Transition to the Teaching Profession in a Queensland High School:

Beginning Teacher Perspectives

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Declaration

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signature:

Date: 17/11/2018
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Acronyms and Abbreviations
APST Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
BT Beginning Teacher
HOD Head of Department
MBT Mentoring Beginning Teachers
QCT Queensland College of Teachers
Abstract

The transition of Beginning Teachers (BTs) into full professional practice in Queensland schools has undergone changes since 2014 with a formal mentoring program, supported by state budget provisions, now a requirement in every government school. This provides a new conceptual and procedural era for BTs, prompting renewed interest in areas such as emotions, confidence, resilience and identity of novice teachers and their mediating influence in the transition phase of the first three years of teaching. This research project, herein referred to as the study, investigated BTs’ experience during their transition phase in the Queensland context. The intention was to identify and examine BTs’ current experiences in this new era, in efforts to drive further understanding of this phase of teacher development.

This qualitative study included seven BTs in a large metropolitan high school, comprising five female and two male participants. The purpose of this exploratory case study was to examine teacher perspectives during this unique phase, identify the areas the BTs deemed significant and consider the impact of these areas on their professional development experience. The participant teachers were at varying stages of transition including the end of the first, second and third years of their career. Each of these teachers had participated in a formal, year-long mentoring program at the same school. The research methodology employed thematic analysis of interviews where the teachers’ unique experiences within the high school context were explored through the transcripts of both individual and follow up, focus group interviews. Findings showed three categories of significant mediating themes emerged from the data analysis: Emotions, Expectations and Collegial Support. Further, the significance of these categories was elaborated regarding increases in confidence and resilience of the BT.

The findings of the study have implications for the development of improved BT transition programs which could be informed by an awareness and accommodation of the
key mediating themes identified through the three categories; 1) Emotions, 2) Expectations and 3) Collegial Support. Future research could look towards including BT identity formation and development as a significant aspect of the important areas shaping the transition phase.
Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study. First, the problem is introduced, including background information regarding Beginning Teachers (BTs) and the transition phase. Second, the context and purpose of the research are described. Finally, the research questions that underpin the study are presented and the significance of the investigation is outlined.

The Problem of Transition

BTs face a difficult transition phase, shifting from being a graduate to being a colleague in the education profession. Challenges in the school context, combined with the transition phase “shock” mean many BTs report dissatisfaction in their first few years of teaching (Hobson & Ashby, 2012; Ingersoll, 2012). BTs enter the profession as graduates, moving from being heavily supported in a pre-service teacher environment (typically a university where professional experience is fully supervised) to a sink or swim feeling in the early years of their teaching careers (Hudson, 2012; Renard, 2003). So significant is the impact of this phase that many BTs leave the profession during the first few years of service (Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson, Burke, & Louviere, 2013; Kidd, Brown, & Fitzallen, 2015).

Australian and Queensland rates of early career exit match those across the rest of the developed world, with current studies consistently reporting between 30-50% attrition in the first 5 years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2012; Paris, 2013). Globally and nationally, there have been movements by governments, policy makers and school administrators to curb attrition through the introduction of formal mentoring programs for BTs (OECD, 2005). To combat both the initial isolation experienced and to support teacher development, mentoring programs have been on the increase worldwide since the late 1990s.
Australian education systems have followed the international trend of formally mentoring BTs by implementing compulsory programs for first year teachers in almost every state and territory (Devos, 2010). These programs require BTs to take part in formal mentoring partnerships, structured learning experiences and involve measuring their work performance against nationally regulated standards (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). With the exception of the Northern Territory, all Australian states and territories have restructured previous processes and formalised their BT support programs in the years since 2012 (ACT Government, 2016; NSW Government Education & Communities, 2013; Qld Department of Education and Training, 2016; Victoria State Government, 2017; Government of South Australia, 2016; Western Australian Department of Education, 2016) in line with government budget attributions and educational department policy changes (Education & Training, 2007).

The corpus of literature over the last two decades (1998-2018) reports the successes of mentoring programs in various countries (Baker-Doyle, 2012; McIntyre & Hobson, 2016; Perda, 2013; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Studies referenced in this paper from England, USA, Turkey, Norway, New Zealand and Australia indicate that in the last 10 years (2009-2018) many countries have shown a similar trend in the organisational practice of providing mentoring for their BTs to target retention rates specifically. Most teachers (80%) in the USA and UK now participate in some form of induction, an increase of approximately 40% from the early 1990s to the early 2000s (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Studies such as Luekens, Lyter, and Fox (2004) claim data that indicates almost 30% of USA teachers leave the profession during the first three years of their careers, and successful mentoring programs can result in retaining more than 90% of teachers. A more recent study in the Queensland context (Hudson & Hudson, 2016) cites similar data from The Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) indicating that exit figures of BTs in Queensland may be as high as 50%. The Independent Education Union showed 45% of
teachers claimed they would not be teaching within 10 years and the Australian Principals Association indicated 24% would leave within 5 years. BTs in Queensland are giving the same exit reasons as their overseas counterparts; difficulties working with colleagues, school culture, behaviour management, continuous stress, long hours and dealing with management (Aitken & Harford, 2011; Buchanan et al., 2013).

Mentoring programs have a reputation for improving this difficult period and at least in some countries, and in some contexts, seemingly help BTs a great deal during this transition time (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). However, despite the positive positioning of mentoring programs, BT attrition has not always declined in response to increases in induction participation rates (Fry, 2010). This incongruence may be explained by the notion that mentoring programs may not be providing the quality support experiences the research suggests improves retention. Alternatively, there may be other variables complicating the potential benefits of a supportive mentoring process which warrant further exploration (Devos, 2010; Fry, 2010; Hudson & Hudson, 2016). This discrepancy, coupled with the reduced number of studies presenting the perspectives and lived experience of BTs represented in the Queensland research base means the current study may serve to inform the many stakeholders interested in this area, locally, nationally and globally.

**Background of the Study**

In 2007, the Commonwealth Government of Australia presented the Top of the Class: Report on the Inquiry into Teacher Education (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, 2007). The report provided recommendations to support BTs, including: a year-long structured induction program, 20 per cent reduction in a BT’s face-to-face teaching load to enable time to undertake professional development, reflection, observing other classes and meeting with mentors,
allocation of a trained mentor and access to a structured and tailored program of professional development (Pendergast, Garvis, & Keogh, 2011).

Two years later, in 2009 all states and territories in Australia signed the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality and in doing so reforms regarding teachers’ professional development were agreed. Due to these events, all mentoring programs in place in Australia now use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) as a measure of proficiency for graduate teachers (Devos, 2010). Registration boards require this certification and governments in the states and territories of Australia claim to align formal mentoring programs for teachers with their professional progression over their first 12 months within the national framework of professional standards (Australian Institute Teaching & School Leadership, 2014; Leonard, 2012). Despite the similar expectations, both in original set up and of continued professional progress, each state or territory registration and mentoring program operates differently. The Tasmanian Department of Education adopted a program for BTs in 2013 with funds targeting the provision of regular, extra non-contact time and professional development opportunities (Tasmanian Government, 2016). Victorian and Queensland also provide increased financial support but leave the distribution of these funds to local school-based decision makers (Queensland Department Education & Training, 2017; Victorian State Government, 2017). It appears that each program implementation in Australia varies widely, both across states and schools. Subsequently, this is another way in which the transition experience is different for each BT.

**Context and Purpose of the Study**

Recent changes to the context in which BTs are being transitioned into Queensland schools presents a complex positioning of teachers that may influence the mentoring processes adopted by a school. The Queensland Mentoring Beginning Teacher (MBT) program was first implemented across the state in 2015. It encourages schools to prioritise
the provision of development processes, support and opportunities to BTs through a fiscal support provision each term. The Great Teachers = Great Results initiative from the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment (2013) and the Review of Teacher Education and School Induction (2010) report provided the foundational directions for the implementation of this formal mentoring program for beginning teachers in Queensland in 2015. Both documents highlight recommendations schools can use to practically support beginning teachers and provides expectations for the work of BTs in their first years of teaching. The roles of the Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leadership and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers play in this mentoring space are of interest as they may impact the ways teachers are socialised into schools and have subsequent influences on teacher self-efficacy, identity and resilience. Research studies such as Hudson and Hudson (2016) (focused on BT perspectives regarding goal setting in line with the APST) and Spooner-Lane (2017) (in low to mid socio economic primary schools) are already beginning to critically question the role of today’s mentoring programs in Queensland schools and how they are effective in the development of BTs.

Consideration of any mandated program, resource or professional development opportunity warrants researchers’ close attention in order to examine and evaluate its effectiveness or usefulness. Early conjecture in this area is not surprising given the complex nature of mentoring, transition and teacher perspectives and further justifies the obvious need for varied research to occur. Participants in the MBT program may be benefiting from significant reform, with greater budgetary and strategic focus placed on BT transition and retention (Hudson & Hudson, 2016). Conversely, teachers involved in these programs may be experiencing a narrow view of teaching and teacher development, resulting in disillusionment and increased attrition rates (Devos, 2010; Leonard, 2012). A wide range of BT perceptions regarding their transition experiences need to be captured
and explored. This study is intended to contribute to that necessity by considering one context and multiple views of the experience of transition in a formalised program. The study is expected to offer to the literature, deep descriptions of such experiences and views from BTs within the Queensland secondary school setting.

**Research Questions**

With the background and contextual features taken into consideration, the purpose of this study was to examine BT perspectives on their experience during their transition into the profession within a Queensland specific school site. The following research questions guided this study.

1. What do BTs consider to be significant experiences in their transition phase?
2. In what ways do these significant experiences contribute to their professional development?

**Significance of the Study**

There is a need for more recent and detailed studies into the nature and value of transition that present and consider the perspectives of BTs in Queensland. An increased fiscal accountability for the human investment in the BT during the transition phase has been implemented in the last 5 years in Queensland state schools. As such, a means to better understand the BTs’ experiences, through their voice, is required to consider the impact and effectiveness of these transition programs. A broad understanding includes considering areas that BTs recognise as useful during the transition period and why these areas may be supporting or hindering their professional development (Hudson, 2012). In reviews critiquing the impact of mentoring processes and programs in primary schools, both Spooner-Lane (2017) and Adoniou (2016) discuss the limitations in this area of research. Evidence (most of which pre-dates current mentoring arrangements in Australia) suggests that the effectiveness of mentoring provision continues to be a matter
of teacher perception, with little evidence in high school settings. Detailed accounts, such as provided in this study, addressing the areas determining success for beginning teachers are helpful to a range of stakeholders (Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012; McIntyre & Hobson, 2016). A literature review by Crutcher and Naseem (2016) states that while there is general agreement in the research area that effective mentoring improves BT practice, there are divergent perspectives across teaching sites and countries critically questioning what exactly these areas are and how they mediate teacher practice. Therefore, asking BTs to discuss their individual experiences, within their context, is of value in providing depth of understanding within the transition phase.

Retaining BTs has become a focus of schools, governments and researchers, with reviews identifying elements such as work overload, professional isolation, challenging student behaviours and an increasingly performance-focused profession as the key reasons that contribute to new teachers’ exiting the profession in the first 5 years (Hudson, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Paris, 2013). However, as in all areas of education research, there are difficulties in identifying the variables in schools and complexities in their explanation. Martin, Buelow, and Hoffman (2016) investigated the impacts of support for BTs in the middle years and found that they leave schools where they do not feel supported, cannot meet the needs of students or feel ineffective. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the categories of BTs’ experiences that contribute to these impacts.

This study explores the views of BTs in the transition phase in a metropolitan, Queensland high school. Conclusions about the value of mentoring programs globally already exist but may be limited when generalised to the broader Queensland school context. Therefore, the transition experience of BTs is considered in the light of current professional standards and transition to work expectations in Queensland education.
Figure 1.1. The experience of a Beginning Teacher.

Research Design

A number of interrelated areas inform this study. The research problem both informed and was informed by the literature review. As the research problem became more refined and its significance became more obvious, certain assumptions deemed as being important to the study were able to be drawn from the literature and helped to shape the research questions. These areas combined to ensure the methodology, methods, and data analysis were carefully considered, well aligned and an appropriate fit for the research design.

Positioning of the Researcher

For a reader to trust the perspective of a researcher as presented in qualitative inquiry, the disclosure of the researcher's position is vital (Thomas, 2015). The research question grew from my experiences as a classroom teacher, manager and mentor of beginning teachers and therefore the understanding of myself in the creation of the subsequent knowledge must be considered in this study. As a mentor to beginning teachers, I recognised firsthand the difficulties these teachers experienced in their initial teaching year, including their frustrations with a system that did not seem to value “their voice” in the analysis of beginning teachers’ experiences. My research was motivated by an interest in
understanding how I responded to this unique time in a beginning teacher’s career, and a reflection that my own, early career times were both turbulent, and yet full of support from key people.

As an administrator I acknowledge my role in this research is one of manager, as well as investigator of data. The voice of BTs is something I am seeking, and yet my very role may curb the honest and open narrative I want beginning teachers to share. Berger (2013) addresses the potential effects of a researcher’s social position, personal experiences and connections to the participants. Consideration and awareness at each stage of the project was influential in regard to my position as researcher; when researcher shared the experience of study participants, when researcher moves from the position of an outsider to the position of an insider in the course of the study, and when researcher had personal experience with what was being studied. Efforts were made both to harvest the benefits of researcher familiarity with the subject and curb its potentially negative effects (Berger, 2013). These are discussed in detail in chapter 3.

**Thesis Outline**

Chapter 2 reviews the literature pertinent to this study. Key tenets of beginning teacher experience during transition; the influence of emotions, self-efficacy, resilience and identity are reviewed. The positive influence of mentoring on beginning teachers during this time is examined. The chapter concludes with a discussion that outlines the implications for the BT experience during the unique transition time.

Chapter 3 provides the theoretical framework of the study, the methodology and methods. The qualitative research design and constructivist paradigm are explained to justify the choice of case study and their potential for answering the research question is
argued. The participants of the study are introduced before the data collection tools and analysis process are outlined.

Chapter 4 presents the data and discussion around the three major categories of analysis. Discussion regarding each category responds to the two research questions of the study. In this final chapter, I summarise the research findings and respond to the research questions, linking results to the literature and note limitations of the current study. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the problem of BT retention, the difficulty of the transition time and the unclear influence of BT mentoring in Queensland schools. The background to the problem was presented, outlining where Australian states and territories are positioned relative to other countries in this area of research. The context and purpose of the study were advanced highlighting the recent changes to requirements in Queensland when mentoring BTs. The significance of the study section detailed the importance of the BTs’ voice and perspective in this work and recounted some of the key areas considered relevant to the BT experience. The design of the study was briefly outlined following the researcher’s positioning in the study. This was followed by an overview of the thesis chapters.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Literature in the field defines the BT transition period as the timeframe from student preparation training into and through to the first few years of teaching (Fry, 2010; Hobson et al., 2009; Huling, Resta, & Yeargain, 2012). It is the first phase in what can become a rewarding continuum of career development, a trajectory including three stages: i) transition shock, survival and discovery; ii) experimentation and consolidation; iii) mastery and stabilisation (Worthy, 2005). For approximately 30 years (1990-2018), research has recognised this transition phase as a particularly critical stage in the development of BTs. Multiple researchers describe the initial transition experience as one of shock because it can be a time that exposes the difficult yet perhaps necessary professional and personal challenges faced by teachers in their day-to-day professional life (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011; Dicke, Parker, Marsh, Kunter, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2014; Goddard & Goddard, 2006). Friedman’s (2010) description of reality shock proposes three stages: slump, fatigue, and adjustment. These stages again indicate that initial classroom experiences can lead to symptoms of exhaustion for BTs. However, this model proposes that eventually BTs can adapt to their environment and successfully adjust their practice to overcome these seeming negative aspects and impacts of this shock. This initial, 3-year phase, the transition phase, seems to subside if and when BTs discover new and successful ways of working, of confidently being a teacher (Worthy, 2005).

The BT transition phase has also been identified as unique due to the substantial conflict between the perceived ideal and the actuality novice teachers experience when starting their first work as professionals (Achinstein, 2006; Ulvik, Smith, & Helleve, 2009). It is a time when the realities and responsibilities of working independently in a classroom become clear to the BTs (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) whilst at the same
time, the real and perceived expectations that are evident from both the organisation and the BT themselves can create confusion and stress. As Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) note, many BTs often do not feel satisfied or confident in their workplace or the organisational situation in the first years of teaching. They do not initially feel integrated or familiar with their new school environment and this is problematic because, as Friedman and Kass (2002) argue, BTs must begin to see themselves as part of the school organisation during transition in order to work and function effectively within it. Disparities between these expectations and their reality experienced during this transition phase can see BTs question their beliefs and ideas about teaching, challenging and confirming some aspects of the professional experience they had predicted (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). These early perceptions have an impact on their capacity to function effectively or demonstrate a high level of professional and organisational ability and can lead to burn out that can ultimately see many BTs exit from teaching (Gavish & Friedman, 2011). As such the BT experience is a vital viewpoint from which to examine the aspects of transition that they deem significant.

**Areas impacting BT**

Research indicates that teachers’ emotions, self-efficacy, resilience, identity and engagement in mentoring opportunities are interconnected areas that are influential during the transition phase (Faulkner & Latham, 2016; Flores & Day, 2006; Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Hems-Lorenze & Maulana, 2016; Nichols, Schutz, Rodgers, & Bilica, 2017). These areas contribute to how teachers perceive themselves (Corbell, Osborne, & Reiman, 2010) and deal with the expectations from both people in the school community and themselves, as they develop their professional knowledge base (Yoo, 2011) and define how good teachers perform (Devos, 2012). These areas are often linked with teachers’ decisions to remain or leave the profession during their early career phase (McIntyre & Hobson, 2016) because, as Flores and Day (2006) describe, “coping with
the demands of teaching entails a continuous process of analysis of one’s own beliefs and practices” (p. 220). The key areas of BT emotions, self-efficacy, resilience, identity and mentoring, and their relevance in the transition phase are discussed in turn.

**Emotions**

Schools and classrooms are complex emotional places, where teachers are required to cope with and manage their own emotions to successfully deliver teaching experiences for their students (Becker, Goetz, Morger, & Ranellucci, 2014; Chen, 2015; Nichols, Schutz, Rodgers, & Bilica, 2017). Emotion is often defined as a complex state of feeling that results in physical and psychological changes that influence thought and behaviour (Lindqvist, Weurlander, Wernerson, and Thornberg (2017). Teacher emotions influence teacher behaviour as they constitute a dynamic process, dependent on the constant and varied social transactions that happen within the school context. Teachers’ emotional experiences not only occur as their own psychological activities but involve the emotions of others and the interaction with the personal, professional and social environment to which the teachers belong (Becker et al., 2014; Dicke et al., 2014; Van Maele, Moolenaar, Daly, DiPaola, & Hoy, 2015). The construct of teacher emotions is gaining more attention in the research as an important area impacting teacher’s work (Nichols et al., 2017).

Teacher emotions can be described in a dichotomous fashion, most commonly labelled as positive and negative. However, researchers also discuss the strength of emotions as a way of interpreting the psychological events at play. Examples of positive emotions described by BTs include satisfaction, pride, excitement and negative emotions such as anger, frustration, anxiety and sadness (Chen, 2015). Nichols et al. (2017) have explored more nuanced impacts including the emotional episodes experienced by BTs as they apply the effort required to manage their own emotions and the emotions of the classroom whilst teaching and working with students. The research into teachers’
emotions is growing and the inter-connections to the work of teaching in the transition phase is becoming more important (Hoy, 2013).

There is some conjecture in the research in regard to emotions experienced by BTs during their transition phase. While Gavish and Friedman (2011) found that emotional exhaustion (i.e., an overload, depletion of, physical and mental energies) remained stable over the first year of practical experience as a new teacher, Goddard and Goddard (2006) reported an increase in emotional exhaustion in newly practising teachers, which can be seen over the first 2 years of their career. As such, emotions in both preservice and BTs as they transition into the profession are a noteworthy theme for the consideration of those who support BTs in their induction. Emotional experiences lie at the inner most core of an individual, therefore rich descriptions from BTs and careful analyses are required to unpack and understand the influence of this area on BT transition to teaching. Hagenauer, Hascher, and Volet (2015) showed self-efficacy was linked to positive emotions because teachers who scored high results for self-efficacy were also found to show positive emotions such as enjoyment during instruction. As such, considering BTs’ emotions, and the connections to their confidence and self-belief as effective teachers could have positive outcomes for planning and implementing the kinds of support programs that could increase success of the transition phase.

Self-efficacy

As BTs enter the classroom independently for the first time, emotions of apprehension, uncertainty and insecurity become manifest (Lowrey, 2012). Self-efficacy is the belief one has in one’s own abilities to organise and carry out actions necessary to achieve desired goals. Bandura’s (1997) seminal work showed these beliefs are more in flux during initial exposure or learning situations. Self-efficacy is influential to BTs as belief in their teaching abilities relates specifically to the confidence they have in their capability to undertake teaching tasks and classroom actions successfully (Skaalvik &
Skaalvik, 2009, 2014). This clearly highlights why the transition phase is a critical period for long term self-efficacy development (Hoy, 2004). Teacher self-efficacy is recognised as having a powerful impact on all educators as it influences behaviours including instructional choice, effort and persistence (Putman, 2012). Importantly, BTs who question their self-efficacy in classrooms and schools ultimately discontinue in the teaching profession (Lowrey, 2012) whilst those who receive support, help to regulate their stress and experience positive outcomes in classrooms show greater levels of self-efficacy and subsequently remain (Helms-Lorenze, Slof & van de Grift, 2012; Hems-Lorenze & Maulana, 2016).

Bandura’s (1997) work advances the notion that self-efficacy is enhanced in four ways, when people experience: i) mastery or success, ii) socially vicarious experiences that provide a model for this success, iii) the effective verbal persuasion of others, iv) emotional arousal that reduces stress. These four experiences seem to bridge the personal and professional relationships practised by BTs and over time, builds efficacy in the individual (Simons, 2011). Many quantitative studies examine teacher efficacy using the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale or a similar, modified questionnaire (Ho & Hau, 2004; Putman, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) linking teachers’ perceived abilities to what are desired teacher behaviours. These quantitative studies show that teachers who demonstrate high levels of efficacy are more likely to use effective methods of instruction, persist during difficult teaching situations, and successfully maintain student engagement (Putman, 2012). However, much of the research on teacher efficacy has been conducted with already established teachers with years of teaching experience. Less evidence is available regarding the efficacy beliefs of secondary BTs and the deep explanations of the areas that may influence them (Gu & Day, 2007; Klassen et al., 2009; Kleinsassser, 2014), a shortcoming that the current study seeks to address.
There is some evidence to suggest that teacher self-efficacy is developed and increases throughout preservice teacher education and then declines during the first year of teaching (Pendergast, Garvis & Keogh, 2011). It would seem that self-efficacy is influenced heavily by school context, with teachers receiving stronger scores in self-efficacy testing also reporting higher levels of support in their first year of teaching (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Therefore, focusing on how professional development experiences may increase the confidence and overall self-belief of BTs is of great importance to those supporting teachers during the transition phase.

*Resilience*

Resilience has been identified as a necessary trait in all quality teachers (Beltman et al., 2011). In this context, it is defined as a category that assists BT to overcome challenging situations or recurring setbacks, common during the transition phase (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). With a majority of the literature defining it as an adaptive response, an individual’s ability to bounce back, and a dynamic and complex interaction between multiple variables, it is important to remember that resilience is not simply a personal attribute (Beltman, Mansfield, & Harris, 2015; Gu & Day, 2007). Rather, resilience seems to be a by-product of both personal attributes of an individual and the context of the external environment (Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney, 2012).

Resilience is essential for self-efficacy to flourish because confidence and coping mechanisms for stress and adversity have an ongoing influence on one’s self-belief system (Faulkner & Latham, 2016). Protective, confidence inducing themes such as a supportive school culture (including mentoring) may increase the resilience of early career teachers (Johnson et al., 2010) and therefore warrant further investigation across contexts. Arnup and Bowles (2016) report,
Many teachers perceive the teaching profession to be stressful due to the following challenges: teaching unmotivated students; maintaining classroom discipline; workload; coping with changes; being evaluated by others (e.g. parents, colleagues, students); relationships with colleagues; administration and management; role conflict and ambiguity; and poor working conditions.

Consequently, examining the categories that help sustain teachers as they move from graduate to early career stage must include a focus on resilience behaviours (Faulkner & Latham, 2016). As stated previously, resilience is, in part, a process located at the interface between the personal and contextual (Mansfield, Beltman, & Price, 2014) and thus has the capacity to change and influence an individual across teaching settings and times. The most frequent challenges associated with the work of being a teacher include both the individual or classroom contexts and the broader, professional work context (Beltman et al., 2011). Not surprisingly, there is a strong focus in the resilience literature on early career teachers’ stress and issues of their retention in the profession (Gu & Day, 2007). A focus on resilience in the BT transition phase has significance for researchers and those who seek to support BT, as is explored in the current study.

Identity

During the BT phase, not only are teachers exposed to new challenges and the need to build new skills, they are also developing and shaping their emerging teacher identities (Nichols et al., 2017). Professional identity development is taken to mean the process where BT are developing and considering “how they define themselves to themselves and to others” (Lasky 2005). Research in this area suggests that possessing a strong personal identity is essential for successful teaching because it is a way that teachers make sense of themselves and the world around them (Putman, 2012), which in turn can provide a sense of purpose for their teaching (Flores & Day, 2006). Professional identity is also a
helpful theoretical lens through which teachers can analyse the work they do in becoming and being a teacher (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

According to Flores and Day (2006) in their longitudinal study of teachers in the first 2 years of teaching, the formation of a teacher’s identity depends largely on the interaction between personal, professional and contextual factors. It is constructed from the technical and emotional aspects of teaching as well as the interactions among the social, cultural and institutional environment the teacher operates in everyday (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Tricarico, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey, 2015). It could be surmised that BT identities are constructed from a combination of their unique school experiences and can influence both the work they are doing, and the way they are reflecting on that work.

As identity is co-constructed (Wilkins, Busher, Kakos, Mohamed, & Smith, 2012) mentoring relationships may contribute to identity development as they help or hinder BT reflections, relationships and professionalism (Pillen, Beijaard, & Brok, 2013). Yoo (2011) and Coward et al. (2015) discuss how BTs are in a period when their teacher identity is developing from preservice teacher to early career teacher and consequently they may be inclined to be more self-critical. Negative self-narratives could encourage beliefs reflecting incompetency about their skills as a teacher, which can actually disempower teacher practice, rather than support its development (Yoo, 2011). Mentoring programs in this context may influence BT identity as BT skills are encouraged and enhanced through the support of both the professional and personal aspects of their development (Marable & Raimondi, 2007).

Drawing on their personal identity, BTs are particularly influenced by the early phase of their teaching careers and those who help them deconstruct it, that is, asking questions such as what does it mean to be a teacher or how do beginning teachers understand their relationship in this new teaching world? (Education Queensland
Mentoring: The Influence of Mentors During Transition

The role of the mentor has been consistently identified as a positive category during this period of BT transition (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Formal mentoring support in Queensland during their transition phase is referred to as “mentoring beginning teachers” and is aimed to support new teachers in this critical phase of their career (Department of Education Queensland, 2018, p. 2). Within the literature the words mentoring and induction are often used interchangeably. However, in this study, the term induction is used to indicate the general support all new teachers receive at the school. Whereas mentoring BTs refers to the specific support (including the provision of an Education Queensland trained mentor for 12 months via school-mediated, formal activities and professional development) provided to BTs within the context of one school. Since (2014) in Queensland, BT mentoring has included the departmental expectation that a formalised program, delivered by trained mentor teachers will support BTs in all state schools (Department of Education Queensland, 2018).

According to research in this field, the mentor appears crucial in supporting BTs during this highly stressful transition phase, helping them to navigate the school as a workplace and organisation (Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012), providing information about school culture, and seeking to support empowerment and self-efficacy for BTs (Lowrey, 2012). A number of reviews have discussed the effectiveness and benefits of mentoring for both mentors and mentees (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Marable & Raimondi, 2007; Musset, 2010). Ingersoll (2012) found BTs who received some form of mentoring had higher job satisfaction, commitment and retention. Overall, teachers who were part
of a mentoring process performed better at aspects of teaching, including: keeping students on task, lesson plans, classroom activities that met their students’ needs and interests, effective classroom atmosphere and management (Corbell et al., 2010; Huling et al., 2012).

Conversely, Ehrich, Hansford, and Tennent (2004) found that although it has potential to be a powerful support in the transition phase, mentorship, if not carefully considered, could be detrimental to BTs, mentors and school cultures. For example, inadequate program components that may negatively impact on these stakeholders include: inadequate provision of time for mentoring, poor planning of the mentoring process, unsuccessful pairing of mentors and mentees, a lack of understanding of the mentoring process (Ehrich et al., 2004). These findings suggest great care and preparation is needed to enable effective mentoring.

Most research supports positive outcomes of mentoring programs for BTs. Mentoring initiatives have been in place for longer periods in the USA and UK, resulting in more research into this area. Studies such as that by Luekens et al. (2004) claim that, although 30% of teacher attrition in the USA occurs in the first 3 years of their careers, successful mentoring programs can result in retaining more than 90% of these teachers. In these countries mentoring appears to be working effectively, indicating that there are variables for a supportive transition process and they warrant further exploration in Queensland school contexts (Fry, 2010).

Implications

Transition is a critical time for BTs as they have completed their university studies and gained some professional knowledge, but are faced with the reality and increased demands of teaching in an actual classroom. It is important to understand their experiences and identify resources and processes that could help them to manage these
challenges and facilitate a less demanding, more positively experienced transition. This work is relevant to a continually changing education sector, which could benefit from streamlined and efficient processes, more satisfied employees and higher retention rates of BTs.

In 2005 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) acknowledged that teacher shortage is recognised as a major threat to the quality of education (Musset, 2010). High attrition rates of teachers in the first 5 years of their careers is one factor contributing to a looming teacher shortage (Paris, 2013). Saliently, in terms of teacher quality, research has indicated that inexperienced teachers demonstrate less effective teaching behaviour in the classroom (Van de Grift, 2007; Van de Grift, Helms-Lorenz, & Maulana, 2014). It is important to take action to prevent escalation of attrition in the near future by enhancing the professional development of BTs (Van de Grift, Helms-Lorenz, & Maulana, 2014).

Much documentation exists regarding forms of best personal and professional preparation as well as the desired outcomes of mentoring BTs (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, less information about the rich and personal experiences of BTs and how they cope during this phase is available (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). What BTs may be facing during transition, particularly when researchers want to consider multiple education contexts, may be better explained by BTs’ own perceptions, emotions and experiences (Kidd et al., 2015). Caires, Almeida, and Vieira (2012) document the importance of sourcing the BT voice in a study that considered the emotions, cognitions and perceptions regarding the teaching practice of almost 300 preservice teachers. Interviews with these teachers emphasise some of the difficulties they experienced during this period such as perceptions of increased stress and vulnerability, balanced by positive perceptions of their growing knowledge and skilfulness, efficacy, flexibility and spontaneity in teaching performance and interactions. Caires et al. (2012) also discuss the role of the BTs’
perceptions of their accomplishments, acceptance and recognition within the school community through the guidance and support provided by their supervisors.

The first three years represent a distinguishable period in the professional development of teachers, where support is critical and the scope for learning opportunities is particularly influential on teacher growth (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). Mentoring has been identified as having a positive influence on strengthening factors such as forming collegial relationships, curriculum and pedagogical development, behaviour management and school processes. Ehrich et al. (2004) and Pendergast et al. (2011) suggest that mentoring programs can be seen as both a means to alleviate the problem of early career attrition and as a means to improve teacher quality through professional development. However, these same researchers also suggest there is a need for more research into BT perspectives regarding what support they deem is beneficial to their development throughout the transition process. Whilst there may be a close relationship identified between professional standards, mentoring, and what it means to be a good teacher, (Devos, 2010), this conceptualisation may also carry risks that can be harmful for both well intentioned mentoring programs and BT development.

Initiatives that includes BTs at the heart of the mentoring program, as active agents in the process may be an answer to their retention and ongoing development. However, Devos (2010) warns of the improvement imperative, identified as a narrow focus in schools, where the need of teacher retention and the demands of specific standardised practice that constitutes quality teacher development is often verbalised to BTs, potentially further fuelling their apprehension. This constraint could have implications in a mentoring program that is highly structured, a mentoring relationship that is unhelpful or in a circumstance where the BT is not given the professional security needed to develop. The current study asks BTs about their experience and considers the nuanced events and themes, including formalised mentoring and the use of the APST in
judging their development, that contribute to the transition phase in the current Queensland context.

Leonard's (2012) work on professional conversations discusses the use of the APST and explores how stringent regulation of BTs may not necessarily improve their learning and development, let alone help in their retention. Too much regulation and standardisation may de-professionalise teachers, especially if it results in BTs being audited or appraised within the school. This culture has been linked to teacher dissatisfaction within the workforce, which is the opposite of what is intended through successful mentoring programs across the nation (Hattie, 2012). Mentoring relationships that are too focused on a standardised framework such as APST, could be commended for being very structured in scope and support for clear expectations. However, they may in fact be limiting in outcomes for BTs and their broader perspectives of quality teaching.

Finally, mentoring can be perceived as a socialisation process in which BTs are proactively acclimatised to school cultures, with subsequent impacts on their self-efficacy, identity and resilience. Powerful school cultural norms often persuade BTs to adapt to the status quo of the school and operate in certain professional and personal ways (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). While socialisation may be a necessary part of feeling involved and accepted into the organisation, (Devos, 2010) cautions about the threat of organisational socialisation (through mentoring) for BTs becoming a process whereby teachers can be positioned into a specific and standardised conception of a good teacher. Long term, this may not necessarily be beneficial for the individual, school or profession. Better understanding what BTs think, do and value in the transition phase requires that they be asked and heard. This is a core focus of the current study.

Chapter Summary
Chapter 2 provided a review of literature pertinent to the study. A strong argument exists that BT transition is a critical stage in teacher development, with various factors impacting on individuals new to the profession. Teacher emotions, self-efficacy, resilience, identity and mentoring are important areas influencing BTs during this phase. The positive influence of mentoring to assist BTs in navigating the early phase of their career, the complexity of current government and system changes, various ways teachers consider their development and the concept of a “quality teacher” are highly relevant to BT transition. An exploration of the deep, rich descriptions of BT experience is of high importance.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter addresses the methodological considerations that shaped the study. The qualitative research design and constructivist paradigm are explained to justify the choice of case study methodology, which is discussed in detail. The role of the researcher and the context of the case are described, and the BT participants are introduced. Data collection procedures and thematic analysis details are outlined to explain both the methods and timeline of the study. Finally, the ethical considerations, potential limitations of the study and ways to ensure trustworthiness of the research are considered.

Overview

This research employed an exploratory, case study design. Case study involves the in-depth examination of the particularity of one context, exploring both the complexity and uniqueness of the setting and the numerous activities that take place within it (Thomas, 2015). Through the detailed description of a secondary school and its participants, this study examined the relationships between colleagues, the teaching challenges and successes of BTs and the formal and informal processes in place for BTs to gain a deep understanding of their experience during the transition phase. This transition phase is defined in the current context as the first three years of the teaching profession, including participation in a formal mentoring program in the first 12 months. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What do BTs consider to be significant experiences in their transition phase?
2. In what ways do these significant experiences contribute to their professional development?
Figure 3.1 summarises the methodological framework in which this study is organised and theorised. The following section outlines in detail the justification for the approach and methods used.

A Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research allows an in-depth exploration and understanding of the values, beliefs and assumptions underpinning behaviours relative to a particular group (Choy, 2014). Beyond the means of gathering data, qualitative methods are a way of approaching the empirical world to establish meaning of a phenomenon from the views of the participants (Baskarada, 2014). Rather than trying to quantify or provide causative variables responsible for successful BT transition, this qualitative research places a high priority on the direct interpretation of events and seeks to gather as much detailed information as possible to understand the experiences of a group of BTs in one high school setting. Once the qualitative data have been collected the focus shifts to analysis,
where the researcher attempts to understand the details of the case and seeks patterns and themes in the information. Interpretation refers to the task of drawing inferences from the collected themes after an analysis of the data (Thomas, 2015). This involves a search for broader meaning in the research findings, with the purpose to understand the participants’ experience in its totality (Kumar, 2005; Stake, 1995).

**Constructivism**

Constructivism is a philosophical view and a psychological approach that holds that meaning, understanding and knowledge of the world, of self and of social practice are constructed through experience. This process can be described as learning, that is, learning is the process of constructing meaning/knowledge through experience. As we all have different experiences, we construct different meanings and understandings that shape engagement in activities such as work, teaching and research. Qualitative researchers have a constructivist worldview, focused on observation and behaviour rather than pre and post data measures (Creswell, 2013). Constructivism concentrates on the interpretation of reality through one’s lived experiences and interactions between the individual and their environment (Morse & McEvoy, 2014). Hence, constructivist research is understanding the world of lived experience from the perspective of those who live in it.

In this study, the perspectives of the BTs are the focus. Experiences and accounts of the participants contribute to the understanding and theorising about the transition phase of BTs. As learning itself is a constructive process, BTs experience their reality as they operate within a range of intersecting experiences within schools. They are learning their craft, learning the social and personal realities of teaching day-to-day and learning how to be independent teachers in the school environment. The transition phase into teaching is a unique time, when BTs begin to experience both the emotions of independence and isolation in teaching, and the impact of a mentor on their day to day
teaching practices (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Conducting research using the constructivist lens allows the researcher to present findings that provide “thick descriptions” of this transition time, valuing the voice of the BTs and providing the potential for the reader to make their own generalisations about the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, this paradigm is justified in supporting the exploration of the BTs’ experience in their context, through an exploratory case study.

Case Study

Qualitative case study research is the detailed examination of contextually bounded social phenomena, chosen on the assumption that a rich description and analysis of the lived experience of the participants (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Thomas, 2015) would provide a basis for understanding. This study addressed the transition phase of BTs and their accounts of the significant themes by which it was constructed and interpreted by them as a professional development experience during that time. Qualitative case study values multiple perspectives of stakeholders and their detailed description of events and interactions in a specific context (Kumar, 2005). In this study the case is defined as seven BTs who completed the same induction and mentoring program in their first year of teaching. These teachers were in their first, second or third year of teaching and had completed all teaching experience post university at the identified school. It is their voice, accessed through the semi-structured interviews used, that generates the descriptive and explanatory accounts of their beginning teaching experience that become the data to be analysed.

Using interviews, the interpretive/qualitative approach enabled the harnessing of BT experiential detail to gain explanatory depth and understanding of their transition. Such data have the opportunity to supplement the quantitative research prominent in the areas of BT transition, mentoring and identity (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kardos & Johnson, 2010). This study provides evidence that adds to this methodological approach,
valuing the explanation of educational situations through the qualitative lens (Simons, 2009). While other research employing qualitative methods has been utilised elsewhere to identify and analyse the areas that contribute to transition success, greater understanding regarding this early phase of teaching is required in the current Queensland context (Devos, 2010).

Case study as a methodology has its origins in anthropology, sociology, psychology and linguistics (Simons, 2009). Historically, this methodology examines individuals, families, communities, institutions, organisations, cities or incidents and pays attention to cultural patterns, meanings and sociocultural groups as observed over a period of time (Duff, 2014). Case study can enable the researcher to generate a deep insight into a situation from the perspective of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Case studies typically collect more extensive amounts of information, in more detail than other methodologies (Morse & McEvoy, 2014). Cassell and Symon, (2004) describe the appropriateness of case study when it is important to “understand how the organisational and environmental content is having an impact on or influencing social processes” (p. 323). Case studies continue to be widely used and valued in health sciences, social sciences and education research (Duff, 2014) and have contributed significantly to theories and models in BT transition and mentoring research (Cassell & Symon, 2004).

Case study research involves “studies of particularization more than generalization” (Stake, 1995) and therefore focus on providing insight and interpretation as opposed to testing a hypothesis (Creswell, 2015). The BTs’ transition experiences were investigated and their personal representations of this significant time in their career development were used as data for further understanding. The case itself consists of more than just the description of the school site. The goal of the case is to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon of BT transition and mentoring influence. Through case study, an opportunity exists for the researcher to gain a deeper and more holistic view of the
research problem and facilitate an understanding of this problem (Baskarada, 2014). The case, even when examined in isolation, is always in interactions with others (including the researcher) (Harland, 2014). Whilst acknowledged there are other impacts on the context (including wider school culture, external organisation influences [such as unions or associations] human resource effects and particularly community contexts) which are influential on BT, they are simply not considered central to the scope of this study.

The role of the researcher.

Case study allows the researcher to gain insight through the eyes of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), focusing on the BT’s experience, rather than through a policy or administration lens (Harland, 2014). However, the researcher’s beliefs and their prior experience, and role in the school context needs to be considered to minimise any potential researcher bias (Kumar, 2005). As the Deputy Principal of the school was responsible for the organisation and implementation of the induction and mentoring program, they had insider knowledge that potentially influenced the implementation and outcomes of the research study. While some of this influence was mitigated, because data collection occurred while this researcher was on leave, the section below highlights considerations that were required to ensure rigour and trustworthiness during the study.

Researcher positioning.

Holding a position of authority and familiarity in this context had an influence on my role as the researcher. For a deputy principal, the balance of knowledge about the context must be tempered by my influence on the participants, as I am inevitably a part of the research story (Thomas, 2015). Importantly, I was on leave at the time of data collection, therefore my presence in the school for research purposes was clear to all. During this time, I was only present on-site to interview the participants. I was not situated in the office, in the Deputy Principal role, or organising any other activities at the
school. My interactions were limited to this purpose of research, so teachers had not had an experience with me in the playground, or classroom recently. Second, I have never been the direct supervisor of these participants, nor did I oversee their line manager thus my supervision of their work has always been collegial, rather than performance-based. Finally, I have established positive relationships with the BTs and have been involved in their professional experience in a highly supportive role. This previously established rapport aided in increasing the comfortable relationship between researcher and participants during interviews, encouraging a more honest and authentic dialogue (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Previous interactions may have impacted on conversations during the data collection phase as teachers may have felt pressure to discuss school processes and programs in a positive light. Data collection processes included reiterating the intention of the research (and the maintenance of their and the school’s anonymity) as a priority in the participant introduction and consent phase (Thomas, 2015). It was important that participants felt comfortable in telling their stories to enable the collection of data that allowed thick descriptions. Occasional discomfort arose for some participants as they recalled difficult events and interactions. At these stages participants were reminded that they could seek support from the Guidance Officers or other administrators at the school, an external support agency, and an offer for them to withdraw from the research at any time was reiterated in each interview.

It was both a risk and a benefit that I had prior knowledge and experience with the school context, participants and the processes. However, “standard qualitative design calls for the persons most responsible for interpretations to be in the field, making observations, exercising subjective judgement, analysing and synthesizing, all the while realizing their own consciousness” (Stake, 1995, p. 41). Therefore, being aware of this
influence and the abovementioned considerations supported the interpretation of the data and the production of “thick descriptions” (Stake, 1995) required in case study research.

**Context of the current study.**

The research was conducted in a large metropolitan high school in Queensland. It is referred to by the pseudonym Westernhill High School. With an ICEA (Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage) value of 1100, the school is considered higher than average in regard to the socio-economic status and also educational attainment of the parent community. The school engages in selective processes for signature programs including academic and cultural excellence. Students engage in applications performances, presentations and interviews to qualify for such programs. Enrolment numbers are approximately 1950 students. Staff numbers include 150 teaching and non-teaching staff, with BTs (first years) totalling 15 in 2015, 12 in 2016 and 9 in 2017.

Budgetary support has been allocated to the school to run a BT mentoring program in line with expectations outlined by state department (Education Queensland Mentoring Beginning Teacher Handbook, 2017). In 2014, school administration and mentor personnel attended two days of professional development training in successful mentoring activities in preparation for program implementation. The school-based mentoring program experienced by the teachers in this study was organised in line with this professional development training and aimed to help BTs to transition to teaching and achieve both APST proficiency and QCT registration, whilst also seeking to increase BT retention rates across all state schools (Education Queensland Mentoring Beginning Teacher Handbook, 2017). Retention rates at this school are well above the national and global standards mentioned in chapter 2, with retention rates in years 2015 and 2016 over 90%, making this an outlier case and one that could provide unique and detailed interest to the research area.
Participants

Case study methodology allows the researcher to obtain in-depth data about a small number of participants (Simons, 2009). Once access to the school was granted, the potential participants were invited to volunteer for the project. Information was communicated via email. A purposeful sampling method (Creswell, 2015) was used to attempt to select six participants from the volunteers who respond to the invitation to participate. It was intended that participants would be selected based on first response and availability criteria. However, seven participants volunteered, so to avoid any selection bias all seven participants were included as part of the study. Each of the potential participants met individually with the researcher to discuss the requirements of the study, and if they agreed to participate were asked to sign a consent form. These series of initial meetings acted as an opportunity to build rapport and for the researcher to be available to answer any questions.

The criteria determining the selection of BTs as participants in this case study included: BTs from the same secondary school setting who had, in the last 3 years, undertaken the formalised mentoring program at Westernhill High School. The participants were required to have either already gained full registration (second and third years) or currently working towards showing proficiency as fully registered teachers according to the definitions in the APST, described in Chapter 2. These teachers were already working in their first, second or third professional year junctures. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the participants involved in the study.
Table 3.1.

**Description of Study Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Transition Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1, 2 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonyms</td>
<td>Paul, Lara &amp; Sharon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Profession = at Current School</td>
<td>First Year Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juncture in Research Project</td>
<td>Juncture 1 – Year 1 in Transition phase to teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal School Mentoring Program</td>
<td>2017 Participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data collection**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a follow up focus group. This section describes and justifies the use of each process and Appendix A contains an example of the open-ended questions guiding the interviews.

**Semi-structured interviews.**

Initially, individual, open-ended interviews (approximately 30-40 minutes) were conducted with each participant. Interviews were chosen as a tool for the dual purpose of identifying and documenting in detail the BT perspective on the topic of transition and to enable an open, flexible approach (Creswell, 2013) to data collection. This process also enabled active participant engagement to identify issues relevant for each person, while
being inherently flexible to allow the researcher to probe for deeper responses (Simons, 2009).

The seven teachers were interviewed over a 4 day visit to the school. The interviews were conducted using an interview guide devised from the research questions driving the study (see Appendix A). The interview guide included specific points of interest to assist the researcher, based on the background literature review conducted. The interview was recorded using an iPhone device and a back-up recorder.

Interview responses were transcribed verbatim and a copy provided participants for checking. An opportunity to contact the researcher and refine, change or redact any part of the interview was made available in the week after transcription, via email. Two participants made contact to refine the information in the transcript and further clarify their intent. These changes were made, and the transcript was returned to these participants. Both were approved after changes were made. This member checking technique helped the researcher improve the accuracy of the participants’ transcripts and therefore improved the credibility and validity of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Focus group interview.

A follow up focus group interview (approximately 60 minutes) was conducted four weeks after the initial individual interviews. The purpose of this interview was to help the researcher gain further insights through questions generated from the first phase of data analysis (Simons, 2009). The group interview was chosen to balance the possible perceived power imbalance arising from a 1:1 interview and provided a context to explore the perceptions, experiences and understandings of the BT group who shared this setting. It also offered further opportunity for the researcher to seek clarification of perspectives in this whole group context (Kumar, 2005). Whilst participants had completed the same formal mentoring program, this occurred at different times and with different mentors.
Timing and mentor relationships are just two areas that could contribute to their differing experiences and perspectives. Broad areas for discussion were developed prior to the focus group, similar to the initial question guide to support the researcher. The focus group question guide (see Appendix B) was developed from the data obtained in the individual interview transcripts after the first round of coding and theme analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data from the group interview helped assemble more detail about experiences through probing questions that compared and contrasted the experiences of the seven teachers.

The two-phase design of data collection provided opportunities to probe for depth in understandings. Enhanced detail from the participants was possible at multiple, successive stages of data collection that is, through the interview, post-interview review, focus group and post-focus group review. The participants’ understandings may have changed and developed from the first phase of data collection, and an opportunity to capture this change or refinement in thinking was provided in the focus group interview. In this way, the study also acknowledged the participants’ active role in construction of the social process of the research, and the iterative nature of the research (Thomas, 2015).

**Data analysis**

Data from the seven interviews and focus group session were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis (TA) is a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning “themes” within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). TA can be used to acknowledge the context and how individuals make meaning of their own experience and thus it demonstrates clear parallels between the research design and the methodological processes applied.

Figure 3.2. summarises the process and intentions of the thematic analysis. The inductive and iterative process began with a review of the literature on related topics (see
Chapter 2). This process shaped the research design and methodology whilst remaining open to the data to be obtained from participants. Interviews were then conducted, and data obtained as outlined above.

![Diagram of data collection and thematic analysis]

**Figure 3.2.** Iterative process of data collection and thematic analysis.

Once the individual interviews were completed, the first phase of formal thematic analysis provided an opportunity for the researcher to read and re-read the full transcripts. The aim was to become immersed and intimately familiar with each participant’s interview content. Next, coding was used to identify important features of the data that might be relevant to addressing the research questions. These important features are known as codes and can be descriptions or analytical explanations (Simons, 2009). These codes broke the data into segments and allowed each segment to be assigned a name (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes were identified by comments, phrases or words repeated in the participant responses. This coding process involved reviewing the entire dataset,
and after that, collating all the codes and all relevant data extracts that support these codes together for later stages of analysis and description at a thematic level (Simons, 2009).

After codes had been established, the researcher examined the collated data to identify any significant, broader patterns of meaning, which became the initial potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through interpreting each participant’s response and collating the data relevant to each theme, the researcher again reviewed the data for evidence to substantiate the viability of each theme. The final stages of review involved checking the candidate themes to determine if cohesive stories emerged in response to the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2016). In this phase, themes were compacted, expanded or discarded as applicable. This iterative process of thematic analysis occurred after the individual interviews (see Appendix C1). At this point, the TA data were used to generate further questions for the focus group session. After the group interview this process was repeated in data analysis, providing an opportunity to check the concepts emerging from the first phase of data collection and analysis (see Appendix C2). Concept mapping helped the researcher in the identification, refinement and reduction of themes in this process. The challenge was to avoid the process becoming mechanical and formulaic or fixed (Simons, 2009), thus to ensure the participants’ views were used to tell the story of this context. Consequently, the researcher instigated outside sources (co-analysis with supervisors) to help validate the data and initial theme generation, modify some themes and sub themes and finally represent each of the categories. Appendix C3 shows the final iterations of the data and generation of final themes.

**Rigour and Trustworthiness**

The rigor and trustworthiness of qualitative research is sometimes questioned because the concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way as in quantitative research (Simons, 2009). Rather than focus on a research design that requires assessment of these traditional measures, qualitative case study research substantiates claims and
ensures rigor through the following four criteria; credibility (in preference to internal validity); transferability (in preference to external validity/generalisability); dependability (in preference to reliability); confirmability (in preference to objectivity) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Credibility and confirmability are key criteria in this research study and are discussed in this section.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the qualitative researcher should ensure credibility in place of validity and confirmability in preference to objectivity. Whilst validity claims a test measures what it intends to measure, credibility implies that the researcher can support the notion that their data and findings are congruent with reality. In this research, gathering multiple perspectives and using both stages of data collection to clarify and refine the data collection, helped the researcher ensure a credible study. The iterative data analysis process also provided a level of rigour related to the interrogation of the data in this context, enabling the reader to trust the data interpretations. Confirmability is the qualitative researcher’s partner to objectivity (Shenton, 2004). As the researcher brings potentially unwitting inherent biases (as previously discussed) to case study research, care is taken to reduce this effect. Consequently, data analysis required steps such as co-analysis with supervisors to support the researcher and reduce possible investigator bias. This helps to ensure that the findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the preferences of the researcher.

Ethics and Limitations

Ethical clearance was obtained from Griffith University and Department of Education and Training (DET) before this research was undertaken (Ethics Number: GU2017/731). Application was made respectively via the Human Research Ethics Committee board at Griffith University, and the principal of the school where the BT participants were employed. These BTs were advised through the recruitment email and at the information session held prior to the commencement of the individual interview that participation was
voluntary, and they could choose to withdraw at any time. They were supplied with an information package at the briefing session outlining the ethical considerations that were considered and the implications for their participation as well as their rights as participants.

**Informed consent.**

All participants received information about the project via email. A follow up phone call was offered to clarify any initial questions about the project. Participants signed a consent form prior to commencing the interview and had another opportunity at the start of the interview to discuss the project as needed to clarify any concerns. In respect to the confidentiality and anonymity of research respondents, all participants were given the opportunity to revise their transcripts and redact any information provided. They were informed that pseudonyms were be used to protect each participant’s privacy in regard to colleagues, administration and other DET colleagues. Their decision to participate remained open between the researcher and the participants and an offer was made to conduct interviews at a safe off-site location if required. All participants wanted to be interviewed at the school site for ease of transport.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter provides a description of the research design. The key epistemological and methodological considerations were outlined, the participants were introduced, and the data collection instruments, procedures for data management and analysis were all described. The trustworthiness, ethical considerations and limitations of the study design were discussed.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

Introduction

This chapter reports and discusses the primary findings of the study in response to the two research questions:

1. What do BT consider to be significant experiences in their transition phase?

2. In what ways do these significant experiences contribute to their professional development?

Findings reflect three key categories that capture the significant themes influencing the participant BT transition into teaching and how these themes are perceived as professional development contributions. The three categories are 1) Emotions, 2) Expectations and 3) Collegial support. These categories are not discrete, instead showing overlap among them and reveal something of their relational qualities and interdependencies as they are analysed and explained. While each category is introduced briefly a detailed description of the themes and sub themes used to denote the three categories are is outlined in Appendix C. As noted earlier, the data set comprises the seven individual interviews with BTs and one group interview with all of them. The participants, Joan, Sarah, Lara, Kieran, Paul, Jenny and Sharon and their shared school context were introduced and outlined in the previous chapter, Table 4.1. below provides a summary of participants and experience in the profession. The three categories are reported in turn.

Table 4.1. 
Study Participants and Years of Experience in Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Paul, Lara &amp; Sharon</td>
<td>Sarah &amp; Kieran</td>
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Category 1: Emotions

BTs reported that they experienced strong emotions during their transition to teaching. Emotion is often defined as a complex state of feeling that results in physical and psychological changes that influence thought and behaviour and this category includes reference to emotional responses to situations and events in the school context (Lindqvist, Weurlander, Wernerson, and Thornberg (2017). Examples commonly identified by the participants include being stressed, overwhelmed, exhausted, uncertain, and unsure. Emotions became a clear and significant category as the participants recounted the emotional intensity of their personal and professional experiences in the first few years of teaching. However, despite some degree of initial emotional negativity in their transition experience, all seven BTs reported feeling an increase in their level of confidence, particularly with regards to certain areas linked with professional growth. For example, during their transition, curriculum knowledge, time management and skill sets for dealing with student behaviour were identified and coupled with positive emotions of competency, confidence and control.

Negative emotions, such as stress, exhaustion, uncertainty and being overwhelmed, identified were most clearly reported when discussing areas such as the initial days of teaching, decisions regarding curriculum delivery, making accurate and consistent judgements regarding assessment, dealing with the diversity of students needs and the struggle BTs experienced managing the impact of other peoples’ perceptions. Some of these experience areas appeared more noteworthy than others, reportedly having greater impact on teacher emotions and subsequent confidence levels. Those emotions associated with the initial days of teaching, the approach to curriculum and assessment challenges and dealing with students’ diverse needs are further elaborated.
Joan stated, “I felt like a deer in headlights at first … I was just consumed … dealing with things I’d never dealt with before”. She also explained that the emotions related to her transition experiences made her feel acutely vulnerable because she did not “want to be seen as not coping or having weakness”. Joan recalled her uncertainty and the physiological impact of beginning her career without the in-class support of previous supervisors, stating, “I remember the week before I started I felt sick … thinking, I just can’t do this”. Similarly, Sharon spoke of an unsettling isolation she experienced early in her first year of teaching, commenting, “When you’re a BT, there is no one, you are just thrown in”. Whilst Lara described the initial, positive emotions of independence in a classroom, she too identified with the overall professional isolation teachers experience day-to-day,

On prac, at the end of the lesson you had someone to talk to about what didn’t work. Then when you’re teaching and you’re by yourself, it’s great, but you’re not sure if you’re doing it right.

Lara, Sharon and Joan illustrate the high levels of emotional regulation that are at play and fundamentally necessary for BTs as they learn to become independent teachers. The experiences they have in the early stages see them wrestle with their practical abilities to cope with both the demands of the autonomous teaching role and the initial negative emotions these challenges evoke. Nichols et al. (2017) refer to the high levels of emotional control teachers must employ to deal with a new organisation and new interactions within that environment.

Joan reported that initially, dealing with the diversity of students’ needs every day was so overwhelming, it impacted considerably on both her physical and mental health. She did not expect to feel the way she described when dealing with students with diverse needs and the responsibility attached to being relied on so heavily by these individuals. She described her emotions and the response that evolved from an ongoing exposure to this situation.
It just wasn’t me, I’m not used to it. It’s almost like having 15 of your own kids, because they come to you with all the stuff they won’t go to anyone else about…. I ended up seeing a psychologist and that helped a lot because she was able to provide that perspective, because I was just so consumed with all the school stuff.

Other participants also acknowledged a need to self-regulate their own emotions and the difficulties this presented with the combined, ongoing pressures of dealing with students they taught every day. Lara explained:

It was really hard in term 3, when you’re dealing with so many emotions in the classroom, and I didn’t feel in control of my own – it made it really hard to stay calm and connected…. It was really hard to navigate that…. It was about trying to just come to school and not feel so overwhelmed that I couldn’t be there.

In line with several studies on BT retention data (Hudson, 2012; Ingersoll, 2012; Paris, 2013), four of the seven participants reflected on feeling so overwhelmed and exhausted during the transition that they seriously considered discontinuing in the profession long term. However, over time the range of emotions and turbulent emotional experiences described by participants seemed to reduce in intensity and coincide with both an increase in their sense of general competency and a specific shift in confidence regarding their own teaching aptitude.

All seven participants reported a perceived shift in their teaching abilities, especially concerning the management of curriculum and behaviour. This increase in confidence appeared associated particularly with an increased understanding of ACARA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority) syllabus documents, implementing curriculum through lesson planning, delivery and assessment and generally being able to work more independently. Further, their confidence seemed to increase as affirmations about the aforementioned areas were received from their colleagues and managers. The data are presented in this section in order of the participant’s years of teaching experience because, throughout the interviews, teachers in their first year tended to show less confidence than teachers in their second and third years of teaching.
Sharon, Lara and Paul were all first-year teachers. Sharon expressed the early emotions of uncertainty about her teaching capability: “You aren’t sure of yourself, you don’t know, am I meant to be nailing it 100% all of the time? With every lesson? I wasn’t sure…”. Lara highlighted the importance in having colleagues to confirm her initial curriculum queries. “I was asking so many questions, I was lucky I was sitting next to people [in the staffroom] who didn’t mind.” These participants signalled the links between their growing confidence levels with curriculum writing and delivery and the importance of confirmation from colleagues. Paul described his growth in confidence from his initial experience of working independently and in a new environment. “Doing things for the first time was challenging: teaching units, marking work … writing a unit for the first time by myself, I was 90% confident but I still needed someone to say to me, you are on the right track”.

This comment signifies the professional development required to move a BT from competent to confident in regard to curriculum writing and delivery. Opportunities to connect with and gain approval from their more experienced colleagues gave teachers like Paul the confirmation that he was seeking to develop and improve in this key professional area. This was essential because the planning of curriculum is only the foundation phase as BTs become clear that enactment of curriculum in the form of lesson delivery presents more challenges. In line with this, Paul reflected on the perhaps misplaced confidence he had in himself early on in his first year and how that changed as his teaching experience increased:

Of course you want to do well. You think, no kid is going to fail in my class. I’m a great teacher, no kid is going to talk when I’m talking. Everyone is going to bring their books. And then it’s a wakeup call and you have to think, wow, how am I going to take these kids from a borderline D to a C or from a B to a high A? It took me until my first assessment piece to get a really good grasp on my kids and look at what they could do, what can they write, understand, produce and communicate.
Sarah, in her second year, described her significant shift in emotions regarding curriculum competency, saying, “I am really confident with what I’m going to teach. It was stressful, but now I am much more over [i.e. confident or feeling in control of] curriculum”. She also explained how her increase in confidence now allows her teaching to incorporate foci beyond the curriculum. “Connecting with students and building their social and emotional wellbeing, that’s how I would grade myself now, that’s what’s important to me”.

Consistently amongst participants in this study, the descriptions linked confidence levels to specific professional development undertakings related to curriculum, assessment judgements, lesson delivery and emotions of a more positive attitude towards managing their own workload. Participants highlighted the positive impact on their day to day work in these foundational teaching areas as their confidence grew over the first few years at work. As teachers became more aware of where and how to seek support and assistance with these areas, and in turn identified how this support helped develop their skills, their confidence increased in multiple ways. Joan, also in her second year, reported a change in her confidence with special education curriculum workload and documentation, explaining that both a change in her confidence and her ability as a special needs teacher had grown over time,

It’s amazing the difference between my first and second year. This year I’ve got myself sorted, I’m a lot more confident and a lot more assertive. I am little more pushy in saying, this is what I think is better for this child.

Third year teacher comments further consolidated the pattern that confidence levels seemed to be increasing over time as Jenny reflected how other teachers were able to help her trust her own judgements and develop her skills in assessment critiques and time management. Jenny described her growth from her first to second year,

I had a really good second year, because I went back to being that confident kind of teacher I wanted to be. I was confident in my time management. In my first year
there was lots of learning about what was correct (with assessment grading) but then I could trust my own judgements and now I’m a lot more confident in all my processes.

These changes in confidence coincided with a change in the teachers’ sense of their own abilities and aptitude for teaching, which is more specifically noted in the literature as self-efficacy, the personal feeling or perception of being able to produce a desired result. As Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) confirm, it is common for BTs to report a change in their perceived capability regarding teaching competence during the three years of the transition phase. After almost completing her first year, Lara stated, “I guess when you get over the mountain, you can see you’ve got a bag of skills. So every time you experience something difficult, you get a little more confident and you improve”. This comment highlighted a link between self-competency and resilience, and the important role professional development plays as she is explaining that more experienced educators need to inform other BTs that transition presents challenges that can be overcome.

She articulated that the transition to teaching was portrayed as much more difficult by others than the reality she had experienced. This unnecessarily and negatively fuelled her concerns before starting her first year, and impacted on her initial confidence,

There was a lot of talk about how we will be working dusk till dawn and a lot of hype which really worried me. The workload has actually been manageable. You need to find your confidence. Just telling BTs that it is okay is important, it’s not as hard as people make out. It’s just not that difficult and you shouldn’t go into teaching thinking you just have to get through your first year. Through such sentiments, Lara is beginning to make-sense of her understanding of the nature of initial teacher professional development and how both negative and positive emotions impact that development. Here Lara is suggesting that transition should not be presented to BTs as something to be coped with or survived in anticipation of eventual positive outcomes. Rather, she identifies that the base of effective professional development is feeling positive from the outset and having opportunities to build on that confidence. Patton, Parker and Tannehill (2015) recognise that all teachers need to be
active learners in their professional development; activities that help define their expectations and provide a space to collaborate with others are invaluable for BTs.

Joan’s comments build on this idea further, indicating that a movement from positive awareness to actively building confidence through work practices resulted in feeling positive late in her second year of teaching,

I know a lot more this year, so it’s nice when people come to ask me questions now … it’s a good feeling because I’ve proven to myself I can do the work … I don’t feel stressed anymore because I think, I’ll work it out, I’ll solve that problem. Not only has Joan started solving problems in her second year of teaching, but also she has come to realise that the problems she has been solving all along, both related to how she feels about her work and herself and the actual work undertaken, are sufficient evidence to prove to herself that she is a successful teacher. It is through such comments that Joan begins to identify and acknowledge that recognising her problem solving capacities should and does begin in the initial stages of transition. Professional development is about this awareness and recognition of it and should become apparent from the beginning of teaching.

It appears that teacher confidence can be a buffer to the negative effects of teacher emotion and stress (Dicke et al., 2014) as is associated with several other professional development outcomes, such as increased instructional quality, student achievement and teacher job satisfaction (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Therefore, the interplay that exists between emotions and confidence whilst intense, can eventually result in positive outcomes for BTs if overall a teacher’s confidence grows. However, this eventual outcome does not and should not overshadow the positive outcomes and associated emotions that mark the initial stages of BT transition into the profession.

In terms of emotions, the participants seem to suggest that transition is a phase of both discovery and witness as they watch and experience the power of their troubling or
negative emotions wane with the rising of their confidence. Becoming an established teacher takes time and the process of becoming a teacher is clearly an emotionally demanding experience (Nichols et al., 2017). Emotions seem to be particularly impactful at the very early stage of a teacher’s career as they are linked to the initial challenges they encounter during this transition phase (Dicke et al., 2014). In this study, participants articulated that, as they developed professionally by becoming more aware of their emotions, they were able to overcome the emotional challenges of transition and the overwhelming nature of their professional work in these early stages. Similar to the findings of Kleinsasser (2014) reviewing other research studies in this area, the participants reported that as their confidence increased, negative emotions they experienced were less prevalent and intense.

Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2012) and Hobson and Ashby (2012) both describe “reality shock” for BTs as they come to a realisation of their complete responsibility for classes which they simply did not experience in their practicum. Consequently beginning teachers experience emotional labour, defined by Hochschild (2003) as the process of managing emotions to fulfil the emotional requirements of a job. More specifically, beginning teachers are expected to regulate their emotions during interactions with students, colleagues and managers (Nichols et al., 2017). The emotional labour required to manage the complexity of a classroom means teachers are required to exert effort - presenting various roles or identities, expressing or repressing their emotions based on perceived needs during particular school activities (Lee, Pekrun, Taxer, Schutz, Vogl, & Xie, 2016). This emotional effort is particularly evident in BTs who are not prepared for the initial emotions experienced when teaching and working with students. They may be overwhelmed, analysing situations and making decisions in terms of expressing their emotions or suppressing those they believe should not be expressed. Changes in the description of teacher confidence relates to the beliefs teachers hold about their own
capability in undertaking certain teaching tasks and classroom actions (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, 2014). As seen in the descriptions of professional development of teachers in this study, confidence is identified as a powerful influence on teacher’s behaviours because it can impact on various professional practices including instructional strategy choice, effort, and persistence (Putman, 2012).

As the participants experienced an increase in confidence and navigated difficult times, their positive emotions and attitudes towards teaching increased. The experiences of these participants correspond with findings in the Yoo (2011) study that cultivating BTs’ capacity for self-efficacy is a key theme for their professional growth and that BTs who are more confident and resilient are better able to manage the uncertainties inherent in ongoing, day-to-day teaching (Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014). This is the basis of the professional development these current study participants identify and acknowledge through their growing awareness of their emotions about their work and how these emotions are influencing their performance of that work. As Lara and Joan indicated above, a focus on the difficulties and emotional coping mechanisms they will require to survive their transition into teaching does not actually support their professional development. Rather it is their successes, their positive emotions of accomplishments and their recognition by self and others that underpins their sense of professional development. Personal emotions are significant but, if emphasised as problematic and demanding of coping capacities, they can become negative influencers rather than positive facilitators in fostering their sense of accomplishment that is identified as the basis of strong professional development.

Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2012) support the notion that BTs experience significant changes in their thinking as they move from preservice to BTs. Over time, all participants in this study felt they had developed their general teaching skills, had greater
understanding of curriculum and assessment, and subsequently all consistently reported emotions of increased self-confidence. These emotions underpinned their initial and positive professional development experiences throughout transition.

**Category 2: Expectations**

All BTs in this study expressed the notion of expectations as a category of importance in their transition to teaching. Participants identified that expectations of them were held by a variety of sources including administration, middle managers, senior teachers, teaching peers, parents, students and importantly, themselves. Expectations were expressed in reference to their general role as a teacher, day to day work in classrooms, extra-curricular activities and professional duties (such as paperwork, emails and attending meetings). Specifically, participants described as being of most concern expectations regarding a lack of clarity about effective teaching, engagement in school activities, marking and assessment, workload and their ability to work independently. They clearly expressed a sense of both external and internal expectations of them. Further to this, they discussed how they needed to manage these expectations to continue to progress and develop as successful, professional teachers. These findings are explained through two key themes evident in this category; Clear expectations and Managing expectations.

**Clear expectations**

Participants reported that dealing with the complexities and lack of clarity in work expectations, including expectations of others and those they held of themselves, increased the challenges they faced during the transition phase. Expectations are those opinions, suppositions and assumptions that shape understandings about what could and should happen, and about what is required. Expectations are not just about being uncertain. As the participant responses illustrate, expectations are also about accepted standards and qualities of practice and how these influence future action and response in
the day-to-day immediacy of teaching and, longer term, in the progress of professional development. These expectations further contributed to the heightened emotions and emotional responses they experienced. Jenny (third year) commented, “It’s really hard, because you know there are expectations, sometimes you’re not sure what they are, but you are trying desperately to meet them”. Sarah (second year) explained, “We [pre-service teachers and teaching peers] talked a lot about what a good teacher is before we started teaching. Now we talk about how much that changes as you keep trying to teach!” Jenny further clarified:

You realise the things you were really hung up on are not the things you really have to do every day. The WOW lessons, they’re not it, day-to-day. That’s not what a good teacher is. At university and at the start of teaching, that’s what I thought. This comment by Jenny suggests that there has been a development in her own expectations and metacognition about the lessons she delivers and the way in which she judges learning as happening or not happening in her classroom.

Although this evolution in professional development seems sharp and independent, further comments point to a more gradual, peer influenced shift in thinking. Sharon and Jenny both alluded to a link between expectations, emotions and confidence, agreeing that some expectations left them feeling unsure, insecure and doubtful: “I was always checking with other teachers and sometimes felt silly asking, but everyone just assumes you know” (Sharon). Jenny agreed stating, “You’re at your most vulnerable state in your first year, when you just don’t know what you don’t know”. These comments signal both the awareness some participants have about their lack of expertise and the subsequent importance of the influence of others on their professional development, growth and progress. The following section elaborates why these influences can be troublesome if expectations are unclear, unsound or unhelpful.
All seven BTs expressed an understanding that while people at their school had opinions about what it means to be a good or effective teacher, there seemed to be hidden or unspoken expectations that required them to decipher what their employer and their peers desired. Participants in this study explained that they perceived criteria for an effective teacher did exist, and they voiced concerns about the assumptions people might have made about them as BTs being graded against these criteria. Jenny, a junior secondary teacher reflected, “It is easier to meet expectations at school if you know what they are. If that is clearly articulated by the school and faculty”. The participants expressed specific worries because when compared to their university experience, they explained that they felt there was a lack of clarity from leaders in the school about the behaviours displayed by a good or effective teacher. This lack of clarity makes personally targeting professional development requirements difficult and BTs lack precision about what to focus their energies on in regard to improvement.

When asked about the criteria they were using to gauge effective teaching, the participants themselves identified the use of the APST as a positive and preferred method because it enabled them to clearly evaluate themselves whilst on practicums and at university. Jenny noted,

As a prac student it meant we had something to grade ourselves against. We could tick off all the practices we were using. It comes back to the perceptions people have about what makes a good teacher. It was all there – in a rubric! But here, people aren’t really following that up, so there isn’t as much pressure on you as there was as a prac student.

This has clear implications for the professional development of BTs in this context because, whilst they acknowledged that the school was clearly asking them to develop professionally, they perceived that the school did not necessarily have regular and explicit processes in place to help them increase their specific skills, nor could they do this against a clear set of standards. Whilst the APST are only one method for gauging teacher
effectiveness, three participants saw them as providing a more clear and targeted guide than the school’s processes and therefore saw them as valuable. Joan articulated:

> In a way it (APST) do influence me, because even if I only look at the document once or twice a year, those standards are what creates your expectation for yourself as a teacher.

Conversely two participants believed the APST were not of value to them because they were not of value to their managers and were not used frequently enough to influence their practice. These teachers stated that these standards were simply not part of their everyday work as teachers. Paul explained how the impact of a lack of leadership and thus a lack of expectations from his direct line manager influenced his attitude towards his own professional growth and development.

> If this process was valued by my HOD [Head of Department] then I would look at it more, but he just asked a group of us where we saved it, spoke to us for 10 minutes in front of the other teachers and that was it. It wasn’t professional in my eyes; it needed to be valued, and he didn’t value it.

This seemed to result in BTs who perceived there may be a school or professionally agreed standard of effectiveness for teachers, but their drive to increase their individual competency had been hindered due to unclear expectations about exactly what the school believes effective teachers do, or at least how and what they should converse about their practice.

> These experiences indicated how expectations of others can be influential on both micro and macro levels when it comes to day to day teacher development, as well as over the long-term phase of transition. These participant BTs appeared to want to develop professionally and want clear direction on how they can achieve this. The perceived lack of clarity in this context could limit their ability to grow and improve in their teacher practice (Richardson, Watt, & Devos, 2013).

The participants consistently raised teacher workload and working independently as elements of expectations held by others and themselves. As a second-year teacher, Joan
explained that workload expectations presented a source of pressure for her, because teachers were clearly expected to participate in numerous school activities,

There is an expectation about being involved in things around the school. In my first year, I just couldn’t manage it. But I could feel there was an expectation there. And I thought, where am I supposed to fit that in? It was really difficult.

Lara voiced her concerns about the expectations other teachers have regarding BTs being able to work successfully and independently, almost straight away. She referred to assumptions her colleagues and managers made about her as a first-year teacher,

There is just a whole heap of stuff that everyone expects you to know when you start and BTs don’t know! Someone will say obviously you have to teach this for the exam… and I thought, ‘but it wasn’t in the unit plan, it’s not in the textbook, it’s not actually that obvious at all!’

Even as a third-year teacher, Jenny was still reflecting on how important it was to her that she understood what was expected of her and her planning, teaching and assessing so that she was able to work more independently. She stated,

It was really important for me to know what I was expected to do on my own. Should I know how to mark this Year 8 exam? I wanted to make sure I was grading students accurately. I guess I wanted to make sure I was following the policies correctly. I needed someone to tell me I was doing that right, and why it was right!

Such findings illustrate that these BTs are aware that others hold expectations of them during their transition phase, and that in turn there is an impact on the expectations they also hold of themselves. The participants seemed to be trying to balance the impact of their new environment and workload against managing other people’s anticipations about their ability to work independently. In comparison to other professional groups, teachers report substantially lower levels of follow-up in their work (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). It is therefore not surprising that their comments highlight frequent situations in which they were torn between seeking to clarify these expectations to achieve competency and risking a perception of incompetency from asking too many questions. They also clearly reported that the expectations of other colleagues were further
compounded by the individual expectations they held of themselves. Providing opportunities to work collaboratively with teachers to ask and confirm the queries of these BTs seemed to alleviate the stress associated with such tensions.

All BTs in this study perceived there were behaviours and teaching strategies that were executed by effective teachers. They described the behaviours that they believed effective teachers showed, articulated that they had formal mentors who were good teachers and clearly explained how they could identify more senior or experienced teachers with these same qualities. Using these kinds of qualities as performance criteria, they seemed to set expectations for themselves whilst they were developing their professional knowledge base and defining how good teachers perform (Devos, 2010; Yoo, 2011). In this way these BTs are directing their own professional development as they seek out the self-evaluation guides they need.

Managing expectations during transition

Participants all reported concerns about the perceptions others held of them as BTs, specifically in relation to their curriculum and teaching capabilities, understanding of policies, procedures and organisational arrangements in the school. Jenny’s comment highlights the associated impact of emotional labour linked to the role quality expectations play in the evaluation of practice involved in day-to-day teaching,

You never want to be the poor example in the textbook, even though you know implementing something is harder than the textbook. You don’t want to be the poor example! You’re always worried about keeping up appearances. You don’t want to be the person who doesn’t know anything. Teachers, supervisors, admin -- you’re worried about everyone, people higher up …. You worry that people might think you’re asking because you’re not a good teacher or not intelligent. But, I’m asking because I’m clarifying things. It’s what makes me a good teacher. BTs may be more self-critical early in their career, as they are reliant on theory and idealism to interpret their beginning practice (Yoo, 2011) and therefore may find it
difficult to manage the expectations of others. Paul (first year) commented on the position BTs find themselves in when they have to manage the expectations of a range of people:

There are different expectations in our school. There are whole school approaches, HODs who push their own agenda, and you have your own expectations … so you end up having to mould yourself as a teacher to fit everything in.

Paul identifies the impact on his personal and professional development and how both are shaped as he manages the expectations of those around him. Sharon, another first-year teacher, explained the pressure of expectations from colleagues in her close vicinity, as BTs were compared to past or current colleagues. “In my staffroom a previous teacher had not been involved in anything and so there was pressure for me to be really involved or I was going to look bad”. Again, her context shapes the teacher she is becoming, as Sharon considers how involved she needs to be to impress, adhere to expected standards of practice or merely be accepted. Sharon, similar to all other teachers in this study had started on a contract arrangement at the school and only two had moved to a permanent position at the time of interviewing. Sarah noted, “You want to make a good impression around the school, especially because I was on a contract. There is nothing worse than people questioning your competency”. Kidd et al. (2015) support the notion that BTs in part time or contact arrangements often lack a strong sense of belonging and stability, which in turn inhibits the process of becoming an established, confident teacher.

BT participants also discussed managing their conflicting emotions regarding the expectations they had about being valued as professionals but supported as new teachers. They believed they had skills and ideas to contribute and wanted to be included in professional opportunities such as program and assessment writing. However, they did not want to work in isolation or be left to their own planning and assessment writing without support. They explained the activities that developed them most effectively were those that included them as part of a team where they were contributing but not expected to do all the work. Their capacities seemed to grow with their confidence levels when
these collaborative professional development opportunities were seen as rewarding. They struggled with scenarios in which they perceived they were punished when they tried to implement ideas that strayed too far from the norm or beyond what their colleagues or the school had done before. Kieran explained:

“It’s funny, the school has a philosophy about being a first-year teacher, leaders say you should have new ideas and a fresh way to look at things, but then you realise, what other people think is … ‘have fresh ideas, but don’t go too far.’ Because you will upset the other people who have spent time and energy on the unit. So, balancing those two things was very awkward because I’ve got these ideas and it is the end of my second year and I still can’t do them.

In terms of expectations, the participants suggested that managing both their own and those of their colleagues was important in their transition phase. Gavish and Friedman (2011) offer a cautionary note that, almost immediately, BTs are under pressure to function and assume the same sort of responsibilities as their more experienced colleagues. Teaching is a challenging profession, particularly for early career teachers as they meet the demands of the profession, develop professionally and establish themselves. This demanding time is influenced by the expectations held of BTs within both their workplace and themselves.

Participants in this study experienced expectations being applied from various levels in the organisation (managers, colleagues and peers). Sometimes these expectations were perceived by the BT as unclear (ranging from individually generated to the perceived need for stringent criteria) and often the BT needed clarification but was too fearful to ask anyone. This has the side effect of all BT participants reporting concerns about the perceptions others held of them as they became aware of who people are in the organisation and the expectations they hold. Specifically, as the BT participants developed, they became more aware of expectations regarding their curriculum and teaching capabilities, and gained more understanding of policies, procedures and organisational arrangements in the school.
These findings show that BTs feel the pressures of expectations from a wide range of people in the school community, including themselves, as they develop their professional knowledge base and begin to define how good teachers perform (Devos, 2010; Yoo, 2011). These participant BTs seemed to be trying to balance the impact of their new environment and workload against managing other people’s expectations. Importantly, this balancing was also directed towards their sense of the future and their professional development as they sought appropriate standards and criteria for evaluating their practice through their transition into teaching.

**Category 3: Collegial Support**

All BTs in this study emphasised the importance of collegial support during their transition phase to teaching. They described the vital role their colleagues played providing a “safety net” in their first years and noted both formal and informal mentors and peers as specific supporters. Such colleagues played a role promoting participant BTs’ emotions of belonging, value and acceptance, which seemed to provide a foundation for them to extend and deepen relationships, develop professionally and in turn, further increase their general confidence levels throughout the transition phase. Buchanan et al. (2013) report that “a school conducive to newcomers is characterised by high levels of support and collegiality” (p. 123). Positive school cultures where collaboration, trust, openness, support and routine help is available support all teachers to cope with the daily challenges of teaching (Flores & Day, 2006; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014). The following section summarises these findings by examining three key support sources for the participant BTs; Informal mentors, Formal mentors and Peers, which underpinned the emergence of this category.
Informal Mentors.

Whilst the BTs in this study noted there was significant stress experienced in their transition years, six of the seven reported that they would simply not have continued in the profession if it were not for the support of an experienced colleague, a finding also reported by Paris (2013). Experienced teachers were not defined by years in the profession, but described as having more useful curriculum specific knowledge, behaviour management strategies and/or knowledge about pedagogical strategies than the participant BTs. Joan explained the difference between her preservice professional experience and teaching on her own in her first year as well as the significant role of a mentor:

Your prac experience is just not reflective of what will really happen...BTs get dropped into this incredibly complex world... you are trying to figure out the people that you can trust, the people you want to impress and the people you think are a good support ... it causes a lot of stress for BTs. Having my mentor was fantastic; he was able to provide perspective, outside my staffroom ... [for] you as a person and as a teacher, in that role.

Papatraianou and Le Cornu (2014) found that support from colleagues seemed to “consolidate a sense of belonging and social connectedness to the profession” (p. 109) as BTs appreciated being valued by these teachers, as well as wanting to learn from and be supported by them. Joan, confirmed this:

I’ve been so lucky with the people in my staffroom, they always make time for you and it has made a big impact on my teaching. There is no way I would be doing this job this year without people in that staffroom ... I do think getting advice from experienced teachers helped. They were the best sources of information. The senior teacher pulled me back to earth ... [when she said] you are worrying about something that doesn’t need to be worried about.

Sarah further emphasised the importance of developing an ongoing professional and personal relationship with her mentor, starting from prac and continuing into her teaching career at the school. She commented, “My supervising teacher from prac was someone I became really close with, so she was able to give me a lot of advice as a first
year”. Paul, the physical education teacher, explained that various experienced teachers played different roles in supporting his professional development as a teacher. His comments reflect the supportive nature and sense of belonging one colleague can evoke every day, and the motivational impact another colleague can contribute to a BT’s professional development through simple modelling.

I had two people in my staffroom, one was a subject coordinator and it sounds simple, but we would just walk to class together, every day. The other was just an old head. She is extremely experienced, and people find her old-school, but she gets those kids moving. I have a spare when she is teaching, and I can see down into the activities centre, she is just always on the go.

Paris’s work (2013) argues the importance in valuing the contribution of teachers in the transition phase and this sentiment was expressed by some of the BT participants. They especially noted the worth they experienced in feeling professionally appreciated and part of a collegial team. Two teachers in the junior secondary space commented on the collegiality they experienced in the atmosphere of their staffroom,

Even as a first-year teacher, other teachers were coming to me and asking about strategies I was using with certain students, because we both taught them and they could see I was the one having some success. (Joan)

Other teachers would ask me about the units I was teaching and ask how I was teaching this and that and tell me that what I was doing was really great. (Jenny)

All seven BTs described at least one or more experienced teachers whom they valued highly because they provided consistent and timely support, made them feel part of the organisation and profession, modelled quality teaching behaviours and/or valued the BT professionally.

Formal mentors.

All teachers in this study had participated in the formal MBT program at the school. The mentors in this study were allocated to the BT and were not part of their faculty or staffroom but engaged in a formal program to mentor and support their mentee.
Although the program was organised and led by the Deputy Principal, frequent interactions occurred primarily between the mentors and BT. Hudson (2012) reports that BT need a “community of mentors who can collaborate and support them in their practice” (p. 81). As described by Papatraianou and Le Cornu (2014) the formal mentors in this study provided both a professional and personal support network, assisting BT early in their transition to teaching. Jenny, in her third year, reflected on her mentoring experience which helped her to collaborate with others and improve her teaching practice,

I think the mentor program here was structured really well, and we were able to help generate the topics, sit down with our mentor and talk… the topics were really relevant to what was happening in the school: assessment, parent teacher interviews, behaviour, depending on the time of term…. We would share with our mentors and we were creating a really big bank of things, so my mentor would give me an article and I would copy it for others… we were constantly sharing that knowledge with each other.

Kieran, in his second year of teaching explained the importance of having a formal mentor outside the faculty who could act as a sounding board to discuss difficult matters. Topics were connected to managing the expectation of others, such as unit and assessment writing disagreements and maintaining professional relationships. Interestingly, as he has grown from the experience, he described the reduced need he had to continue with a mentor outside his faculty, despite recognising he needed support of a different kind,

Now I feel like I don’t need my formal mentor as much because I can process things myself … My mentors have become more subject specific now, and I can handle things in my staffroom without needing that rant.

However, one participant did not report the mentoring experience in a positive light, questioning the value of her mentor. Lara, a first-year teacher explained:

I just don’t know if being assigned a mentor really works… I felt I had different ways of handling things and in fact sometimes I came away from our conversations more confused. I think it is important that the mentors are really stimulated by their career and want to improve their own teaching… not just get credit for the job.
This outlier in the data may point to a noteworthy acknowledgement that forced relationships in mentoring programs may not always lead to productive partnerships, as viewed by either the mentee or mentor.

Overall, the group interview findings confirmed that these BTs strongly agreed that effective mentors held certain qualities as “good people” and attributes as “good teachers”. The BTs specifically reported the importance of approachability, availability and commitment in their mentors. Jenny highlighted certain actions characteristics that were demonstrated by successful mentors:

If you can’t approach them, then they can’t mentor you … they need to make you feel comfortable and relaxed. If I needed her, I was just able to call, she always made time for me, I am sure she put things aside for me, and she was non-judgemental.

Sharon acknowledged the support from the administration at the school by saying,

This school really wanted me to be the best teacher I could be, they really backed me… Having people in those roles (mentors, administrators) that really value the profession is so important…. People saying we want a professional staff, so you are going to go on PD and read these articles … this is what makes us a profession…. That really helped me, and I didn’t expect it in my first year of teaching. I have had such a positive experience here.

Van Maele et al. (2015) confirm that teacher development is strongly influenced by the school environment and administration of the school. Leadership support resulted in ensuring resources and required time were allocated to the support structures for BTs and their mentors to meet, collaborate and attend professional development conferences and meetings. Sharon’s statement above does not just acknowledge the fiscal support provided by the administration team to target teachers with specific training but signifies the impact expectations can have on the professional development of BTs when it is placed in the hands of teachers who have a willingness to authentically collaborate with each other (Patton, Parker, & Tannehill, 2015). All BT participants acknowledged that formal mentors were an example of collegial support that was significant, despite one
teacher questioning the allocation method used and expressing a lack of personal connection with her mentor. The participants referred positively to their mentor as someone who over time helped them to increase their emotional stability, confidence and ultimately resilience. Their interactions with their mentor also appeared to provide a space for them to discuss and challenge expectations and perceptions that were impacting on their work as new teachers. Further, these opportunities provided not just an opportunity to connect regularly with mentors but to influence the topics and decisions made about their program, based on their ongoing needs.

Peers.

BTs in this study relied heavily on their fellow BTs to gauge how they were performing in the transition phase, both in the school itself and in the wider teaching profession. Such peers referenced by participants included people in the same year, or slightly ahead of them. Sarah reported, “I knew people from university and on my prac, and then they ended up in the same staffroom as me in my first year. I built relationships with them and I felt valued because I knew my contribution was really being respected by them”.

Kieran’s perceptions of the importance of a positive collegial environment was strengthened through conversations with his teaching peers experiencing a different transition in different school contexts. He reported,

I think it is really important for BTs to have a safety net… it’s a pretty big process to come into a new school…. You need a supportive environment to develop. There are definitely some friends from uni that I have who haven’t had that. I see my other first year teachers at school and I think we are blessed to have come to this school from university together.

All seven BTs reported that they regularly talked to BT peers in their school and other schools to gauge the expectations that other BTs held. All perceived that they were
lucky or fortunate to be at the school due to the various professional development support provisions in place for BTs. Sharon reflected,

I think how well I went in my first year has a lot to do with the support I received…. I can understand now when I talk to people I graduated with, that some of their experiences sound a lot more difficult than mine, so I am really grateful.

In terms of collegial support, the significant themes outlined above seem to suggest that these relationships were of utmost importance to BTs in their transition phase. As teachers in this study experienced successful relationships with senior and experienced teachers, formal mentors and peers this seemed to impact on the other areas discussed in the previous two categories. BTs with strong relationships seemed to be aware of and also articulate their changes in professional competency and growth over time. Through an awareness of their development, these BTs were able to reflect on the particular role their mentors played and the subsequent changes in their emotions, confidence and resilience as teachers. They did this without diminishing the role other colleagues played and the different layers of support needed by different personnel in this phase.

BTs in this study also reported collegial support as an integral, positive category in their transitional context. They asserted that they would not have continued in their work as teachers without the support they received from colleagues in their work environment. This area of support for the professional development of BTs and its influence on retention is a key area in the transition experience, and is documented widely in the literature on transition (Hudson & Hudson, 2016; Ingersoll, 2012).

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and discussed the findings related to the three categories emerging from the data analysis: Emotions, Expectations and Collegial Support. Within each of these categories, related themes were discussed, and key messages highlighted. Emotions were identified as significant during the teacher transition phase as this professional time
is emotionally overwhelming and exhausting. Analysis of data in the Emotions category demonstrated that the construct of teacher confidence (linked to self-efficacy) is particularly relevant to the BT, as it changes considerably during this phase. Expectations held by others and the BTs themselves were also a source of concern for them. However, whilst BTs must experience and manage the raft of expectations regarding them as professionals, this uncomfortable experience of others expectations can also result in professional satisfaction in the workplace, perhaps, highlighting the role resilience plays in early phase of transition to teaching. Finally, collegial support is a vital component of BT transition success, as they view colleagues, particularly experienced and senior teachers, as a safety net for them during this phase. The role of collaborative, teacher driven professional development cannot be underestimated. Nor can the importance of ensuring it raises awareness of BT requirements, further encouraging and facilitating engagement. Effective professional development opportunities appear to treat beginning teachers as active learners and enhance their skills and knowledge whilst acknowledging and affirming the challenging phase that is transition. The significance implications of these findings are discussed in the concluding Chapter 5.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

An exploratory case study approach was used in this research to examine BTs’ perceptions of and reflections on the key areas influencing their personal and professional development during transition to teaching. The purpose of the study was to describe and critically consider the important experiences of BTs during this phase. The previous chapter presented findings in response to the two guiding research questions. These findings indicated three main categories impacting the BT as they transitioned into the profession. These categories were Emotions, Expectations and Collegial Support. Insights into the significance of these sets of categories and their contribution to the professional development of BTs in their transition phase were also discussed. This chapter builds on that analysis and considers the links between each category and their significance. Connections with previous research are made to highlight how this study contributes to the literature and recommendations are presented for those who work with BTs. The chapter concludes by discussing the limitations of the study and presenting recommendations for future research.

As outlined in Chapter 4, findings from this study support the research literature that recognises the transition phase as a particularly critical stage in the development of BTs (Hudson, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The participants articulated the important categories in one high school context, which impacted on their transitional years and described how these categories influenced their professional development. It confirms that these beginning years include a range of professional experiences in which BTs develop the skills, networks and attitudes that provide the foundational understanding on which their future work is based and sustained.
Evidence presented in this study also confirmed the notions that during the early stages of their career, BTs are not just coping with a range of personal and professional challenges that involve heightened emotions and acute occupational stress (Klusmann, Kunter, Voss, & Baumert, 2012) but are learning from them and deploying that learning to manage and stabilise their practice. Further, and through this, the BT voices in this study demonstrate they are capable of identifying, seeking out and benefitting from the professional development experiences and support they need to enhance their practice (Patton et al., 2015). In this way the participants highlighted that professional development in the transition phase of teaching is more than engagement in a formal program of support hosted by an employer and more than a personal passing from an initial stage of inexperience and dependence into one of experience and independence. Rather, these BTs indicated that professional development through transition is an ongoing, self-directed and daily process of finding and using the resources they know they need from those available to them.

The stakeholders and supporters in the BT world include themselves, their peers, their colleagues and the school context in which they work. Such a perspective on professional development suggests ways by which the provision of professional development opportunities and experiences could be organised and facilitated. These perspectives are discussed further in this chapter to inform those who seek to support BTs as they develop in their early years. The study outcomes suggest that creating a collective culture of responsibility for supporting BTs during their transition phase is beneficial. Recommendations are provided for school leaders, senior colleagues, mentors and the BTs themselves regarding two main ideas. First, and given that BTs are continuously learning to better manage their emotions and the stresses these can cause, they would benefit from assistance to manage the emotional labour of teaching. Second, and given their developing capacity to seek out and personally apply the professional development
resources their circumstances make available, BTs would benefit from targeted professional development opportunities to support the building of their experience and confidence during transition.

Recommendations from the research

**Recommendation one: Support beginning teachers to manage the emotional labour of teaching.**

As documented in the previous chapter, the emotions experienced by BTs were often described as unexpected and intense emotions during their early days as teachers. However, BTs also articulated the positive aspects of completing the first and second years of teaching, and the subsequent impact on their self-confidence. As explained by Nichols et al. (2017), significant emotional labour is involved in teaching, as is especially evident during the transition phase. For this reason, people involved in BT transition play a key role in assisting to raise individual BT awareness to the reality that these heightened emotions will arise. Importantly, they also need to be future focused and positive with BTs, further clarifying and encouraging that this stage can be successfully negotiated. Helping BTs to realise and access their professional growth during this emotionally turbulent time was a key aspect of successful partnerships in the study, which highlights the transition experience as a process that can ultimately contribute to a progressive increase in BTs’ confidence and resilience if successfully implemented.

Findings reflected from the current study suggest that successful transition and development of BTs occurs when they resolve emotions and expectations, modify their preservice teacher ideals and learn to receive support from their colleagues as they focus on developing as practitioners. Suggestions are advanced for the ways school personnel involved in transition programs can assist BTs to manage the emotional labour teaching presents, through the targeted use of professional development.
Gavish and Friedman (2011) and Lindqvist et al. (2017) support the proposition that BTs need to work to resolve emotions associated with professional inadequacy and uncertainty, as they are expected very quickly to become as independent in their functioning as their more experienced colleagues. BTs in this study appeared to benefit both personally and professionally from time allocated to observe and debrief about their developing technical practices with each other, more experienced colleagues and school managers. During this time, with awareness and space to acknowledge their emotions, they could: identify the areas in which they needed support, articulate the teaching skills and strategies that required development, strategise how they could seek these provisions and move forward. Kelly, Reushle, Chakrabarty, and Kinnane (2014) and Lindqvist et al. (2017) support this finding, stressing the importance of recognising that teachers are carrying out highly emotional work in the early days of teaching. BTs need assistance as they work to overcome the hurdle of balancing not only the highly relational work embedded in teaching but also the practical and strategic skills they are developing to teach lessons effectively.

The data illustrated that collegial relationships were attributed as a source of growth in the BTs’ ability to regulate their emotions and modify their expectations about their early capabilities as teachers. Collegial opportunities within professional development situations help to build strong working relationships as teachers reflect and support each other through failures and share successful practices (Patton et al., 2015; Richardson et al., 2013). Through positive mentoring and peer relationships with others in the transition phase, BTs in this study were able to establish, negotiate and manage new school relationships successfully. This finding supports and extends the work of Richardson et al. (2013) and Caspersen and Raaen (2014). Their studies suggested that when more experienced teachers can communicate their competence regarding effective
teaching strategies, they become colleagues that BTs value and seek out for constructive support.

The Richardson et al. (2013) research with German and Australian teachers, further highlights the vital influence of relationships on the uptake of coping strategies that BTs can use, impacting their emotional wellbeing and subsequent retention in the profession. The current study added to this research with BTs in their second and third year of teaching clearly reflecting on the vital role their colleagues played as mentors who offered effective support mechanisms. When the BT in this study experienced adversity early in their careers it was effective relationships that assisted them to develop not only coping strategies but also their confidence during the early transition phase. BT participants reported that of particular assistance during this phase were the formal and informal events the mentees and mentors experienced together. Such activities were responsive in their approach and provided opportunities for BTs to reflect, seek specific help, build their skills and feel supported in their work. These activities are considered in more detail in the next recommendation.

**Recommendation two: Target professional development opportunities to build experience and confidence during transition.**

This study confirms that BTs require unique professional development opportunities during this distinct transition time and identifies that adopting a mentor as a critical friend is a powerful strategy for this work. The following section outlines the BTs’ particular needs including: a personalised approach to professional development; opportunities to identify, discuss and address areas of inadequacy to seek feedback and refine teaching practice; clarity of expectations in the school community; a strengthening of relationships from mentor-mentee to colleague-colleague collaboration. Each is considered in turn.
First, personally responsive and individualised transition programs that seek to support the BTs in the immediate context in which they are working improve confidence and subsequently, teacher resilience. This position is affirmed by the approach to BT transition in the current study as participants linked the effectiveness of the experience to the important mentor-mentee conversations that lead them to develop refined and focused teaching strategies, skills and proficiencies. The importance of resolving the common but unhelpful emotions of professional inadequacy and their impact on teachers during this early stage are reported in the work of Lindqvist et al. (2017), Caires et al. (2012) and Caspersen and Raaen (2014). These studies, coupled with the voices of BTs in the current study are noteworthy as BTs who are introduced to the profession gradually in ways that “engender self-esteem, competence, collegiality and professional stature” are teachers who are more likely to be retained (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009, p. 4). The BTs’ comments reflected those teachers early in transition having explicit, yet supportive discussions about their work, which ultimately impacted their satisfaction, commitment and emotions of improvement in their workplace. The impact of such foundational relationship building is evident in each of the sections below.

Second, this study identified that, throughout the mentoring program, BTs should have opportunities to identify, discuss and address areas of improvement for feedback. BTs voiced a desire to seek advice in areas including: managing curriculum and assessment judgements, meeting the diverse needs of students, forming positive relationships with staff and students; acknowledging and challenging preconceptions about being an effective teacher and the unexpected realities and emotions associated with the demands of their role as a teacher. As these are significant aspects of practice that impact BTs’ emotions and subsequent confidence, formal programs as well as conversations with those who support them informally are identified as beneficial for the BTs. The same acknowledgement was reflected in U.S. research by Fantilli and
McDougall (2009), in which preservice and early career teachers echoed the same concerns regarding their BT experiences and the growth fostered when these concerns are overcome. Both studies found the formal support systems of colleagues, administrators and mentors (even informal mentors) to be beneficial according to the BTs. This study highlights the need for resources that support BT access to senior educators in schools.

The specific assistance provided by teaching colleagues again centred on supportive conversations that enabled BTs to clarify and reflect on their lessons. Direct and clear communication indicating why they were or were not successful, help with critical reflection on experiences with difficult students, and suggested administrative adjustments to improve the management of their workloads were all examples of effective feedback that made a difference to the BTs. Mentors who are trained and attuned to the typical challenges in the BT phase can work to ensure this professional development is practical, constructive and positive. However, all those who seek to support BTs need to consider the ways they can specifically cater for these significant aspects of practice and find ways to clearly show BTs when and how they are experiencing success in these domains. Professional development opportunities that work to build both subject specific and broader pedagogy capabilities improve self-efficacy in the BT (Ross, 2013). Explicit feedback from more experienced teachers is necessary to provide practical aid for BTs’ professional development.

Third, school sites can support BT development by establishing clarity around effective practices and expectations in their school community. This provides a starting point for BTs who seek knowledge and understanding about what may constitute effective practices in order to broaden their expertise. The program at the site for this study was collaboratively determined by mentees and mentors and promoted critical reflection on practice in peer group and mentor-mentee situations. It is important for professional
development to be targeted and clear because it provides opportunities to build self-confidence in clearly defined areas. As indicated by the data in this study, and building on the findings of Devos (2010) and Leonard (2012) BT also need professional discussions with multiple people, which are broad enough to encompass a wide variety of aspects regarding what constitutes quality teaching (Devos, 2010; Leonard, 2012). Without this they may look to a previous, potentially narrow view from their practicum experience (APST) as the basis for what constitutes a good teacher, limiting their growth. BTs need both explicit feedback and broad reflection to engage meaningfully in the profession long term (Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012).

Finally, in the current study, BTs identified how they had developed with the help of supportive colleagues and practical applications during their formal mentoring sessions. Reciprocal relationships among beginning and expert teachers have the potential to be extremely valuable for all parties, as a shared focus on professional development helps the learning of both the novice and the expert (Paris, 2013). Patton et al. (2015) advance the proposition that, to facilitate impactful professional development, lead educators must acknowledge that all teachers enter professional development as “self-directed learners with previous experience, defined expectations for their learning outcomes and a willingness to collaborate with teaching colleagues” (p. 26). This study confirms that BTs benefit from collegial relationships that assist them to become reflective practitioners who can choose strategies and enact their successful delivery and manage the diverse emotions that characterise their day. Ultimately, this study observed a noteworthy relationship shift from mentor-mentee to collegial equal for the participants.

Further, important findings from the Le Cornu (2013) and Phelps and Benson (2012) studies highlight that collegial relationships are not just supportive at a point in time, but critical to resilience building in new teachers. The importance of collaboration with colleagues and the impact on the resilience of BTs is discussed in the next section.
Collaborating with colleagues and utilising support builds resilience...Or they leave.

The current study confirmed that mentors, colleagues and school administration members provided different, yet crucial means of support for BTs and that multiple opportunities for BTs to collaborate is vital. Assistance from these colleagues varied for each BT. It included: practical help, emotional support, time away from classes for planning in stressful times, general guidance and advice regarding everyday teaching and instructional expectations, classroom management, identifying measures of student success, resources, and workload management. As suggested by Hudson (2012), it is critical that BTs have a diverse “community of mentors who can collaborate [with] and support them in their practice” (p. 81) as they continue to develop their professional selves and the way they work during the transition phase.

As BTs are working independently in classrooms each day, their challenges during this transition are amplified because their primary, day-to-day work is often carried out largely in isolation from their colleagues (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The current study supports similar findings of Corbell et al. (2010) whose study of BT satisfaction and retention in America reports that the provision of support for BTs impacted on their own perceptions of success. Despite the regular isolation in classrooms, teachers’ personal beliefs and the social environment to which they belong can be influenced by colleagues (Faulkner & Latham, 2016). Participants in this study articulated clearly that their confidence increased when affirmations about their teaching were received from a variety of their colleagues and managers. Their guidance, perspectives and assistance in developing the BTs’ attitude to and about their own work helped them navigate the transition phase. Importantly the targeted deployment of teachers who are closer to the transition, that is, teachers who have only recently passed through the transition phase, rather than just relying on more experienced teachers, was also an important request from
the BTs. Martin et al. (2016) investigated the impacts of support for BTs and found that they leave schools in circumstances in which they feel unsupported because they sense they cannot meet the needs of their students or are generally ineffective. The support in this study seemed to promote resilience building over time in teachers as the cyclic effort of engaging in positive learning experiences, receiving feedback and making changes to practice influenced their day-to-day work and confidence.

Whilst assistance from administration staff and direct managers seemed less influential initially, the data indicated that its provision, however distal, was vital. For example, providing the resources, time and money for BTs to be away from classes and engaged in informal professional development, such as planning time and time to discuss assessment and marking challenges with other teachers, was supported by administrators and was clearly helpful. BTs acknowledged that this overt support from administrators was evident at their school because they were aware that it was non-existent in the schools of some of their peers. It is clear that school leaders need to be aware that in their positions they are able and need to prioritise the provision of professional development initiatives for BTs and facilitate the collective work of teachers in a positive, growth promoting environment (Patton et al., 2015).

Assisting novice teachers should be seen as a collective responsibility in schools, addressed by a range of personnel for various reasons (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). Colleagues who provide support when specific curriculum challenges are evident are just as vital as those who provide assistance for students with diverse needs, or those who offer emotional support. As the data indicated in the current study, in one school context, these may not be the same colleague.

BTs have a desire to become independent in their work, and yet independence typically does not manifest itself immediately. Until BTs become cognisant of what they
need to improve and can access subsequent targeted support, they remain isolated and somewhat dependent on their senior colleagues. They know they are not performing at the same level as other more experienced colleagues and for this reason, their confidence and resilience are often built through positive and explicit learning experiences with multiple other staff members (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). When BTs have an opportunity to resolve emotions of professional inadequacy (Lindqvist et al., 2017) through dialogue and are encouraged to change their practice, their growth and development as practitioners can occur. Teacher resilience research clearly illustrates the importance of schools creating a caring, professional community around BTs. Such communities contribute to long term positive impacts on the BTs’ work (Mansfield, Beltman, & Price, 2014) as was clearly confirmed through the current study.

**Beginning Teachers Develop Resilience & Identity.**

Resilience occurs in settings where personal characteristics meet contextual factors, including one’s ability to build awareness of the skills and practices that facilitate resilience in teaching (Beltman et al., 2011). When BTs are contributing members of a professional learning community, they have opportunities for reflection and professional growth through authentic and meaningful dialogue with multiple colleagues (Adoniou, 2016). Therefore, it could be concluded that BTs who experienced positive collegial experiences (including formal and informal mentoring) have intentional and direct opportunities to engage in practice behaviours that build resilience (McIntyre & Hobson, 2016).

Professional development opportunities for individual BTs relevant to their contexts are required for sustained development that supports a change in emotions, expectations and confidence. Consideration of the professional development opportunities identified and discussed in this study showed that they can range across informal and formal, individual or collaborative, and voluntary or mandatory experiences.
Activities can include coaching strategies, self-monitoring events and self-reflection. The findings in this study suggest that if activities provide opportunities for BTs to resolve their professional inadequacy as they build their experience and overcome uncertainties, they will develop self-confidence and increase resilience. BTs display different abilities and capacities for development and performance, and therefore they benefit from individualised and highly responsive support from the school personnel who manage their transition programs.

Ingersoll and Strong’s (2011) review of induction programs for BTs showed that most programs assist them and have a positive impact not only on their retention and critical reflection practices but also on student achievement. Some models for BT professional development focus on specific standards or criteria. In Australia these are the APST (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014) and have recently influenced the transition phase of Queensland’s BT population. Whether assessing a beginning or lead teacher, schools are now focused on the teaching practices connected to these standards. They are the benchmark for quality teaching, and conversations about teacher practice are becoming centred on this attainment type model. Participants in this study acknowledged the provision of clarity and direction the standards provided to BTs.

The BTs in this study also highlighted the empowerment of contributing to their own development as professionals through tailoring the topics and methods used in the mentoring program at the BTs’ school. Whilst the professional standards provide consistent expectations across all levels of teacher expertise, some schools may be operating mentoring programs within a less formally structured approach to cater for the individual needs of teachers (Devos, 2010). Critical self-reflection and flexibility in a program can be seen as a positive approach if it promotes BTs’ critiquing their practice with and through group or peer support. Devos (2010) discusses the ways mentoring (that
includes more than just a focus on teaching standards) through professional development can shape new teachers’ understanding of themselves, and how through these discourses new teacher identities are shaped and constructed. The program that was the context in the current study provided opportunities for mentors and mentees to create their own strategies and ways of working as they prioritised their professional development and this autonomy was effective for all seven of the BTs.

As Nichols et al. (2017) argue, teacher identity is not [only] about what someone “is” but rather what they are becoming” (p. 407). Teaching is not just an impersonal, technical job but rather teachers invest themselves in their work. Findings from the current study suggest that not only would emotions and subsequent actions influence teachers’ identity formation, but also the ongoing formation of BT identities would also impact on their day-to-day emotions and actions. Therefore, rather than focus on the improvement imperative and solely use this current study to present best practices for supporting BTs in their professional development, future research studies could enrich our understanding of BT identity. Such a focus may aid in enhancing teacher retention and the development of high quality BT support programs that lead to strong teaching professionals.

**Limitations of the study**

This study was limited to only seven participants and indeed a single location, and as such is not generalisable. However, the depth of the study and analysis allowed the researcher to confidently describe the experiences of each participant and draw conclusions from the data.

While not directly linked with participants in a supervisory capacity, the researcher’s familiarity and association with their mentoring program may have influenced their comments about their transition experiences. Similarly, during the data
collection period, interactions and comments preceding and during the interviews may also have shaped some responses. In addition, the format of group interviews may have limited some of the responses from participants as they may have been inhibited by their concern about perceptions of others present, both peers and the researcher. Some participants were more articulate than others and their stories may have received greater attention although steps to counter this were made by approaching the data in numerous ways and constantly checking the balance of participant representation.

The female to male ratio of participants in this study was 5:2. The dominant female presence in this study reflects the predominantly female teaching population in Australian schools. However, the influence of teachers’ gender was not considered within the constraints of this study as all participants who participated in the formal mentoring program at the school were invited and of those who were willing to participate, all were included. It is acknowledged that the influence of gender as a sociocultural factor influencing the transformation of BTs during the transition phase could be examined in future studies.

**Implications for future research**

There is a need for more studies in Queensland high schools that present the perspectives of BTs. Besides accountability for the recent targeted, fiscal investment in BT that is now expected during the transition phase, a means to better understand the BT experience is required to maximise the impact and effectiveness of transition programs. This understanding includes considering the areas that BTs recognise as impactful during the transition period and why these may be supporting or hindering their professional development (Hudson, 2012). Evidence (most of which pre-dates current formal induction arrangements in Australia) suggests that the effectiveness of BT transition continues to be a matter of teacher perception (Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012); (McIntyre & Hobson, 2016) deeply connected to individual experience and school
context. Therefore, asking BTs to discuss their individual experiences, within multiple contexts is of value in providing depth of understanding regarding the impact of this transition phase.

Further, exploring the ways in which teachers cope with these heightened emotions and expectations during this phase provides valuable information to better prepare those who work with BTs in the Queensland context. In this study, these significant emotions coincided with changes in confidence and resilience of the BTs during their transition phase. Other study contexts may elicit different outcomes because research in the area of teacher emotions is growing. Ultimately the emotional labour of teaching and its impact on BTs suggests their confidence levels, resilience levels and ultimately, identities as teachers are emerging and constantly being shaped by this labour. This body of research is important because BTs need to be prepared for the difficult yet rewarding task of carrying out emotional work, managing the expectations of the profession and constructing their identity as they begin to teach (Richardson et al., 2013). Further research into these areas and their interconnectedness would be of benefit in the Queensland context.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided insights into the importance of the research findings, highlighting the connections between BTs’ experiences and the subsequent emotionality of the transition phase. It suggested how educators involved with BT transition can assist in that career trajectory with effective and responsive professional development opportunities. Key messages for these support personnel included recommendations for programs and targeted professional development activities that build confidence, resilience and ultimately impact on the identity of BTs. Fundamentally, if educators involved with BTs help them manage the emotional labour during transition and seek to mediate the
professional development experiences in which they engage, considerable impact on their confidence and resilience can be seen and retention in the profession would be more likely. Through the responsiveness of both formal programs and information sharing with colleagues who will interact with BTs informally, schools can support BT in transition in more comprehensive ways. These connections between key research areas are important in defining and describing the work of all teachers, acknowledging the challenging role of BTs and ultimately supporting their long-term sustainability in the profession.
References


**Appendix A**

**Table A1. Probing Interview Questions Addressing Research Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Q1</th>
<th>Probing Questions 2</th>
<th>Probing Questions 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your experience as a BT?</td>
<td>What was significant about your first year of teaching?</td>
<td>Tell me about your experience in the mentoring program that you were a part of in your first year of teaching?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which experiences really impacted you professionally?</td>
<td>Tell me about any pressures you felt in your first year? Subsequently?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How did you cope when things were challenging?</td>
<td>Tell me who was influential in your first year of teaching.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Who do you see as your support people now?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tell me about any activities that you participated in.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tell me about the positives/successes in your first year?</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Tell me about any challenges in that time?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How are the challenges you face now the same or different to your first year?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Group Interviewing Planning

Purpose of the Questions for Group Interview

- Probing questions to “tease out” more to research question 2 – **In what ways do these significant aspects of transition phase (experiences) contribute to their professional development?**
- Deeper questioning to elicit more information about themes…. And consider analysis using identity/ self efficacy/emotions
- APST links?

Guiding Questions for Focus Group

- One of the things influencing teacher transition at the moment are the APST standards. What role have the APST standards played in influencing you during this transition phase?

- Think of a PD opportunity you’ve had in the last 1-3 years (depending) and pinpoint an element (activity/narrative somebody told) that really influenced you as a teacher.

- One of the common themes in the group was a “change in how you see yourself as a teacher” over the year/s – what events/happenings have influenced how you think of yourself as a teacher? **Or** When you think of yourself as a teacher, what comes to mind?

- What does it mean to you to be a good/effective teacher? How effective do you feel as a teacher now? Are you meeting the expectations of teachers? School? Students? Parents? Self? What makes you know this?

- One of the main themes influencing BT during transition are mentors. Do you/did you perceive your mentors as experts? What kind of mentoring helps BT? Instructional Support or Psychological Support? Or both?

- With the benefit of hindsight, what would you do differently as a BT?
### Appendix C1

#### Definitions for Themes and Sub Themes October 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transitional &amp; Emotional Elements</td>
<td>Emotional elements experienced during transition include any emotions expressed by the BT that influenced a change in their confidence or resilience. These emotions were clearly expressed as significant, and were experienced specifically during their transition phase.</td>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>Any conscious experience articulated by the teacher characterised by intense emotions, derived from a teaching or school circumstance, mood or relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>A feeling of self-assurance arising from an expectation of one’s own abilities. A judgement, feeling or belief the BT had in their abilities during transition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Processes or actions the BT used to maintain adaptive functioning after experiencing adversity in teaching or other experience during the transition phase. Situations that challenged the BT abilities to stay committed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Beliefs: BT</td>
<td>Beliefs about BT are held by other teachers, administrators, parents, students and BT themselves. These beliefs inform the assumptions we make based on the perceptions and expectations we have of ourselves, those other people hold of us, and situations BT experience during transition.</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>A belief held by the BT or other colleague, manager, parent or student about what might and/or should happen in the future. It was often expressed as a belief that a BT should participate, complete or achieve something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>The way something (a person, situation or event) is regarded, understood or interpreted by a BT, colleague, parent or student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>Taking upon oneself to decide that something is accepted as certain, usually without proof. Often it occurs in a situation or event where it may be taken for granted that BT know, understands or has competency. People (including BT themselves) in schools make assumptions about BT based on the perceptions they hold about their experience and/or competency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 3</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collegial support</td>
<td>Collegial support includes positive relationships that show value and respect between teaching staff, providing sustenance and a sense of being available that contributes to professional and personal success for the BT.</td>
<td>Experienced Teachers as Colleagues in Staffrooms</td>
<td>Any teachers the BT deems as “experienced” either due to curriculum, specific school or situational experiences. Usually these teachers have more curriculum specific knowledge and/or knowledge about pedagogical strategies and are perceived to enact this knowledge in a manner that is more advanced than the BT. Some of these teachers had been teaching 5-10, 20 or 30+ years.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Mentors</strong></td>
<td>Teachers that are part of the Mentoring BT program at the school. These mentors are allocated to the BT and are not part of their faculty or staffroom. The mentors engage in a formal program with their mentee, led by the Deputy Principal, but primarily interactions occur just between mentor and BT.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BT Peers</strong></td>
<td>Any teachers in the same year, or slightly ahead of the BT. They are within the transition phase to teaching. These teachers can be at the school or another school to the BT.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C2

**Definitions for Themes and Sub Themes January 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotions</strong></td>
<td>Any conscious experience articulated by the teacher characterised by intense emotions, derived from a teaching or school circumstance, mood or relationship. Emotions experienced during transition include any emotions expressed by the BT that influenced a change in their confidence or resilience. These emotions were clearly expressed as significant and were experienced specifically during their transition phase.</td>
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<td><strong>Clear Expectations</strong> &amp; <strong>Managing Expectations</strong></td>
<td>A belief held by the BT or other colleague, manager, parent or student about what might and/or should happen in the future. It was often expressed as a belief that a BT should participate, complete or achieve something.</td>
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<td><strong>Informal Mentors</strong></td>
<td>Any teachers the BT deems as “experienced” either due to curriculum, specific school or situational experiences. Usually these teachers have more curriculum specific knowledge and/or knowledge about pedagogical strategies and are perceived to enact this knowledge in a manner that is more advanced than the BT. Some of these teachers had been teaching 5-10, 20 or 30+ years.</td>
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<td><strong>Clear Expectations</strong> &amp; <strong>Managing Expectations</strong></td>
<td>A belief held by the BT or other colleague, manager, parent or student about what might and/or should happen in the future. It was often expressed as a belief that a BT should participate, complete or achieve something. Clarity of expectations featured as BT sough to understand the roles and responsibilities of their job. Managing the expectations of others and of themselves featured as BT undertook their role, experienced intense emotions and tried to adapt to their environment.</td>
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