constrains novice teacher access to mentoring in particular sites. Specifically, I highlight the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that enabled and constrained novice teacher access to mentoring in the empirical study that forms the basis for this chapter. Secondly, I use the theory of ecologies of practices (Kemmis et al. 2012) in a modified way to focus specifically on the relationships between mentoring and other practices that support learning (PSLs). Studies in mentoring to date have largely examined mentoring as a standalone practice, and there has been little attention paid to how mentoring interacts with other practices to support the learning of novice VET teachers. This analytic focus on mentoring as part of an ecology of practices enables a further contribution to the mentoring literature and provides the groundwork for the introduction of the concept of a trellis of practices that support learning.

In this chapter I identify practices that support learning as those practices that engage novice teachers in activities whereby they come to learn "how to go on" (Wittgenstein 2009, p. 66) as teachers. Kemmis et al. (2014b) break down understandings of learning how to go on as involving "learning how to go on in (a) language games, (b) activities, (c) ways of relating to others and other things in the world, and (d) how these things hang together in the common project and practice of coming to know how to go on in a practice" (p. 78). Here I focus on those practices (for instance mentoring and team teaching) that are not learning practices themselves, but that are practices that support learning.

The chapter begins with a brief introduction to the Australian VET teaching context, the teacher mentoring literature, and to the study that is discussed in this chapter. I then outline findings of the study that pertain to mentoring, and highlight the practice architectures that enabled and constrained novice teacher access to mentoring. Next, focussing on four cases from the study, mentoring is explored as a component of an ecology of practices that support learning, and the concept of a *trellis* of PSLs is introduced. This includes an analysis of the practice architectures that enabled and constrained the development of a trellis of PSLs in the study. Finally, I raise two inter-related issues associated with the use of mentoring as a strategy to support teacher learning: teacher workload and teacher volunteerism.

The Australian VET Teaching Context

In Australia, more than two thirds of all VET is undertaken through colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) or other public providers (National Council for Vocational Education Research 2012). TAFE colleges are the main public provider of VET in Australia. Casualisation of the TAFE teacher workforce has been increasing since the early 1990s (Nechvoglod et al. 2010). While the proportion varies across Australia, the percentage of TAFE teachers employed casually is more than 50 % nationally, and much higher than this in some states (Nechvoglod et al. 2010; Simons et al. 2009). This casualisation of the TAFE teacher workforce is occurring against a background of workforce change, demographic change, and an increasingly globalised economy (Guthrie et al. 2006; Wheelahan 2010; Wheelahan and Moodie 2011).

Regardless of the basis of employment, the expectations of, and demands on, VET teachers can be high. Wheelahan and Curtin (2010) note that "there is widespread recognition that achievement of government objectives for the growth of VET, increasing the workforce's skills, social inclusion, and specific participation and equity targets require highly skilled VET teachers" (p. 62). VET teachers work with diverse student groups with a wide range of needs and abilities. They also teach across a range of environments including online and classroom-based environments, and in the workplace. High-level skills are required, and a majority of VET teachers begin teaching as casual employees (Simons et al. 2009). Further, in many cases, teachers begin to teach with no formal education or other preparation related to how to teach (Wheelahan and Moodie 2011). Work-based learning then necessarily becomes an important aspect of teacher development. Guthrie notes in relation to the whole VET sector, "whatever the level of casualisation, a key issue is that they generally have less access both to ongoing support from other VET staff and to professional development opportunities" (2010, p.10). The present high level of casualisation needs to be taken into account when considering teacher professional development strategies, including mentoring.

VET Teacher Mentoring

The literature on the mentoring of teachers is extensive (Cunningham 2011; Fletcher 2012; Francisco and Darwin 2007; Hankey 2004; Ingersoll and Strong 2011). What mentoring of teachers involves is contested (Kemmis et al. 2014a), and a range of mentoring approaches are used (Lane 2004). There has been little research reported in relation to mentoring of novice VET teachers in Australia. Where mentoring is discussed, it is often focussed on suggesting that mentoring be used to support teacher learning (see for instance Guthrie et al. 2011) rather than reporting on mentoring research.

Both formal and informal mentoring by experienced teachers were evident in the study that is discussed in this chapter. The mentoring that I focus on in this chapter is induction mentoring: i.e., mentoring to support novice teachers in developing their skills to undertake their role as a teacher. I define mentoring as a relationship where an experienced teacher (a mentor) supports the learning of a less experienced teacher (the mentee) over a period of time.

The Study

The research findings reported here are part of a broader qualitative, longitudinal study that used a case study approach to explore the learning of novice VET teachers. The study, undertaken over 2 years, took place across four urban TAFE campuses. All novice teachers who began teaching in each of the campuses in the first year of the research were invited to participate. All nine eligible teachers, from eight teaching departments, agreed to do so. Novice teachers were defined as those teachers who had had no previous education related to being a teacher, and who had not previously taught classes of students. Each of the eight teaching departments was unique and operated differently in many ways.

Case studies of the learning of each of the teachers were developed based on semi-structured interviews with novice teachers at certain intervals: within the first 6 months, after 1 year, and after 2 years of teaching. Field notes taken around the time of each interview were also important data sources. Other data sources included teacher-produced resources, teacher journal entries, teacher emails in response to open-ended questions about their learning, and publicly available documents produced by the TAFE college, or informing the operation of the TAFE college.

Teacher Access to Mentoring

The theory of practice architectures sees practices as prefigured in a site by cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements (Kemmis et al. 2014b). These arrangements enable and constrain the actions – the sayings, doings, and relatings – that take place in the site (Kemmis et al. 2014b). A more detailed discussion of the theory of practice architectures can be found in Chapter 1 (this volume). This section presents an overview of the formal and informal induction mentoring that was available for novice VET teachers in this study, and the practice architectures that enabled and constrained novice teacher access to induction mentoring.

Formal Mentoring Program

A formal mentoring program was offered by the organisation where this research was undertaken. This program supported two types of mentoring: induction mentoring and developmental mentoring, and was based on Zachary's (2011) understanding of mentoring as using adult learning principles. Induction mentoring is initial support for learning a new job. Developmental mentoring is mentoring of more experienced teachers, usually in one or more specific areas such as developing online teaching skills, or better supporting student learning. Most mentoring undertaken through the formal mentoring program fitted within the developmental mentoring category. In this section, I address the practice architectures that enabled and constrained novice teacher access to formal induction mentoring.

The formal mentoring program had been established for some years prior to the employment of the teachers who were participants in this study. The training of mentors formed part of the practice architectures that enabled formal mentoring. Other arrangements that supported formal mentoring included a mentor coordinator, a handbook for mentors, and a staff award for excellence in mentoring. This training and the handbook identified the learning goals of the mentee as the focus of the mentoring relationship, and served to establish this understanding as part of the cultural-discursive and social-political arrangements of mentoring in the organisation.

Despite the existence of the formal mentoring program, only two of the nine novice teachers in this study were in a formal induction mentoring relationship. The initial constraint on teacher learning through formal mentoring was novice teachers not being aware that a mentoring program existed. While, theoretically, formal mentoring was available to all teachers, in reality, many of the novice teachers did not know that formal mentoring was an option to support their learning. The program was advertised through the internal staff information system, as well as occasionally being mentioned in weekly emails that were sent to all staff. Administrative procedures that resulted in casual teachers not having access to a staff email or to the staff information system often for up to the first 10 weeks or more of employment was an important material-economic arrangement that constrained novice teachers accessing this information. Operating without staff email or other organisation-wide information services for so long, teachers often did not see a need to regularly access them once they did become available.

The two teachers who did access formal mentoring were provided with a formal mentor by their supervisors when they commenced teaching. In both cases, mentoring was included in the workload of the experienced teachers involved, and they received release time from teaching to mentor novice teachers. Teaching release time for mentoring was not a usual component of the mentoring program. Interestingly, in the departments where release time was not provided for experienced teachers to mentor novice teachers, although it was theoretically available, no formal induction mentoring was provided. This is consistent with findings by

Hankey (2004), who identified the importance of mentoring being explicitly embedded in teachers' workload.

In one site, the cultural-discursive arrangements that enabled novice teacher access to induction mentoring included the embedding of mentoring as an expectation across the faculty through approaches such as discussions about mentoring at staff meetings. Material-economic arrangements that enabled access to mentoring included written documentation that outlined clear roles and expectations of mentors, underpinned by mentors having mentoring as an acknowledged component of their role and being provided with release hours to undertake the mentoring role.

From a social-political perspective, for the novice teachers, the mentors were strangers who were made available by the organisation to support their learning. There was a clear framework for their relationship, and the novice teachers were aware that the mentors were being released from teaching hours so that they could provide support through mentoring. This established the mentoring as something to which the novice teachers were entitled, rather than a favour the experienced teacher was doing for them.

In summary, while there was a well-established formal mentoring program available, only two of the nine novice teachers in this study accessed this formal mentoring. In addition to the existence of the organisation-wide mentoring program, two important material-economic arrangements that enabled teacher access to formal induction mentoring were the provision of release hours from teaching for the mentors and the setting up of the relationships by each mentee's supervisor.

Informal Mentoring

For the purposes of analysis, an informal mentoring relationship, as with formal mentoring, is one where the informal mentor deliberately seeks to support the learning of the novice teacher (mentee) and regularly meets with the mentee for that purpose. Informal mentors do not have mentoring as part of their job description and they are not undertaking the mentoring as part of a formal mentoring program. While only two novice teachers accessed formal induction mentoring, informal induction mentoring was accessed by five of the teachers in the study. Three teachers were informally mentored for between 6 weeks and 6 months at a time, with one teacher informally mentored for the first year of teaching and another informally mentored for the first 18 months of teaching. In some of the sites, teachers were informally mentored by more than one experienced teacher at the same time. It is likely that cultural-discursive arrangements associated with working in an environment where supporting learning is part of a teachers' day to day role, may have influenced the willingness of experienced teachers to informally mentor novice teachers. The desire of experienced teachers for novice teachers to fit in with 'the way we do things around here' and to add to the productivity of the area may also have been influential in experienced teachers' decisions to mentor novice teachers. Other cultural-discursive arrangements supporting experienced teachers'

willingness to informally mentor novice teachers include the fact that a considerable proportion of the staff had been trained as mentors; and the ongoing references to mentoring in discussions at staff meetings and informal gatherings. Official valuing of mentoring through a staff excellence-in-mentoring award also formed part of the cultural-discursive arrangements that enabled informal mentoring.

Team teaching and co-teaching formed part of the practice architectures that increased the likelihood of informal mentoring. Team teaching is when two teachers teach together in the same classroom, while co-teaching is where two or more teachers teach the same subject to different cohorts of students in the same semester, often at the same time. In this study, in each case where team teaching was undertaken, a mentoring relationship developed between the novice teacher and the experienced teacher. The material-economic arrangement of team teaching can be seen to have enabled the development of a mentoring relationship. This also occurred in a number of cases where novice teachers were co-teaching with experienced teachers. Novice teacher observation of the experienced teacher teaching, together with mentoring practices including discussion of teaching approaches, and those associated with shared development of resources, was enabled by team teaching and, to a lesser extent, co-teaching.

An interesting social-political phenomenon that became apparent in the study was that novice teachers were less likely to value the pedagogical advice of experienced teachers if they had not recently worked in, and/or were not teaching in, the same industry area as the novice teacher. In at least two sites, the novice teachers did not pursue an informal mentoring relationship when it was tacitly offered, in both cases because the novice teacher did not value the teaching advice of the experienced teacher. In one of these cases, the novice teacher justified not accepting this tacit offer of informal mentoring by arguing that while the experienced teacher had previously worked in the occupation that they were teaching about, she had not worked in the specific section of the industry that the novice teacher worked in and was teaching about, and therefore could not understand what was required to support students to learn how to prepare to work in that part of the industry. In the other case, the novice teacher felt that the industry knowledge of the experienced teacher was outdated. Casual teachers within the first year of their teaching career, and especially those teaching only a few hours a week, were especially likely to make similar assumptions. Conversely, these same teachers were willing to take teaching advice from other relatively inexperienced teachers if they had a similar industry background and were teaching in the same specific area, particularly if they were co-teaching the same subject. Over time, this unwillingness to take advice from experienced teachers with different industry backgrounds decreased in all cases except where the teacher was employed to teach only 3 hours a week. One explanation for this is that the new teachers were dual professionals, working both in teaching and in the industry they were teaching about. They were novices in only one of these and usually very competent in the other. Such teachers can be seen to have more recent expertise in the industry that they are teaching about than the more experienced teachers. It is not surprising, then, that they foreground this expertise in relationships with other teachers.

In this study, the novice teachers who had the least access to mentoring were those employed casually. Turnover of casual teachers was high in this study, with only two of the four casually employed teachers still working in the organisation after 1 year, and only one still working in the organisation after 3 years. To my knowledge, the three casual teachers who left teaching have not returned to it, either at the organisation where the research was undertaken, or elsewhere. Because most mentoring was undertaken voluntarily, it is possible that the high turnover of casual teachers further constrained casual teacher access to mentoring as a result of experienced teachers becoming less willing to mentor an ongoing revolving door of new teachers.

In a number of sites, the people who informally mentored novice teachers were also, in effect, their direct supervisors (although, on paper, the Head of Department was the supervisor of casual teachers). In most teaching departments, an experienced teacher was given the role of coordinator of a qualification (e.g., coordinator of the Certificate III in Business). The role was usually related to student enrolment, course compliance, and associated administrative arrangements. In many cases, the coordinator was the main person with whom the novice teacher interacted. In some cases, this social-political arrangement enabled an informal mentoring relationship to develop.

While mentoring by qualification coordinators did lead to novice teacher learning, there were a number of arrangements that constrained teacher learning as a result of mentoring by coordinators. Perhaps the most prevalent of these were the material-economic arrangements related to the coordinator's workload and consequent availability for mentoring. One of the novice teachers noted:

> …the coordinators have a lot of responsibility put on them, I feel. And I think because those coordinators are so busy, they have a lot of responsibilities with [various tasks], they're just so snowed under. I just don't think that he's got much time to assist me.

The new teacher was aware that mentoring was additional to the coordinator's workload, and that time taken for mentoring reduced time available to complete the other work that the mentor needed to do, or increased her time at work. From a social-political perspective, this impacted on the willingness of the novice teacher to seek more interaction with the coordinator, and thus restricted their access to support with their learning. For those casual novice teachers working less than 6 hours a week, a reluctance to seek advice from the qualification coordinator often resulted in the teachers not being clear about what was required of them, not seeking support to clarify expectations, and making mistakes. The following comment from a casual novice teacher was not unusual:

> I didn't want to bother … feel like I was bothering her over a single thing. Not that she ever made me feel like I was a nuisance or annoying her, cause she's not like that, she's really lovely, but I just thought, felt that I shouldn't have to just rely on her, like contact her every time I wasn't sure about something.

In this instance, the lack of social-political arrangements such as clear guidelines and negotiated expectations characteristic of the formal mentoring program

constrained the casual teacher's access to support and advice from an experienced teacher, and constrained her learning.

The heavy workload of experienced teachers and coordinators (who were also experienced teachers with a heavy teaching workload) impacted on their availability to support novice teachers. This, together with lack of recognition of mentoring as a component of coordinators' workloads, was one of the practice architectures that constrained the availability of informal mentoring for novice teachers. The following comment from another casual teacher was indicative of the experiences of many of the teachers:

> This is also where I probably could do with a bit of guidance or be grateful for some learning. But it's just everyone's struggling for time at the moment.

Hankey (2004) found similar issues in her study of the mentoring of trainee Further Education teachers in England.

In summary, five of the nine teachers in this study were involved in an informal mentoring relationship. Practice architectures that enabled novice teacher access to informal mentoring included some of those that supported access to formal mentoring; for instance, mentoring related discussions at staff meetings, training for mentors, and arrangements where mentoring was valued by colleagues and managers. Working closely with coordinators and team teaching or co-teaching with experienced teachers were other practice architectures that supported the development of relationships that led to informal mentoring. Constraints to accessing informal mentoring included being casually employed, which led to reduced opportunities to develop relationships with experienced teachers, and the heavy workloads of experienced teachers. I now turn to a discussion of mentoring within an ecology of practices that support learning. In doing so, I consider the practice architectures that enabled or constrained the development of mentoring as part of a trellis of inter-related PSLs.

Ecologies of Practices and Developing a Trellis of Practices that Support Learning

The theory of ecologies of practices posits that practices, like biological systems, can form inter-related webs, and that one practice can form the practice architectures for another practice (Kemmis et al. 2014b). The theory addresses the ways in which one practice, such as teaching, is influenced by other practices operating at the site, such as learning and communicating (Kemmis et al. 2012). A brief outline of the theory of ecologies of practices can be found in Chapter 1 of this volume. (For a more extended treatment, see Kemmis et al. 2014b). In this chapter, I use the theory of ecologies of practices in a modified way. Rather than include all inter-related practices, I focus just on different kinds of practices that support learning and shine a light on mentoring as part of an ecology of practices that support learning. I also introduce the concept of a *trellis* of practices that support learning.

Some of the PSLs undertaken by the teachers in this study can be seen to form part of an ecology of practices, where one PSL provides the practice architectures that further enabled the success of another PSL. While being mentored was supportive of teacher learning in this study, it was when mentoring formed part of an ecology of practices that support learning that it was most powerful. It became apparent that the interaction of PSLs in some of the sites formed a trellis of inter-related PSLs. A *trellis* is made up of interconnected components that help support growth in a particular direction. For the purposes of illustration, I now consider the PSLs that were available for four of the novice teachers where mentoring formed a component of those PSLs: Trevor, Sarah, Sam, and Ewan. Trevor and Sarah were the two teachers who had been provided with an induction mentor through the formal mentoring program. Sam and Ewan were two of the five teachers involved in an informal mentoring relationship. I focus specifically on the relationship between mentoring and other PSLs for these four teachers and consider the practice architectures that enabled and constrained these inter-relationships.

Shortly before Trevor was employed, a single teaching department had been divided to create two new departments. These changes impacted on the practice architectures that prefigured the PSLs available for Trevor. For clarity, I refer to Trevor's department as Department A and the other as Department B. In the restructure, many of the physical resources were moved to another campus with Department B. In Trevor's department, resources were relatively limited, and this was an important material-economic factor that impacted on the PSLs that were possible. Also, most of the experienced teachers, administrative staff, technical support staff, and the previous Head of Department moved to the other campus. Department A was left without a Head of Department (HOD) for the 2 years of the study and the Head of Faculty (the Head of Faculty is usually responsible for three to six teaching departments) became the nominal HOD. Also, most remaining permanently-employed teachers in Trevor's teaching area resigned or retired. As a result of these changes, experienced teachers were not available to provide support, to team teach with, or to share updated resources. The lack of administrative and technical support staff meant these possible sources of support and advice were also not readily available. The lack of a HOD resulted in arrangements where there was no-one to argue for resources in the meetings that were able to be attended by Heads of Department only. This hierarchical structure, which resulted in no-one from Department A attending these meetings, constrained access to resources, and consequently access to PSLs such as team teaching.

Trevor's supervisor, the Head of Faculty, arranged for a mentor for Trevor as part of the formal mentoring program. Trevor's mentor was an experienced and highly regarded teacher who had successfully mentored many other teachers. Because the mentor was in another teaching department and worked in another area of the campus, however, interactions between them were confined to regular, scheduled discussions, in which the mentor sometimes gave Trevor advice about others who could assist him in particular areas. Trevor engaged in a range of practices for the purposes of learning to teach and to undertake the teaching role, including reading and observing other teachers teaching. However, there was little or no connection
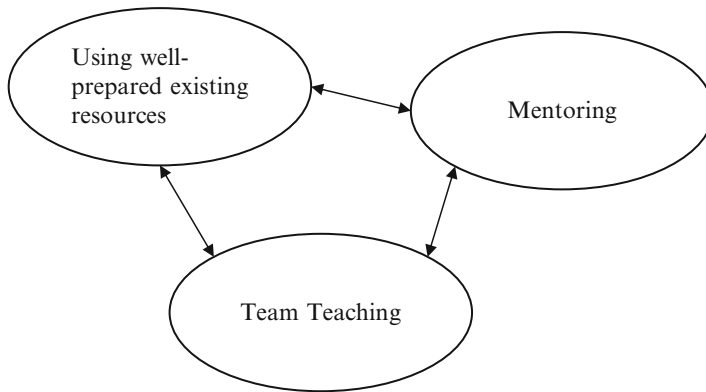
Fig. 6.1 Inter-related practices that support learning: Sarah

between these PSLs and the mentoring that he was involved with. For Trevor, mentoring was a standalone PSL which seemed to him to be unrelated to the other PSLs in which he engaged. Relative to others in this study, Trevor's learning was stressful and involved making mistakes, some of which added considerably to his workload. Trevor worked long hours just to manage, reporting that he regularly worked into the early hours of the morning to be prepared for teaching the next day.

Sarah's teaching department had a tradition of providing novice teachers with a mentor as part of the formal mentoring program. For Sarah, team teaching with her mentor, together with using well-prepared teaching and assessment resources that were made available by her mentor, provided support for her learning of the specific practices she undertook. This is represented in Fig. 6.1. The arrows in this figure represent the interactions between mentoring, the use of well-developed resources, and team teaching. In team teaching with Sarah, her mentor shared her resources, which became an important basis of their teaching. These resources further enhanced Sarah's teaching, and were also a factor in the ongoing mentoring and team teaching arrangements. Sarah undertook a range of other PSLs, such as studying for two different qualifications, and reading, but these were not clearly connected with the three PSLs that I have highlighted. While Sarah valued her mentor and felt supported by her, in Sarah's case, mentoring was part of a relatively unpopulated ecology of inter-related practices that supported her learning.

Some of the practice architectures of the teaching department where Sarah was employed served to constrain her learning. Firstly, Sarah was employed on a casual basis. This gave her limited access to a range of material-economic arrangements such as staff emails and other sources of information. Most importantly, this department had a separate staffroom for casual teachers which was located in another building across the campus from the offices of the experienced teachers. Sarah did not know the experienced teachers in the department, and when her mentor was away, she effectively had little access to support or advice. The network of PSLs inter-related with mentoring was thus limited. The following year, when Sarah was

teaching in another department, she felt that she was still very new as a teacher. Relative to the experiences of the novice teachers discussed next, the PSLs available for Sarah provided only limited support for her learning.

In the site where Sam was employed as a teacher on an ongoing contract, the practice architectures largely served to support his learning, and many of the PSLs he engaged in were inter-related. The Head of Department was experienced, and was able to access resources to enable team teaching and some teacher release for resource development. For Sam, team teaching was undertaken with the qualification coordinator. This coordinator also became his informal mentor. In the staff room, Sam was placed in a work environment where he and his mentor were co-located with desks beside each other. This is illustrated in Fig. 6.2 below. The two small circles represent the chairs of Sam and his mentor. The large oval represents a table that was used by Sam and his mentor, often working together. Other teachers collaborating with Sam and his mentor also used the table occasionally to develop resources, or for meetings. This material-economic arrangement provided easy access for Sam to ad hoc advice and assistance. Sam's mentor arranged for him to co-teach some subjects with other experienced teachers, and Sam had easy access to experienced teachers in the staff room. Sam's teaching department was well-established, with little casualisation and little staff turnover. In the cultural-discursive and social-political dimensions, there was an expectation that new teachers would be supported and retained. In this department, perhaps influenced by the relatively low level of staff turnover, teacher solidarity was strong, and the additional work that experienced teachers did to support new teachers in a sense became an investment in the development of their department. Figure 6.3 shows that for Sam, mentoring was interwoven with a range of other PSLs. This combination of PSLs can be seen to have provided good support to enable Sam's learning.

Ewan's department was well-resourced in comparison with other departments in this study. They had an experienced HOD who was able to access funding for a range of resources. The material-economic arrangements associated with this higher level of resourcing included adequate administrative and technical support staff, who took some of the non-teaching workload that in other departments was undertaken by teachers. This enabled time for Ewan to focus on learning to be a
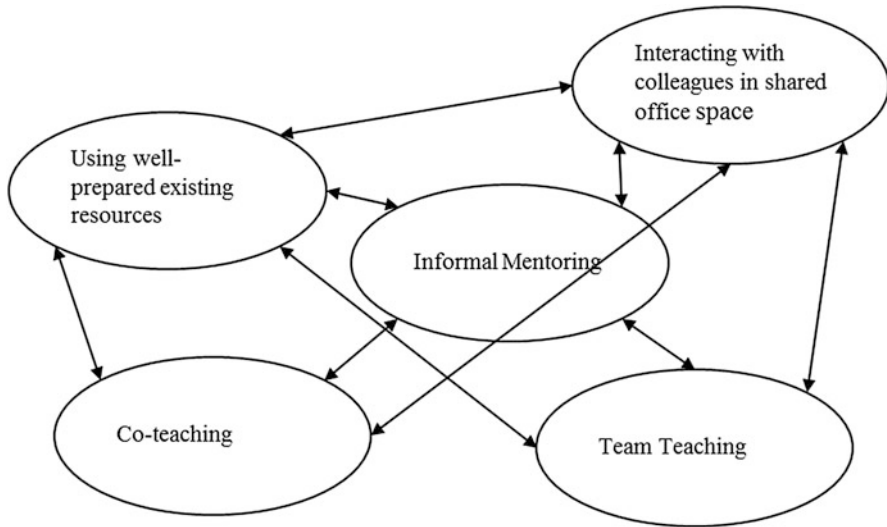
Fig. 6.2 Sam's workstation
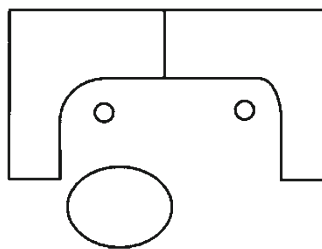
Fig. 6.3 Inter-related practices that support learning: Sam

teacher. Departmental resources also enabled the use of the higher-cost team teaching. Other material-economic arrangements that enabled Ewan's learning included co-location with other experienced teachers in an open plan staffroom which facilitated ad hoc discussions and advice.

Like Sam, Ewan was informally mentored by the qualification coordinator of the course he was teaching. Ewan's mentor provided him with well-developed lesson plans, assessment tasks, and other resources. Ewan and his mentor also team taught a number of subjects together. The mentor also arranged for Ewan to team teach with an experienced teacher the first time that he taught any subject that he was uncertain about, and to co-teach with other experienced teachers in subjects where he had more confidence. In Ewan's teaching department, more than two thirds of the experienced teachers, including Ewan's mentor and the HOD, had a Bachelor of Adult Education, or a Graduate Certificate in Adult Education. This created cultural-discursive arrangements that included a broadly-held understanding of adult learning principles, and learning matters were discussed regularly.

In the social-political dimension, Ewan's department experienced a sense of solidarity among teachers. All staff met every day around a large communal table at morning tea (smoko) where discussions included both personal and professional topics, and Ewan was able to ask questions and hear stories in a relaxed social environment. The daily smoko was evidence of, and served to further develop, this solidarity. Smoko became another part of the trellis of practices that supported Ewan's learning.

After teaching for 6 months, Ewan was involved in all of the practices of the department, initially together with his mentor, or another experienced teacher. This included the collaborative development of teaching and assessment practices and
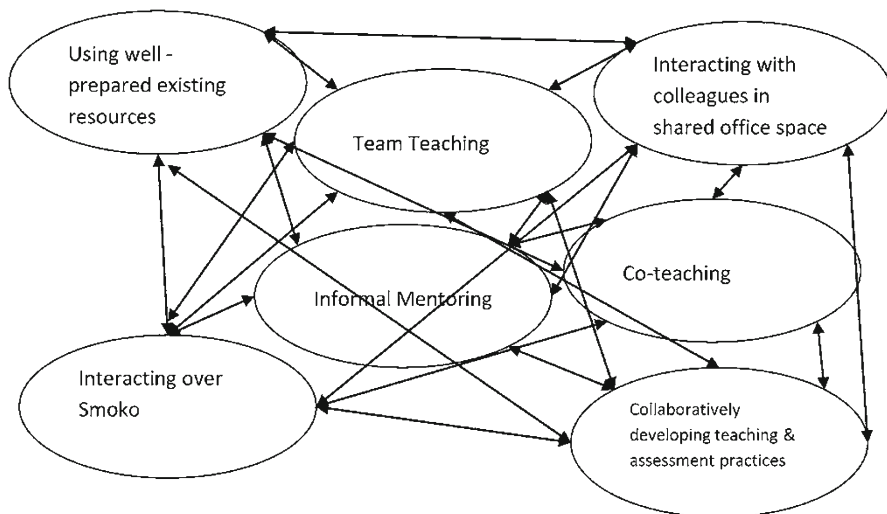
Fig. 6.4 Inter-related practices that support learning: Ewan

resources. More than any of the other teachers in this study, Ewan quickly became a confident and capable teacher. Figure 6.4 shows that for Ewan, mentoring was just one of the inter-related practices that supported his learning.

Examples of the interactions between each of these PSLs are made more explicit in Table 6.1 below. The PSLs that are outlined in Fig. 6.4 and Table 6.1 are not the only PSLs that Ewan engaged in for the purposes of learning to be a teacher. For instance, he also read relevant manuals at home; he discussed teaching with, and received advice from, his family; and he attended training sessions related to teaching. Similarly, Sarah and Sam engaged in PSLs that did not inter-relate with the PSLs outlined in Figs. 6.1 and 6.3 respectively. Importantly, when PSLs inter-related so that they formed a trellis of PSLs – such as that shown in Fig. 6.4 – they provided a powerful support for teacher learning.

Ewan's experiences, particularly considered in relation to those of Trevor and Sarah, highlight the importance of the trellis of PSLs in supporting his development as a teacher. While Trevor had a mentor who was recognised as well-trained and experienced, his learning associated with being mentored was not integrated with other PSLs. Trevor's learning was hampered as a result. Sarah's experience of mentoring was integrated with two other PSLs. However, when she went to a new teaching area in her second year of teaching, she found that it had not actually given her a solid basis for undertaking the teaching role, and in many ways she remained a novice teacher. Sam's experience of mentoring was more integrated with a trellis of PSLs and his learning was well supported. Ewan's experience of mentoring as part of a strong, supportive trellis of PSLs resulted in him learning to undertake the role of a teacher very quickly and well.

While the informal mentoring examples used in this chapter were part of a trellis of PSLs, and the formal mentoring examples were not, no part of this chapter should

Table 6.1 Examples of inter-relationships between practices that support learning

	Smoko	Resources	Team teaching	Co-teaching	Office interaction	Collaborative development of teaching and learning practices
Mentoring	Introduced to others by mentor. Some incidental mentoring happening at smoko.	Mentor shared own resources. Feedback on mentees resources.	Provided experiences that inform the mentoring.	Mentor set this up.	Some mentoring happened here. Mentor facilitated some interactions with others.	Part of the mentoring role included this. Mentor supported and sometimes facilitated this with others.
Smoko		Sometimes talked about resources at smoko. Discussions at smoko lead to sharing of resources.	Discussion of shared experiences while team teaching.	Place of interaction for co-teachers.	Taking more serious discussions from smoko into office interactions.	Solidarity developed at smoko facilitated this.
Resources			Shared resources used in same class.	Sometimes shared resources used.	Discussion of good resources, or of problems with poor resources.	Often need for development identified at smoko, in team teaching, office interactions. Facilitated by mentor.
Team teaching				Sometimes identify co-teacher as someone to team teach with.	Identify people he'd like to learn from through team teaching.	Often need for development of practices identified and facilitated through team teaching.
Co-teaching					Sharing experiences of teaching the same subject. Environment facilitates working together	All teaching the same thing, so work together for ongoing improvement of practices.
Office interaction						Office interaction facilitated collaborative development.

Note. This table outlines the inter-relationships between certain PSLs that Ewan engaged in. The inter-relationships were more extensive than outlined in this table; here I have provided the examples that were most frequent and apparent

be seen as an argument against formal mentoring programs. Rather, the key point is that mentoring, whether informal or as part of a formal mentoring program, is likely to be more effective in supporting teacher learning when it is part of a trellis of PSLs.

Volunteerism and Mentor Workload

Two factors that impacted on teacher access to mentoring were experienced teacher workload and expectations that mentoring was to be undertaken voluntarily by mentees and informal mentors without recompense. For the two cases of formal mentoring in this study, the mentors received some time release from teaching commitments for their mentoring work even though this was not the usual case for those mentoring as part of the formal mentoring program. The formal mentoring program assumed that mentoring would be undertaken by mentors and mentees on a voluntary basis, in addition to other work. For the informal mentors in this study, mentoring was undertaken voluntarily and was not a recognised component of their workload. Thus, the time and effort that informal mentors devoted to mentoring was in addition to their other work. The novice teachers, the students, and the TAFE organisation benefited from this volunteerism. However, the notion that quality VET education is predicated on the goodwill and voluntary work of experienced teachers is a concerning one.

The informal mentoring of novice teachers undertaken by the experienced teachers in this study was in addition to an already heavy workload. Harris et al. (2005) raised this issue of the heavy workload of experienced teachers impacting on the learning of new teachers more than a decade ago when they noted that there was

> extra pressure on existing staff to assist, train and mentor new staff … Experienced staff are obliged to spend considerable time explaining new delivery systems and accountability requirements. Additional tasks such as these create significant amounts of 'incidental' work for the shrinking core of permanent staff. (p. 66)

Since the publication of this work by Harris et al. (2005), the level of casualisation has risen rather than declined (Productivity Commission 2011). The pressure on the decreased number of remaining experienced staff is likely to have increased during that time. This is likely to have an impact on the willingness of experienced teachers to mentor novice teachers, as well as their capacity to do so within a normal work week.

The novice teachers in the study on which this chapter is based were aware of the heavy workload of their experienced colleagues, and as a result, some novice teachers did not seek support from mentors, or potential mentors, when they would have benefited from doing so. For some new teachers the tacit or overt offer of mentoring was not available at all as a result of the heavy workload of the experienced teachers. As one of the teachers noted, "I just don't think he's got much time to assist me" and another noted "everyone's struggling for time at the moment".

In the two cases in which novice teachers were supported in their learning by a strong trellis of PSLs, mentoring was a key component of the trellis. In both these cases, the teaching departments had relatively low levels of casualisation and low staff turnover. Volunteering to support the learning of new teachers becomes more sustainable in such circumstances. However, we know that in most VET organisations in Australia today, high levels of casualisation are the norm (Nechvoglod et al. 2010). It is not sustainable, however, for organisations to expect experienced teachers to voluntarily mentor novice teachers on a continuing basis. Further research into the relationship between levels of teacher casualisation and novice teacher access to mentoring, as well as the relationship between casualisation and the creation of a trellis of inter-related PSLs, would be valuable.

Conclusion

The theory of practice architectures has served as a valuable conceptual and analytical resource that enabled the exploration of the mentoring of novice VET teachers. In this exploration it has become apparent that even within an organisation with an established mentoring program, providing access to mentoring for novice VET teachers is complex. This chapter has shown that access to mentoring does not just happen, but that particular cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements at each site serve to enable or constrain this access for novice teachers.

The chapter briefly addressed two of the arrangements that impact on teacher mentoring: heavy workloads of experienced teachers, and expectations of volunteerism in teacher mentoring. Significantly, the only formal induction mentoring that was available to the novice teachers in this study occurred where experienced teachers were given time release to mentor others. Further, this was made available in sites where access to other practices that support learning was limited for these novice teachers. Practice architectures that constrained the availability of mentoring for novice teachers included an implicit expectation of volunteerism by the TAFE organisation.

Most notably, the chapter has presented the concept of a *trellis* of practices that support learning. It has done this using the theory of ecologies of practices in a modified way to focus on the inter-relationships between practices that support learning in four of the case sites where novice teachers were learning to become teachers. In doing so, it has identified the relationships between mentoring and other PSLs in some of the sites. Further, on the evidence of the more or less rapid development of these novice teachers as teachers, it has argued that richer inter-relationships between mentoring and other PSLs appear to have an impact on teacher learning. In two of these sites, teachers were well supported in their learning because the mentoring they experienced was part of a trellis of inter-related PSLs. These teachers seemed to learn to undertake the teaching role more quickly and effectively than the other two, despite mentoring being made available to all four teachers. The chapter

has outlined the components of a strong trellis of PSLs in these two sites, and identified the lack of development of such a trellis in other sites. Importantly, it has highlighted the value of mentoring forming part of a trellis of inter-related PSLs rather than as a standalone PSL.

If VET teachers are to meet the ongoing and increasing needs of learners, governments, business, and the community, they will need to be well supported in their learning. Ad hoc approaches to VET teacher learning in the workplace are no longer enough. A transformation of how VET teachers are supported in learning to become teachers needs to take place. Mentoring, as part of a trellis of practices that support learning, is likely to be a valuable resource in enabling that transformation.

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