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SUMMARY

Chapter 1: General introduction

Mentoring relationships are vital for the successful preparation and induction of novice teachers. Making such mentoring relationships work requires a good match between the mentor and the novice teacher. The responsibility for this tends to rest with the mentor teacher. Mentor teachers therefore need to be capable of adaptively responding to the momentary and individual learning needs of their mentee teachers, as these arise in the process of learning to teach. This requires mentor knowledge of novice teacher learning and of a broad repertoire of mentoring activities. In addition, mentors need to be capable of connecting this knowledge in such a way that they can 'read' a mentoring situation and respond adaptively. Such knowledge is a critical, but still underdeveloped component in the knowledge base of mentoring. Drawing on practitioner knowledge can help to inform and develop the knowledge base of professional mentoring. The aim of this thesis is therefore to contribute to the professional knowledge base of teacher mentoring by exploring mentor teachers' own, practical knowledge of adaptive mentoring. The central question is: *What is the content of mentor teachers' practical knowledge of adaptive response to their mentee teachers' learning?* For practitioner knowledge to become professional knowledge, it must be represented in such a way that it can be shared with practitioners, and subsequently verified and improved. This study aims to do so through 1) uncovering mentor teachers' practical knowledge of their mentee teachers' learning and of ways to adaptively respond to this learning, 2) providing descriptive accounts of its content, and 3) elucidating specific characteristics of this knowledge through the use of theoretical perspectives.

Mentor teachers' practical knowledge is understood in this thesis as the whole of knowledge and insights that underlie mentor teachers' actions in practice. The study of mentor teachers' practical knowledge in this thesis focuses on four components of practical knowledge assumed relevant for mentor teachers' capacity for adaptive mentoring. According to the literature, these are: 1) a disposition of collaboration and inquiry, 2) knowledge of a repertoire of mentoring activities, 3) knowledge of novice teachers' learning, and 4) heuristics that connect knowledge of mentoring activities and of mentee teachers' learning

as actionable knowledge. These four components therefore guide the overall design of the study.

Each of the five studies in the thesis focuses on one of the four components. Study 1 focuses on mentor teachers' *disposition of collaboration and inquiry*, through a large-scale survey with questionnaire. The study explores the relation between mentor teachers' mentoring conceptions and their motives for mentoring, as expressions of their underlying disposition towards collaboration and inquiry. Study 2 focuses on mentor teachers' *practical knowledge of mentoring activities* through task-based interviews, and explores individual differences between mentors in their practical knowledge of adaptive mentoring. The final three studies use repertory-grid interviews to explore shared elements in mentor teachers' practical knowledge. Study 3 focuses on *practical knowledge of mentee teachers' learning* and study 4 focuses on *practical knowledge of mentoring activities*. Study 5 combines the analyses of study 3 and 4 to focus on mentor teachers' shared *heuristics for adaptive response* to their mentee teachers' learning. The studies in this thesis focus on the viewpoint of mentor teachers, are mostly small-scale, exploratory and descriptive, and use a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures. The terms mentor (teacher) and novice/mentee (teacher) are used to refer to the participants in mentoring relationships. Mentors in this study were schoolteachers in secondary education. They reported on mentees who at the time of their mentoring relationship were in some form entering the profession and hence novice teachers.

Chapter 2: Why mentor? Linking mentor teachers' mentoring motivations to their mentoring conceptions.

The study described in this chapter focused on mentor teachers' *disposition of collaboration and inquiry*. Current mentoring models for teacher preparation and induction emphasize the need to engage novice teachers' learning through collaborative professional learning. Mentors are therefore expected to engage in joint knowledge construction with novices; to be 'co-thinkers' who enact a developmental view of mentoring, as well as 'co-learners' who are willing to engage in mutual learning with their novices. Being a co-thinker and a co-learner are assumed to be associated in mentor thinking. The aim of this questionnaire study was therefore to explore the relationship between mentors' mentoring

conceptions and their mentoring motives. The study addressed two research questions: 1) *To what extent do mentor teachers report generative outcome motives, personal learning motives, and instrumental and developmental mentoring conceptions?* 2) *What is the relationship between mentor teachers' mentoring motives and their mentoring conceptions?* From a review of the literature, the study developed a questionnaire measuring mentor teachers' agreement with an instrumental mentoring conception (getting mentees to act as a teacher), a developmental mentoring conception (getting mentees to develop their views on learning and teaching), a generative outcome motive (being a mentor to pass on knowledge and experience), and a personal learning motive (being a mentor to learn from mentoring). Respondents were 726 mentors associated with 13 Dutch teacher education institutes, both vocational (8 institutes) and university level (5 institutes).

Four statistically significant results were found. Mentors reported stronger agreement with a generative outcome motive than with a personal learning motive, but with a small effect size. Mentors also reported stronger agreement with a developmental conception than with an instrumental conception, with a large effect size. The correlation between a personal learning motive and a developmental mentoring conception was stronger than the correlation between a personal learning motive and an instrumental mentoring conception. The same was found for a generative outcome motive, though less pronounced.

The strong link between holding a personal learning motive and a developmental mentoring conception supports the idea that being a 'co-thinker' and being a 'co-learner' with novice teachers is associated in mentor thinking. The preference of Dutch mentor teachers for a developmental over an instrumental mentoring conception is in contrast to previous studies in Anglo-Saxon countries. This may be due to the influence of models of realistic teacher education in the Netherlands. The on average equal agreement of Dutch mentor teachers with personal learning and generative outcome motives is in contrast to previous studies. These reported generative outcome motives as dominant. This may be explained by the finding that Dutch mentors report a preference for a developmental conception and the link between holding this conception and a personal learning motive.

The results of this questionnaire study informed the selection of the participants for the interview studies described in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. The goal was to maximize the variation in the mentoring conceptions of the participants, to enhance the chances of finding a variety of mentoring activities, constructs and heuristics in the relatively small samples of the interview studies. Participants were selected from the 245 mentor teachers in this study who indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up study. Mentors were divided according to the mean scores for all respondents on the two mentoring conception scales, resulting in four groups: two groups of mentors scoring either above average or below average on both mentoring conception scales, and two groups of mentors scoring above average on one scale, and below average on the other scale. Equal numbers of mentors were selected at random from all four groups and invited to participate in the follow-up studies.

Chapter 3: Adapting mentoring to individual differences in novice teacher learning; the mentor's viewpoint.

The study described in this chapter focused on mentor teachers' *practical knowledge of mentoring activities*. The aim of this study was to explore 1) mentoring activities through which mentors intend to adapt to the individual novice teacher, and 2) characteristics of adaptive mentors, who mention many adaptive mentoring activities. Participants were 18 mentors holding different mentoring conceptions, from 13 different programs for Initial Teacher Education in the Netherlands. The study used on-site task-based interviews with mentors, directly following a post-lesson conversation with one of the mentor's 'own' mentee teachers. Through template analysis of the interviews, 29 mentoring activities were coded that were oriented toward four broad mentoring goals: A) providing emotional and psycho-social support B) supporting construction of personal practical knowledge of teaching, C) creating a favourable context for mentee teacher learning, and D) changing mentee teacher behaviour.

Mentors mentioned four adaptive mentoring activities: 1) aligning mutual expectations about the mentoring process, 2) attuning to the novice's emotional state, 3) adapting the mentoring conversation to match the reflective capacity of the novice teacher, and 4) building tasks from simple to complex relative to the novices' competence-level. Correlation analysis showed distinctive features of the practical knowledge of more adaptive mentors. They mentioned

relatively more activities oriented at support for mentee construction of personal practical knowledge, and less activities oriented at creating a favourable context for novice teacher learning. More adaptive mentors were either more ‘cognitively adaptive’ or more ‘emotionally adaptive’. The more cognitively adaptive mentors described more adapting to novice teachers' reflective capacity, indicating novice growth and linking mentoring conversations to ensure a sense of continuity. The more emotionally adaptive mentors mentioned more attuning to emotional states of the mentee, and keeping mentoring bounded to specific moments.

The four adaptive mentoring activities found in this study reflect current notions of what it means to be adaptive: matching mutual expectations, shifting style and helping novices to reframe teaching. The pattern of activities mentioned by the adaptive mentors may stimulate novice teachers to adopt a meaning-oriented learning orientation and to develop an informed, personal theory of practice. The activities of the more cognitively adaptive mentors may help to enhance novice teachers' sense of continuity and growth in learning to teach. The activities of the more emotionally adaptive mentors may help to make mentoring interactions safer for novices, while simultaneously protecting mentors from being over-taxed as they provide emotional support. The study shows that emotionally adaptive mentors combine a focus on emotional aspects of learning with attention for encouraging reflective thought and progressively developing novice teacher competence. Previous studies have found mentors to focus on either emotional support or on reflection and inquiry.

The studies described in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 were based on repertory-grid interviews with 11 mentor teachers. This technique allowed mentors to express their narrative ways of knowing mentoring practice, while also eliciting their connected thinking about their mentees' learning and their own response to this learning. Mentors recalled the names of six mentee teachers they had mentored. Then they were given three of these names on cards. They were asked to identify how two mentees had been similar to each other and dissimilar to the third mentee, to name the terms that best described the difference, and to provide examples. Finally, they were asked to describe how they had responded to these similarities and differences, and provide examples. These repertory grid interviews provided three kinds of descriptions: 1) descriptions of characteristics of their mentee teachers' learning, 2) of mentoring activities, and 3) of the connections between these two.

Chapter 4: Mentor teachers' views of their mentee teachers' learning

The study described in this chapter focused on mentors' *shared practical knowledge of mentee teachers' learning*. High diagnostic ability is a distinctive feature of successful mentoring. This requires knowledge of mentee teachers as adult learners. The central question in this study was therefore: *What attributes of novice teachers' learning do mentor teachers focus on most in describing similarities and differences between their mentee teachers?* This study analysed mentor teachers' descriptions in the repertory grid interviews of the characteristics of mentee teachers' learning. Interviews were analysed using content analysis. Interviews were also analysed with the second-order conceptual lens of the two core dimensions that people tend to use in social judgement of others: social desirability (warmth) and social utility (competence).

Mentors expressed 33 constructs: bi-polar oppositions that discriminate between two opposing attributes of mentee teachers' learning, for instance; being self-confident versus insecure, or being mature versus immature. The constructs were related to four domains of functioning of mentee teachers; A) mentee teaching, B) mentee development and learning to teach, C) personal attributes of the mentee, and D) the mentoring and school context of the mentee. Approximately two-thirds of the constructs reflected social judgement, mostly judgements of social utility. The four constructs mentioned most often referred to mentee 1) engaging in personal contact or remaining more distant with pupils, 2) being serious and driven or more relaxed and playful in teaching, 3) identifying with the responsibilities of a being a teacher or not, and 4) being self-confident or being doubting and insecure. These four dominant constructs reflected both dimensions of social judgement and the two domains of a) mentee teaching and b) learning to teach. Mentor teachers often combined the dominant constructs across the two domains, but not across the two dimensions of social judgement. This suggests mentors' views of these differences in their mentee teachers' learning represent two separate dimensions of social judgement. Themes in judgements of social desirability were: 1) care for pupils is a disposition, and 2) properly identifying as a teacher requires a balance of care and professional distance. Themes in judgements of social utility were: 1) strong novices balance ambition and playfulness, in which flexible teaching and reflection are both hampered by perfectionism, 2) planning for teaching is a disposition, and 3)

strong novices have inner strength, in which both assertive presence and independent problem-solving come from self-confidence.

The study concluded that for dominant constructs, mentor teachers used a dispositional explanatory style (attributing to fixed traits or dispositions) much more frequently than historicism (attributing to biography and historical circumstances) or control (attributing to willpower and effort). For particular attributes, such as the degree to which mentee teachers plan for teaching, mentor teachers almost exclusively used dispositional explanations. Mentors with a tendency towards dispositionism over historicism could be less attentive to historical and formative origins of mentee teachers' functioning, and potentially put less effort in helping mentees to develop more effective forms of functioning. Previous studies have conceptualized mentor teachers' views of their mentees as reflecting mostly personal attributes and professional practices of the mentee. This study suggests mentor teachers' view of their mentees also incorporates a third domain regarding novice teacher learning to teach. This domain 'bridges' the domain of personal attributes and professional practices: a professional-personal domain of dealing with the self in becoming a teacher. The study presents a conceptual model that encompasses these three domains of mentor teachers' knowledge about their mentee teachers' learning.

Chapter 5: 'We need to talk': confronting as an adaptive response in mentoring

The study described in this chapter focused on mentors' *shared practical knowledge of mentoring activities* for adaptively responding to their mentee teachers' learning. This study analysed mentor teachers' descriptions in the repertory grid interviews of mentoring activities. The study explored what mentoring activities mentors mention most in talking about their response to similarities and differences between their mentee teachers, as an indication of shared knowledge. The central research question is: *What are dominant mentoring activities in mentor teachers' descriptions of their response to similarities and differences between their mentee teachers?* Interviews were analysed using content analysis; the four broad mentoring goals identified in the study described in Chapter 3 served as a guideline for coding mentoring activities. Mentors expressed 34 adaptive mentoring activities, oriented toward four broad mentoring goals: A) providing emotional and psycho-social support, B)

supporting construction of personal practical knowledge of teaching, C) creating a favourable context for novice teacher learning, and D) changing novice teacher behaviour. The single most dominant mentoring activity in mentor teachers' descriptions was confronting. In confronting, the mentor makes the beginner aware of discrepancies between what the beginner does and/or achieves on the one hand, and professional norms of conduct and/or what the beginner is supposed to achieve on the other hand. This confrontation is aimed at changing the behaviour of the novice teacher and at developing the novice teachers' intention to change behaviour. The mentor does this by giving a 'reality check' (bringing the beginner's perception in line with reality), by clarifying expectations and professional standards, and by showing the novice the necessity for change. Mentors most often combined confronting with guiding application, which is oriented at construction of knowledge about teaching. Guiding application refers to the mentor's activity of trying to build skill or knowledge in a gradual, incremental or stepwise manner by providing direct guidance in mentoring conversations or by providing opportunities to practice skills.

Mentors described confronting as *telling* or *developing* the problem. Telling or developing the problem tended to differ according to the nature of the problem that mentors tried to address through confronting the mentee. Telling the problem was mentioned for more observable issues of mentee teaching (i.e. dressing appropriately or planning for teaching). Developing the problem was mentioned for less observable issues of mentee learning to teach (i.e. openness to experience or doubting). For confronting with guiding application, mentors described *crafting the response* to ensure their actions remained responsive to the mentee teacher, through 1) *taking the mentee perspective*, 2) *timing confrontation*, 3) *monitoring mentee reactions*, and 4) *self-monitoring by the mentor*. Mentors mentioned these four aspects of crafting the response mostly for when they described confronting as *developing* the problem. The study concludes that mentors' description of confronting is highly similar to the concept of goal setting in goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002). This suggests that mentor teachers construct their practical knowledge of adaptive response in large part around goal setting with mentees. Mentor preparation should therefore include goal setting through confronting as a mentoring role, skill and practice. This includes how mentors can help mentee teachers to accept goals, especially when addressing less observable and complex issues of mentee learning to teach.

Chapter 6: Mentor teachers' heuristics for adaptive response to their mentee teachers' learning

The study described in this chapter focused on mentor teachers' *shared heuristics for adaptive response*. The aim of this study was to explore how mentors shape their adaptive response by connecting their knowledge of mentee teachers' learning to their knowledge of mentoring activities. As a result of their day-to-day micro-adaptive responses (Corno, 2008) in the course of mentoring different mentee teachers, mentors develop actionable heuristics for specific mentoring situations. These heuristics connect specific characteristics of novice teacher learning to the mentoring activities that mentors see as an appropriate response. In the analysis of the repertory-grid interviews, this study combined the two coding schemes described in Chapters 4 and 5 to explore the associations that mentor teachers describe between (1) attributes of their mentee teachers' learning and (2) mentoring activities to respond to these attributes. These associations were considered indicative of mentor teachers' actionable heuristics. The focus was on associations that were shared across the interviews, as an indication of shared knowledge of mentor teachers.

The shared associations involved ten attributes related to four domains of mentee functioning: 1) interactions with pupils and classroom management, 2) knowledge, beliefs and approaches towards learning, instruction and content, 3) dealing with emotions in the process of learning, and 4) the role of the mentee teacher in guided problem solving. Mentors mentioned a broader set of mentoring goals for the latter two domains. In their descriptions, mentors tended to differentiate their response according to their interpretation of the mentoring situation at hand. For instance, for mentee teachers they viewed as having an unsure presence in class, their response differed according to whether they saw this as an issue of mentee insecurity and self-doubt, or as an issue of a lack of skills for classroom management. In total mentors expressed shared heuristics for seventeen distinct mentoring situations. These were represented in the form of condensed 'if...then' statements that connect attributes of mentee learning to mentoring activities. The study concludes that the heuristics connect actions and intentions to situational interpretations. The organization of the heuristics around the seventeen distinct mentoring situations reflects how mentor teachers' practical knowledge is organized according to the problem this knowledge addresses. In several heuristics, mentors distinguished between a more task-oriented and a

more support-oriented response, according to whether the situation related to mentee competence or mentee dealing with the self. Previous research shows novices also make this distinction in their views of mentor support, and similar heuristics have been proposed in a model for adaptive mentoring.

Chapter 7: General conclusions and discussion

In this chapter the main findings are summarized, strengths and limitations of the research are indicated, and suggestions are provided for how the study can contribute to the knowledge base of mentoring. The discussion integrates the findings of the separate studies according to three themes: 1) representation, 2) verification, and 3) improvement of mentor teachers' practical knowledge.

(1) Representation of practical knowledge

In this thesis, the content of mentor teachers' practical is represented at different levels of reduction, through 1) scales of mentoring conceptions, 2) structured lists of mentoring activities and attributes of mentee teacher learning, 3) mentors' narration of the lived experience of mentoring, 4) themes in mentor teachers' descriptions, and 5) heuristics for seventeen mentoring situations as 'if...then' statements. The heuristics represent mentor teachers' shared actionable knowledge of adaptive response, incorporating both the mentoring situation and the response to this situation within each heuristic. Mentoring activities identified in study 2 and 4 mostly operate at different grain sizes, as a result of different interview instruments. The two studies complement each other by identifying activities at the level of shaping the overall mentoring process (i.e. aligning mutual expectations at the start) as well as at the level of addressing specific issues of mentee learning (i.e. stopping specific mentee behaviours).

(2) Verification of practical knowledge

Five strands of theory building can be linked to the findings of this thesis for theoretical verification of results, which also suggest directions for future research. First, the three notions of adaptive mentoring identified in the task-based interviews (i.e. matching mutual expectations, shifting style and helping to reframe teaching) may constitute different levels of change for the mentor in becoming more adaptive. Second, future research could use the two-by-two framework of the two domains (mentee teaching and mentee learning to teach)

and the two dimensions of social judgement, to study how mentor teachers' views of their mentees changes across time or differs across contexts of mentoring. Third, exploratory analyses using the framework of scaffolding developed by Van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen (2010) suggest that applying this framework to mentoring could provide a theoretical ground for describing adaptive mentoring of novice teachers. Fourth, our findings suggest future studies should explore mentor self-regulation as part of adaptive mentoring. Finally, findings in this study show that mentors notice how mentee teachers' regulate their learning both cognitively and emotionally. Such regulation is part of novice teachers' orientations to learning to teach (Oosterheert, 2001). Future research could explore how mentors could notice learning orientations of novice teachers and help them change as a learner.

(3) Improvement of practical knowledge

Results of the thesis can inform the professional preparation of mentor teachers in four ways. First, the component model can inform the establishment of goals for mentor preparation. Second, findings can inform the design of activities that activate mentor teachers' adaptive meta-cognition. Third, findings may provide mentors with mirrors of practitioner knowledge. Finally, the repertory-grid technique can help mentors to explicate their practical knowledge and re-examine it.