Exploring a framework for the mentoring of early career teachers in Catholic schools in Western Australia

John Topliss

The University of Notre Dame, Australia , ORCID 0000-0002-8916-9405

john.topliss@nd.edu.au

Abstract

The basis for the paper 'Exploring a Framework for the Mentoring of Early Career Teachers in Catholic Schools in Western Australia' stems from the work undertaken in the author's recently published PhD study (Topliss 2017) and on personal experiences of teaching philosophy to students as a classroom teacher, gifted and talented coordinator and School leader for over 28 years. The mixed methods study identified and explored the mentoring experiences in the transition from graduate to Early Career Teacher (ECT) in selected Catholic primary and secondary schools in Western Australia. The research addressed a significant deficit, as presently the lack of a system-wide framework for the mentoring of ECTs, the cessation of the current ECT program and the limited training of mentors, has resulted in less than ideal mentoring experiences for ECTs. A chief finding was that the guarantee of a mentor does not necessarily alleviate every problem faced by an ECT. However, the attributes of a mentor may significantly assist or hinder the aspirations of an ECT. Encouragingly, the majority of principals recognised the importance of mentoring by offering support for the instigation of a system-wide mentoring framework.

On the basis of these findings, principles upon which a new mentoring framework might be developed are proposed. The suggested system frame-work for Western Australian Catholic Education, titled 'Borromeo's Mentoring Framework', may benefit system-leaders, principals, mentors and ECTs through the implementation of programs at a school based level, that enhance critical thinking skills i.e. Philosophy for Children (P4C) and Circle of Inquiry (CoI).

Key words

Catholic education, early career teachers, leadership, mentoring, philosophy

Introduction

The Chair of Australia's Teaching Body, The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), Professor John Hattie (2015) stated: 'We must stop allowing teachers to work alone, behind closed doors and in isolation in the staffrooms and instead shift to a professional ethic that emphasizes collaboration' (p. 23). Furthermore, a 2017 AITSL report into initial teacher education indicated 22% of Beginning Teachers would leave the teaching profession within ten years. Of these, some 15% indicated they would leave within one to five years and another 22% of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) were unsure of their future teaching career (AITSL 2017, p. 102). The release in early 2018 of the Australian Federal Government's report: *Through Growth to Achievement: The Report of The Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, may have provided the much needed looking-glass to redress the concerning rapid incline of ECTs in Australia, and similarly around the world, who appear to be leaving the profession. A key aspect of the Report has been the recommendation of a structured career pathway for ECTs, through the support of a trained mentor.

A mirror, a looking-glass, a window or a microscope are often terms used to conjure the metaphor for looking inside, or reflecting on something more closely. Mentoring is one mirror that leaders may so desperately require to provide feedback to ECTs when improving student performance and may assist in sustaining their future career. ECTs may often be intimidated by the responsibility of teaching a class, and a wise mentor may be the person needed to guide them through such an emotional conundrum. For the purpose of maintaining conceptual clarity in this paper the nomenclature Early Career Teacher (ECT), Beginning Teacher, novice and mentee are used interchangeably throughout the paper to refer to those who are in their first three years of teaching.

The paper will explore how the establishment of a System Mentoring Framework may assist mentors to provide feedback to ECTs and the possibility of how P4C and CoI training for mentors may become an integral feature of future mentor training as part of a System Mentoring Framework in Catholic Schools in Western Australia. The topic will be explored under the following headings:

- The origins of mentoring in contemporary Catholic Education in Western Australia

- International and local context

- The current state of mentoring in Catholic Schools in Western Australia

- The Mentoring of Beginning Teachers Study

- Methodology: The Mentoring of Beginning Teachers Study

- Findings

- A proposed mentoring framework (The BMF)

- The potential for training mentors in P4C and circle of inquiry as part of a newly proposed BMF Mentor-training program

- Conclusion

The origins of mentoring in contemporary Catholic Education in Western Australia

Throughout the history of Christianity, mentoring has been a concept evident through the missionary role of educators in the Catholic Church. Mentoring has been demonstrated in sacred Scripture through the life of Jesus and his relationship with the Apostles, in the everyday lives of the saints, and in the formation of religious orders. English (1999), described Jesus' model of ministry as one of collaboration and support of group cohesion, stating,

> Just as Jesus called the twelve and began to send them out two by two (Mk 6:7), so too ought Catholic school teachers be sent out in twos … Those who do not realize and assume their responsibility to be available to and mentor new teachers should be reminded of Jesus' example and of the positive rewards of being a mentor. (p. 401)

The missionary role of Catholic Education in Western Australia was established with the arrival of Bishop Brady and The Irish Sisters of Mercy in 1846 (available from http://www.perthcatholic.org.au/Our_Archdiocese-History.htm). For many years, this role of mentoring beginning teachers in Catholic schools fell to the Religious Orders, who were given the responsibility to train and informally mentor new teachers. Up until the late 1970s and early 1980s, many teaching and leadership positions in Catholic schools in Western Australia were filled by priests and Religious Orders of Sisters and Brothers (Treston 2008). Whereas in the past, parents relied on Religious Orders and a few lay teachers to teach all learning areas including Religious

Education, today the majority of early career teachers in Catholic schools are lay teachers. The decline of the Religious Orders over the last thirty years or so in Catholic education has created a tremendous loss of mentoring experience in key areas of leadership, teaching and faith education (Sharkey 2010; Treston 2008).

Mentoring in contemporary education can trace its modern origins back to the 1800s, when, at the height of the Industrial Revolution in England, apprenticed teachers were trained on the job to follow the teaching methods of a more senior and experienced teacher (Boreen, Johnson, Niday & Potts 2009). This apprenticeship is what would eventually be known as mentoring. Mentoring is defined as a relationship between a more experienced employee, commonly referred to as the mentor, and an inexperienced new employee, called the mentee or protégé. The role of the mentor has been described as one involving counseling, coaching, educating, inspiring, enriching, leading and advising the less experienced person (Boreen, Johnson, Niday & Potts 2009; Fulton 1990; Furlong & Maynard 1995; Nakamura, Shernoff & Hooker 2009).

Passmore, Peterson and Freire (2012) further stated, 'We would share the view that Coaching and Mentoring share many qualities' (p. 6). Australia's official teaching oversight body, The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) agrees, defining mentoring as having a direct relationship with coaching, they stated:

> The term 'coaching' is used in a wide variety of contexts to describe an array of relationships. Consequently, there is no universal practice when it comes to coaching. Coaching relationships can and often do cross over with mentoring, teaching by instruction and counseling. (AITSL 2013, p. 4)

For the purposes of this paper, the definition of mentoring and coaching encompasses the AITSL definition and the one provided by Passmore, Peterson and Freire (2012).

Present-day teacher education involves attending university programs where an internship or mentor model is adopted which links classroom practice with latest educational theory (Boreen, Johnson, Niday & Potts, 2009). Furlong and Maynard (1995, as cited in Boreen et al. 2009) suggested a positive change in the way mentoring of Beginning Teachers is conceptualised. They stated, '… a Beginning Teacher is encouraged to be an active participant, inquirer and critical thinker. The mentor's role has also changed from advice-giver and problem-solver to questioner, listener and model for reflective thinker' (p. 9). Similarly, Bouffard (2013) noted a conceptual change in current mentoring practices from one where induction involved a simple

orientation process for Beginning Teachers to one where mentors are trained to assist Beginning Teachers to be more effective from the outset. She stated:

> The ultimate goal is to make new teachers more effective with students more quickly. And that goal say experts, requires an approach that is more targeted to instruction than past efforts, using rigourously selected, trained mentors who observe new teachers in their classrooms, provide instructional guidance and model effective practice. (p. 1)

Currently there is clear indication in the literature (Boreen, Johnson, Niday & Potts 2009; Bouffard 2013; Ingersoll & Smith 2003; Riley 2010) of the conceptual change that has occurred in the mentoring of ECTs. Such an observation was elaborated in the Finnish research of Heikkinen, Jokinen and Tynjala (2012) who observed how mentoring had undergone several changes from the apprentice-trainer model to one which is presently seen as '… being associated with collaboration, collegiality, and interaction' (p. 13). Their definition of mentoring was expanded to include lifelong learning where the applications of mentoring do not only support new teachers' induction periods but also the professional dialogue between teachers of different ages, in which both the novices and the experienced teachers learn something new. Teaching can therefore be seen to encompass all developmental stages from Pre-Service to Beginning Teacher to that of a more experienced teacher (AITSL 2012; Dinham 2008). In describing teaching as an ever-learning process, Ambrose, Bridges, De Pietro, Lovett and Norman (2010) also stated, 'Thinking of teaching as a progressive refinement raises the notion of development, which happens in the context of a given climate' (p. 224). They then suggested that apart from students, mentors also need to engage with intellectual development. Such engagement might take the form of refining personal competence, integrity, educational purpose and dealing with emotions. The thrust of the argument proffered by Ambrose et al. is that the mentor-mentee relationship is best developed in an environment that is mutually beneficial in terms of professional development.

Mentoring involves both cognitive and emotional processes. From a cognitive perspective, mentees are encouraged to be active learners, be more aware of the learning needs of their children and be able to reflect with their mentor about how they can improve their teaching practices (Boreen, Johnson, Niday & Potts 2009). A benefit of conceptualising mentoring from the cognitive perspective is the sharing of good work practices that not only benefit the mentee and mentor, but also the organisation and the wider profession (Nakamura, Shernoff & Hooker 2009).

Emotional processes, on the other hand, are required to enhance the mentor-mentee relationship in which the cognitive activity is being undertaken. There has been a growth in research that recognises the increasing role that emotional development plays, especially in the key formative stages of a Beginning Teacher's career (McNally & Blake 2008; Watt & Richardson 2011). McNally and Blake realised that, in addition to the cognitive processes, the emotional processes of teaching are important, especially for Beginning Teachers in their first months of teaching.

The possession of emotional processes is necessary for reflecting on teaching practice. Although cognitive processes are significant, they appear to be more relevant to a Beginning Teacher later in their first and second years of teaching rather than too early in the process. Moir, Barlin, Gless and Miles (2010) devised a model that demonstrated how Beginning Teachers go through a range of attitudes in their first year in the classroom. The model demonstrated how Beginning Teachers' attitudes vary from anticipation, to survival, to rejuvenation to reflection and back to anticipation.

The recognition of the key emotional and cognitive processes in attitudinal development is seen as being necessary in establishing an effective mentoring framework for Catholic Education Schools in Western Australia.

International and local context

Over the last 10 years, there has been a slight decline in the performance of Australia's education system in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 'Program for International Student Assessment' (PISA) and 'Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study' (TIMMS) testing results for Reading, Mathematics and Science (Santiago, Donaldson, Herman & Shewbridge 2011). The direct correlation that might be drawn between the development of mentoring programs for teachers and the success of educational results from leading OECD countries like Finland, China and Singapore, was explored by Jensen, Hunter, Sonnemann and Burns (2012). Their Grattan Institute Report examined the success of three Asian countries with high academic results from the OECD PISA testing. The report found that the success of these high performing countries was significantly due to the establishment of effective teacher mentoring practices (Jensen, Hunter, Sonnemann & Burns 2012).

The United Kingdom House of Commons' *Children, School and Families report on Training of Teachers* was released in February 2010. The report highlighted the importance of mentoring in the development of Beginning Teachers. One of the key recommendations of this report was also visible in the development of the current AITSL professional standards in Australia.

This UK report declared that, 'Mentoring is seen as one of the core professional standards for teachers. Despite this, mentoring of trainees is still not seen as a central requirement of all teachers, as it is, for example, for the medical profession' (p. 35). The 2013 UK Department for Education Report, *Induction for newly qualified teachers*, further reported that all Early Career Teachers (or termed Newly Qualified Teachers) would benefit from an induction process of at least one year, that included mentoring support (p. 16).

The importance of system-based support and a mentoring framework has, correspondingly, been established in the United States. In their research report titled *The cost of teacher turnover in five school districts: A pilot study*, Barnes, Crowe and Schaefer (2007) identified the financial cost of losing a new teacher. The study found that, 'The total cost of turnover in the Chicago Public Schools is estimated to be over $86 million per year. It is clear that thousands of dollars walk out the door each time a teacher leaves' (Barnes, Crowe & Schaefer 2007, p. 5).

Significant government and independent research over the last twenty years has also been conducted in Australia. In particular, the two reports, *An Ethic of Care* (Department of Education Tasmania 2002) and *Top of the class: Report on the inquiry into teacher education* (Australian Parliament 2007) highlighted the importance of mentoring Beginning Teachers for the future of the teaching profession in Australia. In 2008, Australian State and Federal education ministers signed *The Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA 2008). This action initiated important legislation across Australia, which recognised the establishment of two structures vital to the future of Australian education. These were:

1. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). The establishment of this Authority, created a common ground for education systems across Australia to begin work on a National Curriculum (Phase 1); and

2. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), which in 2013 pursued the establishment of teaching and principal standards across Australia.

These standards make explicit the content of what constitutes high quality teaching from a graduate to the more experienced lead teacher level.

With the creation of ACARA in 2008 and AITSL at the end of 2010, the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT) (Masters 2012) was created for all school systems across Australia to assist school leaders with addressing the area of school improvement. The NSIT Tool identified mentoring as one of the strategies necessary to improve teaching standards. Masters (2012) stated that, in the service of mentoring, 'Teachers visit each other's classrooms and welcome opportunities to have principals and other school leaders observe and discuss their work with them' (domain 5, p. 11).

The relevance of the NSIT to the study for mentoring Beginning Teachers in Catholic Education in Western Australia was clearly stated in two critical domains:

1. Building a school culture that promotes learning (domain 3, p. 6) and

2. Developing an expert teaching team (domain 5, p. 10).

The current state of mentoring in Catholic schools in Western Australia

A trial mentoring program began in 2013 with 36 Beginning Teachers and involved 20 city and 16 country teachers from schools in the Perth Diocese (which included Kalgoorlie). This program was called The Early Career Teachers Program, and included a mixture of ECE/Primary and Secondary teachers. The trial was expanded to include all Beginning Teachers in Catholic Schools in 2014. Each of the four Catholic Dioceses in Western Australia—Perth, Geraldton, Broome and Bunbury—are included in the program (Table 1).

Table 1 Diocesan participation in the 2014 Catholic Schools Program

Diocesan	**Participants**
Perth (+ Kalgoorlie)	102 (+ 8)
Geraldton	20

Broome	10
Bunbury	31
Total	171

(Source: Mrs G Wynne, CEO, personal correspondence, 31st March 2014)

Although the program ceased at the end of 2016 as a consequence of a broader program review, it was evident that mentoring provided during the program was, at least in part, intended to address attrition in the workforce. Through participation in the professional learning workshops, there were opportunities for ECTs to conduct personal reflections on their strengths and areas for growth in their teaching. The program objective was to assist graduate teachers to transition into the profession and to keep them in it (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia 2013, p. 22).

The Catholic Education Office of Western Australia's Trial Beginning Teacher Program, which began in 2013, had by the commencement of 2014 lost only two of the original 36 participants. Indeed, 'the approximate cost of $4,500 per participant invested by the Catholic Education Office and their schools has already proven a worthwhile investment for the future' (Mrs G Wynne, CEO, personal correspondence, 31st March 2014). Such data supports the argument for the development of a systemic mentoring framework with specific training for mentors, which might help stem the flow of teacher haemorrhage. There is currently an attempt by the Catholic Education System in Western Australia to reintroduce mentoring support for Beginning Teachers and to initiate discussion around the possibility of introducing a potential mentor-training program.

This section showed how Catholic education in Western Australia is currently in a state of flux regarding how mentoring is to be envisaged, but it was also noted that various attempts have been made and are currently being made to formalise how mentoring is to be approached to include all ECTs. In summary, discussion revolved around the need for mentor-related programs to be cognizant of the advantages of system-wide input; and the inverse relationship between mentoring and workforce attrition. The investigation of the methods used in the author's PhD study involving the context of mentoring in Catholic Schools in Western Australia, are now presented.

The Mentoring of Beginning Teachers Study

The author's PhD study involved collecting both Qualitative and Quantitative data during three separate phases to answer the Primary overarching research question: To what extent is early career mentoring operating effectively in Catholic school environments in Western Australia? The first phase, involved five final year, Primary Education students from the Catholic University of Western Australia (CUWA){Phase 1} during the completion of their final 'Internship'. The study also explored the initial six-month mentoring experiences and aspirations of 36 beginning primary and secondary teachers embarking on their careers in Catholic schools in Western Australia {Phase 2}. Finally, it investigated the perceptions of 50 current Catholic primary and secondary principals on the perceived benefits of implementing a mentoring framework {Phase 3}. Subsequently, a quantitative and qualitative approach was seen to be desirable for the current study, it was decided to use mixed-method methodology while at the same time referring broadly to grounded theory. Both of these approaches are discussed in what follows.

Methodology: The Mentoring of Beginning Teachers Study

For the purpose of the study, collection and interpretation of the data involved a mixed methods convergence design. Following Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), these combined methods (QUAN + QUAL) form a specialised mixed methods convergent model (Figure 1). Such a strategy involves separate collection and analysis of results from survey questionnaire (QUAN) and focus group interview data (QUAL). The data findings are then subjected to convergence for the purpose of contrast and comparison. Interpretation involved analysing the information from these findings in order to answer the Research Questions.
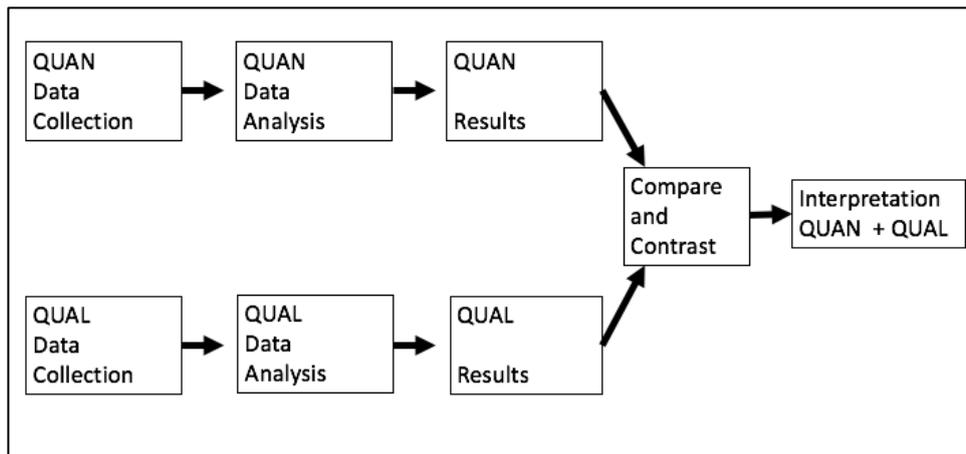
Figure 1. Mixed methods triangulation design: Convergence model (after Creswell & Plano Clark 2007, p. 64).

Theoretical framework

It was also considered that grounded theory, anchored in inductive methodology would make a valuable contribution to the study. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) proffered, 'grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action' (p. 12). It has been suggested that even if no theory emerges, grounded theory research 'will still retain its descriptive value' (Wiersma 1995, p. 13). As the study relied on the emergence of conceptual categories, it was considered that the research procedures of grounded theory might be advantageous in organising and categorising concepts as they emerged.

Figure 2 presents the theoretical framework for the research. The figure indicates how the study is integrated theoretically; it begins with the preferred epistemological perspective, moves to considering research exigencies and concludes with an interpretation of the data.
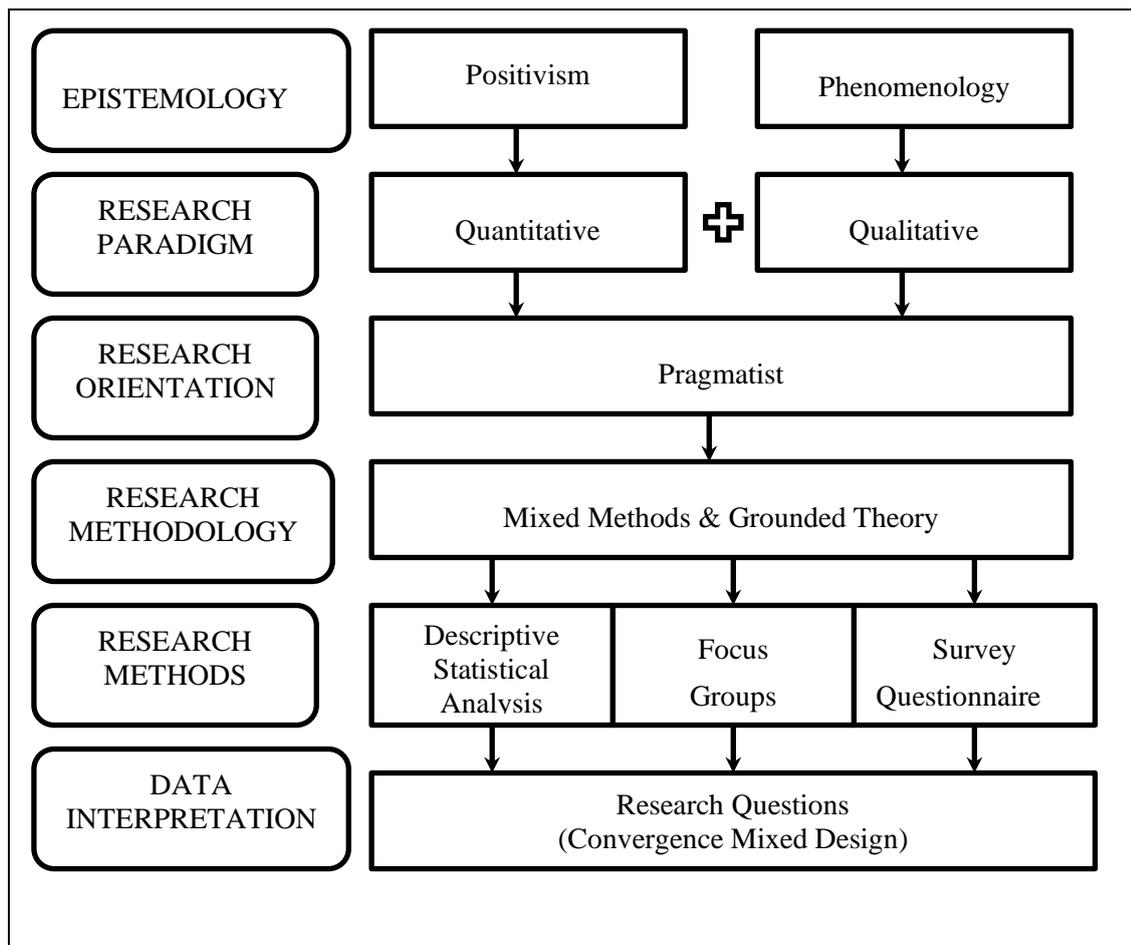
EPISTEMOLOGY	Positivism		Phenomenology
RESEARCH PARADIGM	Quantitative	✚	Qualitative
RESEARCH ORIENTATION	Pragmatist		
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	Mixed Methods & Grounded Theory		
RESEARCH METHODS	Descriptive Statistical Analysis	Focus Groups	Survey Questionnaire
DATA INTERPRETATION	Research Questions (Convergence Mixed Design)		

Figure 2. Theoretical framework for the study.

What follows is a linear description of how the study was undertaken. The various components under this methods rubric are identified and are briefly described.

Extraction of descriptive categories for planning a mentoring framework

As identified in the literature, there exists a vast corpus of research on models of mentoring and mentoring programs. The value of grounded theory procedures became immediately apparent in helping to extract from the literature relevant concepts pertaining to the creation of a mentoring framework, that could then be tested in the 'real world' of the study environment. As Corbin and Strauss (1990) stated, 'As in other qualitative approaches, the data for a grounded theory perspective can come from various sources. The data collection procedures involve interviews and observations as well as such other sources as government documents, video tapes, newspapers, letters, and books – anything that may shed light on questions under

study' (p. 5). Strauss and Corbin (1998) referred to this approach as conceptualising the phenomena, which resulted in the creation of a defined set of attributes or concept descriptors. What Corbin and Strauss termed attributes or concepts have in the present research been identified as *theme descriptors* (from here on referred to as *descriptors*). This nomenclature was chosen as it more accurately represents the data under consideration.

The first step in the research was to identify descriptors that needed to be considered before a mentoring framework could be planned. After a thorough investigation of the literature, 18 descriptors relating to the creation of a mentoring framework were extracted for the present study (Table 2). Where similar descriptors were identified across studies, these were synthesised into a representative statement. The 18 descriptors that were extracted could then be used to provide the basis for the mentoring framework.

Table 1.2 Theme descriptors related to developing a framework for effective mentoring as indentified in the literature

Identifier	Descriptor	Characteristic
1	Personal Expectations	Of own teaching and mentoring
2	Parental Expectations	As experienced by novice teachers
3	Staff Expectations	Others' expectations of novice teachers
4	Principal and Leadership Expectations	Of Beginning Teachers, system & mentors
5	University Expectations and Training	As experienced by Beginning Teachers
6	Catholic Education Expectations	System expectations of graduate teachers
7	State Expectations	Relating to teacher registration
8	National Expectations	As articulated through national standards
9	School/Parish Interactions	Regard for Catholic community
10	Mentor Characteristics and assistance	Selection and training of mentors
11	City vis-à-vis Country Issues	Geographic and demographic differences
12	Professional Development Programs	Availability and quality
13	Mentoring Programs and Experiences	experiences of a mentoring program
14	Group Aspirations re mentoring	All Beginning Teachers in a school
15	Personal Aspirations re mentoring	Graduates, novice teachers and leaders
16	Emotions during Mentoring experience	Beginning teacher emotions re mentoring
17	Leadership Mentor Training	Availability and quality
18	Mentoring Opportunities	Opportunities for peer learning

Conceptual framework and research questions

Having identified from the literature the descriptors required for the development of a mentoring framework, these now needed to be tested to determine their veracity in the Western Australian Catholic educational context. Such a task was undertaken with three different groups which represented three discrete (by cohort) yet interrelated (by orientation) phases of the study. Figure 3 then shows how these relate to the conceptual framework for the study.

Primary overarching research question:

To what extent is early career mentoring operating effectively in Catholic school environments in Western Australia?

Subsidiary questions:

1. Does participation in a mentoring program for Early Career Teachers affect their career aspirations?

2. What perceptions do CUWA (Catholic University of Western Australia) Post-Internship (Pre-Service) teachers hold regarding mentoring prior to the commencement of their teaching career?

3. How have graduate teacher perceptions of mentoring changed as a result of having been teaching for three school terms?

4. What perceptions regarding mentoring do new graduates hold at the commencement of their teaching career?

5. What perceptions do principals have of how mentoring is conceived of in a Catholic School?

Integrative Question:

On the basis of Questions 1-5, what are considered to be the key principles that underpin the development of a Pre-Service and Beginning Teacher mentoring framework?
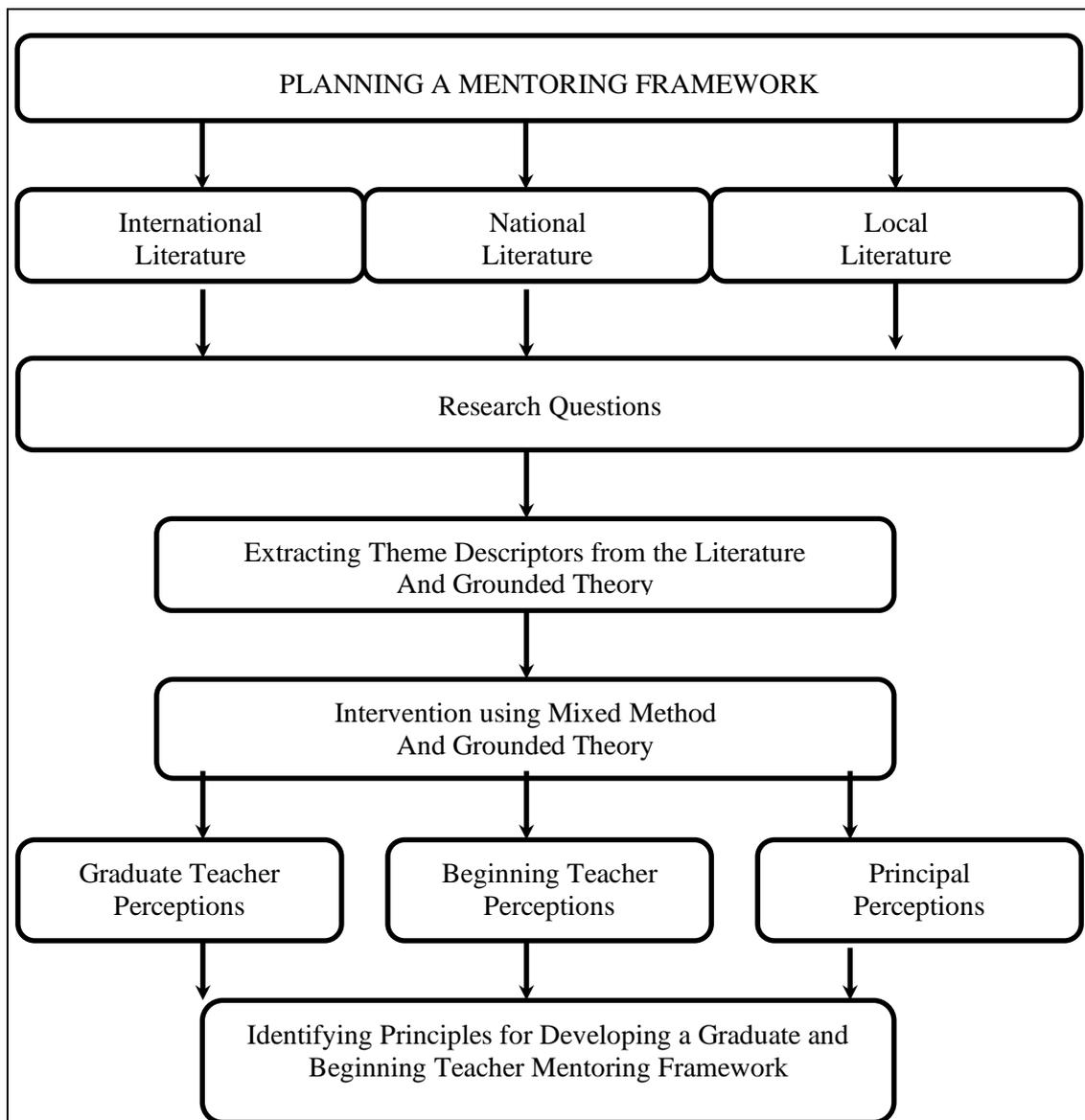
Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

Data collection

Phase One (Cohort One) consisted of obtaining survey and focus group interview data ECE/Primary/Secondary students from a Catholic University in Western Australia (CUWA) who had recently completed their 10-week Internship;

Phase Two (Cohort Two) consisted in total of 32 Catholic primary principals and one secondary principal who completed a survey and were engaged in a focus group interview.

Phase Three (Cohort Three) involved 36 beginning city and country teachers chosen as part of the trial of The Early Career Teachers Program in Catholic schools which had been initiated by the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia (CEOWA). This group also completed a survey and were engaged in a focus group interview.

Survey questionnaires and focus group interviews were selected as the instruments best suited to gain the perspectives and experiences of participants during each of the three phases of this study, and so address the research questions. Survey questionnaires were selected because they sought to seek the perceptions of the mentoring experience through utilising a range of question techniques, which included multiple choice, Likert scales and open short answer written responses. The importance of web-based surveys to collect data was identified by Rosenbaum and Lidz (2007). They recommended that Dillman, Tortora and Bowker's (1999) more traditional survey methods are a useful guide for designing web-based surveys.

The purpose of the focus group interviews was to gain a range of perceptions of the mentoring experiences of Post-Internship (Pre-Service) teachers, Beginning Teachers and principals. Focus group interviews were chosen because they present an opportunity to collect data on group interaction about the topic of mentoring by audio-recording and then transcribing the responses for later detailed analysis. Focus group interviews also require greater attention on the part of the moderator to gather greater depth from a participant compared to an individual interview (Morgan 1997). In a focus group, participants can spark off each other and so deliver deeper information that might otherwise be unavailable to the researcher. Data was collected in non-threatening and comfortable forums, with all participants appearing relaxed and keen to participate.

Data analysis procedure

A separate analysis of QUAN (survey) + QUAL (focus group) data for each phase of the study was undertaken. The mixed methods analysis involved the identification of the descriptors from the literature and plotted the current qualitative and quantitative data against these. This was achieved by using a simple tick or cross to represent whether or not the descriptor was evident. The focus groups' and surveys' ticks were then converged and an overall percentage of the achievement of that descriptor was identified. The results combined to inform mixed method analysis in order to answer the research questions.

Findings

The findings from the data focused on specific survey responses and focus group comments specifically from the Phase 2 and Phase 3 stages of a mixed methods study on Mentoring Beginning Teachers in Western Australia.

The findings of the major conclusions and principles regarding mentoring in the study are now presented. The ten conclusions and ten principles as promulgated , from the study (Figures 4 & 5) were necessary considerations for the successful implementation of a proposed Systematic Mentoring Framework, titled the Borromeo Mentoring Framework (BMF) (Figure 6.).
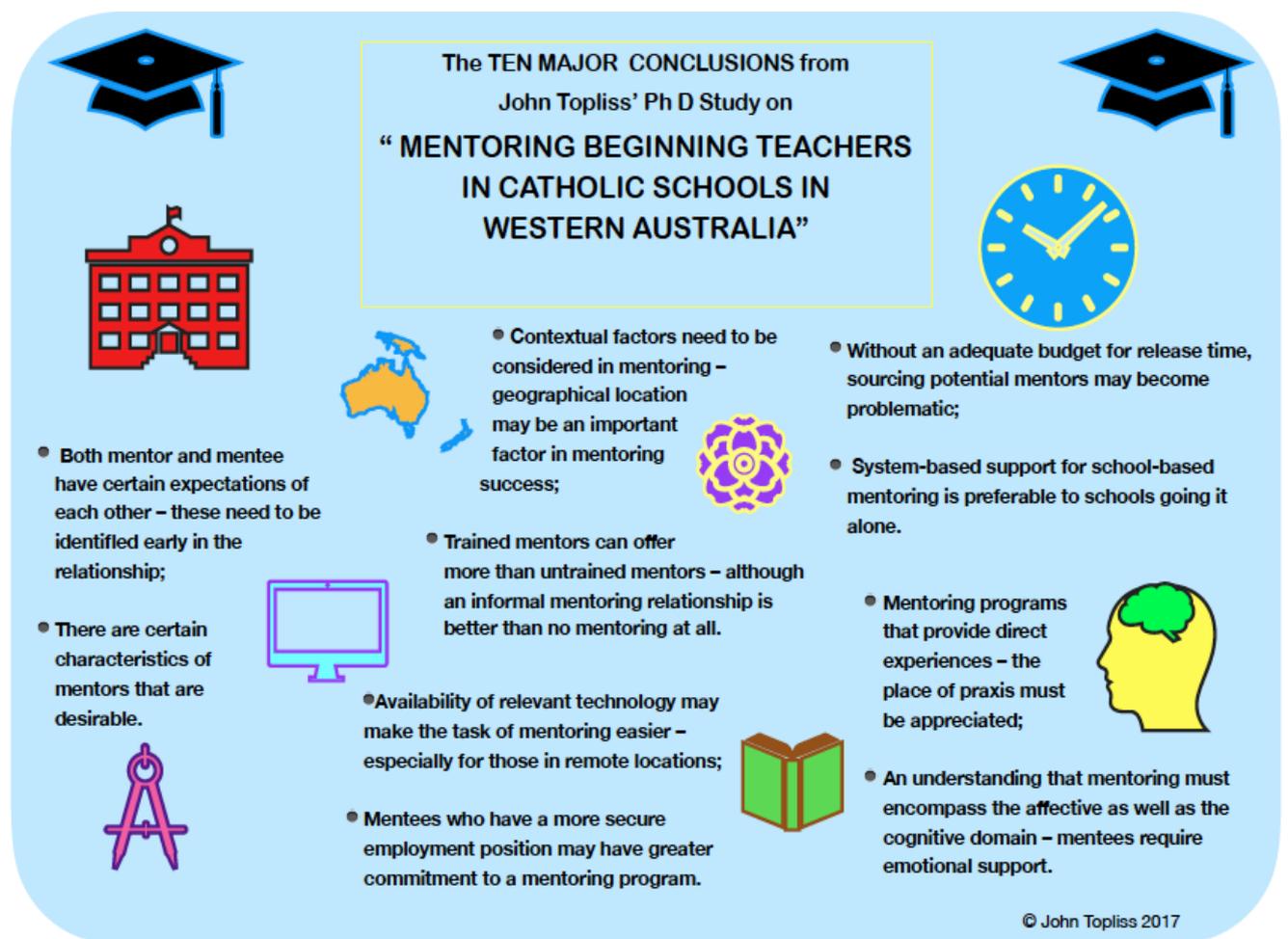
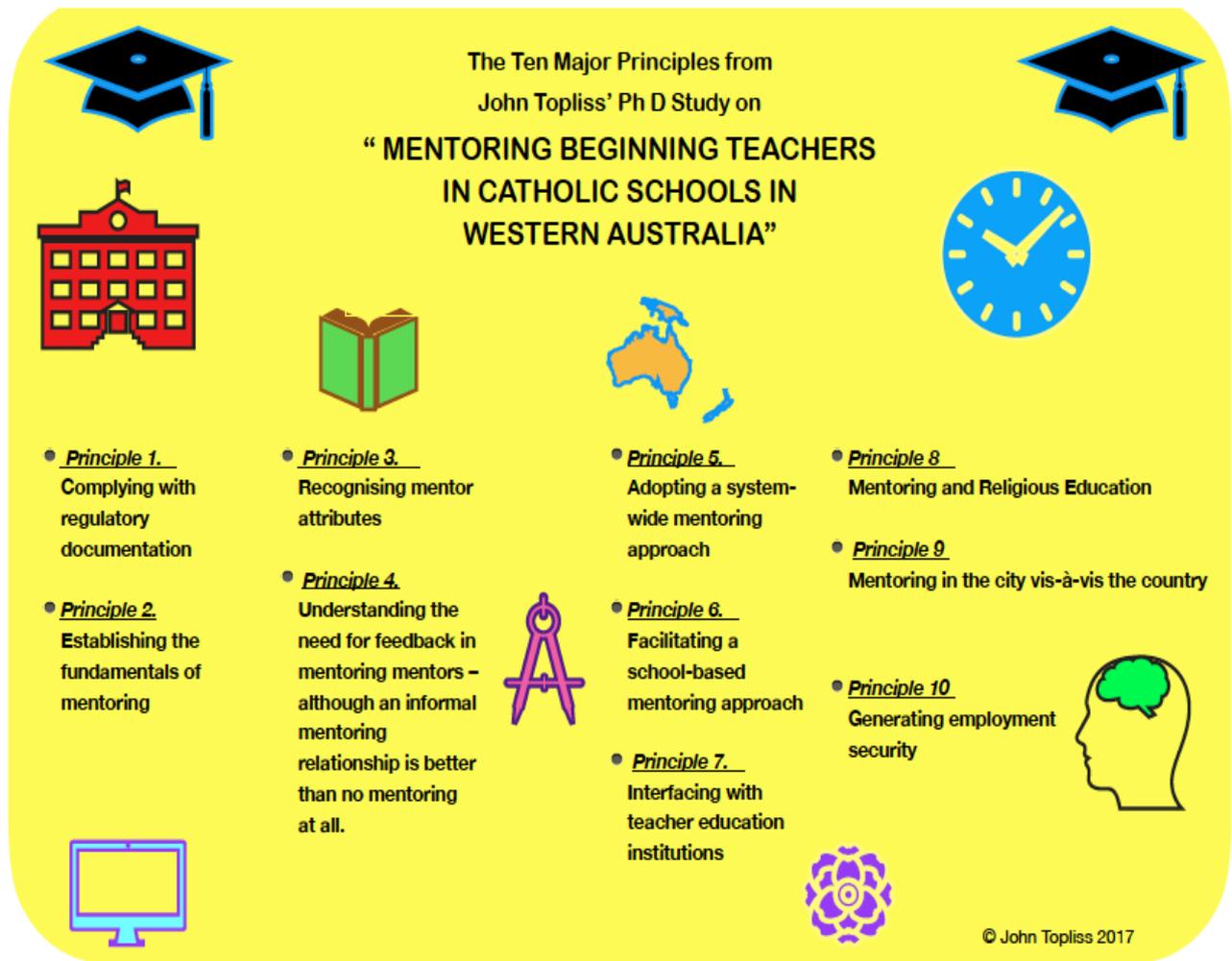**Figure 4.** The ten major conclusions from John Topliss' PhD Study.

Figure 5. The ten major principles from John Topliss' Ph D Study.

A proposed mentoring framework: The Borromeo Mentoring Framework (BMF)

The importance of mentoring ECTs as identified in the literature, together with the findings of the author's study relating to the subsidiary questions, segues well to recommending the development of a system-wide mentoring framework to be used by all Catholic schools. Buchanan, Raffaele, Glozier and Kanagaratnam (2016) suggested that the benefits of a formal mentoring framework are, '… making sure that both parties have a shared agreement about their roles in the relationship and identifying potential goals and challenges' (p. 26). The provision of such a framework would ensure that: school leadership has the necessary system-based support to implement local school-based mentoring programs; the use of terminology and understanding of roles is common; ECTs are provided with the necessary emotional support and formal feedback to progress with their achievement of the Australian

Professional Standards of Teaching; and system-wide training is provided for mentors.

On the basis of the mixed method research that has been conducted, and utilising a grounded theory approach, a framework can now be proposed which has been named from this thesis, the Borromeo Mentoring Framework (BMF). The BMF is so named to acknowledge the life of Catholic Saint, scholar and mentor, Charles Borromeo (1538-1584), who demonstrated the values of knowledge, humility, eagerness, teaching and prayer (Atwood 2012; Guissano 2015). These values assisted the Church in reforms that involved the mentoring of catechists, teachers and priests in a period of great change in the church, the Catholic Reformation of the 16th century. During this time of great renewal, St Charles Borromeo pondered:

> If teaching and preaching is your job, then study diligently and apply yourself to whatever is necessary for doing the job well. Be sure that you first preach by the way you live. If you do not, people will notice that you say one thing, but live otherwise, and your words will bring only cynical laughter and a derisive shake of the head. (Atwood 2012, p. 215)

His writings on Catholic education are still relevant for ECTs and Catholic teachers today. As such, as the implementation of the BMF is designed to equip mentors and mentees with the skills required to enhance the education of children in Catholic schools.

The BMF is considered to be appropriate for furthering dialogue about mentoring in Catholic schools as it remains cognizant of the faith imperative that underpins the Catholic education system. The findings and conclusions from the study also pinpointed that both experienced mentors and ECTs in Catholic Schools are experiencing more staff, students and parents coming from far more diverse: cultural, family and faith backgrounds than previous generations. The opinion of the author, garnered from nearly 30 years of teaching experience in the classroom, would identify programs like CoI and P4C as integral strategies that are necessary to be included in the development of any future mentor training program and would form an integral part of the BMF Framework. The BMF is pertinent to the present paper as it has the wide-ranging potential to benefit mentors, mentees and their students in multiple areas, i.e. critical thinking self-reflection; collaborative partner teaching and observation; Religious Education teaching feed-back; and creating whole staff learning opportunities. The BMF pre-empts the role of a system-wide coordinator/s responsible for framework oversight and liaison with Catholic Education System

staff, the University of Notre Dame (Fremantle), The Catholic Institute of Western Australia, school staff, principals, ECTs and mentors. The BMF is outlined in Figure 6.

Figure 6: The Borromeo Mentoring Frame-Work.

Note[1] Legend for BMF as shown in Figure

Training mentors in P4C and Circle of Inquiry as part of a proposed BMF

The rationale for teaching philosophy to children in Western Australia is to develop critical thinking skills and to aid guided inquiry. The development of critical thinking skills, as espoused by Fullan and Quinn's 6 Cs (2015), Critical Thinking; Citizenship; Collaboration; Character; Creativity and Communication, may further assist teachers adopting a CoI and P4C pedagogy in their classrooms and further encourage the creation of a trusting relationship with their children, that shapes 'critical, caring and creative thinkers' (D'Olimpio 2015, p. 50).

The teaching of philosophy in Western Australian Catholic schools is currently evident in some primary extension classes, i.e. CoI and P4C, whilst traditionally it is offered more widely to students who select the Secondary Philosophy and Ethics ATAR [Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank] course in Years 11 and 12. The Philosophy and Ethics courses offered are designed to engage and stimulate students' critical thinking through the analysis of three classical questions of the human condition: 'What is real?'; 'How do we know?' and 'How should we live?' (SCSA 2018). Such lessons are used by teachers of philosophy to explore epistemological issues with their students about knowledge, ethics and certainty in society.

One important finding from the author's recent PhD study identified that Early Career Teachers received a lack of feedback from their mentors in the teaching of Religious Education. The importance of the provision of feedback was identified as a current strength of the present 'Introductory Philosophy in Schools' (and associated certificate) workshop for experienced teachers (Splitter 2014; D'Olimpio 2015). The potential adaption of the Introductory Philosophy in Schools as a training workshop

for mentors as part of the BMF would likely better equip the mentor responsible for providing feedback to an ECT in Religious Education, through the provision of a multitude of sound pedagogical strategies used in P4C and CoI. These strategies would greatly assist ECTs in the teaching of such areas as Religious Education and Ethics. The feedback then modelled by trained mentors would additionally advantage ECTs who may within their own class of students pose important existential and philosophical questions within the Catholic tradition and as part of their Religious Education classes, for example, 'I wonder what God who created the beautiful sunset is really like?' (D'Souza 2016, p. 6).

The potential of these benefits was witnessed recently first-hand by the author who had just completed an 'Introductory Philosophy in Schools' (and associated Level 1 certificate) workshop in Western Australia. The system training was conducted between APIS (the Association for Philosophy in Schools WA) and in conjunction with Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA). at the completion of the training, the author invited his mentee, to observe a series of Religious Education (RE) lessons for his Year 6 Primary Religious Education class. The series of lessons explored Catholic Social Justice Teaching, using the CoI and P4C approach to investigate the question: What should I buy at the canteen today? The students considered the posed question in light of knowledge garnered from a previous unit on Pope Francis' 2014 Encyclical 'Laudato Si'.

The focus for these RE lessons centred on caring for God's environment. Many students suggested damage to the environment by plastic wrappers as a major consideration they faced when they bought an item from the canteen. Several other factors incorporated by the students as part of the decision-making process focused on the importance of one's parents or peers, i.e. Mum may have wanted them to donate the money to Project Compassion, or, some peers may have wanted the money to spend on their favourite sweet. The virtue of prudence was considered by many of the children as necessary to assist them in their decision- making process.

Furthermore, some children decided that prayer was an action they may incorporate to assist them in future decisions such as personal canteen choices and the potential effect of plastics on the environment. The next lesson then investigated three further questions that arose from the previous content:

1. What is good?

2. What is a good school, and

3. What is a good Catholic school?

The above examples of questioning that arose from the author's own RE lesson engaged both the children and the mentee in critical thinking and displayed the potential for utilising the P4C and CoI approach as part of a future mentor-training program. The adaption of the proposed system-level Borromeo Mentoring Framework by The Catholic Education Office of Western Australia could potentially lead to the establishment of a more robust system of mentor selection and benefit the long-term training of many mentors and their ECTs in Western Australian Catholic Schools. The proposed BMF and mentor-training program would offer prospective mentors a tool-box of pedagogically sound programs such as P4C and CoI that may be beneficial to mentees, mentors and students alike, although additional research would be warranted to investigate the success of the implementation of the BMF in mentor-training in Western Australia.

Salazar, Lowenstein and Brill (2010) further argued that such an approach would prepare Beginning Teachers with the necessary vocational and teaching dispositions, through the support of a mentor, to reflect on morality-based issues such as: what the individual as a professional ought to do (moral action); and what the individual chooses to do (ethical agency). For Beginning Teachers, reflecting on important professional moral questions could be undertaken with the help of a trained mentor. Such reflection is an important skill in Beginning Teacher development because, 'In order to learn from experience it is invariably necessary to take account of the emotional component of the experience' (Mortiboys 2013, p. 151). Concomitantly, school leaders might be assisted in further developing their own emotional competence through participation in such a mentor training program, as highlighted by Swann, Peacock Hart and Drummond (2012). These researchers identified seven key dispositions for facilitating such development:

1. Openness: not a belief that there is one right way of doing things and that outcomes are predictable;

2. Questioning: not relying on certainties and ready-made solutions;

3. Inventiveness: not compliance with imposed models and materials;

4. Persistence: not setting for easy answers and rejecting complexities;

5. Emotional stability: not a fear of failure or fear of trying new things;

6. Generosity: not deficit or negative thinking and a desire for uniformity; and

7. Empathy: not a fear or defensiveness where there is a culture of blame (pp. 87-88).

Conclusion

Pope Francis also proffered the two Gifts of the Holy Spirit of Wisdom and Knowledge, two essential precepts of a mentoring relationship, would be of equal value to members of the Catholic faith. He further stated:

> The Holy Spirit thus makes the Christian 'wise'. Not in the sense that he has an answer for everything, that he knows everything, but in the sense that he 'knows' about God, he knows how God acts, he knows when something is of God and when it is not of God; he has this wisdom which God places in our hearts. (Pope Francis 2014)

Justification for the establishment of the BMF mentoring framework in Catholic Schools in Western Australia can be found in a speech by Saint (formerly Pope) John Paul II. This speech formed part of the official opening of the Catholic Education Centre in Perth, Western Australia in 1986. Although lengthy, it is considered important to include a substantial part of the address in order to maintain contextual integrity:

> In the midst of these different currents of the modern world, Catholic education seeks to be faithful to its religious dimension. Catholic education is called upon to develop the gift of faith. It aims at bringing into the fullness of the Christian life those who have been baptized. It seeks to foster a desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, and a longing to share more completely in the life of the Most Holy Trinity. In today's world, we must help young people and adults to have a clear and consistent understanding of the faith, so that they will be able to affirm their Christian and Catholic identity. Only then will they be able to bear joyful witness to Christ in the changing times in which we live. Education must also assist the members of the Church to grow in an appreciation of their human vocation, since all are called to help make the world a better place. If people possess truly human values and sound moral principles, they will be enabled to find 'solutions which are truly human' for the problems of their

lives. Christians know that their faith helps them to contribute more effectively to the good of the society in which they live. (John Paul II, 1986)

Saint John Paul II discussed the importance of maintaining a Catholic faith dimension in education. As this faith was founded from within a strong historic tradition of Catholic Education in Western Australia, and as such development was in many ways premised on providing some form of mentoring to novices, it seemed appropriate in this paper to provide a brief summary of the early history of how this was undertaken. Such an approach also emphasises how mentoring has historic tenure in this state. The paper also recommended that an accompanying training program for mentors be based on the Borromeo Mentoring Framework (BMF). The adoption of the BMF might lead to the desirable situation that has been identified by Sunde and Ulvik (2014), who declared,

> Mentoring seems to hold the potential to transform the teaching profession, revitalise experienced teachers…it is thus not only beneficial for new teachers. Yet the influence of mentoring depends on the quality of the mentoring and on support from both the school culture and school leaders (p. 285).

It was concluded that careful mentor selection, perhaps by disposition, might obviate problems at a later date. Special mention was made of school leaders who need to be what may be 'dispositionally disposed' with regard to supporting a system mentoring framework, if it is to prove successful in implementing programs like P4C and CoI, that may assist all mentors and their mentees to engage actively as learners with their students in the classroom.

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