

Academic Paper

Migrant mentoring to work: defining an old-but-innovative instrument

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Abstract

Despite numerous labour market interventions to address the large unemployment gap, migrants struggle to find work in their host societies. In an effort to address this, an alternative and innovative intervention is 'mentoring to work'. This paper attempts to create a sense of conceptual clarity on mentoring to work by delineating a clear definition of the field and its scope as a policy tool for migrant employment. This concept analysis is based on scientific literature and further refined in consultation with practitioners through an iterative process of consultation and adaptation. The definition also provides a solid starting point for further empirical research in this field.

Keywords

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Introduction

Labour market integration is considered a key indicator for measuring migrant success in a host country. It is also seen as an essential step in terms of social integration (Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016; Newman et al., 2018; Reyneri and Fullin, 2011; Valtonen, 2001). At the same time, studies indicate that integration into the labour market is no simple task (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018; Hooper et al., 2017). For example, a recent report of the OECD/European Commission (2018) shows that the employment rate of immigrants born outside the EU is 9 percent lower than that of native populations in the EU28 (59% versus 68%), while in countries such as Germany, Belgium or the Netherlands, the employment gap amounts to 16, 18 or 21 percent respectively (figures from 2017). While there are many policies and programmes around the labour market integration of migrants, they do not address the multiple difficulties faced by migrants and do not translate into sufficient improvement. Taking this into consideration, there appears to be a need to upgrade the

existing policies and programmes and identify new strategies to facilitate the labour market integration of migrants.

An increasingly popular yet out-of-the-box intervention in this context is 'mentoring to work'. While this type of mentoring could be used for other target groups as well, in this context it means an unemployed immigrant (mentee) and a volunteer familiar with the local labour market (mentor) are matched so that the latter can assist the mentee towards employment. While there has been a long tradition (especially in the Anglo-Saxon world) of youth mentoring, workplace mentoring (mentoring at work) or mentoring in education, mentoring to work is a relatively new concept that is making headway primarily in Europe (and Canada). While mentoring to work adopts several aspects from other forms of mentoring, it addresses a different set of challenges and follows a different trajectory when compared to them. As explored in detail later, mentoring to work is an intercultural/intercontextual bridge between newcomers and a local labour market.

This tool's potential has been recognised at both national and international levels. The OECD regularly lists mentoring as a good practice for social integration and labour market integration as well (OECD, 2014). In addition to countries such as Norway and France, where mentoring to work already has a strong presence, a host of mentoring projects have sprung up in a number of other countries, especially in response to the refugee crisis. This has been the case particularly in Germany, Spain and Sweden.

The heightened interest in mentoring to work for migrants has a potential downside: it entails not just a proliferation of initiatives, but also includes initiatives with incredibly diverse content that fall under the label of mentoring (e.g.: jobcoaching, intergenerational coaching...). Despite the heightened interest, mentoring to work is still undefined and the practice has no academic grounding. Given this, there is a risk that mentoring will develop into a sort of catch-all term (a buzzword), making the actual scope and meaning of the term unclear. The inherent risk is that the specificity of mentoring will be lost, and in so doing cause the tool to lose its impact and credibility. A delineation of the concept is essential to understand the uniqueness of mentoring as an instrument in comparison with other labour market interventions but also with other forms of mentoring like mentoring at work. There is a clear need for research in this field, as mentoring to work has become a lived reality, especially in an intercultural context of immigrant integration, while academic research is lagging behind. The first step towards this research is developing a clear definition of the concept of mentoring to work.

The current study originated in the context of Memore, a transnational project supported by the European Social Fund. The project aims to develop an effective and sustainable model for mentoring that supports refugees in their integration in the European labour market. The purpose of this article is to create a greater sense of conceptual clarity in relation to mentoring to work for migrants. In this contribution, we present a concept analysis based on an extensive literature review as well as an elaborate cross-check with practitioners, through an iterative process of consultation and adaptation. The paper works towards a definition of migrant mentoring to work that is both theoretically sound as well as practice-oriented.

Background

To understand why mentoring to work is viewed as a promising tool for the labour market integration of migrants, it is important first understand the range of factors influencing the labour market position of those employed and those actively searching for a job, in particular (new) migrants. These factors work at several different levels, from the labour market's systemic characteristics (flexibility, minimum wage, etc.), to the employer level (discrimination, recognition of foreign degrees, etc.) and the human capital of migrants themselves (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1958). This human capital consists of elements such as economic capital (linguistic knowledge, degrees, technical competences, etc.), social capital (professional networks, shared acquaintances, etc.),

cultural capital (understanding local working culture, jobs, sectors), psychological capital (self-confidence, motivation,...) and information capital (e.g. knowledge of the national or local labour market). A lack of (country-specific) human capital is likely to translate into difficulties in finding employment. Migration entails a loss of economic, social, cultural and information capital as these types of capital are not easily transferable across geographic and cultural borders (Borjas, 1994; Chiswick and Miller, 2009; Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018; Friedberg, 2000; Kogan et al., 2011, de Vroome and van Tubergen, 2010). Examples include linguistic competence (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013; Chiswick and Miller, 2003), lack of a professional network, lack of access to job openings and knowledge regarding local protocols around resumes and job interviews, understanding common practices in the workplace, and so on (OECD, 2014; Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018).

The current toolbox of active labour market policies focuses predominantly on economic capital (e.g. providing vocational training, encouraging migrants to get an additional diploma or certificate), while cultural, social and information capital often remain underemphasised. The strength of mentoring lies in its potential to act as a reinforcement in other areas, such as information capital and the development of social networks. It is believed that mentoring can contribute to developing bridging capital (on bridging capital, see Putnam, 2000), which covers externally-oriented contacts or networks and brings people from various social groups and classes together. In addition, mentoring is believed to ease access to “the highly valuable, often elusive and inaccessible, tacit knowledge holding” (Reeves, 2017, p.187), i.e. mentoring allows access to a type of knowledge which is essential, yet hard to access through regular, or more formal channels such as courses and trainings. Mentoring also partially addresses factors at the employers’ level that compound difficulties faced by migrants; through mentoring employers or other employees (who co-determine conditions in the workplace) become acquainted with a migrant’s point of view and obtain more intercultural skills (through contact or by following workshops on this topic). In sum, mentoring allows for a more holistic approach. However, more empirical research is needed to back these claims about the potential of mentoring to work.

Advancing the research field

Mentoring itself is not a new concept. The word mentor traces back to Homer’s *Odyssey*, and authors refer to the concept as “as old as the hills” (Garvey, 2017, p.15). However, mentoring in the setting of labour market policies, a field traditionally dominated by paid professionals, and its use as a tool to address the wide scope of problems that migrants need to deal with to enter the labour market makes it an innovative approach.

Migrant mentoring to work can be situated in a broader strand of literature, which is intercultural mentoring. In a contribution identifying new horizons for mentoring research, Irby et al. (2017) point out the importance of studying mentoring in relation to cultural and linguistic diversity and call for more research on this topic. Reeves (2017) stresses the need for significant research and theory development within the field of intercultural mentoring. While some research already exists, overall, intercultural mentoring remains understudied. We aim to contribute to fill this knowledge gap by focusing on one particular type of mentoring, which is migrant mentoring to work. There is a double interest in mentoring to work within the field of intercultural mentoring: it is not only intercultural because people from different cultures interact, but it also addresses intercultural problematics and aims at strengthening country-specific capital, as discussed above.

Despite the proliferation of initiatives in policy and practice there is little research on the topic (although there are a few exceptions, such as Månsson and Delander, 2017, Neuwirth and Wahl, 2017, and Reeves, 2015). We aim to offer conceptual clarity with regard to migrant mentoring to work, which is needed in order to safeguard the specificity of this policy tool. Clarity is essential as a lack of clear conceptualisation and poor theorization of mentoring to work is likely to lead to confusion, both in policy and practice (Colley, 2003). Moreover, theoretical work from other scholars

has clearly demonstrated the value of concept analyses for advancing the academic field (see Balaam, 2015 for an example). The framework developed here is meant to offer guidance to recently developed or new mentoring projects in this field and to serve as a solid base for further empirical research.

To be clear, we do not take a comparative perspective in our analysis, nor is it our intention to postulate a general definition for mentoring. We share the perspective of Haggard et al. (2011) and others, that it is neither possible, nor desirable to agree on a single explicit universal definition of mentoring (cf. supra). Our goal is to argue what ought to be included in a definition of mentoring in this specific context, i.e., migrant mentoring to work, rather than focusing on what is different from other subfields, or on what is common to other types of mentoring. However, while we will focus exclusively on this specific type of mentoring, the framework can be used as a reference point to conduct a similar exercise for other types of mentoring, as the lack of a clear definition of the concept at stake is a problem that many subdomains of mentoring are facing (Haddock-Millar, 2017). We have aimed for a definition that works in a two-fold manner; on the one hand it is precise with regard to the building blocks of mentoring to work and on the other hand it remains open-ended. While our research focusses on mentoring to work for migrants, the definition we have arrived at can be adapted for any demographic. A major strength of this contribution is that it draws on knowledge from scientific literature and practical experience alike, as will be explained below.

In what follows, we discuss previous definitions of mentoring and position migrant mentoring to work in the broader field of mentoring. Then we explain the methodology used to arrive at a conceptualisation. Subsequently, the findings of the analysis are presented, resulting in a definition of mentoring to work. We sum up with a conclusion.

Box 1: An illustration of different mentoring definitions

Description	Authors
"a transformative relationship in which an experienced person helps a less experienced person realize their personal and professional goals"	Kram, 1985 and Levinson, 1978, in Yip & Kram: 2017
"Someone in a position of power who looks out for you, or gives you advice, or brings your accomplishments to the attention of other people who have power in the company"	Fagenson, 1989, p.312
"Mentoring is a personal relationship in which a more experienced (usually older) faculty member or professional acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced (usually younger) graduate student or junior professional. A mentor provides the protégé with knowledge, advice, challenge, counsel, and support in the protégé's pursuit of becoming a full member of a particular profession"	Johnson, 2002, p.88
"An influential individual in your work environment (typically a more senior member in your organization or profession) who has advanced experience and knowledge and who is committed to the enhancement and support of your career"	Forret and de Janasz, 2005, p.484
"Mentoring or coaching has one clear purpose, the learning and development of an individual, a process that involves change, in this case social change"	Brockbank and McGill, 2006, p. 9
"A process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé)"	Bozeman and Feeney, 2007, p.731
"A working method in which a more experienced role model is engaged to encourage and inspire the person requesting help by sharing learning experiences that enable the person requesting help to master certain competences or skills, thereby fostering his or her personal development."	Van der Tier and Potting, 2015, p.26

Mentoring: a concept with many faces

We argue that there is a need for a clear demarcation of the concept of mentoring in the context of migrant mentoring to work in order to safeguard the specificity of it as a policy tool. But why not use a general definition of mentoring? Is it not clear what mentoring means? Fact is, there is no such

thing as a universal definition of mentoring (Haddock-Millar, 2017). The definition of mentoring varies according to the context in which mentoring occurs, the extent of standardisation, and the mentoring objective. Hall (2003, p.9) concluded that: “mentoring is not one thing, it is a range of possibilities”. This diversity also makes it difficult, or even impossible to reach an unambiguous universal definition of mentoring (McGowan et al., 2009). This statement is echoed by Kochan (2017) who writes that “a single definition of mentoring eludes us and perhaps it always will” (p.11). Box 1 illustrates this range of interpretations of mentoring as a concept with a number of definitions based on scientific literature in the context of mentoring in the workplace.

Haggard et al. (2011, p.286) state that while no comprehensive definition enjoying wider consensus is available, scholars, however, agree on the following: “a mentor is a more senior person who provides various kinds of personal and career assistance to a less senior or experienced person (the ‘protégé’ or ‘mentee’).” This will also be the principal basis for the conceptual definition of migrant mentoring to work.

Positioning migrant mentoring to work in the field of mentoring

Scientific literature on mentoring makes a distinction between the various dimensions that mentoring has been categorised into. Roughly, at least three major divisions can be identified according to: (1) the context in which mentoring occurs, (2) the extent to which mentoring is standardised, and (3) the extent to which the mentoring is goal oriented. Understanding where mentoring to work can be situated among these dimensions in the broader literature is a first step towards narrowing down the concept, as demarcating the playing field is a preliminary hurdle to take before engaging in an in-depth concept analysis. We focus on the field of application, the extent of standardization, and the distinction between mentoring and befriending, as we consider these most relevant in this context.

Field of application

Eby et al. (2008) found three major trends with regard to the fields of application within which mentoring takes place: (1) youth mentoring, (2) academic-related mentoring (or mentoring in education), and (3) mentoring in the workplace. These mentoring practices are well represented in research, particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries (especially the United States). Besides these fields, mentoring is also implemented in other contexts such as parenting support mentoring programmes, and more general projects in which social inclusion is prioritised (Colley, 2003). In practice, the (resulting) list of distinct mentoring areas in which mentoring has become an essential vehicle for change is long (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). In our view, migrant mentoring to work does not fit in the three main categories mentioned by Eby et al. (2008) but should be seen as a separate field of application. It can be attached to a wider strand of intercultural mentoring and also touches upon a new kind of professional mentoring.

Extent of standardization

A second distinction frequently drawn in literature is based on the extent to which mentoring is standardised. The classical distinction is binary (formal – informal), but Rhodes and Boyden’s (2016) description is more nuanced, distinguishing between three types of mentoring: formal, informal, and non-formal mentoring. Formal mentoring concerns a type of teaching or supervision. Examples include a teacher supervising students or an internship coordinator that monitors a student’s progress. Informal mentoring is described by Rhodes (within the context of youth mentoring) as intergenerational support. For example, a young person belonging to a group of friends or the family circle who is purposefully taken under the wing of an adult, or a more experienced employee who provides a younger colleague with advice. Informal mentoring takes place spontaneously, organically and is unplanned. Another term used to describe informal mentoring is “natural mentoring”. (see Dubois and Silverthorn, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2013). A third form, non-formal mentoring, involves a third party that matches the mentor to the mentee. In

contrast with informal mentoring, matches are arranged within the framework of a program (Rhodes and Boyden, 2016). In what follows, only non-formal mentoring forms are taken into consideration, thereby resulting in the exclusion of the formal and informal mentoring forms from the focus of the present work.

Mentoring versus befriending

A third dimension often observed in the classification of mentoring projects is the distinction between befriending and mentoring. Although both ideas are often used interchangeably, according to Balaam (2015) the most important point of distinction is that befriending is more focused on social relationships, while mentoring is more focused on and oriented towards the achievement of predetermined objectives. Cullen (2006) argues that mentoring is often defined as the support of individuals in the areas of training and employment, while befriending is more concerned with offering emotional support and companionship.

The Befriending Network Scotland (BNS, 2009) introduced the befriending/mentoring spectrum. In this scheme, the distinction between mentoring and befriending is presented as a spectrum on which mentoring weighs more heavily towards objectives, while befriending focuses more on the relationship. Several authors reference this spectrum (Cullen, 2006; Dolan and Brady, 2012) as this understanding makes it clear that while there are significant differences between the two, there is no simple black and white story to be had. At the extreme end of the befriending side it is assumed that: “the role of the volunteer is to provide informal, social support. The primary objective of the relationship is to form a trusting relationship over time usually in order to reduce isolation and to provide a relationship where none currently exists. Other outcomes may occur e.g. a growth in confidence, but these are never set as objectives for the relationship” (Befriending Network Scotland, in Cullen, 2006:6). On the other end of the spectrum “mentoring” is described as follows: “the role of the volunteer is to work with a client solely on agreed objectives which are clearly stated at the start. Each meeting focusses primarily on achieving the objectives and the social relationship, if achieved, is incidental” (Befriending Network Scotland, in Cullen, 2006:6). There remain four intermediate points to be found between these two extremes, each of which emphasise relationships or objectives to a greater or lesser degree.

In this study, we decided to use the term mentoring rather than befriending as the emphasis on objectives is a given at the start of any such program. However, other components of the definition were left open during our literature search and practitioners’ consultations, and the focus on objectives in mentoring to work came out as a result, as will be discussed below.

Methodology

The first step in our concept analysis was an extensive review of literature in the field. We started with a full-text search of academic databases for articles and other scientific writing (academic books) on the exact topic, i.e. mentoring to work, and for migrants. However, it soon became apparent that, apart from a few (3) notable exceptions (including Månsson and Delander, 2017; Neuwirth and Wahl, 2017; and Reeves, 2015), there is little scientific literature that addresses this specific topic, i.e., mentoring to work for migrants. We gradually extended our search to include broader literature on mentoring. From this, we derived key components that capture the essence of mentoring to work. The literature review was extensive and continued until we did not find any new essential elements to consider for our definition. In total 29 papers were used to derive the key elements of mentoring. Two of the three authors were involved at this stage of the research in order to ensure that no important information was overlooked.

Even though highly valuable, academic knowledge is only one type of knowledge (Bangdiwala, 2012; van der Zwet, 2018). We chose to bring triangulation into this research by adding a second, different source of knowledge, i.e. professional or practice-based knowledge. The building blocks

for a definition, as identified based on the literature, were discussed with practitioners in the field. The consultation with practitioners was inspired by the Delphi method and organised through three focus group discussions until we arrived at a validated conceptualisation. The participants included representatives of all six mentoring to work projects in Flanders and the Swedish, German and Finnish partners of the Memore project. The transnational partners were a mixture of practitioners and program developers, some with a considerable amount of experience, some just starting their program. Discussions with transnational partners and local practitioners took place between September 2017 and February 2018.

The focus groups began with a presentation of key attributes derived from the literature. Participants were then asked to reflect on each key attribute and present their concerns (including the need for/possibility of other attributes). Based on their feedback, the building blocks were further refined and presented in another round of expert-practitioner consultation. This process allowed us to evolve a theory-driven conceptualisation into a conceptualisation that is both theoretically sound as well as grounded in social reality. The definition was refined three times before we arrived at a validated conceptualisation. We deliberately chose to combine both sources of knowledge to build a definition of mentoring, both because we consider professional expertise as a different but equally valid source of knowledge to complement our findings, and because combining theoretical and professional knowledge ensures that results can be used in practice as well, avoiding the all too frequent pitfall of creating a gap between academic theory building and practice (Hatlevik, 2012; Steens et al., 2017).

After the final stage, the end result was seven key attributes, which we refer to as building blocks. These were then put together to constitute a definition of mentoring to work.

Results: seven building blocks

In the following section we present the seven building blocks. We first discuss what we found in literature and then the remarks/additions added by the practitioners.

Differences between mentor and mentee experiences

There is a clear gap in mentor (more) and mentee (less) knowledge and experience (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007; Kram, 1985), and this gap is acknowledged by both actors. This applies to virtually all forms of mentoring, including mentoring to work. The asymmetrical relationship is further accentuated by the fact that the mentor possesses a certain capital related to the labour market in the form of localised expertise, experience and networks, etc. As a mentor providing support, he or she then makes this capital available to the mentee. Bozeman and Feeney (2007, p.724) argue: "At its most elemental, mentoring is about the transmission of knowledge". The asymmetry of knowledge and experience concerns a set objective; it is therefore possible that the mentee has significantly more knowledge and experience in another field, in comparison with the mentor. Therefore the mentor can also learn from the mentee (see below), but as far as the set objective is concerned, the mentor is the person with expertise (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007; van der Tier and Potting, 2015). In the context of migrant mentoring to work this often concerns a difference in country-specific knowledge or experience. This means that the mentor and mentee are able to be on equal footing vis-a-vis their personal experience in their original contexts; the mentor's surplus knowledge and experience may be limited to country-specific knowledge and/or experience in a specific sector. This dimension was distilled from literature and was agreed upon by all practitioners.

The development and growth of a mentor and mentee

Eby et al. (2008) describe mentoring as a “learning relationship”, given that in nearly every case of a mentoring relationship the acquisition of knowledge (including skills and competences) is involved. Along the same lines, based on their analysis of mentoring literature, Haggard et al. (2011) report that developmental benefits are a fixed property of mentoring. This conclusion can also be found in Kram’s influential work on mentoring (1985) and is reaffirmed in Kram’s later work (Yip and Kram, 2017). Simply put, a mentoring relationship facilitates the growth of the mentee. As with the first building block (experiential difference), this is not considered to be mentoring-specific in this context but is seen as a general characteristic of mentoring. The specific growth for each mentee may vary. The mentoring relationship is hypothesized as bringing the mentee closer to his or her goal - in this instance integration into the labour market (cf. *infra*). However, the development experienced can also be of a broader nature and yield advantages in other areas of life (increased self-confidence, a wider network, clearer perception of personal strengths and weaknesses, etc.). Both transnational as well as local practitioners confirmed the importance of developmental benefits as a building block in the definition of mentoring. Some practitioners, however, stressed the hypothetical nature: it is a goal set, but that does not automatically imply that this goal will be reached. While the mentee’s growth and development are the key priority, the mentor can also learn from the mentoring relationship itself (Eby et al., 2008; Haggard et al., 2011). This aspect will be addressed later in this paper.

Migrant mentoring to work is goal-oriented

A mentoring relationship has an objective that is also expounded on and is clear to both parties (Befriending Network Scotland, 2009; Van Robaeys and Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). The primary role of the supportive relationship is utilitarian: the priority is the achievement of a predetermined objective (van der Tier and Potting, 2015). In this situation it is ‘mentoring’ rather than ‘befriending’ that is referred to. The universal objective of migrant mentoring to work is the mentee’s labour market integration. The mentor guides the mentee on his or her way to employment and supports the mentee in bridging the gap onto the labour market (Petrovic, 2015; Van Dooren and De Cuyper, 2015).

Practitioners, both transnational and local, stressed that mentoring to work can have layered objectives. In some cases guidance will immediately be oriented towards achieving the final objective, i.e., finding a high-quality job. In other cases intermediate goals will be set, such as the development of social and cognitive skills (linked to a specific job or sector), interview and application skills, expansion of the socio-professional network, boosting self-confidence, etc. Therefore, in the mentoring relationship, an attempt can either be made to take the ‘full step’ towards employment, or one or more necessary intermediate steps may be taken.

A mutual relationship as an active ingredient in mentoring

For mentoring, and therefore also for migrant mentoring to work, the relationship between a mentor and mentee is not a goal itself but a pre-condition necessary in order to work towards other goals (Van Robaeys and Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Although the relationship in mentoring to work is contingent on the set objective, it is, however, a relationship of great significance. Accordingly, the relationship can be considered the active ingredient of mentoring.

The practitioners agreed upon this dimension in general, however there was no consensus over the extent to which an understanding between a mentor and mentee is required. We tried to address this concern by taking another look at the literature. Cullen (2006) says: “the success of both interventions (mentoring and befriending) relies on the creation of a strong and supportive relationship between two people”. Others (reference to be added after review process) concluded that that a workable relationship is good enough in the context of mentoring to work. Following this

with another discussion with practitioners, we concluded: whatever the nature of the relationship may be, it must facilitate a movement towards achieving the set objective.

Inherent to the concept of a relationship is the importance of regular interaction over a specific period of time. Mentoring may vary in duration and intensity; however, a fixed characteristic is that mentorship is not a one-off activity. On the contrary, it is a relationship maintained by consistent and repeated points of interaction (Haggard et al., 2011). The practitioners agreed upon this point.

Voluntary commitment on both sides

A fifth essential building block in the conceptual definition of migrant mentoring to work is that this form of mentoring concerns voluntary commitment. Voluntary participation applies equally to both sides: the mentor is a volunteer, and the mentee also participates voluntarily in the mentoring project (Uyterlinde et al., 2009). Mentoring requires commitment and effort on both sides. The mentee is motivated to reach his or her goal, and the mentor makes the choice to guide the mentee in this process and to meet his or her needs (McGowan et al., 2009). The voluntary nature implies that the mentor is not a professional mentor or someone who practises mentoring in a professional capacity (van der Tier and Potting, 2015). While the mentor is often a professional in his or her field, s/he is not a specialist in the support and guidance of migrant job-seekers. The idea of free will was strongly advocated by the consulted professionals as well.

The mentoring relationship is reciprocal

Both in literature (Eby et al., 2008; Haggard et al., 2011; Hall and Maltby, 2013) and practice there is an emphasis on mentoring being a reciprocal relationship. On this point, however, there is mention of asymmetry, i.e. the previously discussed difference in the mentor and mentee's experience, in which the mentor transfers knowledge to the mentee, but where both take active part in the relationship. The communication is also two-way.

Furthermore, the mentoring relationship can also be beneficial for the mentor. The specific advantage depends on the exclusive mentor-mentee match, therefore making it difficult to express in a general sense; however, a regularly recurring component is the (further) development of intercultural skills. Moreover, as has been addressed above, the mentee may have more experience than the mentor in a host of different categories, which can also lead to mutual exchange. Hall and Maltby (2013, p.70) summarise this as follows: "while the focus of research has most often been on the qualities and tasks of the mentor, more recent research emphasizes that both the mentor and the mentee bring important elements to the mentoring relationship. The mentee brings certain qualities, motivations and attitudes to the interactions with the mentor. In other words, mentorship is a two-way street (Padilla, 2005)." According to their analysis of the Time Together mentoring programme on refugee integration, Esterhuizen and Murphy (2007) also conclude that mentoring is a two-way process that benefits both mentor and mentee. The authors confirm that mutual learning took place and that it was not only mentees, but also mentors that clearly benefited from the mentoring relationship.

Aside from the mentee's possible knowledge or experience, the asymmetry only concerns content and not the nature of the relationship, at least not for this form of mentoring. In this scheme, a mentor and mentee are on equal footing. The acknowledgement and safeguarding of reciprocity in the mentoring relationship is essential to avoid a lapse into a paternalistic version of mentoring. It is also important that the mentor supports the mentee, but does not take over responsibilities from the mentee, in a manner that turns the relationship into one of dependence (Van Robaeyns and Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). The aspect of equality was not included in our original building blocks but was added after the first round of practitioner consultation, as this was strongly emphasized by the professionals.

A third actor facilitates and supervises mentoring relationships

Migrant mentoring to work entails an artificially created/facilitated relationship, where the mentor and mentee are matched by a third, and most often professional, organisation. This organisation recruits the mentor, monitors the mentoring relationship and offers necessary support (McGowan et al., 2009; van der Tier and Potting, 2015). The supporting organisation(s) therefore not only bring(s) people together, but also provide(s) additional supervision, which includes support actions. In addition to monitoring the progress of contact between mentee and mentor, the organisation is also able to provide advice to and organise training for mentors or mentees, and set up events in which mentees and mentors get to know their 'peers' and exchange experiences, etc. Thus, migrant mentoring to work can be considered as a three-party relationship.

Feedback from practitioners on this point was, amongst other things, that on the one hand this third party is highly important, but on the other hand that it is not the third party which creates the relationship. One can only facilitate the relationship between mentor and mentee, but what happens next (whether or not it works) is, to a large extent, out of the hands of the third party organisation

Is a one-on-one relationship an essential component?

There are myriad sources among published academic works that support the idea that a characteristic of mentoring is its association with one-on-one relationships: a volunteer is matched (one-on-one) with someone who has requested support (McGowan et al., 2009; van der Tier and Potting, 2015). While this was included in the original building blocks, it has not been retained as a crucial factor in the definition as demonstrations from the field indicate that occasionally a choice could be made to match one mentee to a pair of mentors who possess complementary experience. Some mentees also showed a preference for working in pairs and in conditions where both mentees could make joint appointments with the mentor for various reasons (e.g. because this was perceived as more reassuring for mentees). In addition, advantages of group mentoring in an intercultural context have also been reported in literature (Awujo, 2016), and Montgomery (2017) develops (and advocates) the idea of mentoring networks, further weakening the case for one-to-one relationships as a key component. Even though it may well be the most common form of migrant mentoring to work, it is not a prerequisite.

Definition of migrant mentoring to work

Coalescing these seven building blocks makes it possible to arrive at a definition of mentoring to work for migrants:

A person with more localised experience (mentor) provides guidance to a person with less experience (mentee), the objective of which is to support the mentee in making sustainable progress in his or her journey into the labour market. Both mentor and mentee voluntarily commit to this and establish contact on a regular basis. The relationship is initiated, facilitated and supported by a third actor (organisation). While asymmetrical, the mentoring relationship is of a reciprocal nature.

Therefore, a mentoring programme is a programme set up by an organisation, the objective of which is to match mentors with mentees and to monitor and support this relationship.

Conclusion

The development of migrant mentoring to work is at a crossroads. On the one hand, given the (un)employment gap between locals and migrants in many receiving countries, alternative active

labour market policies that can be used as successful tools for the labour market integration of migrants are much needed. In addition, the ability of migrant mentoring to work to operate simultaneously across several different dimensions (social, cultural, economic, etc.) and its focus on society at large add to its potential. On the other hand, the proliferation of migrant mentoring to work projects across several European countries, with a large variety in terms of methods and approach, raises concerns that mentoring may become a catch-all term in this context, losing its specificity, and possibly part of its strength. Currently, while migrant mentoring to work exists in the field, academic knowledge is still significantly lacking. In this study, we aimed to contribute to this gap in the scientific literature on mentoring by offering conceptual clarity on migrant mentoring to work. Through a dialectic approach, combining academic knowledge in other fields of mentoring with practice-based knowledge from experienced practitioners in the field of migrant mentoring to work, we identified key attributes of migrant mentoring to work that, taken together, constitute a clear and concise definition of mentoring to work. The method was carefully chosen to ensure that the resulting conceptualisation is not only grounded in academic knowledge but also reflects the lived reality.

The result is a definition of mentoring to work which is open-yet-clear: it is sufficiently precise to offer guidance for policy and practice, but at the same time it leaves enough room to be adapted to other contexts, possibly even beyond the intercultural context in which it was developed here. We invite other scholars to build on this conceptualization and put it to the test in a variety of geographic and demographic contexts as our sample of transnational practitioners was quite limited in size and geographic coverage. Overall, more research on migrant mentoring to work is needed to advance the field itself. Areas of concern include how to ensure quality mentoring, how volunteer mentors relate to professional counsellors within the public employment services (governance of mentoring), critical success factors in mentoring to work programs, understanding what works and for whom, and if mentoring to work is effective at all. Many questions remain unanswered and it is necessary – for policy makers and practitioners alike – that research addresses them. While the newness of the field itself is a possible hurdle, the fact that most organisations are set up for short durations with limited funding makes research on the long-term effects of mentoring to work difficult. We hope that the conceptualisation of migrant mentoring to work presented here can be a strong starting point for empirical research on this topic.

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