

Finding the merit of mentoring

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IMPACT PARAGRAPH

This chapter describes the scientific and societal impact of the research conducted at as part of this thesis. It will briefly outline the results, and set out in which ways the insights obtained are disseminated from an academic but also more practically oriented point of view.

RESEARCH

The studies gathered in this thesis tell a story about mentoring. The chapters do not have one single answer to a single overarching question, but each provide insights into different aspects of mentoring. **Chapter 2** (*“Mentors’ Beliefs About Their Roles in Health Care Education: A qualitative Study of Mentors’ Personal Interpretative Framework”*) reports on a semi-structured interview study, aimed at reconstructing mentors’ personal interpretative framework. These insights can offer mentors a heuristic for mapping and understanding why they act the way they do in certain situations and how this potentially may affect the learning of their mentees.

The four mentoring positions described in **Chapter 2** led to the development of the Mentor Reflection Instrument (MERIT) survey, as described in the article *“MERIT: a mentor reflection instrument for identifying the personal interpretative framework”*. **Chapter 3** details the development, first administration and initial validation of the MERIT, which was designed to support mentors’ reflections. Whereas the mentoring positions in **Chapter 2** concern mentors’ personal interpretative framework as a whole, the MERIT zooms in closer on what mentors feel belonging to their mentoring tasks. The MERIT results can be interpreted as focus points in one’s mentoring task perception. While certain focus points may be more prominent depending on the context and mentees involved, they are not mutually exclusive, and mentors can focus on multiple focus points at the same time. From the first administration of this survey we have learned that mentors can reflect on their actual and preferred approach to mentoring, and as mentors gain more experience, the discrepancy between these two modes tends to diminish (**Chapter 4**: *“Mentoring is in the ‘I’ of the beholder: supporting mentors in reflecting on their actual and preferred way of mentoring”*).

Additionally, this thesis focusses on a dilemma in daily mentoring practice: what happens when mentors are asked to combine the support of their mentees with assessment? This affects not only mentors but mentees too, therefore their perspective is brought into this thesis too. Both mentors and mentees were interviewed about their experiences with combining developmental support and assessment within a programmatic assessment context. The results of this study are described in *“Combining assessment and support: Mentors’ and mentees’ experiences in a programmatic assessment*

context" (**Chapter 5**). The study demonstrates that mentors can be responsible for both developmental support and assessment, and this arrangement can be highly effective. However, tensions may sometimes arise. Some tensions could be alleviated through specific strategies employed by mentors and mentees. Furthermore, a well-designed assessment program could preemptively address some of the tensions.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The relevance of this thesis extends to stakeholders involved in mentoring, including but not limited to mentors, mentees, faculty developers, program coordinators and designers. It can assist in establishing and maintaining programs that facilitate the personal and professional growth of both mentors and mentees. Similarly, it can contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of the what, why, and how of mentoring, as it explores how mentors perceive their roles and how they enact these assumptions and beliefs in practice.

PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL RELEVANCE

Relevance in a mentoring context

Throughout the research process, I have come to realize the significance of decision-making in the mentoring process at large. This encompasses not only the seemingly smaller decisions, such as establishing mutual expectations and responsibilities between mentors and mentees, or how to engage in a conversation with a shy – or conversely – a slightly too articulate mentee, but also broader design decisions at the faculty development level or overall program level. These last-mentioned decisions can influence the dynamics between mentors and mentees. For instance, when mentors are required to assess their mentees this may create tension and alter the nature of their relationship. On the faculty development level, choices regarding the topics offered and the working format used during mentor development trajectories can stimulate mentors' reflection on the how, what, and why of their mentoring.

Use of mentoring positions, focus points and MERIT at Maastricht University

At the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences, faculty new to mentoring participate in a series of three mentoring workshops where they learn more about building a relationship with mentees, assisting mentees in critical and thorough reflection on their own actions, guiding mentees as they prepare specific learning objectives, and providing actionable feedback. A new component to these sessions is

explicit attention for questions central to the topic “who am I as mentor?”. Mentors engage in group discussions on the role of the mentor (and mentee), and the relationship between them. Discussions are stimulated with video clips of mentee interviews, recordings of so-called ‘critical incidents’ and case studies. Mentors are also encouraged to discuss issues from their daily practice with fellow mentors. Additionally, during the first workshop mentors brainstorm on what mentoring means to them, and they learn about the four mentoring positions. During the second part of that workshop mentors discuss their own mentoring in relation to the four mentoring positions. In between workshops two and three mentors fill out the MERIT survey. Workshop three opens with a short theoretical explanation about what the different MERIT focus points entail, and why mentors answered each question twice. They then interview each other and try to come up with examples of their highest and lowest MERIT scores. Subsequently, they discuss a written mentee case and try to look at the case from the perspective of multiple focus points.

Dissemination of mentoring positions, focus points and MERIT outside Maastricht University

Multiple national and international conference presentations, invited lectures and workshops have been presented on the work included in this thesis. Until now, a number of formal and informal requests have been submitted to use the mentoring positions and the MERIT in other institutions nationally and internationally, both with the aim of conducting research and using it in practice. An overview of this can be found in Appendix 1, Tables 1 and 2.

Relevance in other contexts

Insights gleaned from the research presented here can also have relevance outside the mentoring context. When exploring the personal interpretative framework of faculty in other teaching roles we would not only yield knowledge on these teachers’ knowledge and beliefs, but also shed light on whether they too are able to reflect on the how, what and why of their mentoring. If this is the case, incorporating reflective exercises in their professional development could be beneficial during faculty development trajectories. Teachers could, for example, first reflect on their personal interpretative framework individually, after which they share their findings with a group of peers. When this group engages in peer consultation – sometimes also called peer coaching or intervision – teachers could actively seek advice from peers whom they know to have similar (or different!) views on teaching, which could then in turn enrich their own teaching.

Additional versions of the MERIT could be developed that are applicable outside the context of health professions education. Due to the importance of professional context in the personal interpretative framework it would be good to not assume that

the MERIT is universally applicable, but that there is actual added value in revisiting individual questions and the overall coherence structure of the survey. Some questions or blocks of questions will need to be modified or completely replaced, which would warrant a new validation process.

Furthermore, the personal interpretative framework of mentees – more specifically their task perception – could be an interesting venue for more research. It is worth exploring whether the MERIT could be reworked as a student survey that mentees can use to reflect on what they see as important components in a mentor-mentee relationships, and what the tasks of mentors and mentees in that relationship are. Alternatively, interviews or focus groups could be considered to explore mentees' knowledge and beliefs about mentoring.

Publications

All studies presented in this thesis have been published via gold Open Access. For me it was important to provide access to all instruments developed during the research process and to be transparent about the prompts, questions and vignettes used during the interviews, so these were always made available as appendices. In this way they are available not only to colleagues, or those connected to well-funded institutions, but also to individuals outside that context.

APPENDIX 1: TABLES

Table 1 Conference sessions and other presentations.

Oral Presentation	Faculty development: mentoring education	2017, NVMO Egmond aan Zee, the Netherlands	Lianne M. Loosveld, Geraldine Clarebout, Eline Vanassche, & Erik W. Driessen
Round table presentation	Professional Development for mentors within health professions education	2018 EARLI SIG 11 Kristiansand, Norway	Lianne M. Loosveld, Geraldine Clarebout, Eline Vanassche, & Erik W. Driessen
Oral Presentation	A Blueprint for Double Blended Faculty development, aimed at Mentors in Health Professions Education	2018, Mini Rogano Amsterdam, the Netherlands	Lianne M. Loosveld, Pascal W.M. Van Gerven, Eline Vanassche, & Erik W. Driessen
Digital knowledgebase	Ask-AMEE mentoring	2018, AMEE	Sylvia Heeneman, Lianne Loosveld, Erik Driessen, Andrea Oudkerk Pool
Oral Presentation	Mentors role perceptions: a qualitative study on their personal interpretative framework	2019, IFDC Ottawa, Canada	Lianne M. Loosveld, Pascal W.M. Van Gerven, Eline Vanassche, & Erik W. Driessen
Oral Presentation	Mentors role perceptions: a qualitative study on their personal interpretative framework	2019, NVMO Rotterdam, the Netherlands	Lianne M. Loosveld, Pascal W.M. Van Gerven, Eline Vanassche, & Erik W. Driessen
Oral presentation	Mentors' role perceptions: a qualitative study on their personal interpretative network	2020, AMEE Online	Lianne M. Loosveld (presenter), Pascal W.M. Van Gerven, Eline Vanassche, & Erik W. Driessen

Table 1 Continued.

Webinar / Invited online lecture	The how, what and why of mentoring	2020, AMEE Online	Lianne M. Loosveld, Pascal W.M. Van Gerven
Magazine	Mentoring Magazine	2020, Online	Lianne Loosveld
Workshop	“Mentoring is in the ‘I’ of the beholder”	2021, SOP Online	Lianne Loosveld, Pascal Van Gerven, Erik Driessen, Eline Vanassche, Anthony Artino
ePoster	Mentoring is in the ‘I’ of the beholder: Supporting mentors in reflecting on their actual and preferred way of mentoring.	2022, AMEE Lyon, France	Lianne Loosveld, Erik Driessen, Eline Vanassche, Anthony Artino, Pascal Van Gerven
Invited lecture	MERITS of mentoring	2022, NVMO DP werkgroep Utrecht	Lianne Loosveld
Invited lecture / webinar	Mentoring in health professions education: Through the eyes of mentors and mentees.	2023, online, Brigham Education Institute Brigham and Women’s Hospital: Harvard Medical School	Lianne Loosveld, Subha Ramani
Preproposal to full proposal	How do mentors form their professional identity? A longitudinal mixed-methods study.	2023, AMEE Faculty development, Dundee	Felicitas Biwer, Lianne Loosveld, Erik Driessen
Workshop	Mentor ik zoals ik ben, zoals ik wil of zoals ik moet?	2023, NVMO Maastricht	Lianne Loosveld, Erik Driessen, Eline Vanassche, Anthony Artino, Pascal van Gerven
Workshop	Do I mentor like I am, like I want, or like I should?	2023, IFDC Glasgow	Lianne Loosveld, Erik Driessen, Eline Vanassche, Anthony Artino, Pascal van Gerven

Table 2 Use of MERIT data/ MERIT survey

Book reference	Mentoring In Health Professions Education: Evidence-Informed Strategies Across the Continuum (IAMSE Manuals)	2021	Alice Fornari (Editor), Darshana T. Shah (Editor)
Faculty Development offer for mentors	Use of MERIT findings published in (Loosveld LM, Van Gerven PWM, Driessen EW, Vanassche E, Artino AR. MERIT: a mentor reflection instrument for identifying the personal interpretative framework. BMC Med Educ. 2021;21(1):144.)	2022, Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell	Alice Fornari & Annalise R. Ellis
Dissertation trajectory in the Educational Doctorate program	Use of MERIT survey	2022, Delta State University	Robin Avant
Study of student teaching supervision/ mentorship in initial teaching certification.	Use of MERIT survey	2022, Elementary / Early Childhood Education Department Slippery Rock University	Laura Strong, Michelle Amodei