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In 1985 the motion picture *Back to the Future* heralded the idea that travelling back in time (to 1955) could inadvertently alter the course of events that lead to one’s future. The above scene in particular shifts the focus from the tangible “here and now” form of Einstein (“Doc” Brown’s dog) to imagining possibilities for his existence in a different era. Although abstract, given our inability to travel back in time from the future, in applying this thinking to Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) we can begin to conceive of the types of knowledge and skills “future” teachers may require, not only within their subject discipline, but also for future roles within the school community, such as being a pre-service teacher mentor. We propose that there is potential for building capacity for future mentoring roles in PETE students through an “Assessment for Learning” (AtL) approach in which fourth- (and final) year students were required to act as peer-mentors to a pair of first-year students during their first school-based teaching experience. This peer-mentoring program has been named the Student Teaching Experience in Mentoring (STEM) program, and we contend it is through the “situated” approach (enhanced through reflective practice tasks in their role as peer-mentors) that the fourth-year students learn *through* assessment about various aspects of a mentoring role. As Hay (2006) argues, considering the recognized impact that assessment can have on curriculum reform and student learning (now and into the future) it is surprising that assessment in Physical Education (PE) has not received more attention by academic researchers.
For many PETE students, the school-based practicum is frequently reported as one of the most valuable learning experiences throughout their degree (Behets & Vergauwen, 2006; Rossi, Sirna & Tinning, 2007). Yet, as Hardy (1995) argues, there is significant diversity and variability in the mentor-mentee relationships that characterize traditional school-based practicum experiences. After Hobson and colleagues (2009) we refer to a “mentor” as a more experienced professional who assumes responsibility for providing support for a less experienced peer (mentee). In their discussion of beginner teacher mentoring, Hobson and colleagues argue that, in addition to providing advice on the mentee’s ability to facilitate learning, mentors also influence mentees’ induction into the culture of the profession and individualized school context. Whilst many of these relationships offer potential for fruitful and meaningful learning for pre-service teachers, others report problematic and less than positive outcomes (Bloomfield, 2010; Rossi, Sirna & Tinning, 2008). It is argued that “not all practitioners are suited to mentoring ... simply, there are not enough quality mentors available in the school context” (Hudson & Hudson, 2011, p. 320). Further, Australian Universities report that it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure school-based placements for pre-service teachers (Hudson & Hudson, 2011), and as others explain, “many teachers are increasingly reluctant to accept student teachers on placement ... schools are seeking partnerships that are ... mutually beneficial rather than predicated on ... traditional service models, [in which] a teacher takes a pre-service teacher to ‘give back’ to the profession” (White, Bloomfield & Le Cornu, 2010, p. 183). These authors argue that the macro-political educational agenda strongly framed by neoliberal notions of productivity and quality are largely responsible for increased competition between universities and the resultant “added pressure for all in accessing sufficient numbers of ‘quality’ placements” (White et al., 2010, p. 185).

In a PE sense, in addition to the challenges outlined above, there is also concern that the types of knowledge privileged and (re)produced during school-based experiences contribute to acts of “curriculum maintenance” (Kirk, 2010, Mordal-Moen & Green, 2012). In much of the PE “futures” work concern is raised about the “remarkably unchanging and apparently unchallengeable form and content of physical education” (Penney & Chandler, 2000, p. 75) that pervades contemporary pedagogy and practice. As Kirk (2010) explains, “there has been no shortage of good ideas for reforming physical education ... [but they have] fallen short because they have failed to ... [insist] on the kinds of radical change to practice ... required to overcome the currently dominant ... physical education-as-sports-techniques” (p. 23). Others have argued that although PETE courses offer the potential to challenge dominant beliefs and values that underpin such notions, they have been relatively ineffectual in their influence (Capel, 2005; Placek, Dodd, Doolittle, Portman, Ratcliffe & Pinkman, 1995). Research particularly highlights the powerful influence socialization processes of “field experiences” have in the cultural (re)production of dominant beliefs and values pertaining to PE pedagogy (Stroot & Ko, 2006). This work highlights the role of the mentor teacher as a “custodian” in maintaining “status-quo” approaches to PE pedagogy (Stroot & Ko, 2006),
particularly given the observations that school mentors appear to have a greater impact on the teaching behaviours of pre-service teachers than their PETE training programs (Behets & Vergauwen, 2006):

The dominant influence of the [mentoring teacher] pushes the student teacher into an apprenticeship model where he [sic] is told what to do and how to do it. The attention is focused on actual teaching problems, leaving little space for experimenting with new ideas and restricting the use of innovative teaching approaches. (Behets & Vergauwen, 2006, p. 408)

Whilst we acknowledge, after Hardy (1999), that the quality of field experiences can be affected by the variability of mentor processes and nuances in different school contexts, like others we are concerned that contemporary PETE practices offer limited opportunity to challenge this cycle of (re)production (Mordal-Moen & Green, 2012). Given that the next generation of mentors are likely drawn from current pre-service teacher cohorts, this chapter reports on an AtL approach conceived to foster an interest in mentoring and to develop skills and promote reflexivity in PETE mentoring. As Le Cornu (2005) argues, we cannot assume that "pre-service teachers...will have the necessary skills and understandings to act as mentors. We as teacher educators therefore need to have an explicit commitment to ... providing opportunities for prospective teachers to engage with the process of mentoring" (p. 359). As teacher educators (and previous mentors of pre-service teachers during our time in schools) we do not assume to have all the answers about "effective" mentoring, but rather, through this approach, seek to provide opportunities for students to critically reflect on the attributes they considered as integral to quality mentors. As others comment, "it is important to recognize that ... mentoring (like teaching) can (and does, in different contexts) have a variety of purposes or goals, [and] can (and does) involve a variety of practices and strategies to achieve these purposes and goals" (Hobson et al., 2009, p. 207).

BACKGROUND

Problematizing Physical Education Teacher Education -- Complicit Mentoring?

An extensive body of research exists to critique the predominance of PE pedagogies that focus on "traditional, multi-activity curriculum based on the acquisition and performance of [decontextualized] skills organised mostly around team games" (Capel et al., 2009, p. 59). Despite the obvious concerns that these approaches privilege skilled students, often at the expense of marginalized others who are afforded little opportunity to develop skill proficiency before moving on to the next activity (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005), such pedagogies have also been reported to reproduce social inequalities concerning gender, ethnicity and social class (Kirk, 2010). Further, these pedagogies tend to draw heavily on approaches concerned with student-management, control and order so that they are most recognizable as "teacher-centred" and "command-orientated" (Green, 2008, Tinning, 2004).
Of concern to this research are reports of the uncritical acceptance and enduring practice of these approaches by pre-service teachers during practicum experiences (Green, 2008; Mordal-Moen & Green, 2012). Green (2008) observed that, although extended placements “may have improved trainees’ preparedness to teach PE, this may have more to do with introducing them to the realities of teaching and the preferred pedagogic practices of their mentors than enabling delivery of the ideal-type PE lessons [espoused in university degree programs]” (p. 211). Further, Green (2008) argues that “students teachers’ perceived need to emulate what their mentors do means that custom and practice tend to be reinforced rather than challenged” (p. 212) during PETE programs. This element of self-replication has been implicated in findings that PE programs are failing to achieve the goals they have set—that is, to “produce skilful lifelong participants” (Kirk, 2010, p. 33)—and as such it would be easy to conclude that many mentor teachers appear to adopt a somewhat complicit role in the cultural (re)production of dominant pedagogical approaches. Yet this viewpoint fails to acknowledge the complexities surrounding the mentor-mentee relationship, and the “modes of discursive production which both construct and critique the truths of PE pedagogy” (Kelly, Hickey & Tinning, 2000, p. 112).

Problematic PE pedagogy and potentially complicit mentor-mentee relationships needs to take account of the discursive-power relations that act to shape these dominant perceptions and taken-for-granted truths. As Ryan and Healy (2009) explain, “pre-service teachers often enter teacher education programs with problematic or unexamined assumptions, beliefs and knowledge about students, teaching and schools” (p. 424). Mentoring, understood as a “long held concept with the overall purpose of offering personal and professional guidance from an experienced and learned veteran to a new professional” (Rikard & Banville, 2010, p. 246), can offer potential for education reform (Hudson & Hudson, 2011; McCaughtry, Kulinna, Cothran, Martin & Faust, 2005); but we argue that a greater awareness is needed of how contemporary notions of mentoring and school practicum perpetuate a theory-practice divide (Chambers & Armour, 2012). For as Hudson (2007) laments, although mentoring can encourage pre-service teachers to engage in “pedagogical discourse and reflective thinking” (p. 202), the reality is that “there is little evidence that mentors encourage mentees to think critically about their practices” (2007, p. 204). This is not unsurprising, given that most mentors lack any formal training in the skills needed to guide newer teachers’ growth and development (McCaughtry et al, 2005); rather, “in most cases, mentors are thrust into the new role of mentoring with only the most meagre guidance” (Edwards & Collison, 1996, p. 11, cited in Hudson, 2007, p. 202).

As Ayers and Griffin (2005) comment, “we have learned that good intentions are not enough to facilitate good mentoring” (p. 368). Although various Government initiatives exist to develop mentoring capacity in teachers, their uptake has been limited (Hudson, 2007). Hudson and Hudson (2011) argue that mentors need to be prepared for their role as pre-service teacher educators through the development of
“knowledge to take deliberate action in their mentoring and [through] specific skills to critique constructively both their own teaching ... and their mentees’ practices” (p. 320). Yet fostering a critical reflexivity in teachers, particularly PE teachers, is not without its challenges (Mordal-Moen & Green, 2012). Despite attempts to develop critical reflective skills in PETE students, Mordal-Moen and Green report that “a variety of studies have tended to confirm that PETE neither ‘shakes nor stirs’ newly emerging PE teachers’ relatively conservative views and practices in relation to PE, let alone education more generally” (2012, p. 2). Herein we describe an AfL initiative – the STEM program, designed and implemented with the view to addressing some of these pedagogic challenges, now and into the future.

AN ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING APPROACH TO BUILDING STUDENTS’ PEDAGOGICAL CAPACITY

Drawing on constructivist thinking, the STEM program required fourth-year PETE students to act as peer-mentors during the final five weeks of their degree program to two first-year students in their initial field experience in a primary school (approximately aged 5–12 years). As such, their participation in this program was constructed as an AfL task that required them to critically reflect on their own experiences as a mentee to identify how notions of effective mentoring were shaped. Further, they were then required to fulfil the role of peer-mentor by firstly modelling their perceptions of effective teaching during the first week, and subsequently by providing professional guidance and support in the mentee’s planning, delivery and evaluation of PE lessons over a four-week period before undertaking a critical evaluation of their learning.

AfL assumes that assessment forms an integral part of the teaching and learning process (Hay, 2006; MacPhail & Halbert, 2010). Constructivism, as a theoretical perspective, informs much of the thinking around AfL; as Le Cornu (2005) argues, central to constructivism “is the notion that learners play an active role in constructing their own meaning” (p. 357) and that social interaction is important in this process. Lave and Wenger (1991), as early adopters of this perspective, heralded “situated learning approaches” in which “legitimate peripheral participation” and “communities of practice” were key factors in knowledge construction. These notions have been applied to PE settings (see e.g., Kirk & Macdonald, 1998; MacPhail, Kirk & Griffin, 2008) to explore the impact of particular curriculum models (e.g., Sport Education) and more recently to explore the links between teacher knowledge construction and student learning (see Rovegno, 2006). Fundamental to constructivist and situated learning perspectives is the belief that learning occurs as a result of interactions between learners and within contexts, and that students actively appropriate and adapt new knowledge in relation to former understanding and cognitive structures. Learning is not a passive process of knowledge transmission, but rather is a complex process dependent upon previous knowledge, the context, and the task (Hay, 2006, p. 316).
Hay (2006) explains that “an assessment for learning paradigm advocates for authentic assessment which refers to contextually relevant and connected tasks that develop and challenge students’ higher-order knowledge and skills that can be transferred to contexts beyond the classroom” (p. 313). In addition to taking place within contextually relevant settings (i.e., the primary school), participation in the STEM program also required fourth-year teachers to apply their constructed knowledge about PE pedagogy in a way that was sensitive to, and reflective of, a collaborative relationship that differed somewhat from the more hierarchical relationships that underpin traditional mentor-mentee power relations, where the former is positioned as “expert”, and the latter, “novice” (Le Cornu, 2005). According to MacPhail and Halbert (2010), AfL acknowledges that “assessment should be part of the teaching and learning process, with information gained from ongoing assessment informing and shaping the learning process ... on a daily and weekly basis as opposed to at the end of a unit of work” (pp. 23-24). Under this premise, formative assessment opportunities require the learner to be positioned at the centre of the learning process, and as a peer-mentor the final-year pre-service teacher becomes “actively engaged (through interactions between peer learners and contexts) in constructing knowledge and understanding in relation to pre-existing knowledge, the task and the context” (MacPhail & Halbert, 2010, p. 24). Importantly, and as a key feature of our role as teacher educators in this process, formative feedback is important for students so that they can plan, implement and review the effect of the changes they have made to their practice, but as Sadler (1998 in Hay, 2006) warns, this feedback is only meaningful and useful for students if they comprehend what to do with the information. As such, the fourth-year students were provided with workshop and critical reflection sessions in which their learnings about mentoring (and in fact their own practices) were discussed and reviewed prior to undertaking their planning for the following week.

METHODOLOGY

Drawing on poststructuralist perspectives and following University ethics committee approval, student critical reflections, submitted in the form of a final written report in the 2011 academic year, were analysed using the principles of Discourse Analysis (DA) (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001). As Wright (2006) explains, DA is “the process of identifying regularities of meaning (patterns of language use)” (p. 61) in texts. DA describes the “relationship between meaning and power; it is used to refer to systems of beliefs and values which produce particular social practices and social relations” (Wright, 2006, p. 61). As such, Wright cautions that not all discourse analysis needs to be undertaken through linguistic analyses; rather “what a discourse analysis takes as its unit of analysis depends on what forms of meaning making are being explored” (2006, p. 61). An important methodological consideration here is that discourse is not reduced to that of only language, for choices in language can in fact “point to those discourses being drawn upon by writers and speakers, and to the ways in which they position themselves and others” (Wright, 2006, p. 61).
In this final written report, students were asked to provide an overview of their mentoring context and a detailed reflection of factors that have shaped their perceptions about what being an effective mentor entailed. In particular, they were asked to examine how their experiences of being a mentor (including the assessment surrounding this) contributed to their philosophies of PE, teaching, assessment and their own capacity to fulfil mentoring roles in the future. As conveyed via the Plain Language Information Statement, students were required to submit their critical reflection for assessment purposes, but their consent was needed for it to be used for research purposes. Of the fifty-eight enrolled students in 2011, fifty-five consented to their work being analysed. Pseudonyms have been assigned to protect the anonymity of participants in data reporting. Acknowledging the diversity in student learning reported, it is impracticable to report on each detail, rather only key data, representative of commonly reported learnings, are discussed here. Specifically we focus on data that reflect the development of a “mentoring attitude” (Le Cornu, 2005) – employed as a general term to reflect a predisposition toward positive approaches to being a mentor – and “deep reflexivity” (Mordal-Moen & Green, 2012) – a term to describe the practice of reviewing and reconstructing taken-for-granted assumptions about PE, teaching and education more broadly.

KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Developing a “Mentoring Attitude”

In Le Cornu’s (2005) research on peer-mentoring with pre-service teachers during their final practicum experience she coined the term “mentoring attitude” to describe caring teachers who wanted the best for their students and, through this caring process, became increasingly competent themselves. She explains that “a mentoring attitude values both one’s own learning and the learning of others” (p. 359). In analysing students’ critical reflections there was extensive evidence of our students fostering just such a mentoring attitude that valued both the learning of their first-year mentees and themselves. For example, Catherine noted:

As a mentor to first-year students I believe that my biggest role is to help them feel comfortable and confident in their role as a teacher, I really cared about them succeeding ... I aimed to give them tips and helpful instructions that have helped me as a student teacher but I was also careful to acknowledge that they weren’t the holy grail of PE “tips and tricks”, I was really deliberate in pointing out that such a thing doesn’t exist ... these were just tips that I learned along the way and still use now. ... For example, I explained that the more effort you put into planning and preparation the easier the lesson is to teach and they will be more confident. This was something that I learned about being a mentor also – the more preparation I put into it, the better I was at it. ... In schools, mentors will tell you that you need certain things in your teaching toolkit but most
of these are just classroom management strategies, it is important to listen to advice but then only draw on those aspects that apply to your teaching situation.

In this account Catherine acknowledges factors she believes important in creating a positive learning environment for her first-year mentees. Typically PE mentoring has been considered as a “form of craft knowledge (i.e., knowledge passed on from one mentor to the next)” (Ayers & Griffin, 2005, p. 376), and perhaps illustrated in Catherine’s account is a questioning of the status-quo (and the discourses that perpetuate it) in relation to a homogenous set of strategies in a “teaching toolkit” required for “effective” teachers. As Tinning comments, “we know that most student teaching programs are characterized ... by a search for ‘cookbook’ knowledge to guide classroom practice” (1988, p. 82), so it is promising that Catherine considers it important to adopt this advice critically. In particular, her comments outline that the “tips and tricks” she offers are not put forward as absolute, all-knowing solutions to every teaching situation, but rather as strategies she found useful in particular circumstances that her mentees may find valuable in the future.

Le Cornu (2005) comments that “an effective mentoring relationship is underpinned by the notion of reciprocity, where each person is required to adopt the role of learner and needs also to be prepared to take on the role of a facilitator of someone else’s learning. There is a mutual exchange” (p. 359). The data regularly provided evidence of reciprocal and mutually beneficial learning. For example, Leigh explains:

This assessment task has been one of the most rewarding and significant learning experiences I have had at University. Each week I would assess the drafted lesson plan and propose ideas for the games my mentees selected ... not to disallow the games but to make the first-years think about the relevance of these activities to the lesson objectives, this process also made me think about my own reasons for my suggestions. ... To have the opportunity to mentor beginning pre-service teachers has been a great start to my teaching career, this responsibility to ensure they are prepared and confident has been a challenging but also needed for my own development. The experience I have received in regards to learning how to be a mentor and developing my ability to assess and critique has been second-to-none.

Similarly, Jacqui comments:

Given that you can’t necessarily be taught a right or wrong way to be a mentor, this experience was definitely about independent learning for me as a prospective mentor. Whilst it was important to help the first-years learn about some key aspects of PE teaching, I really learnt much more about myself. We used the prior knowledge of what we liked/disliked about previous mentors and put it into practice in our mentoring role. I had to adapt some practices that I had previously thought were pretty good. I learnt new things about the profession, about being a leader and about myself...I didn’t think I would be
any good at it, but it was rewarding seeing somebody’s appreciation of your advice whether it worked or not.

In both accounts there is evidence to suggest something of a “re-positioning” in the ways these prospective mentors considered the mentor-mentee relationship, especially in terms of learning opportunities. Both students discuss not only their responsibility for what is learnt by their mentees, but also a consideration of how this occurs, and perhaps importantly, their role in facilitating this. This is a significant shift towards what Le Cornu (2005) terms co-learning or collaborative mentoring, where the focus is on developing new knowledge and skills in both participants and differs largely from the more hierarchical relations that tend to characterize traditional mentor-mentee relationships. In particular, she highlights that in the past the mentor has been positioned as the “wise one imparting knowledge to a ‘mentee’ [who is] clearly the learner” (Le Cornu, 2005, p. 358). With co-mentoring, or a collaborative approach to mentoring, both the mentor and mentee are positioned as “co-learners or co-constructors of knowledge” (Le Cornu, 2005, p. 358).

As discussed above, individuals considered that quite diverse and individualized learnings were developed through this AfL task; however, confidence in assessing the learning of others in practical settings, providing feedback on performances, and improved interpersonal skills in communicating this feedback were commonly reported. For example,

The ability to develop my assessment and mentoring skills has provided me with a learning opportunity not necessarily received from teaching rounds or University over the last four years. (Matt)

This program gave me the opportunity to improve on my own assessment skills, it is quite hard to judge performances in physical settings but I guess that is what my job will be about in the future. It made me realise just how important an educator’s feedback is to a learner. (Amy)

One of the most hindering aspects of a mentor teacher is when they believe that the way that they conduct their classes is the only way to do it. I understand that all teachers will have different strategies and approaches that suit them best and a mentor’s role is to guide them where improvements can be made – the way this is communicated is really important. I mean I had to make all the decisions about how my boys were performing and no-one gave me immediate reassurance that the way I was marking them was correct – so I thought it was really important to pose questions in my feedback such as “How might you do that differently next time” rather than assume that my way was the only way (Elly).

_Deep Reflexivity and the Transformative Potential._

As Mordal-Moen and Green (2012) discuss, “deep reflexivity” can refer to practices which lead to the reconstruction of oneself as a teacher. They suggest, as embodying
the strongest sense of the term “reflexivity”, a person with the potential to realize the “cultural milieu in which they operate” (p. 3). They argue that through an awareness of the ways in which cultural and social factors shape their ideas teachers will potentially be able to use this knowledge to “transform” notions of pedagogy and practice. Perhaps one of the most progressive outcomes from this AfL task as reported in some of the student accounts was its potential to disrupt some of the commonly held assumptions these students had about “effective” PE pedagogy. As noted earlier, this has often been reported as a significant challenge and limiting factor in terms of progressing a socially-just agenda in PE (Rossi et al., 2008). In the accounts below there is evidence to suggest that the experience of being a peer-mentor allowed these students to “see” PE practice and pedagogy through a different lens. For example, Dan comments:

Having this opportunity to critically reflect on my own strengths and weaknesses as a mentor and teacher has really opened up my eyes to new ways of doing things. At some point in the future I would relish the opportunity to mentor a pre-service teacher because I feel that through critiquing them it makes me more critical of my own teaching, it helps you to identify aspects that are missing in your teaching, you really see different things from the sidelines. (Dan)

Further, for some students, it allowed them to begin to question many of the taken-for-granted assumptions that underpinned their beliefs and values in relation to PE pedagogy, and has revealed possibilities for future practice and for the way they wish to construct their professional selves.

Mentoring other students was a really strange feeling because I thought I was the one who was supposed to have all the answers. Watching my mentees teach gave me a different perspective on the class, I could see how some of the activities really let some students just “show off” and it has made me really think about how I construct my lessons – does this happen in my classes? (Dave)

I’m not sure some of the ways we do things in PE are necessarily the best way, I mean when I watching from the sidelines there were a lot of students not really catered for. I encouraged my mentees to maximise participation but even though I approved with, and agreed with their activities, in reality it still didn’t really include everyone. It has made me re-think my whole approach to “maximising participation”. (Amy)

As Le Cornu (2005) explains, critical reflection requires prospective teachers to question their own and others’ assumptions in “an effort to uncover values and interests served and not served by the arrangements of schooling”. For Dave this AfL task has provided him with an opportunity to consider his own complicity in reproducing social inequities, particularly in terms of how various pedagogies
underpinned by a performance discourse (Tinning, 2004) act to privilege skilled students.

It would be rather naïve, however, to assume that all learning from this task was inherently positive; despite anecdotal impressions that the task had been largely well received, there were some examples of concerns this Acl approach exacerbated. For example:

I did wonder if I was really cut out to be a PE teacher and after fulfilling this role, whilst I did enjoy it, it probably has really confirmed that I am not that interested in applying for a teaching job next year. (Rick)

As an assessment task, whilst I get what the lecturers were trying to do, I really struggled to identify any areas that I think I need to improve in, or the impact that mentors have had on me. I think my first-year teachers had a great time, but in terms of my own development, well there was no rubric for me to follow and I find critical reflective tasks a bit loose ... I think it would have been better if I was marked on the lesson that I taught. (James)

This assessment task has given me a clear sense of what I did well and what I could improve on from the perceptions of others. It highlighted my deficiencies in planning and organisation as I couldn’t always meet with my mentees regularly. This made their roles unclear and diminished their confidence [so that] without my direct support, their lessons were sometimes not that great. (Lisa)

It is interesting to note in the above accounts that James’s concern with a lack of direction of this task manifested in claims that he didn’t have clear notions of “what” he was being assessed on. Perhaps a key lesson here is that, whilst assessment rubrics were provided, a clearer articulation of the learning outcomes may have focussed James’s attention away from the actual practicalities of his ability to “teach” PE to a more critical consideration of taken-for-granted pedagogical approaches and to an awareness of the roles he may be required to adopt in the future.

In considering how the Acl task contributed to the capacity of these students as prospective mentors, many indicated that this task had fostered the skills, knowledge and confidence to adopt this role in the future.

The experience of mentoring has been great for my teaching. Seeing how it operates from a different view is something that is valuable in further developing myself as a learner, teacher and prospective mentor. In the future I wish to take on mentoring roles and having a go at it in a safe, controlled environment has been a great stepping stone. (Sam)

This assessment task has taught me a school-based mentor needs to exhibit the ability to walk in the mentee’s shoes and empathise with them ... I can confidently state the STEM program has provided me with the skills, experience and capacity to take on mentoring roles in my future professional career. (Lisa)
CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

I found this assessment task highly rewarding as it felt like I was contributing to the learning of future teachers. (Geraldine)

Despite the intentions of PETE programs to develop “holistic” teacher graduates, much of the focus of these degrees (and certainly the knowledge privileged by PETE students) lies in the development of discipline content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Green, 2008). In this chapter we have argued the merit of incorporating approaches to PETE learning that consider their roles beyond that of merely a subject discipline teacher, and in the case discussed here, as a “future” pre-service teacher mentor. Whilst we do not advocate peer-mentoring as assessment as a panacea for all problems confronting the profession, especially in terms of placement shortages and pedagogical limitations, on the basis of evidence presented here it certainly shows the potential to go some of the way towards addressing these issues. Perhaps most heartening is the inference that, for at least some students, this assessment appeared to promote a degree of deep reflexivity resulting in some critical reflection of taken-for-granted assumptions that pervade perceptions about “effective” PE pedagogy. In particular the development of critical reflection skills enables students to engage in meaningful professional dialogue through which “they can open up their ideas and beliefs to critique and also support and challenge their peers in doing the same” (Le Cornu, 2005, p. 361). Further, there was evidence to suggest that this learning and assessment task did in fact foster a “mentoring attitude” (Le Cornu, 2005) among many of our participants.

Although we acknowledge that there is still work to do in refining and revising this learning experience, especially in terms of our own pedagogical approach in the provision of opportunities allowing PETE students to develop skills and attributes that will serve them beyond the PE classroom, we are heartened by Kirk’s (2010) sentiments on the future of PE in schools. He argues that future work is about not necessarily predicting the future of PE, but rather, “about preparing ourselves as best we can to meet whatever challenges arise by having a sense of what those challenges might be. Being well-prepared to meet the challenges of an uncertain future requires a disposition to imagine beyond the present” (p. x).

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