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FACULTY OF PEDAGOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY  
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

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**THE ROLE OF ADULT LEARNING PROCESSES IN THE  
PRACTICE OF MENTORING NOVICE TEACHERS**

**DOCTORAL (PhD) THESIS BOOKLET**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Table of Contents.....	3
List of Figures.....	4
List of Tables.....	4
1 Introduction and background.....	5
1.1 Impact of mentors on novice teachers.....	5
1.2 Importance of reflective practice.....	6
1.3 Mentoring novices as adult learners.....	6
1.4 Different roles of mentors.....	7
1.5 Importance of school-university partnership.....	8
2 Purposes and Research Questions.....	8
2.1 Purpose of the study.....	8
2.2 Research questions.....	9
3 Research methods.....	12
3.1 Impetus of decision.....	13
3.2 Triangulating the evidence within the qualitatively driven mixed methods study (October 2017- June 2019).....	15
4 Findings.....	15
4.1 Pilot Study.....	15
4.2 Audio Diary Study.....	16
4.3 Interview Study.....	17
4.4 Mentor Survey Study.....	18
4.5 Overall findings.....	20
4.5.1 Supporting adult learning of mentees.....	20
5 Overall Implications.....	21
5.1 Implications for policymakers.....	21
5.2 Implications for teacher training.....	22
5.3 Implications for practice.....	22
6 Contributions of the study.....	23
7 Suggestions for future research.....	23
References.....	26
Related publications of the author.....	30

## LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1.</i> Examples of mentor roles on the spectrum of relational quality .....	18
<i>Figure 2.</i> Ratio of mentors applying different approaches for supporting adult learning .....	19
<i>Figure 3.</i> Actual and expected dynamics of reflections in the mentoring network.....	21

## LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1.</i> Collection of research questions and assumptions by sub-studies .....	11
<i>Table 2.</i> Thematic foci and key terms of the research sub-questions .....	12
<i>Table 3.</i> Visual model for mixed methods sequential exploratory design procedures: research framework.....	14

## **1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Mentoring in teacher training (TT – which refers to mentoring in initial teacher education and early career teacher mentoring in the first two years of teaching), is acknowledged as the most crucial support strategy through which novices learn about the teaching profession. Among many other goals, mentoring aims to help novices to survive, thrive and succeed the induction part of their career and encourages novices to define their professional identity as teachers (Fairbanks, Friedman, & Kahn, 2000). Guided reflective teaching practice is fundamental for novice teachers to become and develop as teachers (Korthagen, 2004). Different mentoring programmes have certain elements in common concerning conceptual frameworks, role concepts and goals. These elements are integral parts of a comprehensive theory of mentoring in TT (Mathur, Gehrke & Kim, 2013).

### **1.1 Impact of mentors on novice teachers**

Gaining real teaching experience is considered to be an essential part of teacher training and the mentor teachers who work with novices in schools have a significant impact on the learning process in this context (e. g. Wang, 2001; Mathur et al., 2013, etc). The important role of mentor teachers in training new generations of teachers is widely acknowledged in the European context, although the expected competences, professional attitudes, and practices are articulated only as broad recommendations by the European Commission (European Commission, 2013). Some member states further specify these in their national legislative documents, hence the different descriptions, frameworks and mentors' core competences are usually detailed in state-specific documents (European Commission, 2013, 2015a, 2015b). Nevertheless, in European initial teacher education which includes the Hungarian system as well (European Commission, 2015a), an integrated definition of 'the mentor' has gained general acceptance. Their main responsibility is to support beginning teachers and to develop their teaching competences. Further, it is generally understood that mentoring for reflective practice that is defined by Schön (1996, p. 26) as "thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline" underlies any work with novice teachers. Reflection, as referred to in this research project as well, is "the instrument by which experiences are translated into dynamic knowledge" (Korthagen, 2001, p. 53). It facilitates growth competence, that is, the ability to develop professionally in an ongoing manner guided by internally directed learning.

## **1.2 Importance of reflective practice**

Benefits of mentoring relationships are mainly rooted in the open reflective space of the process (Allen, 2007; Darwin, 2000; Fairbanks et al., 2000; Mullen 2012; Clutterbuck, 2014; Majzikné & Fischer, 2020). As Hobson (2017) claims, by liberating the reflective space, programmes may maximize the benefits on the individual and the institutional level. In this dissertation, the notion of reflexivity, reflective space and circles of thinking are discussed through various concepts that all relate to the baseline theory of Donald Schön (1983).

In Hungary as elsewhere in Europe, mentors should master and support the development of reflective thinking and professional analysis (cognitive knowledge), be able to develop beginning teachers' reflective thinking (ability) and devote attention to self-reflection for professional development (attitude) (Kotschy, Sallai & Szőke-Milinte, 2016, p. 11-13). Mentoring guidelines in Hungary, integrating international and national empirical research (Szivák, Lénárd & Rapos, 2011; Simon, 2013; Kotschy et al., 2016), present a comprehensive mentoring framework that includes mentors' duties and expected achievements of the mentoring process in TT. These documents contain, complete and specify the European indicators and also present recommended mentoring strategies, activities and their conceptual foundations, whilst granting mentors with professional autonomy in choosing and developing the most appropriate models to use in their own practice. Nevertheless, it is generally understood that mentoring for reflective practice underlies any work with novice teachers.

## **1.3 Mentoring novices as adult learners**

Although Hungarian mentoring guidelines (Szivák et al., 2011; Simon, 2013; Kotschy et al., 2016) and national and international research findings recommend applicable models, tools, strategies and necessary elements of mentoring, studies concerned with mentees' experiences of the mentoring process found that positive outcomes are often missing due to the lack of adaptive and differentiated reflective strategies in practice (Mathur et al., 2013; Gál, Singer, Simon & Szabados, 2014; Kovács, 2015; Kovács & Dombi, 2015; Van Ginkel, Oolbakkink, Meijer & Verloop, 2015a; Van Ginkel, Verloop & Denessen 2015b). Further, these practices could support student autonomy and responsibility for own learning progress. In particular, within the reflective practice of mentors an integrated perspective on adult learning is often missing and its potential for personal and professional development in building a teaching career is underestimated. Nevertheless,

supporting self-regulated learning (SRL) and student autonomy (two concepts highlighted in adult learning programmes) is also core to TT programmes in general (Timperley, 2008, p. 6; Kramarski & Michalsky, 2009; Gaál, 2015). Teacher training programmes worldwide are designed within the paradigmatic and conceptual framework of adult learning (e.g.: Hobson et al, 2009, 2013; Hudson, 2013; Clarke, Triggs & Nielsen, 2014). Recently, the interpretive possibilities of adult learning have become more important in education policies, however, developers of teacher training systems mostly acknowledge that the system alone cannot fully serve the professional needs of the entire teaching career (Lunenberg, 2005; Murray, 2005; Dolan, 2010; Kotschy, 2011). Continuous professional development in the teaching profession is (also) essential, so lifelong learning becomes paramount in a period of reflective modernity, when the learner has to think reflectively about complex choices (Hager, 2011). The incentive for this dissertation has been this particular discrepancy, particularly, to discover and analyse it in mentoring practices.

#### **1.4 Different roles of mentors**

While studies and regulations have shown what the role and duties of these teachers should be, it is also worth considering how this role and related tasks are conceptualised by the mentors themselves. Processes of mentoring for teaching in primary and secondary schools have been transforming simultaneously with the structural changes in teacher education in Hungary (Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education; Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education and the Government Decree 326/2013 (30. VIII)). Educational policy provisions are being introduced to make mentor teacher certification mandatory for mentors<sup>1</sup> who work with pre-service and in-service novice teachers in schools during their practicum. A two-semester formal mentor training programme focuses on raising pedagogical awareness for mentoring strategies, administrative and statutory duties, conflict management, expectations, roles and functions in mentoring and, importantly, it also prepares mentors for reflective practice (Korthagen, 2004; Schön, 1983). Mentor teachers usually do not have the ability, time or chance to access further methodological or professional support for managing mentorship after completing the teacher mentor certification programme. Further, since empirical research in this

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<sup>1</sup> Title changed from „vezetőtanár” to „gyakorlatvezető mentortanár” in Hungarian. The change in terminology also suggests a change in the priorities of the role from leading to supporting novice teachers in their early teaching career.

particular area is limited in the Hungarian context (partly due to the short period of time, concept of mentorship has been introduced in the Hungarian initial teacher education), there is a potential for improvement in this nationally underexplored research field.

### **1.5 Importance of school-university partnership**

A mutually beneficial partnership between teacher training universities and practicum sites (schools of mentor teachers) is also a necessary condition for accomplishing a high level of reflexivity. A clear description of mentoring roles and mentors' activities is crucial in this process (Ng & Chan, 2012). Previous research focused on mentor teachers' role as teacher trainers and the competences related to it (Fairbanks et al., 2000; Hobson et al., 2009; M. Nádasi, 2010; Kovács, 2015), but studies rarely deal with how mentors are situated in the complex dynamics between universities (teacher training programmes) and the practicum sites (their own schools). Exploring the perspectives of the different participants in this network helps understand the discrepancies between the expected and realized practices of mentor teachers, which are often perceived as obstructive to effective school-university partnerships (SUPs) and thus to mentoring (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Cameron & Grant, 2017). Therefore, in this research, multiple perspectives of the participants are analysed on their diverse roles in SUPs: point-of-views of the mentor teachers, novice teachers, and the university-based mentor training programme directors (i.e. programme directors) and teacher educators.

## **2 PURPOSES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The aim of this current dissertation project is to explore, in the context of Hungarian teacher training, the common meeting points of endeavours to develop reflective practice and adult learning models in the mentoring phase of teacher training. The analysis also provides an opportunity to address research questions that examine the joint work of mentor, mentee and the higher education professionals in developing reflective practice.

### **2.1 Purpose of the study**

The dissertation has two main guiding questions to focus the orientation and objective of the research process. Added to the main research questions of the dissertation, a more detailed list of sub-questions is compiled in order to support designing, developing and categorizing the qualitative and quantitative data in the empirical studies. However, as the research project is meant to be a qualitatively driven relational study, it is also dealing



with quantitative data to be analysed with logistic descriptive statistical methods. Thus, several assumptions have been formulated in accordance with the main research questions of this dissertation in order to examine the relations between the research elements. By triangulating the evidence, the research aims to clarify and set the effect directions, scale and extent of these domains so as to summarise the findings in a multidimensional model of practices.

Firstly, the dissertation research project aims to explore (1) *the different ways in which the process of mentoring, and the roles within, are conceptualized by different stakeholders in the process of teacher training*. It also intends to map out how these stakeholders see the current state-of-art of mentoring and how they think about the possible developmental options of mentoring, in and out of the mentoring process.

Secondly, the study investigates (2) *how mentor teachers translate their concepts into the practical mentoring strategies they use to support mentees' adult learning*. The research aims to understand and analyse the relations between mentors' concepts and their approaches to mentoring, with a special focus of adult learning models.

## 2.2 Research questions

The research design was understood as a sequential protocol: first, three qualitative research studies (including the *Pilot Study*) were conducted to determine the concepts of teacher mentoring and the stakeholders' experience within, followed by a concurrent survey design in the quantitative tradition. The research questions were shaped to follow this sequential design, and the findings and results of each sub-study are manifested in the research questions of the following sub-study. The schematic causality of the design and the interconnected research questions and assumptions are presented in Table 1.

There has been a first stage introductory study designed to strengthen and further elaborate the main research questions. The purpose of this Pilot Study was to map out, explore initial findings, and elicit the research focus for the main study by using an interpretative method to collect findings on a large spectrum of the mentoring process. The empirical research involved qualified and experienced school-based mentor teachers. The Pilot Study sought to test and answer the following research questions for the Main Study:

**PS RQ1:** What are the different ways the process of mentoring and the roles within are conceptualized by different stakeholders in the process of teacher training? (Concepts of Mentoring)

**PS RQ2:** How do mentor teachers translate their concepts into practical mentoring strategies they use to support mentees' adult learning? (Supporting of Adult Learning)

The Pilot Study applied an interview approach to answer the research questions and drew data from 10 mentor teachers.

The purpose of the *Main Study* manifests the findings of the Pilot Study to investigate the complexity of mentoring process from various aspects. In this study, links and correlations are explored between those aspects of mentors, mentees, teacher educators and mentor training programme directors. The notions in focus were the mentoring concepts and practices, role of stakeholders in the process, relationship between mentor and the mentee, importance of mentoring qualification and the facilitation of adult learning within the process.

The sub-studies of the Main Study form research questions that sequentially intertwine, based on findings and results established by the proceeding research. This multi-layered sequential mixed methods research study sought to answer the research questions by the sub-studies as seen in Table 1. In the qualitative elements of the Main Study research, the complex set of factors around the central themes is explored and diverse concepts and interpretations are presented through the participants' perspective. While in the subsequent quantitative sub-study, the research scope is narrowed down to identify specific, narrow questions and hypotheses based on a few variables (Creswell, 2014).

Table 1. Collection of research questions and assumptions by sub-studies

Audio Diaries Study with mentor teachers and their mentees
<p><b>RQ1a:</b> What are the differences and similarities in how mentor teachers and their mentees perceive reflective practice and roles within their society of mind in their meta-position?</p> <p><b>RQ1b:</b> How is the mentoring intervention interpreted from different dialogical aspects by mentor teachers and their mentees?</p> <p><b>RQ2:</b> What are the benefits and difficulties of using audio diaries for reflective practice from the participants' perspectives?</p>
Interview Study with mentors, mentor training programme directors and teacher educators
<p><b>RQ1:</b> What are school-based mentors' concepts of their own roles and their mentees' process reflections?</p> <p><b>RQ2:</b> How do these the concepts of mentoring relate to the notions of university-based mentor training programme directors and teacher educators within the context of school-university partnerships?</p>
Mentor Survey Study with mentor teachers
<p><b>RQ1:</b> In which manner do the different sets of complex components predict the process of mentoring in terms of qualification and mentoring experience?</p> <p><b>RQ1a</b> How does mentoring experience and qualification correlate with the complex concept about mentoring as learning held by the mentor teachers?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">H0: <i>Qualification and experience in mentoring are determinants for perceiving mentoring as an opportunity for professional learning and development.</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">H1: Qualification and experience in mentoring do not show correlation with perceiving mentoring as an opportunity for professional learning and development.</p> <p><b>RQ1b</b> How does mentoring experience and qualification correlate with mentor teachers' practices of supporting mentees as adult learners?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">H0: Qualification and experience in mentoring define certain patterns in conceptualizing mentoring as a support for adult learning processes.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">H1: <i>Qualification and experience in mentoring do not define any particular patterns in conceptualizing mentoring as a support for adult learning processes.</i></p> <p><b>RQ2:</b> How do mentors perceive their work supported and motivated by external factors and stakeholders?</p> <p><b>RQ2.a</b> In which manner do mentors think that their work is supported by the teacher training institutions?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">H0: Qualified mentor teachers feel rather supported by the teacher training institutions compared to non-qualified mentor teachers.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">H1: <i>Qualified mentor teachers do not feel more supported by the teacher training institutions compared to non-qualified mentor teachers.</i></p> <p><b>RQ2.b</b> How do intrinsic and extrinsic motivators define mentoring?</p>

H0: Mentors tend to perceive extrinsic motivators stronger at the start of their mentoring career while in their current mentoring work, they feel intrinsic motivators stronger for staying in the profession.

H1: *Mentors do not report any change in perceiving extrinsic and intrinsic motivation for their mentoring work compared to their initial motivation when taking up mentoring.*

In order to further elaborate the main research questions, several sub-questions were posed. The sub-questions highlight more subtle segments of the main questions and wrap around the fundamental objectives. These sub-questions elicit certain thematic elements and highlight foci summarized in Table 2.

*Table 2.* Thematic foci and key terms of the research sub-questions

	<b>Concepts of Mentoring</b>	<b>Supporting Adult Learning</b>
Key terms and foci of sub-questions	concept of learning to teach	mentee as an adult learner
	goals of mentoring	mentor as an adult educator
	efficacy of mentors	motivation
	reflective practice of mentors	self-regulation
	motivation of mentors	reflective circle
	roles in the process	situational and system-defined factors of mentoring adults
	external support provided for mentoring	concept of emergent adult
	mentor-mentee relationship	
	mentor's learning	
	mentor qualification	
	mentoring in school-university partnership	
	developmental initiatives	

### 3 RESEARCH METHODS

Studies framed in the pragmatic paradigm adopt methodological pluralism. This current dissertation project also applies multiple methods that fit best with the set objectives of the research.

The research aims to obtain answers to the research questions by exploring and observing the world around us and applying various instruments as research tools to measure

approximate realities (Johnson & Onweugbuzie, 2004). Knowledge in this experiment is generated from the elements of reality and constructive interpretations of human thinking. The dissertation adopted a qualitatively driven mixed methods approach within the sequential exploratory research design. In the research design, the sequential nature of the studies helped generate themes and research questions for the following and future research on teacher training, mentoring, mentoring for reflective practice and adult learning processes that these practices are embedded in.

### **3.1 Impetus of decision**

The mechanism of mentoring novice teachers in education involve multiple perspectives and stakeholders. Given the complexity of the system, this study is designed as a mixed methods research, which allowed a more thorough and comprehensive investigation of the phenomena. The conceptual drive of exploring and mapping out the qualitatively different perspectives of mentoring in TT determined the nature of the approach taken. Since the purpose of the project was predominantly not to test a theory or a set of hypotheses, a qualitatively driven mixed methods approach was selected within a sequential exploratory design as most fitting and appropriate. From 15 reasons for designing qualitatively driven mixed methods research (Hesse-Biber, Rodriguez, & Frost, 2015) several reasons established the choice for prioritizing qualitative findings to lead the design. The comprehensive network of stakeholders in the mentoring process, however, has defined the main reason for qualitative drive for this research at a very early stage of the design, namely, to gain insight into the multiple layers of the experience of a phenomenon in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon from differing perspectives through which a more rounded understanding/theoretical framework can be developed for mentoring in TT.

The design was understood as a sequential protocol: first, three qualitative research studies (including the pilot study) were conducted to determine the concepts of teacher mentoring and the stakeholders' experience within, followed by a concurrent survey design in the quantitative tradition. *Table 3* provides a graphic overview of the qualitatively driven mixed methods research design applied in the present dissertation, including the phases, procedure and products of the individual research components.

Table 3. Visual model for mixed methods sequential exploratory design procedures: research framework

RESEARCH SEQUENCE	PILOT STUDY			AUDIO DIARIES STUDY		INTERVIEW STUDY			MENTOR SURVEY		
PHASE	qualitative data collection	qualitative data analysis	connecting two qualitative phases	qualitative data collections	qualitative data analysis	qualitative data collection	qualitative data analysis	connecting qualitative and qualitative phases	quantitative data collection	quantitative data analysis	integration of qualitative and quantitative findings and results
PROCEDURE	individual in-depth semi-structured interviews	phenomenographic analysis approach; manual analysis	purposefully selecting participants based on responses	individual and cross-connected audio diaries; pre- and post-diary interviews	cross-thematic analysis; within-case and across-case theme development;	individual in-depth semi-structured interviews	thematic network analysis of audio diaries and semi-structured interviews	section-wide selection of participants; developing questionnaire	cross-sectional web-based survey, Qualtrics survey	data screening descriptive, correlational and experimental analysis; frequencies SPSS	interpretation and explanation of the qualitative and quantitative findings and results
PRODUCT	text data (interview transcripts)	thematic collection of emerging themes and categories	protocol for audio diaries study	text data (audio diary logs and interview transcripts)	similar and different themes and categories; thematic matrix for the survey design	text data (interview transcripts)	network of related themes; completed thematic matrix for the survey design	recruitment protocol; questionnaire design	numeric data	Descriptive statistics, missing data, correlations, complex variables and their correlations	discussion; implications; future research
ETHICAL PERMISSION	No. 2017/43			No. 2017/235					No. 2018/199		

### 3.2 Triangulating the evidence (October 2017- June 2019)

In the *Pilot Study*, findings from a research project on experienced mentor teachers' conceptualizations and strategies (from partnering or “non-practice” schools) of mentoring novice teachers for reflective practice is outlined. Following the result of the pilot research, the decision was taken to keep the original plan of putting this research into a triangle (Cohen & Manion, 2000) of a mixed method approach (Creswell, 1997). The *Main Study* applied a qualitative-driven mixed-method study design to answer the research questions, involving 254 school-based mentor teachers, 14 mentees, teacher educators and university stakeholders from 7 universities nationwide. Participants for the study are identified through convenience sampling, and data were collected in semi-structured interviews, audio diary logs, and cross-sectional surveys.

In an *Audio Diaries Study*, experienced mentor teachers' (n=12) from partnering or “non-practice” schools and their mentees' (n=14) work was followed and monitored during a semester-long mentoring process. Between the structured introductory and closing interviews, mentors and their mentees reflected on their work and development in three phases (initial, mid-term and end-term) during the mentoring process. They individually recorded three audio diary entries with the help of prompt questions sent by the researcher (Monrouxe, 2009).

Oriented by the Audio Diaries Study, an *Interview Study* was designed to collect and analyse feedback and reflections of mentor training programme directors'/TT unit leaders (n=7) and teacher educators (n=7) who have close contact with the mentors during the practicum. Mentor training programme directors and teacher educators are from seven different universities across Hungary.

In a cross-sectional *Mentor Survey*, quantitative data is gained from active and experienced mentor teachers (active in pre-service or early-career teacher mentoring in partnering or practice schools) in various locations across Hungary (n=242) at a given point in time, and the data were analysed with descriptive statistics.

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Pilot Study

The *Pilot Study* found that self-reported reflective strategies which are, to a certain extent, aligned to mentees' adult learning processes seem to be dependent on students' actual, often ad hoc needs and curricular obligations and thus are hardly reconciled in the

complexity of the authentic teaching self. These strategies exist in distinct forms associated with either teaching students or mentoring adult learners. Hence, mentees' autonomy and self-regulation in teaching and in learning is guided in a supportive manner as far as it is perceived by the mentor to be beneficial – or at least not harmful – to the school students' learning. This tension influences mentors' conceptualizations of the process and their approaches to mentoring. Mentor teachers aim to support mentees to become authentic and autonomous teachers, but their work is seemingly limited by a lack of clear adult learning strategies that facilitate mentees' self-regulation and autonomy in teaching and a supportive (institutional and legislative) context that allows for the time that is needed for such a transformative learning process.

Further, the *Pilot Study* suggested that real and proactive collaboration between different stakeholders in teacher education (teacher educators, programme directors, school administrators, colleagues, mentors and mentees) could enhance the quality of the practicum by reducing stress, isolation and the discrepancy between theory and practice throughout the mentoring phase. The low level of coherence may, however, result in roles that mentors have to take individually instead of sharing the responsibility of assessment, gatekeeping to the teaching career, and being the only link to the profession (Hobson et al., 2009; Hobson et al, 2013).

A strong school-university partnership for pre-service teaching practicum, a mutually informative diagnostic discussion should be established about mentees' background, progress, engagement and motivation in learning to teach (cf. Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Hoffman 2011).

## 4.2 Audio Diary Study

The *Audio Diary Study* indicated that reducing time pressure on mentors and improving public recognition of the teaching profession may result in qualitatively more focused relationships with their mentees in an extended and interconnected society of mind (understood in the Dialogical Self Theory of Hermans, 2001). These relationships may, in turn, enhance mentors' and future teachers' relatedness to the profession, which could decrease the possibility of teacher turnover, not only in the early career phase but also at later stages. The method of audio diaries also calls attention to the importance of more personalized processes in evaluation and assessment, and to the possibility of dividing the various mentoring roles that help develop the quality of reflective cycles, providing authentic advanced organizers in the mentoring process for adult learning (cf. Kaufman,



2003). Therefore, the question also arises whether the network of teacher educators and mentor teachers is sufficiently supported through educational policy, or whether more could be done to make this valuable association more beneficial.

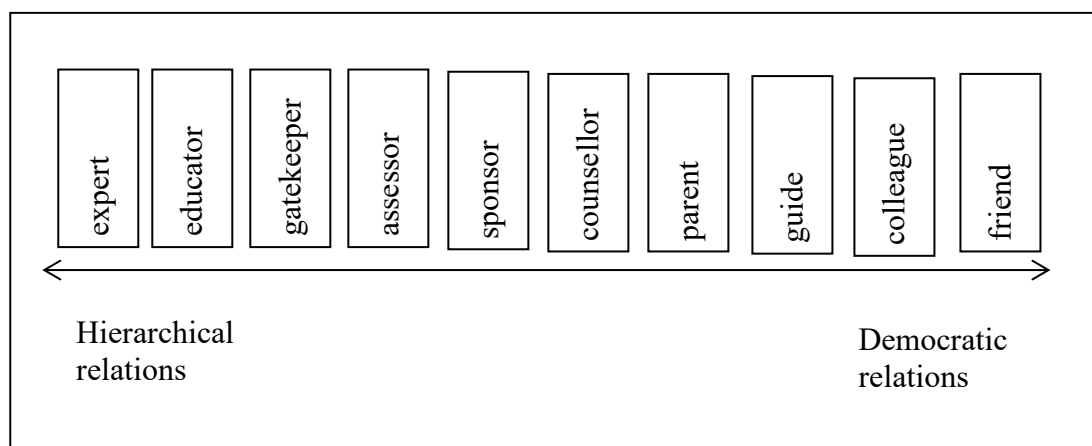
The findings of the *Audio Diary Study* suggested certain improvements by (1) supporting universities to improve the embeddedness of the mentoring process and the mentors' role within the TT process, (2) raising awareness of the isolated work of mentor teachers and offering more opportunities for mentors to meet other mentors, (3) promoting the formation of a community of practice for mentors (cf. Holland, 2018) and (4) remunerating and acknowledging mentor teachers' work in a more transparent way.

### 4.3 Interview Study

The *Interview Study* further confirmed a gap between mentoring strategies expected by the university and the mentees and the actual mentoring strategies that mentors report. This also implies that there are ideal and/or real roles mentors take. Furthermore, mentors appear in various complex and often conflicting roles during the practicum. The reason for an aggregation of these roles is often rooted in the lack of ownership over the mentoring process and in the feeling of isolation in the learning cycle of teaching practice (cf. Hobson, 2016; 2017). Thus, system-based roles often override the relationship-based roles in order to fulfil the expectation that derives from the structural elements of the system. This aggregation has an impact on the chain-of-responses (Cross, 1981), consequently, on the motivation of the mentors and mentees (cf. Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

The mentor's roles were described with the help of binary relationships, such as macro-micro contexts and system-individual: the macro-level school-university and the micro-level mentor-mentee relationship. These binaries do not constitute separate "entities" but are interrelated. In other words, relationship-based roles are related to system-based roles and assume a dynamic interplay.

Acting as ‘gatekeeper’ to the profession, and mentors’ educative function, are examples of how this interplay may evolve and associate the mentors’ role with the hierarchical state of an assessor and an expert (macro-level/system), whereas the collegial and guiding role manifests in a more horizontal and developmental relationship (micro-level/individual) within a democratic partnership (see *Figure 1*).



*Figure 1.* Examples of mentor roles on the spectrum of relational quality

This comparative interview study also conceptualized mentorship as a form of collaboration between higher education and schools as practice sites, with mentors serving the system isolated or complementing in a parallel dimension of teacher training with limited engagement of the higher education partner (cf. McLaughlin & Black-Hawkins, 2007).

#### 4.4 Mentor Survey Study

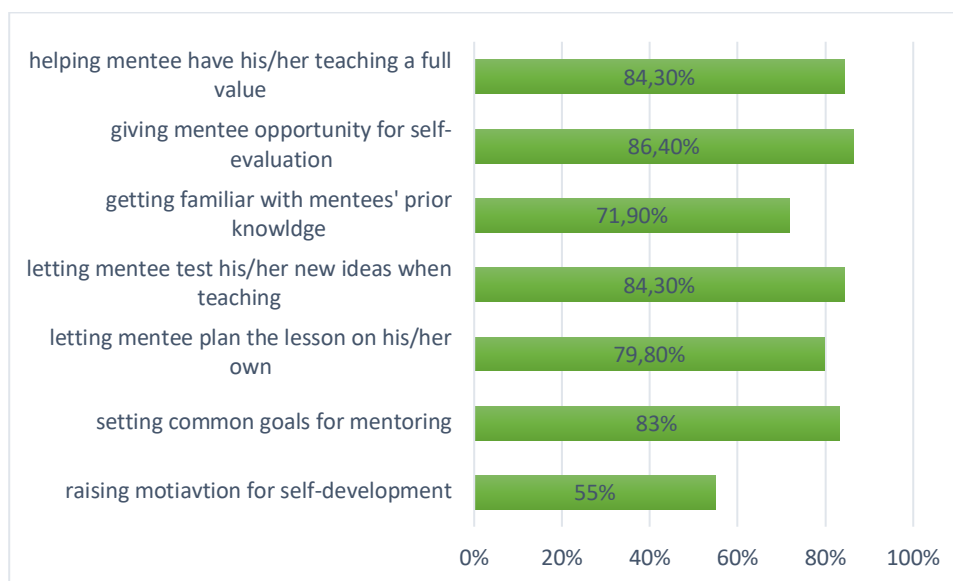
The *Mentor Survey Study* expanded the research by confirming certain challenges that need to be addressed in mentoring. Lack of close bond in the professional network of mentors and other stakeholders needs to be fixed; the workload and time burden of mentors should be balanced; the discrepancy between role-taking of and expectations towards the mentors needs to be reviewed to unlock the tension in the practice of supporting adult learning which seems to be a clear goal of mentors conceptually. An increased readiness and intention to provide intensive support for mentors needs to be explored to develop the effectiveness of mentoring.

This study confirmed the importance of experience and qualification of mentors have a substantial impact on their perceived self-efficacy in practice. The complex component of self-efficacy was measured by the aggregate variables of general self-efficacy (ability to fully complete mentoring duties, ability to maximise the mentee’s performance, ability

to fulfil expectations of mentees while mentoring, and ability to overcome personal/professional problems when mentoring) and time-related self-efficacy indicators.

The patterns of motivation for mentoring that were revealed highlighted the primary driver of mentors; that is, their overarching dedication to learning in the mentoring process as a mentor and the serious desire to collaborate with novices within this learning process. Initial strong motivators for mentors to taking up mentoring were the possibility for working together with adults and young professionals, however, the prestige of the mentoring profession was considered as the strongest initial and current motivator for mentoring

Complex indicators of self-perceived practice suggest that mentors tend to support their mentees as adult learners in several segments of the mentoring process and link various approaches to their mentoring practices. For the positive distribution of the responses, see *Figure 2*.



*Figure 2.* Ratio of mentors applying different approaches for supporting adult learning

In terms of goal setting for the mentoring process, forming and discussing common goals with the mentee at the beginning of the mentored practicum seem to be a main determinant to other variables of supporting adult learning processes.

Mentoring is conceptualized as a mutual learning opportunity that expected to be valued, acknowledged and supported by the stakeholders of the system in as many ways as possible. Teacher training institutions are recommended to work on stronger and more

rigorous reflective cycles in the teacher training network, encouraging dynamic reflections between the mentors and the teacher trainers.

#### **4.5 Overall findings**

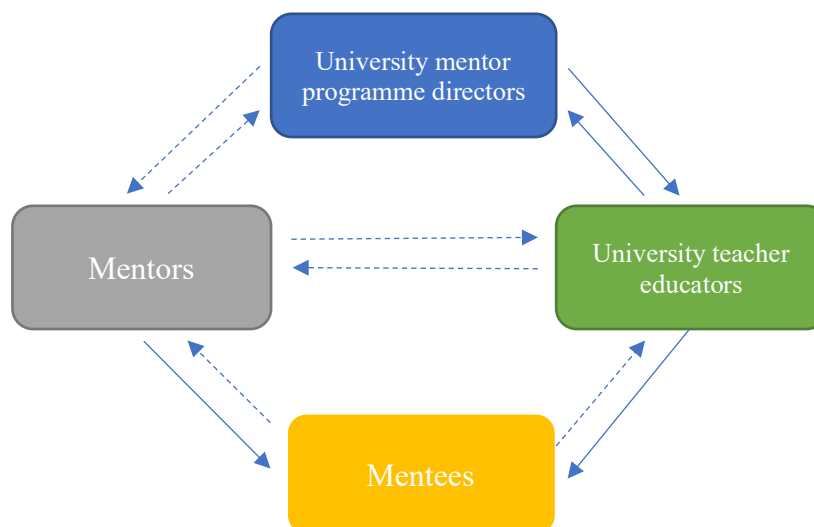
The findings and results of this mixed methods sequential research suggest that the mentoring process should trigger and maintain a complex dialogue of stakeholders and participants in order to utilize the potential of this unique mentoring system. Dynamic dialogues within the network help to define roles, competences and strategies and develop the authenticity of participants' self-definitions, and provide the contours for ideal and real mentoring practices.

##### **4.5.1 Supporting adult learning of mentees**

Effective mentoring of adults depends on the micro and macro management of mentoring process, on the quality of the school-university partnership, and on the quality and quantity of feedback exchanged in and on the mentoring. Domains of adult learning processes are all linked to the reflective practice of the facilitator of the process (cf. Nixon, 1989; Copper, 1990; Belanger, 1992; Winne & Hadwin, 2008). Reflective practice creates a context for supporting self-regulatory learning, and thus motivation for learning (Zimmerman, 2000, Taylor & Hamdy, 2013).

Multi-participatory dialogue, however, is rarely operationalized in the complexity of reflections and quality support of adult learning is mitigated by the overlapping roles and contextual limitations of the framework. The routine of reflective practice to value and apply experiences in the adult learning context needs more time and fewer role constraints upon the mentor to establish a model of partnering knowledge management of learning in the mentoring relationship (cf. Boshier, 1998).

In *Figure 3*, the existing system-integrated reflections and their directions are presented with continuous lines. Dotted arrows implicate the desired presence and directions of reflections; as was found in this study, mutually informative diagnostic discussions are missing from the network of stakeholders. Routinized back-and-forth feedback in the system can maximise the impact and effectiveness of mentoring and can also balance the load of responsibility of mentors to be able to fully achieve the mentoring goals in practice.



*Figure 3. Actual and expected dynamics of reflections in the mentoring network*

## 5 OVERALL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the evidence available in this research project, possible actions can be taken to advance and foster the development of reflective cycle in the mentoring network in four main steps:

- (1) provide financial and infrastructural support for universities to improve the embeddedness of the mentoring process and the mentors' role within the teacher training;
- (2) initiate and launch feedback loops (including school students, school management and stakeholders of the mentoring process) that have never been targeted before, in order to acquire richer and deeper understanding of their needs, limitations and expectations;
- (3) raise awareness about the isolated work of mentor teachers and create more opportunities for mentors to meet other mentors in order to promote the formation of communities of practice for mentors;
- (4) acknowledge and fairly remunerate mentor teachers' work and dedication to the mentoring process in a more appropriate and transparent way.

These strategic implications are also assigned to different agents, namely, educational policymakers, teacher trainers, and mentors themselves.

### 5.1 Implications for policymakers

This research informs educational policymakers about the practice of mentoring after 6-7 years of regulations for an undivided system of teacher training, and how different participants experience these measures. Policymakers can benefit from these findings when refining policies to maximise the potential of mentoring.

Second, this study aims to raise policymakers' awareness of contextual constraints and challenges to fostering reflexivity in mentoring. Policymakers can use the constraints and facilitating factors identified through this research to trigger more fruitful and effective mechanisms conducive to effective mentorship in teacher training.

Third, policymakers should revisit policy documents and modify the definitions for enhancing the conceptualizations of mentoring by research-based evidence. Policy documents should also offer guidelines for unifying the system in terms of mentors' acknowledgement and the main strategic concepts of mentoring to directly help teacher retention for early career teachers.

## **5.2 Implications for teacher training**

Several implications can be found in the current study that could be adopted by teacher trainers within pre-service and in-service training programmes. The results provide a segmental evidence base of what mentors and other stakeholders believe about mentoring in their actual context of teacher training. It offers a partial but important account of how the participants in Hungarian teacher training think about and practice mentoring with respect to reflective practice in mentoring adults for the teaching profession. Teacher training can build upon the findings of the current study to define new routes to synthesize the different perspectives and needs related to the mentored teaching practicum.

The study also identifies factors that facilitate or limit mentors' ability to translate their knowledge and intentions within the mentoring programme. These factors can be reviewed and collaboratively reflected upon by the teacher training institutions, universities, mentor training providers in a shared understanding with the mentors.

Last but not least, stakeholders in teacher training should also help promote the important roles of mentors, by acknowledging the mentors' and their own contributory roles as change agents in the training process. Teacher and mentor trainers should address barriers to fostering reflective cycles in the process and help develop routines for reflexivity.

## **5.3 Implications for practice**

This mixed method research holds implications for mentor teachers who intend to promote their mentees' development in teaching and form their own teaching identity. Mentor teachers need to regularly reflect upon their own views and cultivate the self-reflections of their mentees to interact, model and sustain the mutual adult learning processes generated by the mentoring process. The qualitative and quantitative studies in this research project provide mentor teachers with an overview of mentoring in education that can inform concepts and practices of nurturing reflective practice through facilitated adult learning. Mentor teachers should use the research to develop more effective processes and learning management by becoming familiar with the mentees' and their students' views, needs, reflections in the mentoring process.

## **6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

In addition to the practical implications, the present study also contributes to existing literature in several ways. This study contributes to a better understanding of the different stakeholders' beliefs about mentoring and its possible development through reflections by synthesizing the findings of empirical evidence base. Although participants' beliefs, strategies and practices in teacher mentoring were explored segmentally before, no comprehensive triangulation of reflective evidence was found in the national or international literature.

This study intended to undertake and explore each perspective directly involved in the mentored teaching practicum to accomplish a full spectrum of views and experience with mentoring. Though mentor teachers', their mentees' and teacher and mentor trainers' reflections on mentoring were collected separately before, the current study focused for the first time on tackling and apprehending mentoring in all of its complexity. This study thus provides insights into what may be conceptualized as mentoring in one aspect of the process; but at the same time, parallel reflections are explored to compare and contrast the findings. The study did not only provide a list of constraints and facilitating factors with respect to reflective mentoring concepts and practices, it also filled the gap in the Hungarian context by examining Hungarian stakeholder' beliefs about and experience with mentoring and the partnering relationship between the participants of the mentoring network. Thus, the study contributed to the understanding of the relationship among views, practices, effectiveness and impact within the Hungarian education system.

## **7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Findings of this study fill in a research gap in the body of knowledge on mentoring concepts and real practices, but it also provides future research perspectives to deepen the understanding of the link between reflective practice, motivation and engagement in the mentoring process. This mixed method study raises a number of opportunities for future research at the intersections of mentoring, reflective practice, adult learning, and the stakeholders' beliefs.

First, the Audio Diary and the Interview Study shed more light on the importance of ongoing professional support for and better cooperation with teachers who train future teachers. In the Mentor Survey Study, mentor teachers report on the value and prestige of mentoring profession, however, the perspective and recognition of colleagues in teaching and the school management have not been explored yet. Also, an international comparative perspective on the motivation of mentor teachers for mentoring may further increase the value and importance of the findings of current drivers of mentors in the Hungarian system.

Second, the Audio Diary Study adapted an innovative method, namely, the audio diary approach that utilised its potential in educational research. The method revealed unknown perspectives in mentoring and opened new dimensions for researchers to test and integrate alternative approaches to generate novel and often hidden data about teacher training and mentoring within.

Third, the qualitative and quantitative studies of this research mapped out various existing and missing links in the mentoring network. However, the direct impact of mentoring training on the mentors' effectiveness or on the mentees still needs to be discovered. Longitudinal comparative studies could generate more knowledge about certain short- and long-term impact of the mentor training on the process.

Fourth, a complete monitoring research to strengthen and broaden the evidence base of mentees' changing motivation and self-regulatory processes in the practicum may be able to open up new perspectives and developmental opportunities for the practices in teacher training.

Finally, the study that involves school students of mentors and mentees needs to be further developed vertically and horizontally to elicit a new perspective rarely investigated in the teacher training context. This perspective may help to complete the understanding of the mentoring phenomena by looking at the changing concepts of school students about mentored practicum. As an initial result, it was found that school students are open to give feedback on their experience with teaching, ready to highlight critical aspects,



suggest space for improvement and most importantly, value the opportunity to contribute to the research and to be let their voice within that process to be heard.

Future studies could adopt qualitative or mixed method research elements to explore and conceive richer data on school students' lived-through experiences to analyse and refine certain mechanisms in the system.

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