

Critical thinking, caring and professional agency:  
An emerging framework for productive mentoring  
Geraldine Mooney Simmie and Joanne Moles  
University of Limerick

Author Note

Geraldine Mooney Simmie, Faculty of Education & Health Sciences, University of Limerick;

Joanne Moles, Faculty of Education & Health Sciences, University of Limerick.

Email: [Geraldine.Mooney.Simmie@ul.ie](mailto:Geraldine.Mooney.Simmie@ul.ie)

## Abstract

In this paper, we report on a mentoring programme which provides an accreditation pathway to a master's level qualification. The paper serves three purposes. First, informed by selected literature on education we caution against expedient reductionist models that are based solely on novice-expert mentoring relationships with limited facility for critical inquiry. Second, we present an evolving theoretical framework for *productive mentoring* based on our critique of a preferred academic literature and interactions with mentor teachers, school principals and teacher educators. We proactively encourage an awareness of societal norms and traditions that can appear as counterculture to critical thinking. Lastly, we consider some implications for *productive mentoring* as an academic, caring and professional practice within a continuum of teacher education.

*Keywords:* expedient reductionist models, critical thinking, caring and professional agency, productive mentoring, four principles, contextually responsive.

Critical thinking, caring and professional agency:

An emerging framework for productive mentoring

In this paper we adopt three different and complementary lenses through which to consider mentoring as an academic and professional practice: the international literature, our own reflective and reflexive dialogue and observations from mentor teachers' efforts to interrogate

their own professional practices. We contend that when inquiry-driven models of mentoring, encompassing critical thinking, caring and professional agency are contextually responsive, they can be successful in providing meaningful teacher education and professional learning. We present a framework for mentoring, *productive mentoring*, that is based on four principles, uses an evidence-informed lens, and addresses a multiplicity of mentoring relationships of learning.

We caution against expedient reductionist models of mentoring that are based solely on rigid novice-expert relationships with limited facility for critical co-inquiry or sustained networks for professional knowledge generation. During the last four years we have advanced dialogue within the context of a challenging school culture and an awareness of societal norms and traditions that can run counterculture to critical thinking and professional agency. We have regularly and consistently shared, between ourselves and with our students, our own reflective and reflexive positions with regard to teaching, mentoring and education. We have observed the struggles of our motivated mentor teachers as they seek to interrogate their professional practices and the cultural constraints they face in trying to become scholarly and professional mentor teachers.

Hargreaves (2003) believes that if the education community accepts teachers working within small budgets and conforming to externally imposed standards, teachers will become “the drones and clones of policymakers’ anaemic ambitions” (p. 2). He advocates an alternative scenario in which “highly skilled teachers are able to generate creativity and ingenuity among their students” (p. 2). We concur that teachers themselves need to experience the joy of professional learning and the excitement of creativity so that they can share these with their pupils – ensuring that the life-changing potential of education is acknowledged and pursued.

Teaching is recognised as a complex activity requiring sustainable change at the school site and extended networks of support from teacher educators, researchers and policymakers (Day & Sachs, 2004). Darling Hammond and Bransford (2005) acknowledge this complexity within a framework which is “learner centred, knowledge centred, assessment centred and community centred” (p. 32). Teachers as professionals are expected to share responsibility for their learning throughout the various stages, initial, induction and in-career, of their career trajectory.

Mentoring is one significant component in making this important connection. As the need for school-based mentors in an increasingly complex classroom and school culture gains greater currency, it raises questions about what types of mentoring are required to encourage such complex and professional practices. This is the central question explored in this paper.

In the last decade in the Republic of Ireland research findings consistently indicate the enormity of the task of developing professional teachers and changing inherited practices of a school culture that appears to value compliance over innovation, subject knowledge over social and political issues and a pragmatism over a theory informed and evidence-based practice (Hogan et al., 2007; McNamara & O’Hara, 2006; Mooney Simmie, 2007). Internationally models of teacher professionalism are being implemented, ranging through a spectrum between managerial professionalism and democratic professionalism (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. 67). In an education world awash with learning outcomes, accountability and demands for immediate, externally mandated and monitored, results managerial models take precedence over democratic models that explore education as human learning and development.

The response from one university in the Republic of Ireland, the subject of this paper, has been the development of an academic pathway of accreditation for teachers willing to engage in a mentoring process that connects them in a cycle of reflection, inquiry and collaboration with

the broader education community and the comparative lens of relevant literature. Mentors follow an academic programme of study with three qualifications: *Graduate Certificate* and *Graduate Diploma* awards in the first two years progressing to a *Master's level* qualification in the third and final year.

Hargreaves' (2003) alternative position above is consistent with wider aims informing this mentoring study, which aims to facilitate mentors in becoming critically reflective and caring with a sense of professional agency. Experienced mentors in our study recognise that they are working in a non-linear way and that their daily work involves synthesis and analysis on an almost constant basis. Engagement with academic scholarship is essential within the three awards with the mentor teacher retaining the right to choose where and when they wish to step off the pathway. The mentors' study is informed by relevant education theory which encompasses the vision and mission outlined in the *Teaching Council's Strategic Plan (2008 – 2011)*. It is within this literature that we contextualise our analysis.

### **Current models of mentoring in education**

A literature review of existing models of mentoring initially helped contextualize our analysis and exploration of mentoring for teacher continuing education and professional learning. Substantive gaps were found in this literature, both internationally and in the Republic of Ireland, especially with regard to moving the mentor beyond routine pragmatic concerns toward developing a more inquiry-oriented and evidence-based practice.

### ***Mentoring in teacher education***

Research studies in mentoring span personal and professional development, pedagogical concerns and broader social and political issues, including considerations of the supervisory and often unequal power relations between mentor and mentee (Fletcher, 1998, 2000; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Tang & Choi, 2005; Sundli, 2007). Mullen (2005) argued that the literature divides between reform-minded mentoring for professionalisation of teachers and mentoring for the socialisation and preservation of existing cultural norms. Cochran-Smith and Paris (1995) summarised these as tensions between mentoring for reproduction and mentoring for reculturation:

what mentors in pre-service programmes are expected to do is help beginners implement “best practice” and adopt the language and culture of the local site as quickly as possible.

When mentoring is seen in this way, however, it serves to reproduce rather than to reconsider curriculum, pedagogy and the structural arrangements of schooling – arrangements in which inequalities based on race, culture and gender are deeply embedded. (pp. 183-184)

Frameworks for mentoring include those posited by Maynard and Furlong (1995) and Wang and Odell (2007). Maynard and Furlong (1995) identify three distinct models, each in their own way partial and inadequate: the *apprenticeship model*, the *competency model* and the *reflective practitioner* model. In the apprenticeship model the mentor acts as a role model, in the competency model the mentor acts as a systematic trainer and instructor of pre-defined competences and in the case of the reflective practitioner the mentor acts as critical friend and co-inquirer. Wang and Odell (2007) also considered the apprenticeship model and the critical constructivist model and introduced a third model, the humanistic model. This latter model focuses on the relational aspect of mentoring and the opportunities for personal, social and

emotional development. Hawkey (2006) has extensively reviewed the emotional aspects of mentoring across a range of literature.

While all models above focus on using mentoring to develop pedagogical practices Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) argue for mentoring to build teacher professional cultures:

mentoring as a way of preparing teachers to become effective change agents who are committed to making a difference in the lives of young people and are skilled at the pedagogical and partnership developments that make success with students possible.

Mentoring in this sense becomes not just a way of supporting individual teachers but also a device to help build strong professional cultures of teaching in our schools, dedicated to improving teaching, learning and caring. (p. 54)

Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) caution against authoritarian models of mentoring that may result in the *Mentor* becoming a *Tormentor* (p. 52). O'Brien and Christie (2005) in their research of beginning teachers in Scotland observed that while time, space and resources were provided that this was, of itself, not sufficient to develop mentoring as critical engagement:

In recent years, reflective practice has become one of the dominant discourses in Scottish teacher education, but on the evidence of this research at least, has not filtered into the language of supporters and probationers as they conceptualise the role of mentoring. (p. 197)

Sundli's (2007) research in Norway, where school-based mentors act as assessors of preservice teachers, found that mentoring was often based more on novice-expert and cloning models than critical co-inquiry and where "traditionality, more than reflexive modernity,

characterises the picture of mentoring, and student teachers' reflection, co-operation and creative work are more squelched than stimulated by mentors" (p. 213).

### ***Mentoring in the Republic of Ireland***

In the Republic of Ireland a number of mentoring projects have developed since the late 1990s and their results have been reported (Kiely, 2005; Killeavy & Maloney, 2010; Killeavy & Murphy, 2006; Murphy, 2005). All involve experienced teachers mentoring either newly qualified teachers (beginning teachers) or preservice teachers (student teachers). Kiely's (2005) findings show that while the model of mentoring adopted brought benefits to mentees, mostly through an apprenticeship of observation and professional support, it did not support critical thinking and inquiry (pp. 373-374). In 2002, a *National Teacher Induction Pilot Programme* (NTIPP), now part of national policy, was established for the induction of newly qualified teachers into the profession through support from experienced mentor teachers. However, while Killeavy and Murphy (2006) argue that mentors successfully supported the professional development of newly qualified teachers, the report regards the development of mentoring as largely unproblematic and focuses more on its capacity for professional support rather than critical co-inquiry. Killeavy and Maloney (2010), in a later study, observed that newly qualified teachers did not demonstrate critical inquiry capacities (p. 1075).

Murphy (2005) studied a school-university mentoring partnership at the National University of Ireland, Cork funded in five schools by the Department of Education and Skills. The project involved the introduction of a mentoring programme which was designed to assist the personal, professional and pedagogical development of teachers. The study found that while



experienced teachers were willing to discuss teaching and learning with preservice teachers they did not generally disposed toward sharing classroom observations and critical feedback.

In summary, the international literature shows that teacher professionalism is highly contested within a debate oscillating between empowering teachers to develop as learners or positioning teachers as the clones and drones of policymakers. While the literature highlights some benefits of mentoring it also shows the difficulty of establishing a model of mentoring with an inbuilt capacity for critical engagement. Studies in the Republic of Ireland consistently reveal a lacuna in the inquiry-oriented disposition of mentors.

### **An emerging theoretical framework for productive mentoring**

We argue for a theoretical framework for mentoring that takes into account mentoring as an academic, caring and professional activity situated within its own environmental context. We developed this argument, over the four year period of this study, through engagement with relevant literature, our own reflective and reflexive dialogue, consideration of the context for mentoring in the Republic of Ireland and observations from our interactions with mentor teachers, school principals and teacher educators, from primary education through to upper secondary education.

This evolving process of co-construction of knowledge, using the lens of the literature and observations from these interactions, eventually led to the development of our theoretical model of mentoring, *productive mentoring*. This conceptual framework is fully captured in Figure 1. We argue that *productive mentoring* occurs in that space where critical thinking, caring and professional agency achieve confluence together. We also argue that the work of any educator is always within the wider context of society with its social and political mores and needs to be

contextually responsive. We now indicate the relevant literature that supports our theoretical stance, we describe the contextual background for mentor teachers working in the Republic of Ireland and share some observations from mentor teachers. The inquiry eventually led to our development of four key principles underpinning *productive mentoring* for the continuing education and professional learning of teachers.

(Figure 1 HERE)

### ***Our reflective and reflexive dialogue***

Over the four year period of this study we engaged in ongoing critical dialogue about progress and process. We realised that we shared experiences of crossing boundaries between different levels of the education system, second-level education and higher level education, and between countries, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England and Norway (Moles, 2003; Mooney Simmie, 2009). This resulted in a shared understanding of education as an enlightening and emancipating force for the democratic development of each person. We have remained acutely conscious of the struggle to retain this conception of education as a human liberating force against the backdrop of a reductionist agenda sweeping the education world with its focus on outcomes and external modes of accountability. In our opinion mentoring in teacher education needs to be underpinned by an alternative lens provided by the literature taking this broader educational landscape into account.

Caring for mentor teachers in the study was the living out of an important value for both of us. We wanted to create a public space where mentor teachers could debate issues and have their voice and contributions valued. A dialogical approach with mentor teachers reflected an effort to remain consistent with shared values of mutuality and democracy. Caring and professional

agency were also consistent with shared values. Mentor teachers reported that they enjoyed and were intellectually stimulated by the philosophical arguments and debates. They often arrived onto campus, stressed and complaining of physical aches and pains. From the start we incorporated structured physical activity into the agenda to promote positive holistic awareness:

If you are going to be confident as a mentor you have to feel good about yourself. This is not only in terms of feeling that you can do what you have to do but it relates to a general holistic feeling of well-being. Things like having good posture and low levels of stress are excellent ways to ensure that your body contributes to generic positive feelings of self.

(J. Moles, Class Notes, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2007)

### *Education and pedagogy within a philosophy of care*

Parker's (1997) description of "two stories of education" in which he contrasts "positivism" with "reflective teaching" (pp. 10ff) described how professionalism is perceived differently within these positions. This dichotomy can be identified in debates about education where the role of the teacher is perceived as being either as an expert who reproduces his/her understandings in the pupils, or as a liberator who facilitates pupils in developing new and unique understandings. Bernstein (2000) described what he calls "competency models" in which the focus is on "similar to" relations. These models "emphasise difference rather than deficit" (p. 51). They "oppose stratification procedures, announce a common creativity – emancipation" (p. 86) They "operate with forms of an invisible pedagogy" (p. 86). In contrast Bernstein describes what he calls performance modes. Consistent with what occurs in Irish post-primary schools, "(P)erformance modes focus on something that the acquirer does not possess, upon an absence, and as a consequence place the emphasis upon the text to be acquired and so upon the

transmitter” (p. 86). It is worth noting that Bernstein’s use of the word “competency” is different from common usage.

This latter mode, with teacher as transmitter, is reported by the teachers on the mentoring study as the dominant pedagogical discourse in Irish post-primary schools. A recent report from the OECD *Teaching and Learning International Study* Gilleece, Shiel, Perkins and Proctor (2009) noted that “teachers in Ireland hold stronger direct transmission beliefs than teachers in Austria, Denmark, Belgium (FI), Norway and Poland (e.g. they see their role as transmitting knowledge, and providing correct solutions” (p. 8).

We are concerned to ensure that teachers’ voices are valued and that they speak in an informed way to allow for debate around issues in education. Hargreaves (1994) cautioned that “exclusive emphasis on vision or voice alone is constructive neither for restructuring in general nor for professional development in particular” (p. 251). The mentors in this study declare themselves to be familiar with Hargreaves’ (1994) description:

In this world, where purposes are imposed and consensus is contrived, there is no place for the practical judgement and wisdom of teachers; no place for their voices to get a proper hearing. A major challenge for educational restructuring is to work through and reconcile this tension between vision and voice; to create a choir from a cacophony. (p. 251)

Bernstein (2000) argued that knowledge has been divorced from the knower. He claims that “(T)he principles of the market and its managers are more and more the managers of the policy and practices of education” (p. 84). He also believes that there is a new concept of knowledge which is “a truly secular concept”. Irish teachers have been through enormous discursive changes in recent times. Sugrue (2004), writing about education, declared that

“education for citizenship and cosmopolitan identity in an independent world is vital, while rediscovering the moral mission of teaching is necessary also as part of the process of developing more sophisticated kinds of teacher professionalism” (p. 14).

Nel Noddings (2007), writing about education in The United States of America claimed that “Our public schools are under siege. Worries about low test scores and ‘not enough math and science’ have led policymakers to instigate a system that is frighteningly anti-intellectual and antidemocratic” (p. vii). Noddings (2007) stated that as an experienced educator with more than 50 years experience, including teacher education and as a philosopher, she spoke from a deep concern for teachers and students. In the recent past sociologists and economic analysts have described the rapid changes in which Irish society was involved (Inglis, 2008). The so-called Celtic Tiger indicated to Irish people that they were part of a successful economy. The country’s economy has failed to support the weight of expectation and has proved unable to respond to the demands placed upon it. This economic downturn has coincided with a worldwide financial downturn. The resultant recession now requires people to look at their values in a less materialistic way by examining the belief that possessions and accessible money provide status and security. The Celtic Tiger is no longer financing lavish lifestyles.

Implications for the education system of social change are well documented within critical commentaries on contemporary societies. Bernstein (2000) provided a detailed commentary on the implications of societal structures on pedagogical discourses. The level of official control in education has implications for its nature and purpose. Bernstein (2000) wrote about education in the UK:

We can distinguish between an official recontextualising field (ORF) created and dominated by the state and its selected agents and ministries, and a pedagogic

recontextualising field (PRF). Today, the state is attempting to weaken the PRF through its ORF, and thus attempting to reduce relative autonomy over the construction of pedagogic discourse and over its social contexts. (p. 33)

By addressing concerns about loss of teacher autonomy it is hoped that mentors will critically evaluate their teaching and mentoring in a structured reflective way. There is also an awareness of the need for reflexivity, whereby each person's unique set of experiences is considered, to indicate both strong presences and absences which inform attitudes to teaching and mentoring. Consistent with a school university partnership reflections provide opportunities for dialogue between teachers, teacher educators and tutors. Giroux (2008) provides a strong critique of the neo-liberal agenda within which schools prepare pupils to join society as competitive individuals who aim to acquire material reward for their successes. Caring, as described by Noddings (2007), is not part of this rational pursuit of clearly defined goals.

For mentor teachers, taking this programme, to reflect critically on their practice, several frames of inquiry are provided. Bernstein's (1990) theories of instruction, Figure 2, which position teaching within a matrix describe four positions relating to teachers' view of teaching either predominantly as transmission, or as acquisition; along with their position with regard to inter-personal or intra-personal interaction among the learners provided one lens for the mentor teachers.

(Figure 2 HERE)

The second lens which we use to examine teaching is provided from *the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study* (Lingard et al., 2003). This study provided a framework within which mentor teachers examine their pedagogical practice as "productive pedagogy and productive assessment" (p. 7). The researchers indicated that leading learning "is located with a

sociology of education that simultaneously recognizes the difficulties of schools for interrupting the (re)production of inequality and the possibilities for teachers to make a difference” (p. 8).

They go on to suggest “that the negative thesis needs to be complemented by a positive thesis about what schools and teachers are able to achieve in a global context of growing inequality and often parsimonious funding for education and weakened social justice agendas” (p. 7). They recognised that they did not want to overstate what productive pedagogies can achieve. The use of this analysis is beneficial because Lingard et al. (2003):

emphasise both academic and social outcomes that include, but aim beyond, the skills often implicit in economistic human capital framings of the purposes of schooling and the prescriptions of content knowledge that are often linked to narrow forms of assessment and testing. (p. 8)

For them the concept of a productive pedagogy speaks back to human capital theory while moving well beyond it. We have adopted the term productive for the study of mentoring in which we are involved as it encapsulates our aspiration to develop a programme which aspires to change existing values and facilitates positive progress.

The need to position education allowing for a less restricted analysis of the processes of education is addressed within the frame of productive pedagogy which values intellectual quality, relevance and is socially supportive with a recognition of difference (Lingard et al., 2003). Moles (2007) applied the frame of productive pedagogy in an analysis of teaching gymnastics, challenging the preferred pedagogical discourse of transmission and control, in teaching physical education. By enabling teachers to examine teaching in a systematic way Lingard et al. (2003) facilitate teachers in moving away from traditional teaching and in adopting a more professional, considered way of working.

If teaching and mentoring are predominantly reproductive, we contend that they become reductionist and effectively the medium becomes more important than the message. This conflicts with our central principles in which learning is a shared endeavour and knowledge is seen as changing, developing and evolving. We advocate for mentor teachers to become inquiry-oriented, within a holistic framework that values caring and moves mentoring, through teacher agency, beyond existing contextual constraints. It is to this educational context that we now turn.

### ***The educational context in the Republic of Ireland***

Mentoring in the accreditation pathway is positioned within an examination of Irish education and of the dominant issues which influence teachers' choice of pedagogical discourse. In the Republic of Ireland the momentum to change the role of the teacher to professional has resulted in the publication of a range of reports and pieces of legislation including the Education Act 1998, the Teaching Council Act 2001 and the Byrne Report, 2002. Teachers' 'professionalisation' is promoted within a self-regulating statutory body, the Teaching Council. *The Teaching Council Strategic Plan (2008 –2011)* is clear about teachers' contribution as professionals, where Goal 1 of the plan aims "To promote teaching as a profession" (p. 12) The concept of professionalism is explored by Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting and Whiting (2000) who acknowledge that, "despite the widespread use of the term, the concept of a "professional" remains deeply contested in our society" (pp. 4-5). They cited Hoyle and John (1995) who "suggested that debates around what it means to be a professional focus on three central issues – knowledge, autonomy and responsibility" (p. 5).



Irish education is acknowledged as being traditional and teacher-centred (Waldron, 2004 p. 229). Teachers predominantly provide their pupils with experiences similar to their own. Drudy and Lynch (1993) outlined dominant ideologies in Irish education and there is no evidence to suggest that these have changed. Traditionally Irish teachers have not been encouraged to question the nature and purpose of their practice. Values underpinning the education system are agreed by participants without being critically evaluated or systematically analysed.

Kincheloe (1999) indicated how ideological positions of the churches, who manage the majority of schools, were shared among all participants resulting in a very strong society where agreement about aims was viewed as unproblematic. The curriculum for Irish schools is prescribed and uncontested. Currently a post-primary teacher's role is to act as a conduit for the transmission of content which is then assessed. Right answers are valued. The award of points for examination results describes an accepted meritocracy which ensures that progress to third level education is awarded to conformist pupils who are prepared to work within provided structures in a way which indicates acceptance of rules and extrinsic criteria.

Successful entrants to third level education are already enculturated into acceptance of a hierarchical system with experts and novices in education. The very structured school system with rewards for conformity provides a good preparation for competitive capitalism. The cultural capitalism accrued in schooling (Leaving Certificate points) holds a strong trading value. Drudy and Lynch (1993) described meritocratic individualism which is premised on the idea that "ability and effort should lead to reward" and which "helps perpetuate the existence of a hierarchical social order" (p. 49). This finds resonance in the very competitive Leaving Certificate examination. As teachers typically have experienced success in the examination process, they have confidence in its ability to select effectively. Teachers taking part in the

mentoring programme regularly indicate that they feel constrained by the examination driven system in which they work and for the most part they would agree with Skilbeck (2004), when writing about Irish education:

what needs to be overcome is the view that in order for systems and institutions to achieve and maintain “standards”, goals must be set in an unduly restrictive pedagogic environment, thereby and as an artefact ensuring that many students will fail at the first opportunity or close the book on continuous learning. (p. 57)

### *Observations from our interactions with mentor teachers*

Mentor teachers, throughout the study, used Brookfield’s (1995) lenses of inquiry, initially with some reluctance, to critically think about their practices. These lenses included their willingness to interrogate their own thinking and practices, to share their insights and findings with a peer acting as a critical friend, to elicit additional feedback from their mentees and to use the comparative lens of relevant literature. Selected pieces of reflective writing, on a number of different critical incidents, were shared with peers and tutors. After dialogue with a critical friend and peers deeper layers of analysis were sought through drawing out themes, insights and questions. This layered approach to scaffolding reflective writing has been well documented by Bolton (2010). Over time the mentor teachers developed a shared language of education, teaching and mentoring. Each year at a forum of national policymakers mentors were given the opportunity to express their hopes and concerns for a mentoring team to develop learning inside their schools.

A meta-analysis of the first ten masters’ theses is significant in that it charts the studies of ten motivated mentors, unable to make full use of the theoretical frame given to critique

mentoring in the workplace settings (Mooney Simmie & Moles, 2012). Despite willingness to critique national policy mentor teachers remained highly resistant to question constraints in their school culture. The theses interweave a narrative of a second-level school system deeply fearful of sustainable change, critical thinking and breaking down barriers that retain teachers in isolated classrooms with little or no opportunity for professional learning at their workplace. Mentoring for socialisation and maintaining the status quo appeared the preferred safe option. More scaffolds and supports will be needed going forward to bring the critical edge of dialogue and thinking to mentoring in schools in the Republic of Ireland. We perceive this as an issue both for the teaching team at the university, as well as, a national policy issue of some significance.

### **Findings and insights**

Over time we began to formulate our values and develop theoretical principles underpinning this academic study of mentoring. A theoretical framework for productive mentoring began to emerge, as indicated in Figure 1, and the need for mentors to develop an inquiry stance to their mentoring process at all times if sustainable change was required. We began to align teaching, caring and mentoring and developed four key guiding principles for the study and, with observations from our interactions with mentors involved in the study, began to advance an imagined practice, Ottesen (2007), for the application of this theoretical framework.

### ***Guiding principles and an imagined practice***

It became clear that bringing teachers together to engage in a study of mentoring while necessary was not sufficient to overcome the barriers they experienced in trying to change the mind-set and culture of their school contexts. The four principles we arrived at support teaching and mentoring as learner-centred and democratic, within a complex and ever changing context, which requires engagement with the traditions of academia for critical and sustainable change:

1. The holistic, learner-centred nature of teaching is supported within a commitment to caring for each person working within education. Interaction and dialogue are the preferred ways of sharing knowledge.
2. Teaching is viewed as a profession with its own standards and codes of practice. We resist the reductionist definition of teaching as a set of skills or competencies (although we defend teachers as being very skilful and competent in their work).
3. Within the traditions of academia, participants on the mentoring course interrogate education in a critically reflective way. The school-university partnership is celebrated as a mutually enriching relationship.
4. We acknowledge the complexity of teaching and mentoring and confront the difficult issues which surround contemporary education within a rapidly changing and challenging society.

Engagement with the academy facilitates pursuit of and presentation of considered theoretical positions which can be rigorously defended. Dialogue among participants evidences their ability to articulate and defend academic positions both in written and spoken formats. There is collegiate pride among the group about the level of engagement with theory which informs educational practice. We positioned our emerging theoretical framework for *productive mentoring* within these four principles.

Bernstein (2000) argued that knowledge has been divorced from the knower. He claims that “(T)he principles of the market and its managers are more and more the managers of the policy and practices of education” (p. 84). Irish teachers have been through enormous discursive changes in recent times. We argue the need for mentor teachers to interrogate the totality of the education system.

A *productive mentoring* model of this type would require a mentoring team of teachers and school administrators, initial teachers, induction teachers and in-career teachers and school principals, regularly involved in a school-based discourse of teaching, learning and caring and ongoing connection to a broader social learning network, including teacher educators and policymakers. This mentoring team would assist professional learning of teachers and school administrators through intellectual, caring and social relationships of learning. In this way student teachers and newly qualified teachers, while gaining insights from experienced teachers’ processes would be encouraged to share their knowledge of, for example, newer forms of assessment and technology applications. School principals and senior administrators would be empowered to fully engage with their pedagogical leadership role. In a similar way teacher educators and researchers, while sharing findings from research studies and scaffolding inquiry, would also gain deeper insights and learn more about the everyday reality of school life.

### **Discussion and future implications**

This paper began by considering Hargreaves’ (2003) philosophical question on what kind of teacher we need to develop in these rapidly challenging times nationally and internationally. Do we need teachers and mentor teachers who are clones, drones and functionaries of the system

or do we need teachers and mentor teachers who are continually educated and supported over their career to become creative and public intellectuals in a global knowledge society?

In this paper we have positioned ourselves within the mentoring debate and have argued for a model of *productive mentoring* based on the changing needs of mentor teachers working as professionals within a rapidly changing society. It is this positioning through our elucidation of the four principles and the resulting theoretical framework for *productive mentoring* in teacher education that is the essence of this paper. The framework thus far has evolved over the last four years from a robust interrogation of our practice, shared with one another and with our students, mentor teachers, school principals and tutors, from primary education through to upper secondary education. It comes from our experiences and critical reflections as teachers, teacher educators and mentors allied with an interest in positioning teaching, mentoring and educational discourse in a wider frame supported by empirical research.

The first phase of this study involved developing a theoretical framework for mentoring that fits with the type of philosophical inquiry we want our students to progress. Our evolving framework for *productive mentoring* is positioned within a philosophy of care, with mentor teachers as professionals and critical inquirers working within the complexity of a rapidly changing global society (Bernstein, 1990, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Lingard et al., 2003; Noddings, 2003, 2007).

Teachers involved in this mentoring study were surrounded by teacher educators, researchers and policymakers and involved in dialogue that sought to bring a critical edge to a model of *productive mentoring* for teacher professional learning. We need to continue to develop newer scaffolds to support mentors' critical interrogation of practice. We also need to continue our ongoing engagement with national policymakers. Our study argues that all

educators need to develop a broader conception of continuing teacher education and mentoring. From our findings to date the enormity of the cultural challenge of professionalising mentor teachers has become clearer. Models of mentoring that do not embrace this wider framework run the risk of socialising teachers into routine mechanical and pragmatic practices. We see little long-term benefit from these types of transmission models of mentoring. We argue for *productive mentoring*, for sustainable change, as an academic, caring and professional practice that is contextually responsive. We need to think beyond the given. Giroux (2008) challenges all educators in this regard:

To think beyond the given is a central demand of politics, but it is also a condition for both individual and collective agency. At the heart of such a task is both the possibility inherent in hope and the knowledge and skills available in a critical education. I think it is all the more crucial to take seriously Derrida's provocation that "(w)e must do and think the impossible. If only the possible happened, nothing more would happen." (p. 146)

## References

- Bernstein, B. (1990). *The structuring of pedagogic discourse (Volume IV) class, codes and control*. London: Routledge.
- Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: theory, research, critique*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Byrne, K. (Chairman). (2000). *Advisory group on post-primary teacher education*. Dublin: Department of Education and Science.
- Bolton, G. (2010). *Reflective practice: writing and professional development*. London: Sage Publications.
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Paris, C. L. (1995). Mentor and mentoring: did Homer have it right? In J. Smyth (Ed), *Critical discourses on teacher development*, 181-202. London: Cassell.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (Editors). (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world what teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Day, C., & Sachs, J. (2004). *International handbook on the continuing professional development of teachers*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Drudy, S., & Lynch, K. (1993). *Schools and society in Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.
- Fletcher, S. (1998). Attaining self-actualisation through mentoring. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 21 (1), 109-118.
- Fletcher, S. (2000). *Mentoring in schools – A handbook of good practice*. London: Kogan Page.



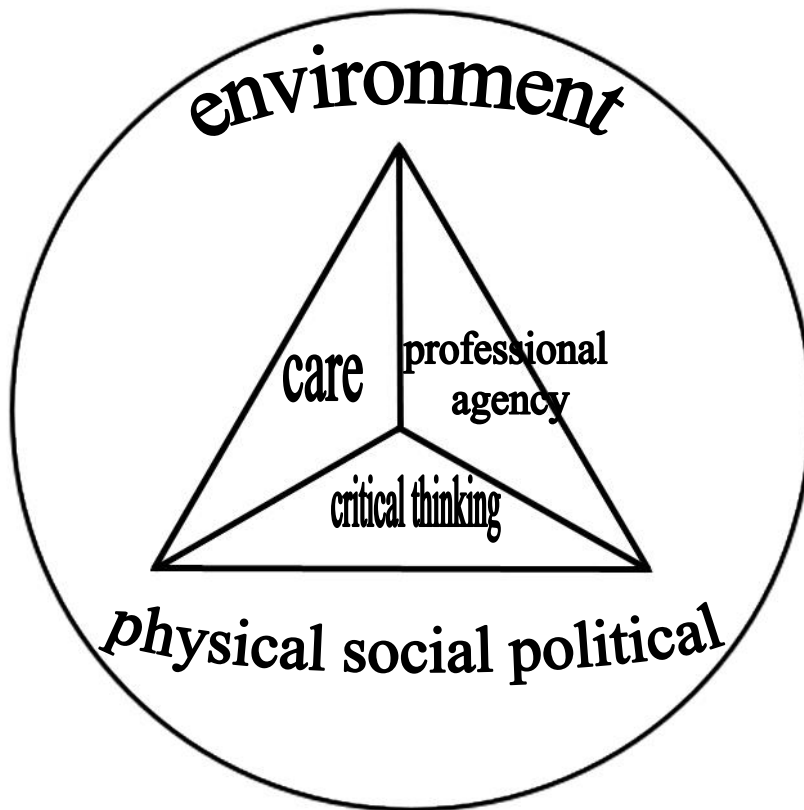
- Furlong, J., Barton, L., Miles, S., Whiting, C., & Whiting, G. (2000). *Teacher education in transition re-forming professionalism?* Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Gilleece, L., Shiel, G., Perkins, R., & Proctor, M. (2009). *Teaching and learning international survey (2008) national report for Ireland*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Giroux, H. (2008). *Against the terror of neo-liberalism*. London: Paradigm Press.
- Government of Ireland. (1998). *Education Act*. Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland. (2001). *Teaching Council Act*. Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. London: Cassell.
- Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity*. New York: Teachers' College Press.
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2000). Mentoring in the new millennium. *Theory into Practice*, 39(1), 50-56.
- Hawkey, K. (2006). Emotional intelligence and mentoring in pre-service teacher education: a literature review. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 14(2), 137-147.
- Hogan, P., Brosnan, A., de Roiste, B., MacAlister, A., Malone, A., Quirke-Bolt, N., & Smith, G. (2007). *Learning anew final report of the research and development project teaching and learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 2003-2007*. Maynooth: Education Department, National University of Ireland.
- Hoyle, E., & John, P. (1995). In J. Furlong, L. Barton, S. Miles, C. Whiting, & G.

- Whiting. (2000). *Teacher education in transition re-forming professionalism?*  
Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Inglis, T. (2008). *Global Ireland*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kiely, E. (2005). *The mentoring phenomenon in educating preservice science teachers through a school-based collaborative partnership*, unpublished PhD thesis.  
Limerick: University of Limerick.
- Killeavy, M., & Maloney, A. (2010). Reflection in a social space: Can blogging support reflective practice for beginning teachers? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 1070-1076.
- Killeavy, M., & Murphy, R. (2006). *National pilot project on teacher induction, report on phase 1 and 2, 2002-2004*. Dublin: Department of Education and Science.
- Kincheloe, J. (1999). Critical democracy and education. In J.G. Henderson & K.R. Kesson (Eds.), *Understanding democratic curriculum leadership*, Columbia: Teachers' College Press. In C. Sugrue (Ed.), (2004). *Curriculum and ideology Irish experiences international perspectives*. Dublin: The Liffey Press.
- Lingard, B., Hayes, D., Mills, M., & Christie, P. (2003). *Leading learning*.  
Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Maynard, T. & Furlong, J. (1995). Learning to teach and models of mentoring. In T. Kerry & A. S. Mayes (Eds.), *Issues in mentoring*. Buckingham: The Open University.
- Mc Namara, G., & O'Hara, J. (2006). Workable compromise or pointless exercise? School-based evaluation in the Irish context. *Educational Administration & Leadership*, 34(4), 564-582.
- Moles, J. (2003). *Physical education in contemporary Ireland: A case study of*

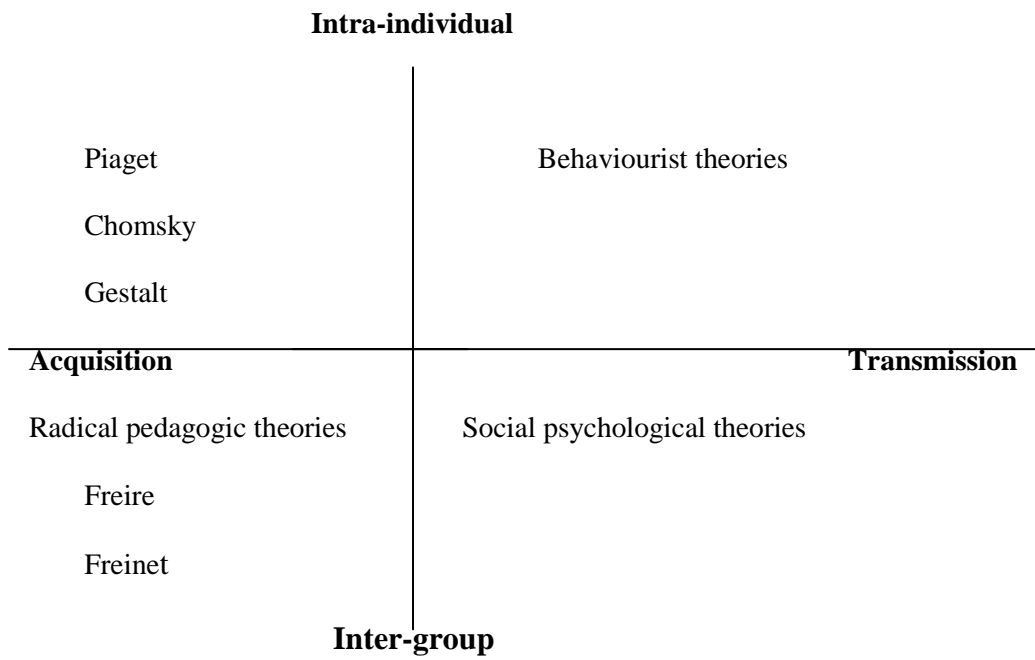
- curriculum continuity and change*, unpublished PhD thesis. Loughborough: Loughborough University.
- Moles, J. (2007). *Gymnastics as education*. Limerick: Matt Kelly Productions.
- Mooney Simmie, G. (2007). Teacher design teams (TDTs) – building capacity for innovation, learning and curriculum implementation in the continuing professional development of in-career teachers. *Irish Educational Studies*, 26(2), 163-176.
- Mooney Simmie, G. (2009). *The policy implementation process in the upper secondary education system (senior cycle) and videregående skolen in science and mathematics in the Republic of Ireland and the Kingdom of Norway from 1960-2005*, unpublished PhD thesis. Dublin: Trinity College Dublin.
- Mooney Simmie, G., & Moles, J. (2012). *Educating the critically reflective mentor*. The Sage handbook of mentoring and coaching in education. Sage publications.
- Mullen, C. (2005). *Mentorship primer*. Volume 6. New York: Peter Lang Primer.
- Murphy, F. G. (2005). *Towards a more formal school-based mentoring programme for post-primary teacher education*, unpublished master's thesis. Cork: National University of Ireland, Cork.
- Noddings, N. (2003). *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. London: University of California Press.
- Noddings, N. (2007). *When school reform goes wrong*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- O'Brien, J., & Christie, F. (2005). Characteristics of support for beginning teachers.

- Evidence from the new teacher induction scheme in Scotland. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 13(2), 189-203.
- Ottesen, E. (2007). Reflection in teacher education. *Reflective Practice*, 8 (1), 31-46.
- Parker, S. (1997). *Reflective teaching in the postmodern world*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Skilbeck, M. (2004). Chapter 2 Towards a Curriculum for Lifelong Learning. In C. Sugrue (Ed.), *Curriculum and ideology Irish experiences international perspectives*, 35- 63. Dublin: The Liffey Press.
- Sugrue, C. (Ed.). (2004). *Curriculum and ideology Irish experiences international perspectives*. Dublin: The Liffey Press.
- Sundli, L. (2007). Mentoring – A new mantra for education? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 201-214.
- Tang, S.Y.F., & Choi, P.L. (2005). Connecting theory and practice in mentor preparation: Mentoring for the improvement of teaching and learning. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 13(3), 383-401.
- The Teaching Council. (2008). *Fás Agus forbairt: strategic plan 2008-2011*. Maynooth: The Teaching Council.
- Wang, J., & Odell, S.J. (2007). An alternative conception of mentor-novice relationships: Learning to teach in reform-minded ways as a context. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 473-489.
- Waldron, F. (2004). Chapter 7 Making the Irish: Identity and Citizenship in the Primary Curriculum, 209-237. In C. Sugrue (Ed.), *Curriculum and ideology Irish experiences international perspectives*. Dublin: The Liffey Press.

Figure 1 Mooney Simmie & Moles' (2011) framework for productive mentoring.



**Figure 2 Theories of Instruction (Bernstein, 1990, p. 213)**



**Figure 2 Theories of Instruction (Bernstein, 1990, p. 213)**

