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Veteran–Novice Pairing for Tutors' Professional Development

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Abstract   This mixed methods study examines whether veteran–novice mentorship between tutors, as part of continuous in-service professional development, would have a positive effect on either party's transferable skills (e.g., communication, collaboration, and professionalism). Quantitative findings from pre- and postsurveys about the veteran–novice mentorship suggest that tutors have significant gains in some transferable skills, such as oral/written communication skills, teamwork/collaboration skills, digital technology skills, and career management skills, after attending the continuous in-service professional development. Quantitative findings from the pre- and postsurveys further indicate that novice tutors improve more, compared to veteran tutors, in their self-perceived oral/written communication skill levels. Qualitative findings from postmentorship interviews explain findings suggested by quantitative analysis, with contextual factors. This research study has bifold significance: "a theoretical perspective" on writing center work and research-supported professional development strategies. The findings of this study provide more food for thought on the subjects of how to design veteran–novice mentorships, how to target some transferable skills for professional development in the future, and how to exemplify the transferable skills in the survey to make those abstract constructs more concrete.

Keywords   transferable skills, mixed methods, peer mentorship

Introduction

Most writing centers (WCs) at U.S. four-year institutions hire undergraduates as peer tutors. Peer tutors' professional development, referred to as "the development of personal and professional competencies" (DeFeo & Caparas, 2014, p. 141), has been studied in ongoing research on individual tutoring experiences, including DeFeo and Caparas (2014) and Hughes et al. (2010); however, few consider veteran–novice mentorship between tutors for further professional development. Such mentorship can be supported with multiple pedagogical theories and has been probed empirically with respect to the relationship between social networks and peer learning (Grunspan et al., 2014), both of which will be elaborated on in the section on theoretical framework in this paper. In this research study, we intend to examine whether such mentorship, as part of continuous in-service professional development, would have a positive effect on either party's transferable skills. Transferable skills refer to

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skills that are "learned in one context [that] will be transferred, adapted, transformed, or built upon in new contexts" (Driscoll & Powell, 2016, p. 1). Though this term is questioned as "an inadequate metaphor for the messy reality of learning that involves not just knowledge or skills but dispositions, identities, and social and cognitive processes" (Driscoll & Powell, 2016, p. 1), it is used in this paper, in correspondence with the name of the skill checklist (see Appendix A), and refers to those items in the survey as a catalog.

Noticing the neglect of and drift toward learning and pedagogical theories in the WC scholarship (Driscoll & Wells, 2012), we built up our theoretical framework on the theoretical foundations of Knowles's (1978) adult learning theory (ALT), Bruner's (1960, 1967) tenets of learning, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), and social networks, in order to examine writing tutors' professional development derived from one-on-one consistent mentorship and apprenticeship between veteran and novice tutors. We hypothesized that such in-service professional development would benefit both parties.

To examine the effectiveness of this pairing model, we conducted a quasi-experimental research study in a WC at a large public university in the United States. We employed a mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative) design to explore the following research questions:

1. Do writing tutors' perceptions of their transferable skills (see Appendix A) increase before and after having the ongoing in-service professional development?
2. What are the effects of the different roles in the ongoing in-service professional development (paired-veteran, paired-novice, and non-paired-tutor), if any, on writing tutors' perceptions of their transferable skills (see Appendix A)?
3. What differences in skill levels do participants in general perceive before and after having the ongoing in-service professional development?
4. What differences in skill levels do participants assigned in pairs perceive before and after having the veteran-novice pairing mentorship?
5. If anything, what else do participants perceive about their skill development as tutors?

The first two research questions were answered by the analysis of quantitative data, and the remaining three were answered by qualitative findings. Quantitative findings showed thatwriting tutors' perceptions of their transferable skills (see Appendix A) increased before and after having the ongoing in-service professional development. Quantitative findings also revealed that when participating tutors played the role of mentee in professional development, compared to those playing the role of mentor, they improved more in the self-perceived level of oral/written communication skills. Qualitative findings with contextual factors explained why the aforementioned improvements occurred.

This research study has bifold significance: "a theoretical perspective" on WC work, instead of relying on "lore or anecdote" as the basis of WC texts (Nordlof, 2014, p. 46), and research-supported professional development strategies. This study intends to inform other writing center practitioners of more contextual considerations and contribute to existing WC practice and potential RAD (replicable, aggregable, and data-supported) research; RAD research has been greatly lacking (i.e., less than 6% of the total articles in the *Writing Center Journal* 1980–2009; Driscoll & Perdue, 2014, p. 105) and advocated for decades by scholars, including Driscoll and Perdue (2014) and Driscoll and Powell (2015). With that said, this study combines theory, research, and practice to determine the extent to which mentorship programs within writing centers are an effective strategy for promoting tutors' professional development related to both their work as tutors and their development of skills for use beyond the writing center context. Professional development was chosen as a major objective for the mentorship program because of the writing center's role in promoting the development of transferable skills that can benefit tutors (who are often also students) in their time both at and beyond the writing center.

This article will first establish the theoretical framework for the study. This article will then establish the models and methodology (including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis) developed after consideration of that framework. Next, the data related to tutors' self-perceived differences in their transferable skill levels before and after participation in the veteran–novice mentorship will be described. The findings from the study will then be discussed in connection to the theoretical framework to determine the effectiveness of the methods used in the mentorship and provide recommendations for future studies and mentorship programs in writing centers.

Theoretical Framework

The current study relies on a specific set of theoretical texts as the authors' basis for designing the study, establishing the skills most relevant to the study, and interpreting the qualitative data collected. These texts were chosen for their prominence in professional development and learning pedagogical fields, as well as their valuable insights into these subject areas.

Professional Development and Knowles's Adult Learning Theory (ALT)

Knowles's (1978) five principles of ALT are applied to design and evaluate professional development practices, as promising professional development "reflects foundational concepts" in ALT (Baker, 2016, p. 25). Principle One discusses needs and interests as "appropriate starting points for organizing adult learning activities" (i.e., professional development; Knowles, 1978, p. 12), for the sake of motivation for the parties involved. According to Knowles's ALT Principle Two, professional development should also be "life-centered" with authentic "life situations" instead of subjects. The existing professional development methodology is "theory-driven" (Yan, 2012, p. 444), which needs to be modified using the analysis of experience as "the richest resource for adults' learning" (Knowles, 1978, p. 12), based on Principle Three. Through Principle Four, Knowles advocates the learners' role as "self-directing," thus the professional development, rather than being "transmissive . . . and authority-centered" (Yan, 2012, p. 444), should be in a "self-directed" adult learning style (Croft et al., 2010, p. 8). Though professional development is possible "alone, with one-on-one guidance, and in teams" (Croft et al., 2010, p. 2), it is strongly argued that professional development is most effective in collaboration, with access to the professional knowledge of their staff (Croft et al., 2010, p. 5) in "a process of mutual inquiry" (Knowles, 1978, p. 12). Knowles's (1978) ALT Principle Five delineates the increasing individual differences related to age, thus professional development should be flexible in "style, time, place, and pace of learning" (p. 12).

Professional development can be conducted in the formats of "short courses, degree upgrading courses, participation in . . . seminars/workshops, conference attendance, school/classroom–based research, and partnerships with universities or external consultants," among others (Lee, 2011, p. 31). The various modes of professional development in WC work often include listening, watching, being observed, receiving feedback, engaging with academic or professional readings, discussing tutoring with critical colleagues or experts, and discussing tutors' own theories of tutoring (Timperley et al., 2007), in the formats of coaching, mentoring, professional learning communities, and study groups (Croft et al., 2010, pp. 6–7).

Professional Development and Bruner's Tenets of Learning

Bruner's tenets, as another theoretical underpinning for this study, are suggested as a means to improve the tutors' professional development practice. Bruner (1960) put forward the role of structure in learning, stating that strategies for "teaching and learning" should take structure into account "by providing a general picture in terms of which the relations between things encountered earlier and later are made as clear as possible" (p. 12). The

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professional development practices should embody Bruner's concept of structured learning in terms of contextualizing and personalizing content for target learners by forming a bridge between old and new knowledge.

Discovery learning (Bruner, 1967) is an inquiry-based and constructivist learning theory. In the concept of discovery learning, learners' own existing knowledge and past experiences are valued and used to discover new concepts, facts, relationships, and knowledge on their own (Jiang & Perkins, 2013). Professional development should be inquiry-oriented and focused on "hands-on experiential learning" (Van Canh & Barnard, 2009, p. 24). As Bruner's theory of discovery learning applies, effective professional development for tutors should be "collaborative and collegial" to be constructive (Servage, 2008, p. 63). Professional development should function as "a community to sustain support and learning" (Klein, 2008, p. 85). In this professional learning community, tutors as trainees need to be encouraged to "move out of their submissive position" (Borg, 2009, p. 358), pose questions, generate knowledge, and discuss and find constructive solutions to their problems via "authentic two-way interaction" (Lee, 2011; Song & Cheng, 2011, p. 97). One of the approaches that Croft et al. (2010) suggest is teaching-by-example as a strategy for facilitators (p. 9). This approach relates to WC work in that the sample of novice tutors who participated in this study were expected to observe tutoring sessions as part of their required preservice training course (ENC 3491), thereby learning from the example of veteran tutors who had already had on-the-job experience.

Veteran–Novice Mentorship and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Another factor in this opportunity for novice tutors' growth is what Vygotsky's model describes as the basis for growth: "the internalization of what begins as social interaction." To Vygotsky, "student learning . . . is a developmental process in which concepts are internalized through social interaction" (Nordlof, 2014, p. 56). One such concept is that social interactions can "help students achieve what they could not do on their own" (p. 57). Another is that "the nature of support the tutor provides changes depending on the circumstances," such as using "more explicit modeling and instruction" when helping a student learn a new concept and "providing less and less support" when the student understands it better (p. 57). Further, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, or ZPD, "provides . . . a developmental model for how student learning occurs, as opposed to social construction's focus on how knowledge is created in professional fields" (Nordlof, 2014, p. 59). The concepts within Vygotsky's model can be translated to both general tutoring work and mentorship programs such as the one discussed in this study.

In the context of this study's veteran–novice mentorship program, the role of the student in Vygotsky's model is filled by the novice tutor. Similarly, the veteran tutor takes on the model's role of the tutor who reduces their level of support as the novice tutor becomes more experienced and accustomed to tutoring work. When students allow themselves to be novices, they give themselves the opportunity to grow as writers and tutors (Sommers & Saltz, 2004). As Sommers and Saltz write, "Being a novice . . . involves adopting an open attitude to instruction and feedback, a willingness to experiment" (p. 135). By "imitating as they learn" (p. 135), students are able to use "the materials and methods of a course or discipline in demonstrated ways before making them their own" (p. 134). They learn by "holding the expert's tools in their hands, trying them out, imitating as they learn" (Sommers & Saltz, 2004, p. 135). This concept of allowing oneself to be a novice is especially relevant to the novice–veteran mentorship that is the basis of this study in that novice tutors willingly engaged in a situation in which they could learn from more experienced tutors. By engaging with veteran tutors, novice tutors can become equipped with new techniques that they had perhaps not considered or tried to use in prior tutoring.

Veteran–Novice Mentorship and Social Networks

A social network, as a sociological concept, is defined as "a set of socially relevant nodes connected by one or more relations" (Marin & Wellman, 2011, p. 11). The members of the network of interest in this study were identified as tutors at the WC of the research, who had in common both their places of employment and job requirements and had distinctions in their levels of work experience (i.e., veteran or novice tutors).

Marin and Wellman (2011) also discussed outcomes of interactions between network members, notably including transmission of information. More recently, Grunspan et al. (2014) probed the relationship between social networks and peer learning in an undergraduate biology course. This outcome is especially relevant to the current study because flows of information due to peer learning would be expected between more experienced tutors and novice tutors, especially from the former to the latter, and among tutors' interactions in general. In this study, the veteran tutors and novice tutors were scheduled to meet every two weeks for 45 minutes at maximum. In this context, the transmission of information from veteran tutors to novice tutors, both intensively and extensively, may facilitate the novice tutors' efforts to adapt to the WC environment and their new workplace expectations.

Theoretical Framework in a Model

The authors reviewed existing literature to build a theoretical framework in the context of the current study (see Figure 1).

Exigency

As Nordlof (2014) writes, "our lack of theoretical models to describe what we do in tutoring sessions, however, has meant that these stances have become proxies for theoretical models themselves" (p. 48). To strengthen connections among theory, practice, and research about WCs, the authors—a director, a former tutor, and an educational research methodologist—aimed to contribute to the existing evidence-based research and show its practical applications as takeaways.
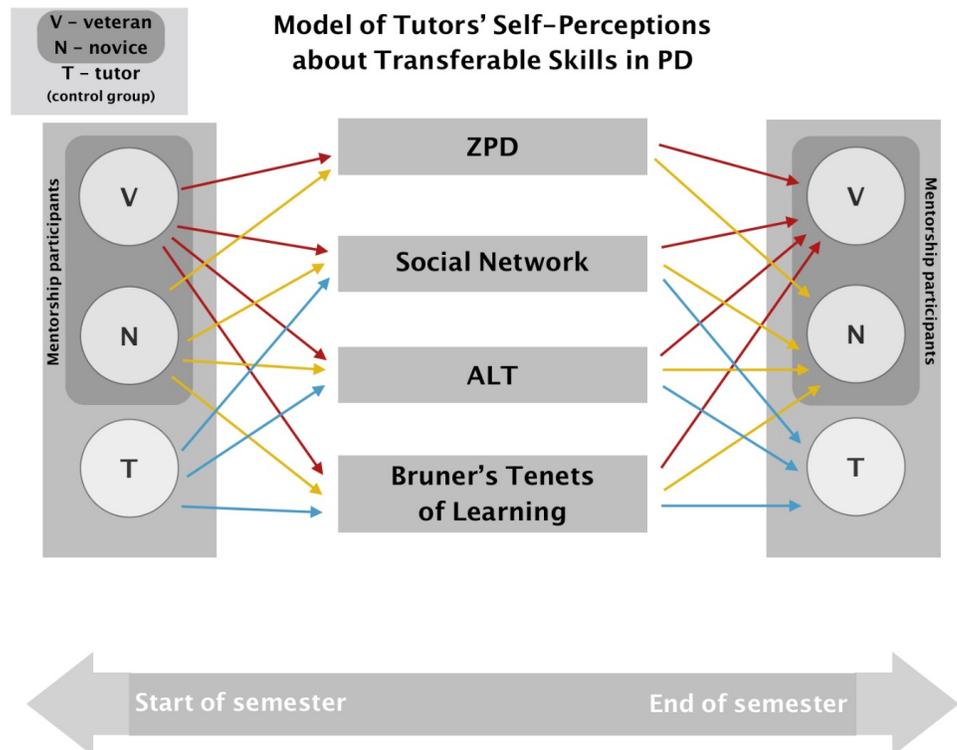

Figure 1. Model of tutors' self–perceptions about transferable skills in professional development (PD).

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The current study was inspired by a few research studies connecting professional development and peer support. For instance, Chiaburu and Marinova (2005) conducted an exploratory study via survey on 186 employees from a work organization and found significant connections between skill transfer and peer support along professional development sessions (see Figure 2 for more details, p. 117). The peer support was exemplified, such as in the statement, "My peers care about my applying new knowledge on the job" (Chiaburu & Marinova, 2005, p. 115). The mentorship pairs for the current study were established based on participants' willingness and a veteran tutor's coordination. The coordinating tutor matched veteran and novice tutors in pairs and secured biweekly meeting times by finding out their common work hours. The mentorship was peer-initiated, completely voluntary, freely structured, and consistently formatted (i.e., biweekly meetings). The biweekly meetings were one-on-one conferences between a veteran tutor and a novice tutor during one blocked session (at maximum 45 minutes) in a space they agreed on, either at or around the WC or virtually, with the aim of helping novice tutors navigate in and adjust themselves to writing tutorials and the digital literacy associated with the WC online and the university's HR online systems.

The study was conducted at a multilingual WC at a large public university. This university is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), where approximately 70% of the population are Hispanic (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). This university reflects local demographics well and is one of the largest Hispanic-Serving Institutions in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). This university has over 56,000 enrolled students, including over 40,000 undergraduates and over 4,000 degree-seeking international students. In addition, the university serves first-generation and low-income students (Drouet, 2019).

The data collection was mainly during spring 2020, when COVID-19 impacted people's lives globally. The WC transferred all writing tutorials from physical to virtual in March, when the university transitioned to remote learning; accordingly, the interactions among tutors in general and between the participating veteran–novice tutors changed dramatically. For instance, the weekly staff meetings were switched to Zoom, and some tutor-led professional development workshops during staff meetings were postponed or cancelled. Tutors, like other human beings, needed to cope more than before in their lives and in themselves.

Methodology

We hypothesized that the veteran–novice pairing mentorship, as part of the ongoing in-service professional development, would benefit both parties' transferable skills (see Appendix A). We conducted a quasi-experimental research study to examine the effectiveness of this pairing mentorship in the WC at the HSI, approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Research Design

We implemented a combination of concurrent and sequential mixed methods designs (Newman et al., 2011). A sequential mixed methods design has three phases in this study—presurveys, postsurveys, and interviews. To examine the effectiveness of this pairing model, we conducted a quasi-experimental research study in the WC at the participating university.

In our research study, the first phase was via a survey that collected both quantitative and qualitative data from closed-ended and open-ended questions, prior to the professional development and mentorship. The second phase was via the same survey after the professional development and mentorship over 12 weeks. We distributed a validated survey to all participating tutors at the beginning and end of the professional development to see the statistical significance of changes, if any, in transferable skills (see Appendix A). Voluntary pairing between veteran and novice tutors occurred at the beginning of the study and was maintained over a period of 12 weeks (8 weeks physically and 4 weeks virtually). After the postsurvey, individual interviews

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were conducted to further explore tutors' perceptions of their professional development with or without such mentorship and how that mentorship affected their professional skills, if at all. Findings from the first and second phases gave us clues to guide our questions in the one-on-one interviews, the third/final phase.

Based on findings from the three phases, a meta inference was made. A meta inference, also known as a meta interpretation, refers to "the judgment a researcher makes about the data that is based on the results of more than one study" (Newman et al., 2011, p. 192). It would improve our understanding of "how" professional development worked and "not just if" it worked, which also applies to "how" the mentorship worked (Hitchcock & Newman, 2013, p. 48). That is to say, whatever the quantitative results were, looking at individuals might tell us why these results were as such (i.e., explain and interpret the quantitative data).

Recruitment and Participants

Purposive sampling was conducted to select participants from the participating university for this study. The sampling is at the discretion of researcher(s) "when it comes to selecting the units (e.g., people, case/organisations, events, pieces of data) that are to be studied" (Sharma, 2017, p. 751). Eligible participants were the 41 tutors working in the WC at the university at the time of this study. Twenty-five of them agreed to participate; 17 remained till the end of the study: 5 mentors, 7 mentees, and 5 nonpaired tutors in the control group. The data from 17 participants in retention composed effective data for further analysis. In compliance with the IRB confidentiality agreement, each participant selected a pseudonym to use in the study (for details of their demographics, see Appendix B; e.g., Belle, Janice, Samantha, and Stephanie).

Survey Design

We designed a survey about self-perceived skills with a 5-point Likert scale, based on existing literature (e.g., items relevant to motivation and politeness in Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2013, p. 47) and current surveys about peer tutors in WCs and professional development (e.g., a professional development transferable skill checklist from Florida State University [FSU] career center; see Appendix C). We asked FSU tutors to select those skills that were most applicable in the checklist. We then validated the survey by asking for opinions from WC administrators. Afterward, we conducted a pilot study by sending the survey to the university's alumni writing tutors for further improvement and modification. The final version of self-perceived transferable skills is seen in Appendix A.

Data Collection

We distributed the validated survey to all participating tutors at the beginning and at the end of the professional development to see the statistical significance of changes, if any, in transferable skills before and after the veteran–novice mentorship. Each time, participants spent approximately 15 minutes in responding to all of the questions, ranging from their means of professional development participation to perceived development in transferable skills. Voluntary pairing occurred at the beginning of the study and continued over the period of 12 weeks, during which tutor-led staff meetings on various themes and other in-service professional development activities also took place. The main structure of such mentorship was based on voluntary participation in biweekly one-on-one meetings in pairs.

One-time semistructured interviews were conducted in English after the postsurvey. The researchers, to the interviewee's preference, interviewed two participants (i.e., Samantha and Stephanie as pseudonyms) respectively for approximately 10 minutes on Zoom with audio recording, when/where only the researcher and the interviewee were present. The electronic recordings and physical copies would be kept securely for three years starting from the date of publication and be discarded after that time frame.

Data Analysis

All quantitative data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet database. The quantitative

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data were then organized and analyzed according to the research questions. The data were first analyzed to determine the improvement, if any, of all tutors in each category of transferable skills (see Appendix A). The score values in each category were created by averaging scores to corresponding statements within each category. Due to the small sample size ($n = 17$), the third researcher applied the Shapiro-Wilk test to determine whether the variables for each category of the transferable skills (see Appendix A) in the pre- and postsurvey were normally distributed, which was one of the main assumptions for the paired-samples t-test. According to the Shapiro-Wilk test results, the paired-samples t-test is only appropriate for the first category of the transferable skills (see Appendix A), which is critical thinking. Therefore, the third researcher finally decided to employ a paired-samples one-tailed t-test to determine tutors' improvement in critical thinking and a Wilcoxon signed-rank test, a nonparametric method, to determine tutors' improvement in other categories of transferable skills (see Appendix A). The effects of tutors' roles in the professional development, as mentor, mentee, or nonpaired tutor, on their improvement, if any, in each category of the transferable skills were examined with a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) between subjects for critical thinking skill and with an independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test for all other categories of transferable skills (see Appendix A), due to the normality issue in data distribution.

The qualitative data from pre- and postsurveys and interviews were analyzed preliminarily by giving meaning to first impressions of those texts (Stake, 2005). The primary investigator wrote down her first impressions on the margins of those input answers of the surveys and interview transcripts. Different color highlights were used to categorize the coding. The coding categories were words and phrases that represented the regularities, patterns, and topics covered by the data and derived from the checklist of transferable skills (see Appendix A). The first and second researchers pooled their coding together by making their own tables of themes and supporting quotes and then combined them, including tutors' growth in problem-solving, listening, and collaboration.

After that, they categorized coding to find concepts and patterns and developed them into themes, such as perceived differences before and after having the veteran–novice mentorship, through thematic analysis to help answer the research questions. To further organize and interpret their findings, they both threaded the draft with themes and categorized answers and evidence from the analyzed data.

Findings

Writing Tutors' Perceptions of Their Transferable Skills Before and After the Professional Development

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the level of critical thinking skill before and after the professional development. There was a significant difference in the scores of tutors' critical thinking skill before professional development (M = 4.28, SD = 0.54) and after professional development (M = 4.56, SD = 0.36); t (16) = –2.21, $p = 0.042$. These results, shown in Table 1, suggest that when tutors participated in professional development activities, their level of self-perceived critical thinking skill increased. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted to compare the level of other transferable skills (see Appendix A) before and after the professional development. The results (Table 1) of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated the following:

1. There was a significant difference in the scores of tutors' oral/written communication skill before professional development (M = 4.37, SD = 0.75) and after professional development (M = 4.88, SD = 0.29); Z = –2.79, $p = 0.005$.
2. There was a significant difference in the scores of tutors' teamwork/collaboration skill before professional development (M = 4.20, SD = 0.81) and after professional development (M = 4.71, SD = 0.37); Z = –2.85, $p = 0.004$.
3. There was a significant difference in the scores of tutors' digital technology skill before professional development (M = 3.65, SD = 1.00) and after

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Table 1. Writing Tutors' Change of Their Perceptions of Transferable Skills Before and After Professional Development (PD)

Transferable Skills	Before PD		After PD		Z–value	*p*–value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Critical Thinking	4.28	0.54	4.56	0.36	2.21 (*t*–value)	0.042*
Oral/Written Communication	4.37	0.75	4.88	0.29	2.79	0.005**
Teamwork/Collaboration	4.20	0.81	4.71	0.37	2.85	0.004**
Digital Technology	3.65	1.00	4.47	0.70	3.05	0.002**
Leadership	4.22	0.56	4.29	0.70	0.62	0.534
Professionalism/Work Ethic	4.18	0.57	4.49	0.44	1.87	0.061
Career Management	4.06	0.60	4.51	0.50	2.60	0.009**
Global/Intercultural Fluency	4.76	0.31	0.71	0.35	0.50	0.618

Note: * = α < 0.05, ** = α < 0.01

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professional development (M = 4.47, SD = 0.70); Z = –3.05, *p* = 0.002.

4. There was not a significant difference in the scores of tutors' leadership skill before professional development (M = 4.22, SD = 0.56) and after professional development (M = 4.29, SD = 0.70); Z = –0.62, *p* = 0.534.

5. There was not a significant difference in the scores of tutors' professionalism/ work ethic skill before professional development (M = 4.18, SD = 0.57) and after professional development (M = 4.49, SD = 0.44); Z = –1.87, *p* = 0.061.

6. There was a significant difference in the scores of tutors' career management skill before professional development (M = 4.06, SD = 0.60) and after professional development (M = 4.51, SD = 0.50); Z = –2.60, *p* = 0.009.

7. There was not a significant difference in the scores of tutors' global/intercultural fluency skill before professional development (M = 4.76, SD = 0.31) and after professional development (M = 4.71, SD = 0.35); Z = –0.50, *p* = 0.618.

These results suggest that tutors' self-perceived levels of oral/written communication skill, teamwork/collaboration skill, digital technology skill, and career management skill increased after their participation

in the professional development. Our results also suggest that when tutors participated in professional development activities, their perceived levels of leadership skill, professionalism/work ethic skill, and global/intercultural fluency skill did not change.

The Effect of Mentorship Roles on Writing Tutors' Perceptions of Their Transferable Skills

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of tutors' roles in professional development on the improvement in the level of critical thinking skill in mentor, mentee, and nonpaired conditions. There was not a significant effect of tutors' roles in professional development on the improvement in the level of critical thinking skill at the *p* < 0.05 level for the three conditions [F (2, 14) = 0.75, *p* = 0.491]. An independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to compare the effect of tutors' roles in professional development on the improvement in the level of other transferable skills in mentor, mentee, and non–paired conditions. There was a significant effect of tutors' roles in professional development only on the improvement in the level of oral/written communication skill at the *p* < 0.05 level for the three conditions [Chi square (2) = 6.25, *p* = 0.044]. Because we found a statistically significant result in the Kruskal-Wallis test, we

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selected the Mann Whitney U test to compute a pairwise comparison. Pairwise comparisons using the Mann Whitney U test indicated that the improvement in the level of oral/written communication skill was significantly different between mentor (M = 0.00, SD = 0.24) and mentee (M = 0.90, SD = 0.98), U = 32.00, *p* = 0.018. However, the nonpaired condition (M = 0.47, SD = 0.45) did not significantly differ from the mentor and mentee conditions. Taken together, these results suggested that a tutor's role in the mentorship (or not in the mentorship) did have an effect on the improvement in their self-perceived level of oral/written communication skill. Specifically, our results suggested that when tutors played the role of mentee in professional development, compared to playing the role of mentor, they improved more in the self-perceived level of oral/written communication skill.

Perceived Differences Before and After Having the Ongoing In-Service Professional Development

The professional development activities included staff meetings in which tutors could lead theme-based discussions in the form of short talks or presentations, class visits, conversation circles, tutor-led workshops, tabling, and other social events. Belle, a biology major bilingual tutor (speaker of English and Spanish), when asked in the presurvey what she would like to add about her transferable skill development via peer tutoring as a new tutor, wrote, "It will help me become less shy." In the postsurvey, Belle disclosed that her "communication skills improved because I worked hard on being able to help the student out without overstepping and without offending them." Janice, an English major bilingual tutor (speaker of English and Spanish), expressed her changes as a novice tutor in another aspect of communication in the postsurvey, stating, "I'm a lot better at talking to new people now. I wouldn't consider myself shy anymore."

The professional development also inspired tutors to reflect on themselves. For instance, Abigail, a new-coming English/

psychology major bilingual tutor (speaker of English and Spanish), expressed her belief that "ENC 3491 [the preservice training course] has prepared me in various ways—especially when analyzing my skills and those of others." After the 12-week time period of professional development, she reflected and wrote the following in the postsurvey:

> At the beginning of the semester, I felt as though I had a basic understanding of how I could do all of these things [transferable skills]; now, by putting them into practice and analyzing my sessions with other tutors, I am confident in my abilities to do all of the above. While there is undoubtedly still room to grow as a tutor, I decided to put 5 [highest level] on all of the above because I've noticed a significant amount of growth in my skills.

Eric, a mentor, English literature major, and trilingual tutor (speaker of English, Spanish, and French), merited the professional development by exemplifying that "it has helped facilitate relationships with new tutors." Samantha, a veteran tutor, attributed her development in leadership skills to her talk in a staff meeting and her growth in teamwork to her scholarly collaborations. Samantha also spoke highly of a conversation circle she facilitated in the interview because:

> It has definitely helped me develop the global and intercultural fluency because in order to talk to others and, like, tell them about another culture, not only must I be well informed, uh, but I'm also, also must learn how to talk to them about it in a way that is easy to understand.

Stephanie, another veteran tutor, compared class visits with tutor-led committees in the interview as the following:

> Where class visits put you in, like, a leadership position, committee events kind of put you in a collaborative position. Um . . . so it's like helping you practice a whole different set of skills, like how to listen to

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other tutors and their ideas, um . . . and how to put those things into action and things like that.

In the same interview, Stephanie defined leadership in the light of public speaking by referring to being "in a position to present to other people and get your point across . . . keep it entertaining and you want to keep your audience's attention."

Perceived Differences Before and After the Veteran-Novice Mentorship

Belle, a mentee, revealed her confidence and assertiveness in communication by writing, "I felt comfortable asking my mentor about how to deal with certain situations as a tutor or what to do if I didn't really know how to help the student." Belle specified her improvement in communication skills from her initial shyness in certain contexts.

Abigail, as a novice tutor, expressed her gratitude for the veteran–novice paired mentorship in the postsurvey by stating:

My professional skills were truly improved through these one-on-one sessions because I felt like I had space to talk to someone who has experienced that same frustrations and joys as a tutor that I experience. I could ask questions and get counsel without feeling judged, and heard about new opportunities (like the Contemplative Writing Circle) through these meetings as well.

The mentorship benefited not only mentees but also mentors; for example, Samantha, a mentor, elaborated on her growth in the mentorship program in the interview:

Once I took on that responsibility, I was actually, I was on the lookout more to see what I could get from my sessions that I could pass on to the mentee, and I guess it made me a little more conscious in that, in that way.

Stephanie, another mentor, highlighted her skill development in solving problems and listening in the interview, as follows:

It definitely, like, opened my mind to other ways of handling problems, because my mentee and I—while we were similar in some ways, we were also very different. So, in those moments when we'd be talking about, like, techniques to implement, it was very much, like, a two-way street where we were learning from each other. So, um . . . it definitely opened up, like, my ability to listen to others, as well as kind of, like, opened my mind to, like, different ways to handle situations as well.

Logistical Factor Relevant to Participants' Perceptions of their Skill Development

Such a laissez-faire mentorship style did not always benefit mentees. For instance, Marta, a novice tutor, admitted in the postsurvey:

I chose three for all of them as a neutral response [for the transferable skills]. I only had one facilitated meeting with my mentor, and it was at the beginning of the semester. I really didn't learn anything or feel engaged in this program.

Lack of consistent mentorship meetings might have backtracked mentees' perceptions and confidence in their transferable skills. The enthusiasm and expectations mentees held might even have turned into disappointment about professional development as a whole package and confusion about how to conduct certain writing tutorials.

Contrary to Marta's experiences, Lisa commented on the redundancy of such consistent mentorship meetings at a later time in the semester in the postsurvey by stating:

I liked the idea of partnering up with a mentor, but I didn't find it necessary to continue having biweekly meetings throughout the

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whole semester. It made more sense in the beginning, but as the semester progressed and I learned how to navigate sessions by myself, the meetings became somewhat redundant.

Based on the findings above, it should be noted that the mentorship meetings would have been more meaningful and helpful (resulting in transferable skills of more statistical significance) if the meetings had been arranged and the topics had been brainstormed by the participating mentees and/or mentors at their own discretion. Moreover, facilitating and monitoring such mentorship seems essential for professional development in balancing tutors' autonomy and objectives-outcomes equilibrium.

Contextual Factor Relevant to Participants' Perceptions of their Skill Development

Behind the logistical factor, the global context of COVID-19 impacted the study hugely in the way that all the interactions were transferred to a remote mode in the second half of the study. The COVID-19 pandemic and the virtual transfer substantially changed the mode of mentorship meetings and the context when participants rated their transferable skills (virtually in the postsurvey vs. physically in the presurvey). It was found that the topic of the pandemic permeated in the virtual mentorship and professional development sessions, and participants felt comfortable listening and sharing their discomfort in small and big groups.

Participants' contextualization of their perceived changes in their skills differed; for instance, Samantha, in the interview, discussed multifaceted impacts in detail:

Communicate with others online, there's a different, like a rhetoric, a different way of doing it. You have to be a little more specific. It's not the same as being sitting right next to somebody. And having them tell you the information or they

can't, for example, they can't show you a paper physically. You have to, uh, look at it through a screen . . . the person who speaks, the two people that are interacting have to make, I believe, an extra effort to express themselves when it's online or via Zoom.

Samantha also mentioned the change in her professionalism and work ethic "because now you have to demonstrate professionalism within a small box in your computer." In addition, her self-perceived digital technology skills were greatly enhanced because of the virtual transfer. Such enhancement was also true in other participants' cases, including Stephanie's.

Discussion

Tutors' High Ranking of Their Transferable Skills Before Professional Development

It should be noted that participating tutors had very high-level self-perceptions of global/intercultural fluency skill. Ten out of 17 tutors scored 5 for the level of global/intercultural fluency skill before professional development, which gave it a mean score of 4.76 and left limited room for improvement in the scores. This could somewhat explain why their perceived level of global/intercultural fluency skill did not significantly change after participating in professional development activities. There were two reasons to contextualize the findings: first, they all took the preservice tutoring training course (ENC 3491), which had provided theoretical concepts and foundations across languages and cultures; second, their previous immersion in or exposure to languages other than English may help to develop their mindsets of multiplicity and openness to newness.

Similarly, it should be noted that mentoring tutors had very high-level self-perceptions of oral/written communication skill before professional development (4 out of 5 mentors scored 5, the highest level, and the other

mentor scored 4.67), which gave it a mean score of 4.93 for all mentors' scores for the level of oral/written communication skill before professional development and left very limited room for improvement in the scores. Accordingly, mentoring tutors improved much less compared to mentored tutors in the level of oral/written communication skill. Nevertheless, the perceived improvement of mentors, mentees, and nonpaired tutors in the level of oral/written communication skill was statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

For future research, additional transferable skills for professional development (e.g., critical thinking and teamwork) pertaining to the context and population of the study can be chosen and studied as a narrow scope of the skill improvements, if any. Corresponding examples and language in the survey would be helpful to make those transferable skills more concrete and user-friendly.

Bruner's Tenets of Learning and Continuity of Professional Development

Bruner (1960) put forward the role of structure in learning such that "relations between things encountered earlier and later are made as clear as possible" (p. 12). The professional development should embody Bruner's concept of structured learning in terms of contextualizing and personalizing content for target learners by forming a bridge between the preservice training (i.e., ENC 3491) and the in-service professional development. The professional development did reach the goal, as seen in Abigail's comparative analysis below from the postsurvey, as an example:

> At the beginning of the semester, I felt as though I had a basic understanding of how I could do all of these things; now, by putting them into practice and analyzing my sessions with other tutors, I am confident in my abilities to do all of the above. While there is undoubtedly still room to grow as a tutor, I decided to put 5 [highest level] on all of the above because I've

> noticed a significant amount of growth in my skills.

Abigail's professional development experience with "hands-on experiential learning" empowered her to be confident about her transferable skills (Van Canh & Barnard, 2009, p. 24).

ZPD and Perceived Growth in Communication Skills and Problem-Solving Skills

Participants, both mentors and mentees, manifested their development in oral communication skills. For instance, Belle, a mentee, disclosed a clearer sense of boundaries when working with students via conversations; Janice, another mentee, expressed her changes in "talking to new people now"; Samantha, a mentor and tutor, remarked on the need for tutors to make "an extra effort to express themselves when it's online or via Zoom." The one-on-one verbal communication practice did not guarantee their progress in oral communication skills; however, the mentorship conferences did promote collective reflections and self-reflections on memorable moments of tutoring sessions. They critiqued those moments and would apply what they concluded as best practices to subsequent sessions. The ZPD between mentors and mentees could be seen replicated between themselves and their tutees; that is to say, what they practiced or discussed how to practice would possibly emerge in an authentic situation of tutoring.

In addition to communication, mentorship participants attributed their growth in problem-solving skills to the biweekly discussions. For instance, Stephanie, in the interview, recalled her discussions with her assigned partner as "a two-way street where we were learning from each other" by sharing problems and techniques. Stephanie and her mentee collaborated on solutions to problems that could not be solved by them as individuals. Such a pool and exchange of ideas and strategies resemble peer conferencing in the mentorship and the zone in ZPD. Later on, tutors imitate and internalize as they are learning (Sommers & Saltz, 2004, p. 135).

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Benefits of Mentorship in Professional Development Reaffirming ALT

Mentors and mentees arranged to meet biweekly for open-ended and "self-directed" conversations with "one-on-one guidance" (Croft et al., 2010). They conversed about authentic "life situations" emerging in their tutorials, analyzed the experiences in "a process of mutual inquiry," and valued the takeaways as "the richest resource for adults' learning" (Knowles, 1978, p. 12). Mentors were not authorities; instead, they were peers with an equilibrium of power (Yan, 2012, p. 444). In all, the perceived success of mentorship between veteran and novice tutors resembles the meaningful application of ALT. Moreover, the mentorship's success, as perceived, leads to more thoughts on how to design veteran–novice mentorships, along the relationship continuum of "authority" and "peer."

Mentorship Meetings and Social Networks

As revealed in the findings, the frequency and delivery format of the mentorship meetings matter to the social network and further affect the mentorship outcomes. A social network, in the context of the current study, is referred to as a pair of one mentor and one mentee meeting biweekly for information transmission and peer learning (Marin & Wellman, 2011, p. 11). The findings included two contradictory statements: Marta felt one session of meeting was not enough, and Lisa commented on the redundancy of such consistent mentorship meetings at a later time in the semester. Such two thoughts cannot be generalized, but it can be inferred that the mentorship meetings would have been more meaningful and helpful (resulting in transferable skills of more statistical significance) if the meetings had been arranged and the topics had been brainstormed by the participating mentees and/ or mentors at their own discretion. The social network should not be seen as a static connection but rather a dynamic flow of information; without transmission of meaningful information, the connection itself does not facilitate

mentorship and tutors' growth in professional development.

Conclusion

The mixed methods study has integrated theory, research, and practice with respect to veteran–novice mentorship and its effect on professional development to all participating tutors. Quantitative findings showed the significant effects of the mentorship on some transferable skills in professional development. Qualitative findings revealed the reasons why there were or were not effects. Although the sample size was small, the test-retest reliability was questioned (in particular because of the unexpected transition to remote learning during the period in which the study was conducted), and the results were not generalizable, the authors believe that this study holds bifold significance in providing "a theoretical perspective" (Nordlof, 2014, p. 46) and research-inspired professional development strategies (Sommers & Saltz, 2004). Further, the findings of this study provide more food for thought on the subjects of how to design veteran–novice mentorships, how to design other models of peer mentoring, how to target some transferable skills for professional development in the future, and how to exemplify the transferable skills in the survey to make those abstract constructs more concrete and less ambiguous. Last but not least, the authors welcome readers' feedback and collaborative efforts to move forward with other empirical studies regarding tutors' professional development that would provide "a common language to reach external audiences" and "legitimize" the WC practice (Driscoll & Powell, 2015, para. 1).

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Appendix A

Please rank your current level of transferable skills below, 1 as the lowest and 5 as the highest (that you have developed in your work as a peer writing tutor) by choosing the applicable skills and circling the corresponding number.

Category	Skills	Lowest				Highest
Critical Thinking	Plan strategies/goals	1	2	3	4	5
	Discover resources	1	2	3	4	5
	Find alternative options/solutions	1	2	3	4	5
	Observe details	1	2	3	4	5
Oral/Written Communication	Listen attentively	1	2	3	4	5
	Provide feedback	1	2	3	4	5
	Revise papers	1	2	3	4	5
Teamwork/Collaboration	Display patience/sensitivity	1	2	3	4	5
	Develop rapport	1	2	3	4	5
	Provide support	1	2	3	4	5
Digital Technology	Find online research resources	1	2	3	4	5
	Facilitate video conferences	1	2	3	4	5
	Learn new technologies	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership	Delegate responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
	Motivate people	1	2	3	4	5
	Prioritize tasks	1	2	3	4	5
Professionalism/Work Ethic	Manage time	1	2	3	4	5
	Evaluate personal performance	1	2	3	4	5
	Welcome/assist new colleagues	1	2	3	4	5
Career Management	Articulate skills & strengths	1	2	3	4	5
	Prepare for career transitions	1	2	3	4	5
	Make informed decisions	1	2	3	4	5
Global/Intercultural Fluency	Ask clarifying questions	1	2	3	4	5
	Respect individuality	1	2	3	4	5
	Recognize power/influence disparities	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Participant	Pronoun	Years of Tutoring as of Jan. 2020	Role	Category	Language(s)	Race/ Ethnicity	1st Gen. College St.
Helen	She/her	0.5–1 year	Mentor 1	Undergraduate Tutor (UT)	English (En), Spanish (Sp)	Hispanic/ Latinx	No
Eric	He/him	< 0.5 year	Mentor 2	UT	En, Sp, French (so so)	Hispanic/ Latinx	No
Stephanie	She/her	0.5–1 year	Mentor 5	UT	En, Sp	Hispanic/ Latinx	Yes
Samantha	She/her	1–2 years	Mentor 6	UT	En, Sp, conversational Chinese	Hispanic/ Latinx	Yes
Lauren	She/her	< 0.5 year	Mentor 9	UT	En, Sp,	Hispanic/ Latinx	No
Simon	He/him	1–2 years	NA	Graduate Tutor (GT)	En, Sp,	Hispanic/ Latinx	No
Maria	She/her	> 2 years	NA	UT	En, Sp, basic Japanese	Hispanic/ Latinx	Yes
Nancy	She/her	> 2 years	NA	UT	En, some Japanese	Asian or Pacific Islander	Yes
Anthony	He/him	1–2 years	NA	UT	En	White Non–Hispanic	No
Antonio	He/him	1–2 years	NA	GT	En, Sp,	Hispanic/ Latinx	No
Abigail	She/her	< 0.5 year	Mentee 1	UT	En, Sp,	Hispanic/ Latinx	No
Andres	He/him	< 0.5 year	Mentee 2	UT	En, Sp, ASL	Hispanic/ Latinx	Yes
Marta	She/her	< 0.5 year	Mentee 3	UT	En	White Non–Hispanic	No
Andrea	She/her	< 0.5 year	Mentee 4	UT	En, Sp,	Hispanic/ Latinx	No
Jessica	She/her	< 0.5 year	Mentee 6	UT	En, Sp,	Hispanic/ Latinx	Yes
Sylvia	She/her	< 0.5 year	Mentee 7	UT	En, Sp,	Hispanic/ Latinx	No
Lisa	She/her	< 0.5 year	Mentee 8	UT	En, Sp, Portuguese	Hispanic/ Latinx, White Non–Hispanic	No

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Appendix C

Transferable Skills Checklist from FSU Career Center

Critical Thinking/Problem Solving

Analyze information

Create ideas

Find alternative options/solutions

Identify problems

Observe details

Plan strategies

Predict outcomes

Anticipate problems

Conceptualize cases/situations

Detect themes/patterns

Discover resources

Formulate questions

Gather information

Set goals

Oral/Written Communication

Express ideas

Listen attentively

Perceive nonverbal cues

Persuade others

Provide feedback

Write clearly

Public speaking

Convey positivity

Describe feelings

Edit documents

Facilitate discussion

Interview clients

Report information

Receive feedback

Teamwork/Collaboration

Give advice

Display patience/sensitivity

Convey feelings

Develop rapport

Interact sociably

Listen effectively

Persuade others

Provide support

Appreciate diversity

Counsel/empower others

Demonstrate emotional intelligence

Help/cooperate

Motivate

Perceive feelings/group dynamics

Share credit/recognize efforts

Teach/instruct others

Digital Technology

Connect networks/network administration

Conduct online research

Develop software

Evaluate products

Install hardware/software

Troubleshoot problems

Understand customers' concerns

Use statistical tools

Design/manage websites

Explain technical processes

Facilitate video conferences/discussions

Learn new technologies

Operate audio/visual technology

Program/code

Repair technology

Write technical/instructional manuals

Leadership

Delegate responsibility

Manage groups

Motivate people

Promote change/take risks

Reduce conflict

Own/acknowledge responsibility

Teach colleagues/followers

Analyze tasks

Conduct meetings

Develop goals

Give praise and feedback

Identify talents

Negotiate agreements

Prioritize tasks

Professionalism/Work Ethic

Arrive on time/punctuality	Adhere to company policy
Recognize accountability to self/others	Consider others' thoughts/feelings
Appreciate teamwork	Evaluate personal performance
Follow dress code(s)	Exercise patience/defer gratification
Improve/maintain organization's reputation	Make ethical decisions
Represent agencies properly	Model integrity
Meet deadlines/due dates	Welcome/assist new colleagues

Career Management

Advocate for oneself	Assess readiness for promotion
Articulate skills & strengths	Cope with setbacks/rejection
Continue professional development	Initiate information interviews
Explore occupational information	Make informed decisions
Prioritize personal growth	Network/build connections
Research labor/market trends	Practice interview skills
Update résumé/cover letter	Prepare for career transition(s)

Global/Intercultural Fluency

Ask clarifying questions	Acknowledge context/history
Confront prejudice/discrimination	Display inclusivity & safety
Convey authenticity	Engage in self-reflection
Examine assumptions	Navigate cultural norms tactfully
Correct misunderstandings	Recognize power/influence disparities
Respect individuality	Speak another language(s)
Study other cultures	Self-disclose considerately