

IMPORTANCE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF PARTNERSHIP: DOCTORAL CANDIDATE - MENTOR(S) - UNIVERSITY

DAMIJAN MUMEL

University of Maribor, Faculty of Economics and Business, Maribor, Slovenia.

E-mail: damijan.mumel@um.si

Abstract The paper deals with the triangle of participants in the Doctoral Study process: Institution-mentor-Doctoral student. Shown are: Basic dimensions of the student – mentor relationship, Motivation and responsibility in the student – mentor relationship, Expectations, perceptions and satisfaction in the student-mentor relationship, Factors which influence expectations in the student-mentor relationship, Keys to Successful Mentoring Relationships on personal and interpersonal levels, Possible solutions for Successful Mentoring on the Faculty and university level, and the Benefits of those activities.

Keywords:
doctoral
student,
doctoral
mentor,
university,
relationship,
partnership.



University of Maribor Press

DOI <https://doi.org/10.18690/978-961-286-409-5.3>
ISBN 978-961-286-409-5

1 Introduction

Relations are one of the most important factors which define an interpersonal partnership, equal in personal and in business environments. In this contribution we focus on formalised knowledge acquisition in the form of university study. We will try to understand the relationships between the three key participants in the study process: Students, mentors and an Institution, in this case a Faculty or University.

This paper focuses primarily on the relationship between the three actors, specifically in the field of the Mentoring Process. Mentoring occurs, and is equally important at all three levels (Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Doctoral) of study. In the spirit of Doctoral reform in Albania and Montenegro, we will deal with relations within the framework of mentoring in Doctoral studies.

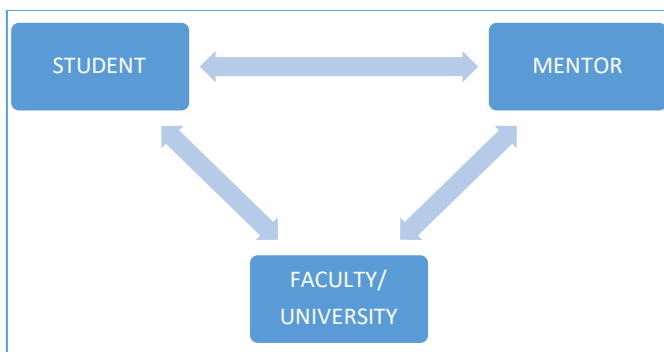


Figure 1: Relations between student, mentor and Institution

Source: own

2 Student - mentor relationship

2.1 Two basic dimensions of the student - mentor relationship

The relationship between the mentor and the Doctoral student is one of the fundamental factors that shapes the Doctoral study process, especially the process of preparing the Doctoral Dissertation. That is why it is important how we understand it and how we establish it.

There is great variability in the circumstances in which Doctoral studies are carried out at different universities and Faculties. This is influenced by a variety of factors, from objective to subjective.

Notwithstanding the complexity mentioned above, the relationship between mentor and student can be defined according to two basic dimensions:

- Quality (formal-informal) relationship
- Quantity of relations (e.g. annually, ..., everyday)

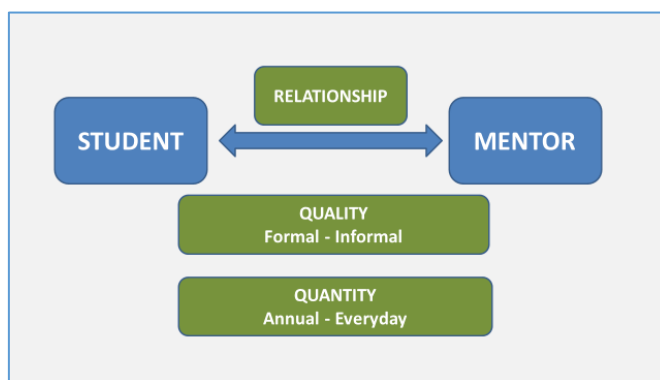


Figure 2: Two basic dimensions of the student – mentor relationship

Source: own

2.2 Motivation and responsibility in the student – mentor relationship

In the mentoring relationship, there are two fundamental questions / dilemmas between student and mentor that relate to motivation and responsibility:

- Motivation. The questions that arise in this dimension are, e.g.:
 - Who is motivated to participate - student, mentor, or both?
 - How strongly is each of them motivated?
 - Who is responsible for motivating the other, if the motivation dies down (is anyone responsible)?

- What to do if there is a significant difference in the level of motivation (for example, a mentor puts pressure on a student who wants to lower the intensity of work)?
- ...
- Responsibility. The questions that arise in this dimension are, e.g.:
 - Who is responsible for the collaboration - student, mentor, or both?
 - Is the mentor responsible if the student does not achieve the intended results?
 - What to do if the mentor or student is not responsible for implementing the work plan?
 - ...

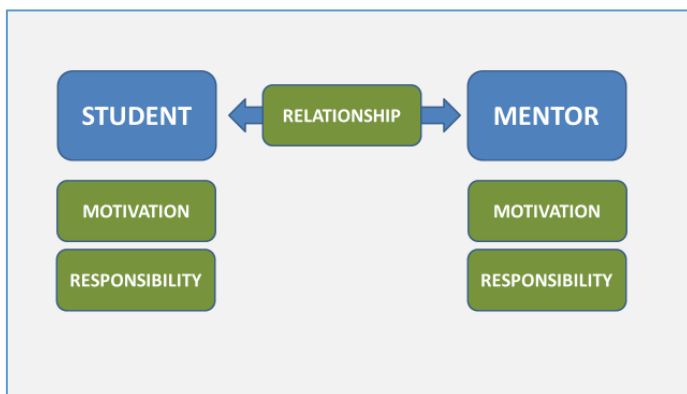


Figure 3: Motivation and responsibility in the student-mentor relationship

Source: own

2.3 Expectations, perceptions and satisfaction in the student-mentor relationship

The satisfaction of all partners (student, mentor, Institution) is a key outcome of the study process. Satisfaction is the result of the relationship between expectations and perceptions of the current situation. Expectations can be high or low, and the perceived current state may be positive or negative.

Satisfaction level, e.g. 1, is identical:

- If the perception of the current state is low (2 on a scale 1-5) and expectations are also low (2 on a scale 1-5),
- If the perception of the current state is high (5 on a scale 1-5) and expectations are also high (5 on a scale 1-5),

Dissatisfaction arises when expectations are higher than the perceptions of the current situation.

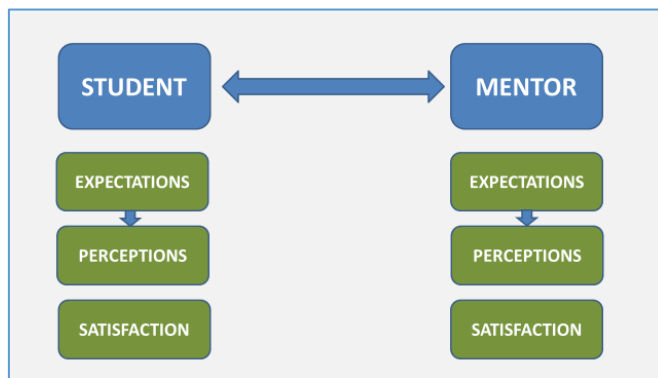


Figure 4: Expectations, perceptions of current and past situations and satisfaction in the student-mentor relationship

Source: own

The situation is further complicated by the fact that all three partners have expectations about themselves and about the other two partners. It also refers to the perception of the current state.

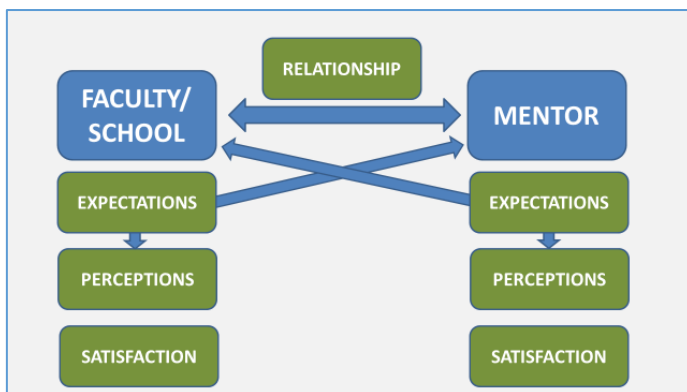


Figure 5: Expectations, perceptions and satisfaction in a Faculty – mentor relationship

Source: own

2.4 Factors which influence expectations in the student-mentor relationship

Expectations are always subjective, and depend on a set of factors. In the mentor-student relationship, expectations originate from the real, external environment (whose perception is also subjective), and from the subjective, internal environment of the individual (individual's history, knowledge, self-image, ...).

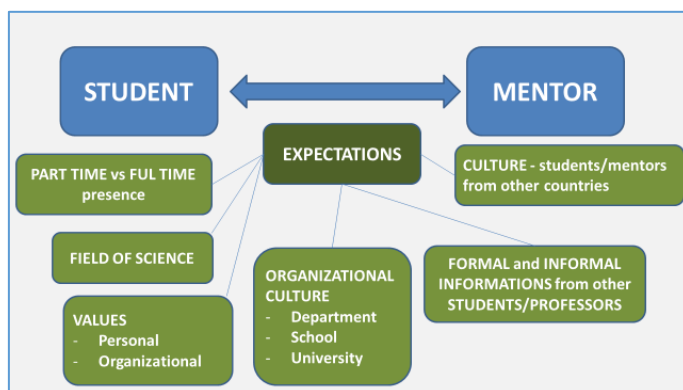


Figure 6: Factors which influence expectations in the student-mentor relationship

Source: own

Knowing the factors that influence expectations is important, as we can influence satisfaction level indirectly through raising / lowering expectations.

2.5 Keys to Successful Mentoring Relationships on both personal and interpersonal levels

There are many authors who deal with the factors of successful mentoring. As this is not the focus of this article, we only cite the recommendations mentioned by Teresa Byington [1]:

- Develop a Relationship of Trust;
- Define Roles and Responsibilities;
- Establish Short and Long Term Goals;
- Collaborate to Solve Problems.

Notwithstanding the good set of factors listed, the dilemmas of how to apply the principles in a particular case are always raised in the particular environment of each universe, Faculty and mentor-student. The question arises whether the planning and implementation of these principles is the responsibility of the provider of the Study Programme (university, Faculty) or the responsibility of the mentor or student, or all three? The answers and specifics in these answers that reflect acceptable solutions should always be sought in the light of the particularities of the given environment, and in the spirit of consensus on solutions.



Figure 7: Keys to Successful Mentoring Relationships, Teresa Byington [1]

Source: own

2.6 Possible solutions for Successful Mentoring on the Faculty level

There are several solutions to ensure successful mentoring at the Faculty level. The Faculty conducting the Doctoral Study can develop specific instructions, rules, standards, contracts, support and examples of good practice, which it (trans)forms into specific documents that are accessible to mentors and Doctoral students, and set clear frameworks within which the Study Programme is implemented, and which provides a high level of security for all three partners in the Doctoral Study process.



Figure 8: Some possible solutions for successful mentoring on the Faculty level

Source: own

2.7 Possible solutions for Successful Mentoring on the university level

A set of solutions to ensure successful mentoring also exists at the university level. The university conducting the Doctoral School or coordinating the set of Doctoral studies in more Faculties, can develop specific tools to facilitate this process and are slightly different than at the Faculty level:

- Minimal standards,
- Programme for mentoring (coaching) young mentors,
- School for mentors,
- Measuring the variables in the Doctoral Programme and process,
- ...

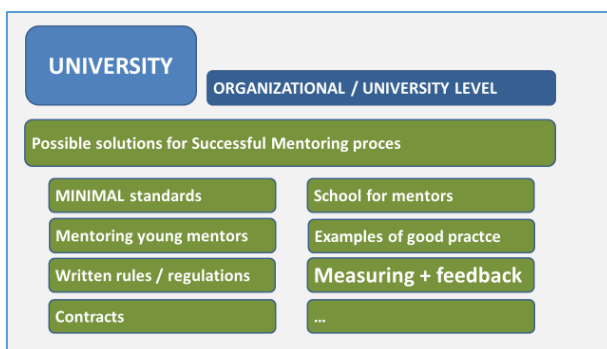


Figure 9: Some possible solutions for successful mentoring process at the university level

Source: own

2.8 Benefits

At the end of the paper let us consider a question that might also be addressed at the beginning of the paper. This question is very often encountered in the process of motivation and is *Why*, or *What benefit will I have from exercising some activity*.

It is not necessary for us to know the theory of motivation or the theory of learning to understand the importance of this question, since we are asking it constantly (most often at an unconscious level). Therefore, it is relevant in our case as well.

There are at least 5 benefits that are possible and, at the same time, are factors that are important (1) For the satisfaction of all three partners in the Doctoral Programme, (2) For the success of the Study Programme and (3) For the success of each Doctoral student. The benefits are outlined in Picture 10.



Figure 10: Some possible benefits in designing the Student-Mentor-Institution partnership triangle

Source: own

3 Conclusion

The conclusion is that there is no conclusion.

The conclusion must be drawn – in the spirit of the Doctoral studies – by the reader, just like deciding whether and what he will do. Only if the decision is his own and he understands the benefits, will it then lead to an action he will understand as a result of his own judgment, of free will, and not as a result of external pressure.

References

- [1] BYINGTON Teresa "Keys to Successful Mentoring Relationships", *Journal of Extension*, Volume 48, Number 6, December 2010; <https://www.joe.org/joe/2010december/tt8.php>