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Re-imagining teacher mentoring for the future

Ellen Larsen[a], Cecily Jensen-Clayton[a], Elizabeth Curtis[a], Tony Loughland[b] and Hoa T. M. Nguyen[b]

[a]University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia; [b]University of New South Wales, Australia

ABSTRACT
Teachers are dealing with a profession characterised by rapidly evolving educational research, societal shifts, and political agendas. They are faced with unforeseen events that create educational futures that are yet unknown, with the global pandemic a clear example. Mentoring has a long history as an approach to support teachers, particularly those in the early stages of their careers, to navigate the challenges of the profession and build professional capacity. The unprecedented complexity of the current educational landscape demands now, more than ever, that mentoring for early career teachers (ECTs) extends beyond standards-driven capacity building to nurture future-focused dispositions. This paper conceptualises the Future-focused Mentoring model (FfM) for the current educational context, framed by the intellectual virtues for the transformation of self, relationships, and teacher practice that leverages and celebrates intellectual imagination, courage, open-mindedness, and tenacity. In proposing this model, we draw on a strong theoretical and empirical base to articulate the principles of a mentoring model that is relational, mindful and future-focused. This model has been conceptualised as a way forward to support and sustain ECTs' effectiveness for the future and longevity in the profession.

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Introduction

Teaching has always been characterised by constant change amidst evolving educational research, societal shifts and political agendas (Vahasantanen 2015, Loughran and Menter 2019). However, the need for teachers to be innovative and adaptable has been made more conspicuous than ever by the increased demands on educational adaptability experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic (Duignan 2020, Carver and Shanks 2021) with teachers having to rapidly and creatively rise to the challenge of online teaching and assume a pedagogy of care (Burke and Larmar 2021) that in many cases transcended their previous experience and training (Burgos *et al.* 2021). Teachers in many countries across the world, including the US, the UK and Australia, are continuing to navigate the tension of an unprecedented pedagogical evolution expedited by technology and the demands of a well-established drive for teacher accountability and standardisation (Holloway 2021, Vaughn *et al.* 2021).

In Australia and elsewhere, teacher stress levels have been reported as high as 60% of the workforce (Mcgrath-Champ *et al.* 2017). Therefore, there is an urgent need to support and enable them to survive and thrive in an educational context most likely to continue to be highly demanding well into the future. Just as teachers are being required to adapt to the demands of the future, so too mentoring approaches must evolve to support teachers in a way that is future-focused. This paper

CONTACT Ellen Larsen ellen.larsen@usq.edu.au University of Southern Queensland

puts forth a conceptualisation of teacher mentoring, with exemplars of practice, that aims to empower early career teachers and their mentors to harness their personal potential, build learning partnerships for mutual learning benefit and explore practice in ways that respond to changing needs.

Challenges are exacerbated for the early career teacher (ECT), who can be defined as those who have less than five years of teaching experience (Miles and Knipe 2018, Aarts *et al.* 2020). These tensions add to what has already been identified as a highly complex and demanding career stage as teachers develop their skills through classroom experience (Larsen and Allen 2021). ECT teachers are already facing daunting challenges in the classroom, such as responding to challenging classroom behaviours, meeting the needs of diverse students and developing an engaging curriculum and delivering it, all without the benefit of experience (Damico *et al.* 2018). This can be daunting for ECTs as they 'navigate the murky waters of education that can sometimes feel disempowering and disillusioning' (Damico *et al.* 2018, p. 828). These challenges contribute to ECT burnout, attrition and diminished wellbeing, an issue that has been reported as a growing concern around the world (Mcgrath-Champ *et al.* 2017, Herman *et al.* 2021).

Attrition rates among ECTs have been the subject of numerous studies. In one study, US researchers found ECT attrition rates increased by up to 70% in schools serving students at high educational risk where mentoring structures were not available (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond 2017). Similarly, a 2019 Canadian study demonstrated that ECTs who did not receive any support through mentorship indicated significantly lower feelings of well-being, creating the ideal conditions for teacher attrition (Kutsyuruba *et al.* 2019). With research from the UK suggesting that each cohort of new teachers leaves faster than the previous (Sims and Jerrim 2020), and UNESCO stating that 69 million new teacher recruits are needed worldwide by 2030 (Madigan and Kim 2021), the issue is one of global importance (Shanks *et al.* 2020). Australia acts as another case in point, with Carroll *et al.* (2021) arguing that without mentoring support, organisational, interpersonal and relational stressors on ECTs will continue to drive attrition rates of up to 40% among ECTs.

Despite the focus on attrition, some researchers have cautioned against using this narrow lens as a focus for the conversation around how to support ECTs (Goodwin *et al.* 2021). The issue of attrition alone can act as a statistical distraction from a broader argument that should drive the development of mentoring approaches. At present and into the future, teachers, including ECTs, are and will be required to respond to the precipitous changes and evolving professional contexts within which they do – or will – work (Herman *et al.* 2021). All teachers, including ECTs, need to be supported, not just to stay (Collie and Perry 2019, Herman *et al.* 2021), but to develop the kinds of thinking, feeling and relating that will nurture their current and future professional work in rapidly evolving contexts (Collie and Perry 2019).

Mentoring has long been espoused as the means by which teachers can be supported by a more experienced colleague to navigate the complex challenges and demands of the classroom. Currently, mentoring is often purposed as a strategy for qualification, or pedagogical support to meet a narrow set of teacher standards (Biesta 2019), or as a form of professional socialisation in the early career stages (Kelly *et al.* 2018, Kelchtermans 2019, Goodwin *et al.* 2021). This leaves subjectification (Biesta 2019), or the holistic and agentic development of the ECT, as a third purpose of mentoring that is conspicuously underrepresented in current mentoring practices.

Subjectification positions the early career teacher as an object of their own actions and not the subject of the intervention of the more knowledgeable mentor (Biesta 2019) or of the limitations of a restrictive set of teacher standards. Self-actualisation through subjectification (Biesta 2019) overcomes the cultural reproduction and replication of teacher practice inherent in the dead hand of standards frameworks, instead nurturing the development of critical inner resources of adaptability and agility that teachers will need moving forward into an unknown educational future for which the standards are not purposed. Teachers across the globe will need to pivot and re-imagine their work in unknown educational futures, already clouded by the spectre of global pandemics and the climate changes of the Anthropocene, calling for the reimagining of mentoring practice.

In this paper, we explicate the Future-focused Mentoring Model (ffM), designed to achieve subjectification for ECTs and, concurrently, the mutual development of essential future-focused intellectual dispositions with those teacher mentors that work alongside them. Framed by key tenets of futures intelligence theory (Jensen-Clayton and McLeod, 2017, Jensen-Clayton 2018), we draw upon the long and rich genealogy of transformative education, traced from Dewey through to Illich, Postman and onto contemporary philosophers such as Biesta, as a careful, thorough and humane praxis. We do this through firstly, a review of the extant literature to discuss prevalent teacher mentoring models drawn from Australian and international research, giving a critique of their empirical strengths and limitations; secondly, an explication of the theory of Futures Intelligence drawing on the seminal work of Kegan (1982) and intellectual virtues scholar, Baehr (2013), before then explaining the application of this work into a comprehensive and feasible model of mentoring.

Mentoring practices

Mentoring has a long research and praxis history as a highly regarded support approach for all teachers, and most specifically ECTs (see Beutel *et al.* 2017, Kelly *et al.* 2018, Kelchtermans 2019, Goodwin *et al.* 2021). A somewhat contested practice, however, it has across time and context taken different forms, been purposed in different ways and been based on a range of theoretical approaches (Aspfors and Fransson 2015). In his phenomenological study of mentoring literature across different disciplines, Roberts (2000) identified numerous approaches to mentoring, including those framed by an active relationship, informal advice, a teaching-learning process, reflection, career development and formal structures. Roberts (2000) revealed mentoring to be a practice plagued by diverse conceptualisations.

A traditional, classical view of mentoring in educational contexts is framed as an experienced teacher (mentor) guiding and supporting a beginning teacher (mentee) as they enter the profession and continue to develop their skills, beliefs and values (Spooner-Lane, 2017). In these kinds of socialisation models, the focus is often on providing ECTs with necessary on-boarding information to elucidate ways of working, policy and procedures specific to the profession and the teaching context, shown to be important for the smooth transition of the ECT into an unfamiliar context (Spooner-Lane, 2017). Underpinned by the belief that the ECT will benefit and learn from the wisdom of the more knowledgeable 'other' (Aspfors and Frannson, 2015), mentors assume the role of an all-knowing authority and expert. This classical model is predicated on knowledge giving rather than knowledge construction, with the hierarchical privileging of the mentor's experience over the ECT's education, previous experience, potential strengths and values (Clarke *et al.* 2013). As a consequence, mentors may draw on their own experience and preferred practice (Clarke *et al.* 2013, Aspfors and Frannson, 2017,) to provide tips and survival guidance to ECTs (Stanulis *et al.* 2019). While ECTs have been shown to operate in survival mode in the earliest stages, this approach significantly limits opportunities for the exploration of ideas beyond the status quo through constructive critical inquiry and reflection by either the mentor or ECT (Clarke *et al.* 2013, Henry and Mollstedt 2021) and may undermine ECT's perceptions of their own value and potential.

An educative mentoring approach repositions the ECT from passive to active participant in the mentoring experience which offers greater agency to the mentee (Hobson *et al.* 2009, Hudson 2013, Aspfors and Fransson 2015). Based on social-constructivist theory, mentoring assumes a more collaborative approach to improving practice (Aderibigbe *et al.* 2014). A 2017 study of three mentoring programmes in Malta, Ireland and Norway (Attard Tonna *et al.* 2017) noted that effective mentoring must 'challenge traditional, hierarchical relationships and involve a commitment to collaborative, co-produced, inquiry-oriented approaches towards mentoring' (p. 222). The use of dialogic mentoring conversations in this model requires the ECT to accept greater responsibility for their learning and to engage in critical reflection that will challenge their underlying beliefs and assumptions (Beutel *et al.* 2017, Willis *et al.* 2019). According to Stanulis *et al.* (2019, p. 568), the educative mentor is one 'who takes the stance of a co-learner while creating growth-producing experiences' for the ECT, thus going some way to position the ECT more strongly as a valued partner in the process and serving to 'challeng[e] prevailing norms and praxis' (Attard Tonna *et al.* 2017, p. 221).

Studies utilising an educative approach have found both ECTs and mentors benefit from the sharing of ideas inherent to the process (Stanulis *et al.* 2019, Wexler 2019). As Wexler (2020) explains, mentors not only support ECTs to examine their own teaching, but rather see the process as a mechanism for their own professional learning. Educative mentoring makes a significant shift towards a goal of mutual professional benefit and the recognition of trusting relationships as central to the educative mentoring process (Izadinia 2015, Spooner-Lane 2017). The contemporary neo-liberal educational landscape, however, has created new challenges for mentoring, with an intensified focus on teacher accountability and measurement (Taylor, 2023). To address these pressures, mentoring has been repurposed in many instances as an approach to supporting teachers to meet external accountabilities in order to secure teacher registration. To illustrate, Kemmis *et al.* (2014) reported that in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW), new teachers were supported via a formal mentoring scheme whereby mentors assessed ECT's performance while at the same time preparing them to meet the requirement for probation and registration as per state professional standards policies. This type of mentoring, rooted in judgment, is mediated by the professional bureaucracy and creates role conflict for the mentor (Hobson 2016). Referred to by Hobson and Malderez (2013) as 'judgmentoring', ECTs are exposed to a narrow form of mentoring bounded by the standards and complicated by evaluative overtones that may inhibit their active participation (Izadinia 2015).

While structured programs with clearly defined goals have been heralded as more effective than adhoc approaches (Willis *et al.* 2019, Hairon *et al.* 2020), mentoring also needs to be understood as a holistic act that works to support ECT's personal, social and professional progress. One recent study (Goodwin *et al.* 2021) noted a holistic approach to ECT support is necessary and argued that humanity is inherent in mentoring. Crutcher and Naseem's (2016) review of teacher mentoring research concluded that mentoring needs to move away from a hierarchical and 'narrow assessor role to one that encompasses a great deal more care and complexity' (pp. 51–52), thus acting to counter the potential for a regressive shift back to an even more conspicuous hierarchical model of mentoring.

Beyond this, Hairon *et al.* (2020) calls for a model of mentoring mindful of the future, noting that we are educating 'within an environment which is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous' (p. 106). Now more than ever, teachers need a model of mentoring that responds to these challenging times and prepares them to be educators in a future that is largely unknown. This neoteric mentoring model needs to re-imagine, re-vitalise and reinvigorate teacher mentoring in ways that prioritise collaborative and strategic adaptability, flexibility, innovation and transformation to meet the needs of teachers, students and schools as they enter a new era of education. In this paper, we respond to Hairon *et al.*'s (2020) call, presenting a conceptualisation of mentoring that while embracing the strengths of current mentoring models, contributes an expanded focus on the dispositional mentoring of ECTs that is mindful of the contemporary tensions between mentoring qualification and subjectification, and mentoring for the present and mentoring for the future. Such a model is served by the theory of futures intelligence theory, outlined in the next section.

Theory of Futures Intelligence

In responding to the needs of teachers in a world of rapid change and unpredictability, futures intelligence theory (FIT) offers a holistic approach to the evolution of human potential in ways that are future-oriented, adaptable, imaginative and strategic. Fuelled by intellectual virtues, such as open-mindedness, curiosity and perceptiveness, this type of thinking is oriented to find positive value in challenge and change, to seek out opportunities to add, create and enhance value to ways of working and ideas in ways that are responsive to both place and people.

Unpredictability, such as experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, can cause unprecedented epistemological and psychological challenges for people globally as they struggle to adjust (Shahidullah *et al.* 2020). Thus, it is imperative that people are able to adaptively reorder and reshape the ways they think, work and play. Transformation of ways of thinking and working is complex (Kegan 2008, Leerssen 2021), exacerbated by society's privileging of neo-liberal uniformity and consistency (Gershon 2011) over the relational and strategically adaptive and imaginative thinking necessary to respond to the fast-paced reordered world. That is, it is inherent to human nature to seek refuge in the known and familiar, yet the known and familiar that may have worked in the past, may not be what is needed in the now or future

As a theory, FIT is underpinned by three key tenets. Firstly, for people to respond flexibly to the rapidly changing social environment they must partake in conscious intellectual work that enables personal, relational and contextual transformation. Secondly, such transformation requires people to be able to genuinely recognise and leverage their own and others' potential and value. And finally, working with futures intelligence energises people's relationship with themselves and others, thus releasing personal and collective potential to seek solutions and generate ideas in mutually satisfying ways.

Transformation

FIT engenders a change in consciousness, and in so doing, transforms the ways that people think about themselves, their relationships, ideas, experiences and context. FIT draws strongly on the insights from the theory of Robert Kegan (1982, 1994, 2008), who explains the evolution of consciousness as processual across five categories (orders) through a model of constructive development. The first order refers to 'impulse' level thinking, with the subsequent three orders representing increasingly higher levels of independent thinking (Eriksen 2006). While the first four orders all emphasise the individual, the fifth 'self-transforming order', most significant to FIT, is non-hierarchical and transsystemic. Put simply, the individual is capable of authentically embracing and valuing their own (the self-system) and others' (the world system) ways of thinking that take account of 'the greater complexity with which they are faced' (Kegan 1982, p. 84). Put simply, transformative is predicated on the flow of ideas between the self and other systems.

Kegan's model has previously been used in various cultural contexts and for different purposes. For example, Kegan's model has also been used to bring about transformative learning of adults marginalised by race, class and gender, with evidenced progression in their ability to think in multiple ways across diverse contexts (Bridwell 2013), foregrounding the transferability of this way of thinking. Further, using the constructive development model with adult language learners, Ouellette-Schramm (2016) found that learners could advance across the orders of Kegan's model with explicit support suggesting that reaching this stage requires intentionality and support, which may explain Kegan's argument that such transformative intellectual work is not a given outcome of human interaction.

Rather, FIT acknowledges that while the contemporary world needs this kind of thinking, research, as previously described, points to the benefits of intentional development through strategic interventions. In short, FIT argues for the development and delivery of interventional experiences aimed at re-awakening and nurturing this inherent potential (Jensen-Clayton and Macleod 2017). Supporting individuals to engage with transsystemic thinking can expand the individual's vision of opportunity, encourage them to think, feel and act differently, and value ideas beyond their own and the status quo. This suggests that mentoring providing the conditions for transformation, therefore, would depend not only on the expectation that teachers engage in transsystemic ways of thinking, but also that such an approach offer a way forward for doing so. The

Future-focused Mentoring model (FfM) innovatively draws on the intellectual virtues for this purpose.

Interrelated intelligences and intellectual virtues

In conjunction with transsystemic intelligence (Kegan 1982, 1994), FIT also recognises the role of bodily and strategic intelligences (Fernandez *et al.* 2006, Gitelman *et al.* 2021) that, working in tandem, provides a particular type of cognitive processing capable of handling the complexities of a demanding world, both now and into the future. Bodily intelligence, a term recently coined by Vancea (2020), refers to intelligence connected to one's inner perceptiveness. As such, it is an embodied intelligence that serves as a source of deeply complex knowledge that supports more nuanced understandings of experiences that can inform decision-making (Barbour 2018, Jensen-Clayton 2018, Vancea 2020). Strategic intelligence fosters an openness to randomness and spontaneity, with the driving force being constant curiosity. This form of intelligence welcomes unpredictability, transcends fears of the unknown, and is future-focused (Fernandez *et al.* 2006), an orientation significant to FIT.

These interconnected intelligences, through intentional practice, manifest as intellectual virtues (Baehr 2013, Heersmink 2018) (see Table 1) such as curiosity, open-mindedness, attentiveness, and intellectual courage (Howes 2012, Baehr 2013).

According to Baehr (2013), the espousal of the need be a lifelong learner lacks clarity and serves to be unhelpful for its actual development and execution. Instead, Baehr (2013) draws our attention to the need to 'identify some of the specific psychological qualities, abiding convictions, ingrained habits, or essential skills that distinguish the lifelong learner' (Baehr 2013, p. 249), and explains,

> To be a lifelong learner, one must possess a reasonably broad base of practical and theoretical knowledge. But possessing even a great deal of knowledge is not sufficient. Being a lifelong learner also requires being curious and inquisitive. It requires a firm and powerful commitment to learning. It demands attentiveness and reflectiveness. And given the various ways in which a commitment to lifelong learning might get derailed, it also requires intellectual determination, perseverance and courage (p. 249).

Intentional operationalisation of these virtues provides the dynamism required for transformation of the self, relationships and practice. These intellectual virtues both require and fuel transsystemic thinking and are developed and enacted within and through social relationships and shared interaction. These communally produced values drive the creativity and courage for a future-focused imagination.

This courage to imagine is counterintuitive to dualistic thinking so often privileged in Western society (Yang and Yoo 2018); a society whereby expertise has been almost exclusively valued as 'the one who knows' (Jensen-Clayton and Murray 2016). Such historically sanctioned conditions mean that those individuals who do not 'know' may be judged as lesser (Murray and Jensen-Clayton 2019). Instead, FIT embraces the opportunities presented for new imaginings, openness and transsystemic thinking that emerge from 'not knowing', uncertainty, and possibilities. In FfM,

Table 1. Intellectual virtues (adapted from Baehr 2013).

Intellectual virtue	Meaning
Curiosity	Asking questions, wondering
Autonomy	Having independent ideas and opinions
Humility	Admitting you do not know
Attentiveness	Focused listening and being present
Carefulness	Checking ideas for accuracy
Thoroughness	Seeking deeper information and understanding
Open-mindedness	Considering alternative ideas to one's own
Courage	Sharing your ideas with others
Tenacity	Persisting through a cognitive challenge

these virtues serve to underpin mentoring conversations with a focus on re-awakening, nurturing and using these intellectual virtues for mutual learner benefit in the now and for the future. However, this theory needs to be operationalised into practice.

The Future-focused mentoring model

The FfM model draws on this conceptualisation of FIT (Jensen-Clayton 2018) and the evidence of impact from previous research grounded in this and connected theory (Kegan 1982, 1994, Jensen-Clayton and Macleod 2017, Murray and Jensen-Clayton 2019). Concurrent to this evidentiary base, FfM draws from previous empirical evidence of transformation as reported across aspects of the aforementioned mentoring models to conceptualise a contemporary mentoring approach that is holistic, attentive to extant research in the field, and carefully constructed to address the emerging complexities of education that are, in many ways, yet to become clear.

We propose that future-focused mentoring offers a theoretically rigorous and practically robust model that can afford ECTs and mentors the space to reawaken and nurture ways of thinking about and approaching their teaching that will position them for longevity and adaptability in a changing, unpredictable and complex profession. In short, FfM aims to create opportunities for teachers to engage in conversations that will nurture pedagogical exploration, while concurrently drawing on and developing those intellectual dispositions that will position them to manage ever-changing and unpredictable educational futures. We put forth the intentional development of these virtues, as advocated by Ouellette-Schramm (2016), Kegan (1982), and Baehr (2013), is essential to the effectiveness of the FfM approach.

The principles underpinning the FfM model can be grouped under three key themes (the 3 Ps): potential, partnership and possibility (Table 1 and Table 2).

These three themes, elucidated further in the forthcoming sections, encapsulate the model's intention to rejuvenate teachers' ways of thinking about the *personal, relational* and *contextual* through the mentoring process.

Teachers are encouraged to think differently about their personal potential in its varied and diverse forms and the learning relationships they forge in order that the contextual possibilities that exist for adaptation and innovation in practice can be explored. In orchestration, there is potential to transform professional learning, practice, and school culture (Figure 1).

These themes, addressed for the most part in isolation across disparate models in previous mentoring research, assemble in FfM, extending on mentoring practices of today to frame mentoring with a future focus.

Personal potential

FfM is predicated on the belief that all teachers have value, strengths, and perspectives that are contributory to any professional conversation or experience. While there has been some shift from privileging the mentor as 'knower' (Henry and Mollstedt 2021), to educative approaches that espouse the active role of the ECT as a partner in the learning process (Stanulis *et al.* 2019, Wexler 2019), these models underestimate that such participation is predicated on self-belief. Research has demonstrated that teachers, ECTs in particular, may choose to remain invisible in the company of their colleagues for fear of diminishing their professional status or the respect of their colleagues (Lambert and Gray 2020, Larsen and Allen 2021). Such impression management (Weiner 2001) and risk aversive behaviours (Sachs 2016) may come from an innate belief that the knowledge and ideas of the 'other' are more profound or, in some cases, a belief that a degree of professional reverence for more experienced colleagues may be expected (O'Sullivan and Conway 2016).

A diminished self-belief or, similarly, self-view (Vaughn *et al.* 2021) in professional contributory power for any teacher undermines the potential professional learning that can occur. Thus, FfM

Table 2. Principles of FfM.

Theme	Principles of FfM	Principles in practice
Potential (Personal)	(1) Teachers flourish through self-valuing, rejecting self-limiting beliefs and instead *transforming* (Kegan, 1982) the ways in which they view their own potential.	Using intellectual virtues, ECTs and mentors reflect on the ways in which they think about their own potential in ways that make way for the development and application of intellectual virtues during mentoring. For example, ECTs can engage in mentoring courageously when they are aware of the rich potential they bring to the mentoring conversation.
	(2) Teachers develop their personal *intellectual virtues* (Baehr, 2013) that *transform* their ways of working and relating, transferable across contexts and time.	ECTs and mentors have the opportunity to intentionally develop and practice the intellectual virtues within their mentoring conversations that can be used across other contexts. For example, the nurturing of a mentor's intellectual openness will serve them when working with parents.
Partnership (Relational)	(3) Teachers engage in a non-hierarchical relational process that nurtures the *intellectual virtues* (Baehr, 2013) and embraces the ideas and perspectives of others.	For example, the deployment of intellectual openness and humility forges non-hierarchical learning relationships that are respectful and rich.
	(4) Teachers collaboratively construct, plan and implement imagined practice that *transforms* ways of working for mutual benefit.	An intentional intellectual openness and curiosity between ECTs and mentors can create real learning opportunities for both learning partners in the mentoring conversation.
Possibility (Contextual)	(5) Teachers seek out opportunities to add, create, enhance, maximise and/or amplify value in and of practice in ways that sensitively *transform* contexts.	ECTs and mentors can draw on intellectual virtues as a means of thoroughly and carefully examining practice. For example, ECTs and mentors critically reflect on the ways in which school-family partnerships have been traditionally fostered.
	(6) Teachers engage *intellectual virtues* (Baehr, 2013) to strategically and courageously explore alternative, adaptable and flexible solutions and a range of possible futures that extend beyond quick fixes, habitual or traditional solutions.	ECTs and mentors can draw on the intellectual virtues to encourage a reimagining of practice in ways that respond to changes in education or society. For example, ECTs and mentors can engage virtues of tenacity and courage to develop ways of working that may be challenging and unprecedented.

supports teachers' robust self-awareness and self-celebration of their potential as paramount to countering self-limiting beliefs and attributions (Larsen and Allen 2021, Vaughn *et al.* 2021) that delimit courageous contributions and exploration of options, ideas and perspectives. Additionally, warnings that models focused almost entirely on affective support (Burger *et al.* 2021) may fall short of engaging the beginning teacher in the kind of rigorous pedagogical dialogue that leads to important instructional discovery are addressed in FfM, with teachers using the self-language of 'I', 'me' and 'my' as they ask themselves: 'What do I bring to this learning?' for the purpose of understanding their own personal potential to professionally dialogue in new and creative ways (see Figure 2).

The concept of potential and strength is expanded in FfM to include intellectual virtue, whereby narrow, traditional conceptualisations of expertise are broadened from what teachers 'know' (Hobson and Maxwell 2020) to acknowledge teachers' strengths in the form of openness, curiosity, empathy, resourcefulness and imagination, to name but a few. In essence, mentoring of this kind is assembled through the practice of intellectual virtues (that is, these virtues in action) as intellectual virtues are parallelly reawakened and nurtured for both ECT and mentor. The intellectual virtues become a personal resource for longevity, adaptability and flexibility (Baehr 2013, Heersmink 2018) as teaching circumstances and contexts change both during and beyond FfM.

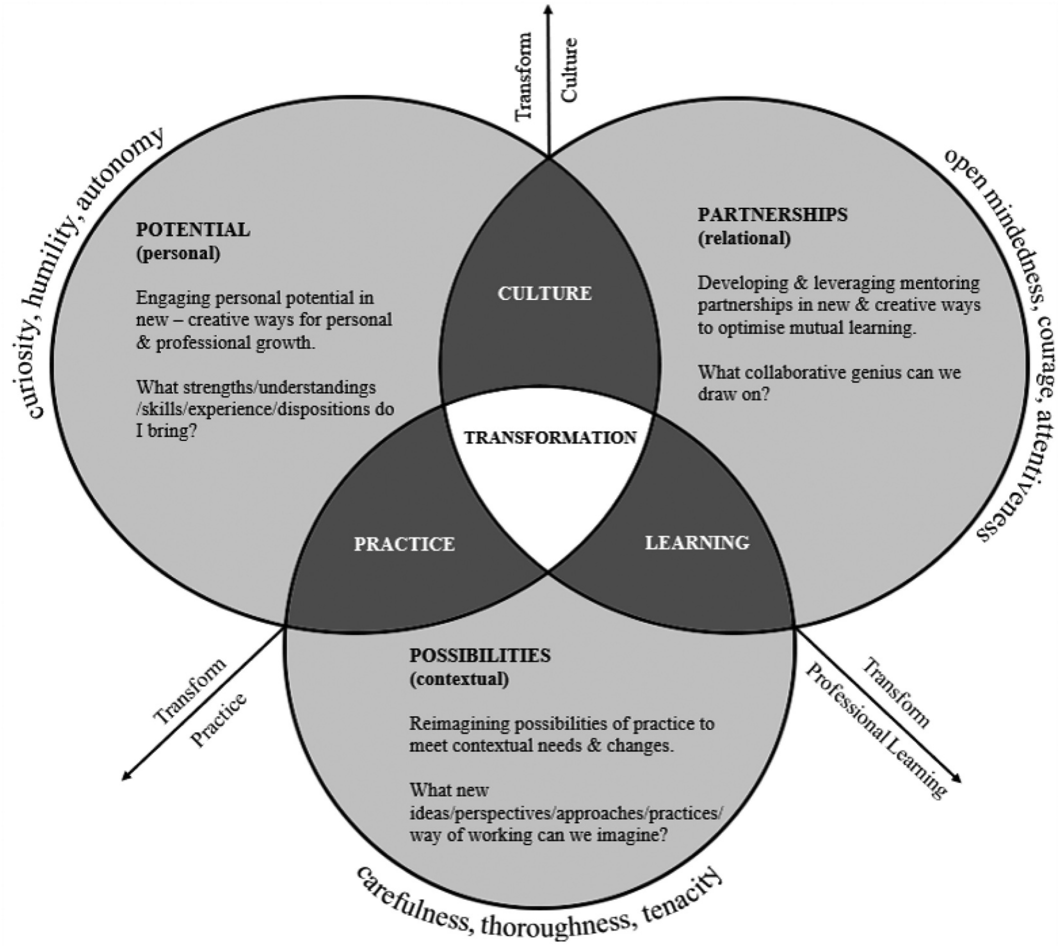

Figure 1. The principles of FfM.

Relational partnerships

FfM recognises that while a self-awareness of personal potential is paramount, equally critical is the relationship in which this potential is shared. Significant research speaks to the relationship imperative (Hairon *et al.* 2020, Wexler 2020, Goodwin *et al.* 2021); that is, that open disclosure of ideas, experiences, suggestions and perspectives can only be achieved within a relationship of trust and mutual respect (Vostal *et al.* 2021). Within FfM, colleagues engage as partners in professional learning regardless of experience, discipline, school position or perceived capability, thereby demonstrating an overt valuing of, and respect for, the collective genius upon which they will draw to meet challenges, solve problems and build their own and each other's professional capabilities.

Such a non-hierarchical approach is not simple to achieve. Mentoring approaches have previously been reported to be sabotaged by unequal power relationships between participants (Hobson *et al.* 2013, Izadinia 2015). These studies reported that ECTs are often mentored by the same colleague responsible for their performance review, or experience mentoring plagued by sage-based processes, whereby mentors act as instructors for the 'unknowing' ECT (Hobson and Malderez 2013). This form of professional clone-ism is diametrically opposed to FfM principles. Rather, the language of FfM is unapologetically transsystemic, whereby the use of 'we', 'us, and 'our' overrides boundaries of status, system and siloed teaching that inhibit the effectiveness of mentoring (Ewing 2021). Instead, teachers embrace the shared experience of storytelling (Cruz *et al.* 2020), exploring, researching, imagining, risk-taking and planning and enactment, while encouraging each other to build intellectual virtues of open minded-ness, empathy, flexibility, and attentiveness. In doing so, professional learning is transformed, as is the culture of mentoring and the school more broadly.

Possibilities for practice

FfM provides the opportunity for teachers to imagine what practice 'could' and 'can' be in that context. Mentoring focused on the development of a narrow set of skills and knowledges, as set out in teacher standards (Biesta 2019), falls short of nurturing dispositions of creativity, criticality, imagination, empathy and problem solving, for example, that are absent in most functionally oriented teacher performance indicators (Mockler and Stacey 2021). Both mentor and ECT adopt a curious and courageous worldview to teaching practice, looking beyond the status quo of practice conceived of through the eyes of perceived barriers and limitations. Instead, mentoring provokes strategy and resourcefulness (Vaughn *et al.* 2021) for new and re-invigorated action.

Such transformation does not require a rejection of the past or present practice. Research has reported the frustration and change fatigue of teachers (Dilkes *et al.* 2014) at the never-ending changes and innovations that they are asked to take on in their practice. Rather, FfM adopts a critical eye to practice, inviting teachers to recognise and seize opportunities and possibilities to value add, revitalise, re-imagine and challenge ways of working so that practice can be ever-evolving, adaptive (Loughland 2019) and responsive to the 'now' and the unknown future (Inayatullah 2018). In doing so, teachers become adept at pivoting, problem-solving and grappling with the complex demands of curriculum, pedagogy and professional expectations (Vaughn *et al.* 2021).

Accountability

FfM is not inimical to accountability. Rather, if the intellectual virtues are to be respected within this model, then accountability is an opportunity to 'give an account of practice' (Lingard *et al.* 2017, p. 13) as part of a process of collaborating and sharing for the purpose of educational progress. However, this kind of accountability is not of the kind foregrounded in many contemporary schooling systems. Biesta (2019) and Keddie (2018) draw attention to the inevitable duality of accountability – accountability for qualification and accountability for subjectification – that co-exist in the mentoring space.

On one hand, 'qualification' (Keddie 2018, Biesta 2019) demands that teachers (and schools) address teacher standards. Mentoring for qualification serves as a 'field of intervention' (Lingard *et al.* 2017), focusing on the development and illustration of practices that are legitimised as *the* valued practices and purposed for the external audit of teacher quality. While Bradbury *et al.* (2020), for example, developed a model of mentoring framed by standards-driven reflective practice, Biesta (2019) warns that this approach distracts teachers from seeing other priorities and possibilities. Vaughn *et al.* (2021) concur, lamenting the loss of teacher 'visioning' within these constraints which depose the actualisation of personal commitment, beliefs and values that can 'fuel' (p. 6) the thinking of adaptive educators.

Through the purview of pragmatism, FfM, without dismissing these very real accountability pressures, seeks to address accountability from a richer perspective (Lingard *et al.* 2017, Vaughn *et al.* 2021). In essence, FfM seeks to enable accountability to be re-balanced (Lingard *et al.* 2017, Keddie 2018). Given that education is a profession pushed and pulled by prevailing societal changes, political influences, expanding educational research and the ever present unknown (such as global pandemics), FfM supports ECTs to meet their compliance schedules as they develop their own and others' FIT. Thus, the collection of evidence of standardised practices is not the sole intention of FfM; rather, we propose it to be the inevitable outcome of a far richer mentoring experience.

Conclusion

FfM offers a way forward for schools to implement a model of mentoring that will support their teachers, and more specifically their ECTs, to build capacity in ways that are not only measured via standards-driven qualification processes, but the subjective ways of working and thinking (Biesta 2019) that will enable them to embrace change and challenge productively and innovatively both in the present and into their career futures through a careful address of intellectual dispositions.

In this paper, we have conceptualised and justified FfM as a theoretically robust and practical mentoring model that addresses the complex and demanding global educational landscape of today and the future. Cochran-Smith's (2005, p. 3) insight that 'it will be teachers with the skills to be responsive, adaptable, flexible and innovative who will be the 'linchpins to educational reform' resonates in these unpredictable and rapidly evolving times. Regardless of the political value put on the technicist capabilities of teachers as indicators of quality education, such as focus is, and will continue to be, insufficient to support teacher capacity to effectively respond to the continually changing space that is education. In short, mentoring can no longer only address the qualification of teachers, but must also facilitate the subjectification of teachers.

A mentoring model that develops both the functional aspects of teaching concurrent to adaptability, innovation, creativity, resourcefulness, open-mindedness, collegial respect and self-belief is critical to developing responsive approaches to worldwide challenges of teaching and learning, teacher wellbeing and professional longevity. FfM, conceptualises a way forward to responding to the political accountabilities inherent to the profession, while concomitantly reawakening and nurturing the natural human genius in all teachers to be personally aware, relationally engaged and contextually innovative and progressive.

The potential of this model does not come without the need for prudence, however. As reported by Kegan (1982), the development and sustained implementation of transsystemic learning, in this case through FfM, requires careful and intentional teaching. For FfM to reach its potential as a future-focused mentoring approach, mentors and ECTs alike will require the assistance of carefully considered professional learning. With the careful address of the need to support mentors and ECTs to engage in mentoring in these ways, mentoring can become a catalyst for personal, relational, professional and cultural transformation for a new era in teacher mentoring.

Disclosure statement

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ORCID

Ellen Larsen http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4293-2485
Cecily Jensen-Clayton http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8488-0820
Elizabeth Curtis http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7561-4910
Tony Loughland http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9538-4809

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