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# Mentor education: challenging mentors' beliefs about mentoring

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to highlight university-based mentor education as a negative antecedent to mentors' beliefs which are consistent with judgementoring (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). The concept of beliefs consistent with judgementoring (evaluative or judgemental mentoring) is introduced as a quantitative construct which is then used as a dependent variable. The concept of "folk mentoring" is introduced to theorise why and how mentor education may challenge mentors' beliefs about mentoring.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Structural equation modelling of cross-sectional survey data is used to estimate and compare the strengths between mentors' perceived self-efficacy, role clarity, experience and education as independent variables and beliefs about mentoring aligned with judgementoring as the dependent variable. The survey was completed by 146 mentors who attended mentor education programmes in universities and university colleges across Norway.

**Findings** – The findings indicate that mentor education contributes to lower levels of beliefs consistent with judgementoring and strengthens mentors' awareness of their role as a mentor. Higher levels of self-efficacy related to the mentor role were associated with stronger beliefs consistent with judgementoring. Mentor experience was not associated strongly with any tested variable.

**Research limitations/implications** – This paper identifies new questions pertaining to the effects of mentor education and variables associated with judgementoring. Omitted variables might have influenced the explored models and the methods used do not allow us to determine causal relationships.

**Originality/value** – Taking an approach based on social exchange theory, the authors describe judgementoring as a form of mentoring that hampers potential exchanges which would enable mentoring to contribute to professional development. This paper provides new insights into judgementoring by introducing it as a quantitative construct, by testing relevant antecedents and by introducing the concept of "folk mentoring". Mentor education is highlighted as a potential moderator of mentors' beliefs in judgementoring.

**Keywords** Self-efficacy, Social exchange theory, Role clarity, Beliefs, Developmental mentoring, Folk mentoring, Judgemental mentoring, Judgementoring, Mentor education, Mentor experience

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

The term "shock" is often used in connection with newcomers' introduction to working life, to describe their inability to act as expected and to highlight their lack of control over the situations they face (Caspersen and Raaen, 2014). Beginning teachers often benefit from organised support at the start of their professional careers (Achinstein, 2006). To accommodate such needs, it is a political intention in Norway, and also at transnational level, that beginning teachers should be guided by mentors (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2009). However, providing mentors with adequate resources to undertake their highly demanding and complex role is a challenge (Jones, 2010). The preparation that

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mentors need in order to enter their role successfully has received sparse attention (Hobson *et al.*, 2009; Jones, 2010; Smith and Ulvik, 2014). The current paper extends knowledge of mentor education by presenting empirical results suggesting that mentor education challenges mentors' beliefs about mentoring. The mentors involved are school-based mentors of student teachers and of newly qualified teachers, whom in the following we call beginning teachers (Hobson and Malderez, 2013).

Studies have shown that beginning teachers who receive induction support from mentors are less likely to leave the teaching profession (Helms-Lorenz *et al.*, 2013; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004). Indeed, research on the induction of beginning teachers has concluded that effective mentors are "critically important" to success (Totterdell *et al.*, 2004, p. 5). Mentoring has also been found to be important for beginning teachers' interactions with pupils, their beliefs in their own abilities and their intention to stay teachers (Dahl, 2006).

Although mentoring has been perceived as a positive endeavour, there are researchers who question such a positive attitude towards school-based mentoring (Augustiniene and Ciuciulkiene, 2013) or who have highlighted how the term "mentoring" can denote a number of different phenomena, which might have conflicting consequences (Brondyk and Searby, 2013; Payne and Huffman, 2005). There have also been studies that have tried to identify and describe different qualities of mentoring (Eby *et al.*, 2004; Evertson and Smithey, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Richter *et al.*, 2013). Some studies have shown that negative experiences (Harrison *et al.*, 2006) and disadvantages can result from school-based mentoring (Hobson *et al.*, 2009; Hobson and Malderez, 2013; Hobson and McIntyre, 2013). Hobson and Malderez (2013) describe a non-beneficial – and potentially harmful – form of mentoring and use the term "judgementoring" to refer to this phenomenon.

### *Judgementoring*

Judgementoring is defined as:

> […] a one to one relationship between a relatively inexperienced teacher (the mentee) and a relatively experienced one (the mentor) in which the latter, in revealing too readily and/or too often her/his own judgements on or evaluations of the mentee's planning and teaching (e.g. through "comments", "feedback", advice, praise or criticism), compromises the mentoring relationship and its potential benefits (Hobson and Malderez, 2013, p. 90).

While it is important to note that mentors' judgements are necessary for their own understanding and that mentors' expressions of these judgements can be beneficial to an extent, Hobson and McIntyre (2013) find that mentoring characterised by an excess of judgements and evaluations based on the mentor's private convictions regarding how a good teacher should act may result in mentees engaging in fabrications. This involves mentees becoming reluctant to expose their vulnerabilities and weaknesses to their mentors, which in turn might reduce the ability of the mentor and mentee to work together to foster the mentees' professional growth (Hobson and McIntyre, 2013; cf. Abell *et al.*, 1995; Lindgren, 2005; Loughran and Russell, 1997; Wildman *et al.*, 1992). Other scholars have found that situations in which newcomers can practice their roles without fear of failure (Bauer *et al.*, 2007) and in the absence of a performance climate (Cerne *et al.*, 2013) are beneficial to both employees and employers.

The findings showing that there may be undesirable outcomes from mentoring indicate that we need to study mentoring in new ways in order to learn more about why scholars have come to conflicting results (Augustiniene and Ciuciulkiene, 2013; Hobson *et al.*, 2009). Hobson and Malderez (2013) suggest that we need to explore the

antecedents of judgementoring and the extent of judgementoring's prevalence in educational systems other than that of the UK. Other scholars call for deeper investigation into competent mentoring (Brondyk and Searby, 2013; Roehrig *et al.*, 2008) and into mentor preparation (Jones, 2010; Ulvik and Sunde, 2013). This leads us to the present study. So far there has been little focus in quantitative research on the content or quality of mentoring given to beginning teachers, nor have we seen many studies on mentors' beliefs about mentoring and mentor education. The first purpose of this paper is therefore to contribute to the field of mentoring by investigating whether and how university-based mentor education challenges mentors' beliefs about mentoring. The second purpose is to explore judgementoring as a quantitative construct, and to test whether self-efficacy related to their mentor role, role clarity, mentor experience and formal mentor education have influence on beliefs consistent with judgementoring. To do this, we measure judgementoring using a quantitative instrument developed by the authors for this purpose (Lejonberg *et al.*, 2014). The study was carried out in Norway, where a nationally developed mentor education programme has been implemented.

*Folk theory*

Teachers' educational beliefs are likely to strongly affect their practice (Fang, 1996; Pajares, 1992). Given the importance of such assumptions, it is relevant to consider a theory concerning how people construct beliefs, or "informal psychological theories" (Heider, 1958), in our attempt to contribute to deeper understanding of mentors' beliefs about mentoring. Dominguez and Hager (2013) show that, within mentoring theory, there has been a shift away from earlier theories that looked upon mentees as passive receivers formed by mentors.

Bruner (1996) uses the term "folk pedagogy" to describe how people are steered by their beliefs when involved in teaching and learning interactions. He also explains how resistant these folk theories are to scientific findings and academic theories that challenge them. As an example, Bruner (1996) points out how likely we are to believe that the most effective strategy for teaching a child simply is to tell the child what we think is right. Olson and Bruner (1996) extend this view by distinguishing between simple and more sophisticated pedagogies, the former focusing on knowledge transmission, the latter considering knowledge as developed jointly by tutors and learners (Richardson, 1997). In the present paper, we contend that these mechanisms can also be applied to the context of mentoring. The term "folk mentoring" can be used to denote an intuitive form of mentoring characterised by correction and telling. However, it is important to note that the cultural context the mentoring is taking place in is likely to be of importance in this matter. Just as what would be perceived as judgemental mentoring is likely to differ with context, also a suggested "folk view" on how to execute mentoring will probably depend on cultural differences (Kochan, 2013).

We also suggest that the theory of folk pedagogy and the idea of folk mentoring are relevant for the development of a deeper understanding of judgementoring. Indeed, judging another person based on one's own practice can be seen as a less complex approach than using this person's competencies and preferences as starting point for that person's professional development (Loughran and Russell, 1997). Mentoring which follows such a constructivist style has been found to be more developmental (Furlong, 1995; Richter *et al.*, 2013; Wildman *et al.*, 1992). We also elaborate on the idea of university-based mentor education as a contribution to challenging folk beliefs about mentoring.

*Context*

Contextual conditions might encourage or hinder judgementoring. According to Hobson and Malderez (2013), judgementoring may be less likely to occur in Scandinavian countries because of contextual conditions enabling mentors to focus on support and development rather than assessment. On the other hand, we also know that many beginning teachers in Norway are in temporary employment or job-seeking positions, and mentors sometimes contribute to decisions regarding whether mentees should be hired or not. This involvement might result in circumstances in which judgementoring is likely to occur (Gustafsson and Fransson, 2012; Hobson and Malderez, 2013; Lejonberg, 2014). Moreover, a number of Norwegian political parties (the Labour, Conservative, Social Liberal and Progress parties) have proposed teacher certification as a means of quality control over teachers (Elstad, 2013). Whether mentors should be involved in the certification process is up for debate (Kemmis *et al.*, 2014).

Such contextual factors, placing mentors in roles where they are supposed to assess mentees, indicates that judgementoring could be measured in a Norwegian context. On the other hand, mentor education in Norway is university based and seeks to contribute to mentors' knowledge about research on mentoring and mentoring skills, which might affect their beliefs about mentoring. Nationally provided frames denoting the content of mentor education underpin four foci: mentoring, communication and relations, critically analysed; learning and teaching, critically analysed and used for reflection upon own and others educational practice; organisation, culture and innovation, used for critical analysis and reflection in mentoring; and professional knowledge, used to illuminate mentees as professional actors, development of teacher identity and participation in professional learning communities (The Norwegian Government, 2010). Furthermore, mentors in Norway are expected to support the professional development of mentees – not formally assess them (Ulvik and Sunde, 2013). The Norwegian government's attempt to raise the quality of mentoring through formal mentor education can be described as "unique in the European and international context" (Smith and Ulvik, 2014, p. 265). This combination of contextual factors makes Norway an especially interesting context for the study of mentor education and its connections to mentors' beliefs about mentoring.

*Social exchange theory*

Social exchange theory is based on the assumptions that social and material resources are exchanged in human interactions, and that norms of reciprocity influence exchange relationships (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961). Drawing on the literature of social exchange theory, mentoring has been described as an exchange relationship in which both mentor and mentee gain benefits (Dominguez and Hager, 2013; Ensher *et al.*, 2001; Kram, 1988; Richard *et al.*, 2009). In this paper, mentoring is defined as a reciprocal exchange relationship between the mentor, who is an experienced teacher, and the mentee, who is a beginning teacher (Dominguez and Hager, 2013; Richard *et al.*, 2009; Young and Perrewé, 2000). Judgementoring can be described as a form of mentoring in which the potential outcomes of the social exchange processes are hampered by the judgemental form that characterises the mentoring.

## The present investigation

*Mentor education and judgementoring*

Many scholars describe a favourable kind of mentoring characterised by stretching, challenging and risk-taking in a safe and supporting environment (Clutterbuck, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Harrison *et al.*, 2006; Hobson *et al.*, 2009; Hudson, 2005; Kram, 1988).

The term "developmental mentoring" (Clutterbuck, 2004; Kram, 1988) is often used to refer to such mentoring, which can be seen as a contrast to judgementoring (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). There is reason to believe that mentors in university-based mentor education programmes become familiar with ideas consistent with developmental mentoring, which might encourage them to demand more from their own mentoring practices and enable them to ground their practices in scientific theory, instead of folk theory (Bruner, 1996; Fang, 1996; Furlong, 1995; Hyland, 1992; Ulvik and Sunde, 2013). Indeed, mentors need arenas "within which personal beliefs and assumptions can be challenged and modified" (Jones, 2010, p. 123). Thornton (2014) argues that, without in-depth professional learning opportunities, mentors are more likely to exercise judgementoring.

General scepticism of whether education can provide mentors with the skills they need has been asserted (Kram, 1988). However, university-based education aims to contribute to mentor students' knowledge about mentoring research, as well as to their development of mentoring skills (University of Bergen, 2014; University of Oslo, 2014). As teacher education aims to challenge teachers' beliefs about teaching (Pajares, 1992), mentor education can contribute to the adjustment of folk beliefs about mentoring.

Trained mentors have been found to differ from untrained mentors in their tendency to guide their mentees through self-discovery of knowledge about teaching (Crasborn *et al.*, 2008). The balance between telling, on one hand, and assisting and guiding, on the other, is not easy for mentors to master. However, such skills can be improved if mentors have the opportunity to practice them in mentor training (Crasborn *et al.*, 2008; Evertson and Smithey, 2000; Hyland, 1992; Thornton, 2014). We suggest that beliefs about mentoring held by those who undergo mentor education are challenged by mentoring literature, peers and course leaders. This assumption leads to the following hypothesis:

*H1.* Completion of mentor education is related to lower levels of beliefs consistent with judgementoring.

*Self-efficacy and judgementoring*

Self-efficacy refers to peoples' expectations regarding their ability to perform their jobs successfully (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is directly related to peoples' perceptions of their success in past situations and influences how employees define their roles (Jones, 1986; Rhodes and Fletcher, 2013). Judgementoring can be understood as an intuitive, folk approach with regard to contributing to others' professional development, and can therefore be described as a less complex form of mentoring (Hobson and Malderez, 2013; cf. Bruner, 1996; Clutterbuck, 2004; Hobson and McIntyre, 2013; Kram, 1988). High levels of self-efficacy related to the mentor role might contribute to mentors' willingness to step out of their comfort zones and explore another person's practice and development. In comparison, mentors with lower levels of self-efficacy might stick to the easier, more intuitive advice-giving and assessing forms of contribution which characterise judgementoring. In contrast, we could also expect that mentors with high self-efficacy related to the mentor role are more likely to provide advice based on own practice, and that the practice of judgementoring, understood as an easier, more intuitive form of mentoring, might be reinforced if mentors perceive it as effective. Therefore, we assume that mentors' level of reported self-efficacy related to the mentor role is associated to their level of reported beliefs consistent with judgementoring. However, we do not predict the direction of the estimated effect and offer an exploratory question (EQ):

*EQ.* Does the reported level of self-efficacy related to the mentor role predict the level of beliefs consistent with judgementoring?

*Role clarity and judgementoring*

Role clarity refers to the beliefs individuals have about the expectations and behaviours associated with their work roles (Hall, 2008; Kahn *et al.*, 1964). Mentoring is related to two aspects of role clarity: goal clarity (which can be described as the extent to which an employee understands the outcome goals and objectives of a job) and process clarity (which can be described as the extent to which an employee is certain about how to perform a job) (Hall, 2008; Sawyer, 1992). As noted above, the purpose of mentoring beginning teachers in Norway is to contribute to mentees' professional development, rather than to assess them (Ministry of Education and Research, 2009; Ulvik and Sunde, 2013). Based on this knowledge, we predict the following hypothesis:

*H2*. Higher levels of reported role clarity are related to lower levels of beliefs consistent with judgementoring.

*Mentor experience and judgementoring*

Mentor experience has been found to facilitate mentors' leadership development by encouraging reflection and a wider perspective on teaching and learning (Thornton, 2014). Mentors with more mentoring experience have also been found to be more effective than those with less mentoring experience (Roehrig *et al.*, 2008). Based on these findings, we predict the following hypothesis:

*H3*. Lengthy experience as a mentor is related to lower levels of beliefs consistent with judgementoring.



## Methodology

*Data collection and setting*

We tested the hypotheses using data from a self-report survey completed by 146 mentors who attended mentor education programmes at universities and university colleges throughout Norway (referred to as university-based mentor education). The data were collected by administrators during lectures attended by these mentors: we estimate that the response rate was between 90 and 100 per cent of the mentors present. The informants were gathered from 12 different mentor education programs. These programs are designed in line with a national framework which functions as guidelines and denotes for instance purposes, learning goals, methods, content, extent and admission criteria (The Norwegian Government, 2010). The mentors reported from 0 to 29 years of experience as mentors, with 91 per cent having some experience as mentors. The mean mentor experience was 3.9 years. Of the informants, 74 per cent had completed 15 or more credits in mentor education at the time the data were gathered (the national frame suggests that 30 credits in mentor education should be offered).

*Measures*

A questionnaire was constructed based on measurement instruments previously reported in the literature, as well as on new developments: an instrument to measure judgementoring was developed (based on Lejonberg *et al.*, 2014), and reported instruments for self-efficacy and role clarity were adapted to the mentoring context. In the survey, the mentors responded to items using a seven-point Likert scale, in which 4 represented a neutral midpoint. Each concept was measured with three or four items. We developed and used a measure to map whether mentors' beliefs about mentoring aligned with judgementoring, as described by Hobson and Malderez (2013). Using structural equation modelling (SEM), we tested empirical associations with

judgementoring as the dependent variable and mentor education, self-efficacy, role clarity and mentor experience as independent variables.

*Dependent measures*. Jones (1986) used a measure of socialisation tactics for newcomer adjustment which includes items concerning experienced members of an organisation giving advice or guidance and providing an understanding of newcomers' roles. We included these items in our study. However, the factor analysis showed a discrepancy among these items. The loadings indicated that mentoring as a socialisation tactic comprises contradictory aspects. This finding supports the assumption that the content of mentoring can be divided into distinct variables based on the distinction between developmental and judgemental mentoring noted by Hobson and Malderez (2013). We tested this assumption in our pilot study and found that developmental and judgemental mentoring appeared as two distinct, separate measures. However, this finding was not replicated in our main data. For this reason, we used beliefs consistent with judgementoring as the only dependent variable in these analyses (Lejonberg *et al.*, 2014).

We measured beliefs consistent with judgementoring using three items based on the descriptions of Hobson and Malderez (2013) ($\alpha = 0.79$). The statements were measured on a seven-point Likert scale. To achieve variance in the responses from informants, the wording was modified from the original descriptions (sample item: "It is important that the mentee becomes aware of my evaluations of his/her professional practice"). All used items can be found in the Appendix. Further information about the construct development can be found in Lejonberg *et al.* (2014).

*Independent measures*. Mentor education was measured using a dichotomous variable that separated participants who had completed 15 or more credits in a mentor education programme from those who had not. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had (1) no mentor education; (2) less than 15 credits in mentor education; or (3) 15 or more credits in mentor education.

Self-efficacy related to the mentor role was measured with four items based on Jones (1986) that were adapted to the mentoring context ($\alpha = 0.86$; sample item: "I am certain that I will be able to practice good mentoring, no matter how well the beginning teachers master their job").

Role clarity was measured with four items which were based on Hall's (2008) classification of the two aspects of role clarity and adapted to the context of mentoring ($\alpha = 90$). The two aspects of role clarity are goal clarity and process clarity. The former describes the extent to which the goals and objectives of a job are perceived clearly (sample item: "I know exactly what is expected of me as a mentor to beginning teachers"). The latter, process clarity, describes the extent to which an individual is certain about how to perform a job (sample item: "I know how to make use of the time I have for mentoring in a suitable way") (Hall, 2008; Sawyer, 1992).

Experience was measured with an item asking how many years of experience respondents had worked as mentors to beginning teachers. In our analyses, we made experience a dichotomous variable, separating mentors with zero to three years of experience as mentors from those with more than three years of experience.

*Analysis*

SEM was used to analyse the relationships among the variables. Assessments of fit between the models and the data were based on the following indices: *p-kji*, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), normed fit index (NFI), comparative fit index

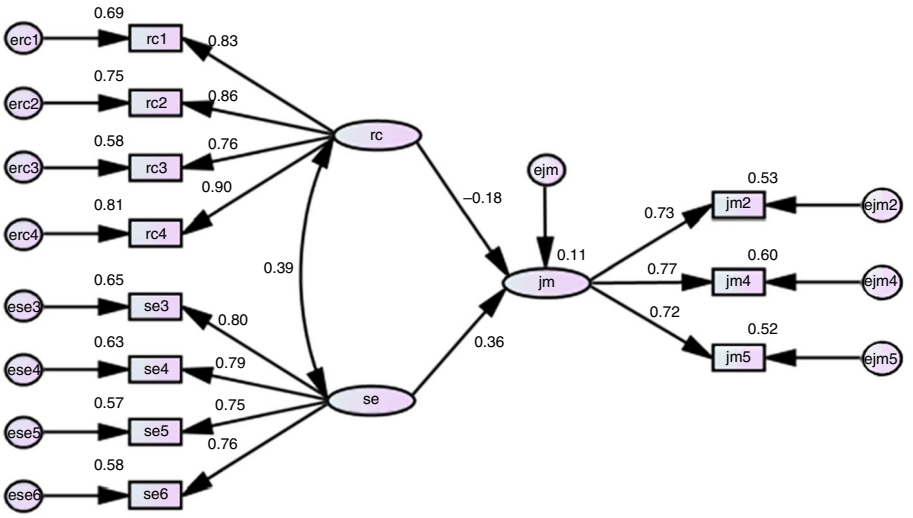
(CFI) and goodness-of-fit index (GFI). *p-kji* > 0.05, RMSEA < 0.05 and NFI, GFI and CFI > 0.95 indicated good fits, while RMSEA < 0.08 and NFI, GFI and CFI > 0.90 indicated acceptable fits (Byrne, 2010; Kline, 2005). The measurement and structural models were estimated using IBM SPSS Amos 21. The values of *p-kji* = 0.150, RMSEA = 0.040, NFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.988 and GFI = 0.942 indicate that the first structural model in Figure 1 has an acceptable fit. The values of *p-kji* = 0.126, RMSEA = 0.039, NFI = 0.922, CFI = 0.985 and GFI = 0.932 show that the model in Figure 2 also has an acceptable fit.

*Analytical models*

In the following section, we present two analytical models. Figures 1 and 2 show the parsimonious and the extended estimated structural models, both of which feature beliefs consistent with judgementoring as the dependent variable. Ellipses represent the latent variables, circles represent measurement errors, and rectangles represent observed items. The structural model consists of terms with paths (arrows) between them. The path arrows indicate theoretical common causes, and the numbers, which are standardised regression coefficients, display the measured strengths of the connections. The strength of a connection increases with the numerical value.

## Results and discussion

The estimated direct effect of mentor education to stated beliefs consistent with judgementoring is (−0.23). In addition, we see an estimated indirect effect of mentor education on role clarity (0.36). Together, these statistical associations indicate that mentor education contributes to lower reported levels of beliefs consistent with judgementoring, as predicted in *H1*. These associations can be described as desirable, as university-based mentor education aims to contribute to knowledge about mentoring research and to the




**Notes:** jm, judgementoring; se, self-efficacy related to the mentor role; rc, role clarity in the mentor role. Standardized estimates: *p-kji*=0.150; RMSEA=0.040; NFI=0.940; CFI=0.988; GFI=0.942

**Figure 1.** Estimated parsimonious model

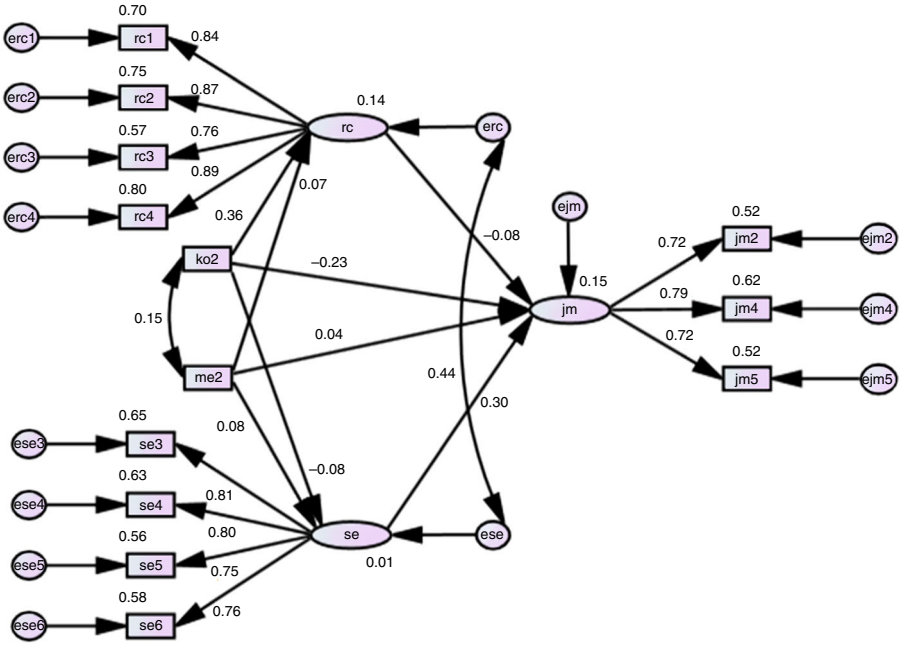



**Figure 2.**
Estimated extended model

**Notes:** jm, judgementoring; se, self-efficacy related to the mentor role; rc, role clarity in the mentor role; ko, mentoring education; me, mentoring experience. Standardized estimates: *p-kji*=0.126; RMSEA=0.039; NFI=0.922; CFI=0.985; GFI=0.932

development of mentoring skills (Smith and Ulvik, 2014). Thornton (2014) found mentor programmes to be important in mentor development because such programmes ntroduce mentors to a network of other mentors and provide support from programme leaders. Furthermore, through testing unsubstantiated beliefs in education, in discussions and by acquiring knowledge from mentoring research, educated mentors might adjust their folk beliefs regarding beneficial mentoring. This claim is supported by literature on constructivist teacher education which stresses that teacher students "must be actively engaged in reconstructing their existing understanding" during teacher education (Richardson, 1997, p. 5).

Regarding our exploratory question, we found that reported self-efficacy related to the mentor role is positively associated with stated beliefs consistent with judgementoring (0.30), which indicates that mentors with high levels of confidence in their mentor roles are more likely to have beliefs more consistent with judgementoring. Although we might imagine that mentors who feel confident in their ability to function as mentors do not share values consistent with those of judgementoring, considered to be a folk approach characterised by instinctive expressions of mentors' thoughts about others' performance, we must keep in mind that expressions of personal judgements could also result from thoughtful considerations about how to best contribute to mentees' development. Other findings regarding teachers' beliefs and knowledge about mastery experiences as the strongest predictors of teacher self-efficacy can contribute to our understanding of why self-efficacy is associated with judgementoring (Bandura, 1997; Hoy and Spero, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

Researchers have also found that less proficient teachers tend to overestimate their own abilities (Roehrig *et al.*, 2008; Tschannen-Moran, 2007). It might be that, similarly, those who are not the best mentors tend to overestimate their mentoring skills. Rhodes and Fletcher (2013) show that high self-efficacy can reflect an unrealistic self-image. Such findings encourage further research on the associations between self-efficacy related to the mentor role and beliefs about practice among teachers and mentors.

In research that seeks to explain the relationships between such variables as self-efficacy and beliefs consistent with judgementoring, there are always uncertainties about the direction of the arrows (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Satisfaction with earlier teaching success has been found to be the most potent source of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Roehrig *et al.*, 2008; Tschannen-Moran, 2007). If a mentor states that a mentee's performance is not good enough and points to a preferable way to act, the mentee likely will do as instructed. Although a more developmental practice likely will be more beneficial in the long run, the judgementoring approach might bring about a desired, short-term result, thereby strengthening a mentor's belief in mentoring aligned with judgementoring and feeling of self-efficacy. It is, however, important to recognise the potential positive outcomes from clear feedback in mentoring. The question of how much feedback and advice in mentoring is too much needs more investigation.

As predicted in *H2*, we found reported role clarity to be negatively associated with stated beliefs consistent with judgementoring, indicating that mentors' awareness of the purpose of their roles and knowledge of mentoring techniques weakens their beliefs about judgementoring as beneficial. It is, however, interesting to note that the strength of the pathway between role clarity and judgementoring is weakened when mentor education is added to the model. This finding indicates that mentor education strengthen mentors' awareness of their roles as a mentor, which, again, is negatively associated with beliefs consistent with judgementoring.

Regarding *H3*, mentor experience does not seem to have a great influence on reported beliefs about judgementoring. On the basis of our assumption that judgementoring can be understood as a folk belief about effective mentoring, this result indicates that experience alone might not open mentors' eyes to different approaches to mentoring. This finding also supports Bruner's (1996) idea regarding the resilience of folk beliefs. Folk beliefs about mentoring can be self-reinforcing if not questioned by external influences. Our findings indicate that research which claims that experience is important for beliefs about mentoring outcomes should control for mentor education. In our model, the variables mentor education and mentor experience are associated, which indicates that formal education might explain spurious correlations between experience and beliefs about beneficial mentoring.

Viewing mentoring through the lens of social exchange theory underpins how the multiple possible roles of both mentors and mentees relate not only to the potential benefits but also to the potential costs of mentoring relationships (Dominguez and Hager, 2013). Therefore, we claim that social exchange theory provides a beneficial framework for understanding judgementoring as a form of mentoring that hampers the reciprocal exchanges essential for successful mentoring. However, it is interesting to consider the extent to which reciprocity is realistic in mentoring relationships. Factors such as age, personal recognition and years of work experience might influence the degree of perceived reciprocal exchange. In cases of such asymmetry, more expressions of judgements might seem natural to both parties in a relationship. However, if one believes the literature on developmental mentoring, a more scaffolding-oriented approach which aims to contribute to mentees' knowledge construction is preferable in all developmental relationships.

*Limitations and implications for further research*

This study has clear limitations from a methodological (e.g. cross-sectional) and a conceptual perspective (e.g. structural modelling). We acknowledge these limitations and argue that they can serve as the foundation for future studies. Cross-sectional studies give only momentary glimpses into humans' reported beliefs and do not allow for the testing of causal relationships. Omitted variables might have influenced the explored models. Larger samples of mentors, longer-term investigations and a better understanding of the mechanisms generating the path coefficients are potential directions for future research. A further limitation of this study is the lack of an opportunity to couple mentors' self-reported beliefs with objective goals for mentoring behaviours and their influence on mentees' professional development. Also, our questionnaire was distributed in Norwegian, so there is a risk of translation inaccuracy.

Judgementoring is described as negative mentoring which compromises the potential benefits of mentoring because of a too-judgemental form (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). In this study, we asked whether mentors hold beliefs similar to the characteristics used to define judgementoring. It is, however, not certain that stating such beliefs is equal to the practice of harmful mentoring. Our operationalisation of judgementoring is based on descriptions of judgementoring as characterised by mentors' communications of their own judgements about mentees' practice. We must remain open to the possibility that such communications could be beneficial to an extent. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that there might be a significant discrepancy between mentors' self-reported beliefs about mentoring and the ways in which mentees actually experience mentoring (Pajares, 1992). Thus, it would be beneficial to examine the extent to which mentees experience judgementoring and developmental mentoring and to test associations with similar antecedents, as was done in this work. Another limitation of this study is the moderate size of the sample. However, Norway is a relatively small country, and mentor education in Norway is a relativity new phenomenon, which means that a moderate sample size is unavoidable. In sum, the limitations noted here provide potential directions for future research.

*Implications for practice*

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to our understanding of the factors which influence mentors' beliefs in judgementoring. If the associations between the independent and dependent variables represent causal relationships, our findings could have implications for practice. The most important finding is that mentor education might reduce the likelihood of beliefs which may correspond with the practice of judgementoring. There is an underlying assumption that teachers' stated beliefs can affect their practice (Fang, 1996; Girardet and Berger, 2014; Pajares, 1992). In addition, mentor education contributes to a better understanding of mentors' roles.

A much debated question related to the implementation of school-based mentoring, is about who is best suited to provide mentoring. Developmental relationships in working life can take a variety of forms (Kram, 1988). Some scholars claim that leaders are in a natural position to provide mentoring as they are already responsible for providing career and psychological support to employees (Eby *et al.*, 2007; Richard *et al.*, 2009). Other scholars highlight the challenges associated with integrating mentoring into leadership roles (Hobson and McIntyre, 2013). Still others emphasise, for instance, the importance of mentors' personal qualities and commitment to the role and of a shared subject specialty among mentors and mentees (Abell *et al.*, 1995;

Hobson *et al.*, 2009; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004). Our results indicate that completion of mentor education should be important in the selection of mentors.

Mentor education seems to be an antecedent to more desirable mentoring practices, which supports the notion of implementing mentoring education. However, it is important to note that mentor education is negatively associated with self-efficacy related to the mentor role. This finding contrasts with that of Thornton (2014) that mentor preparation is a driver of mentor confidence. Despite the relatively weak statistical association, our data imply that education could leave mentors sadder but wiser, in the sense that it increases their insecurity about how to act in order to contribute to mentees' professional development. More research on such potential effects of mentor education is needed. Although uncertainty often comes with greater insight into the complexity of a phenomenon, this finding should be of interest for those who work in mentor education.

As mentioned, other scholars have found that teachers' self-reported efficacy does not necessarily coincide with their actual abilities (Roehrig *et al.*, 2008; Tschannen-Moran, 2007). This implies that, in the search for the most appropriate people to serve as mentors for beginning teachers, we should not pay too much attention to whether people consider themselves the best teachers or the best mentors. There is a growing consensus that beginning teachers need effective mentoring support early in their careers. Mentor education is important to challenge mentors' beliefs about how to provide the best support to beginning teachers.



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## Further reading

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## Appendix. All used items

*Judgementoring*

- Jm2: It is important to contribute to the mentees' awareness of mistakes he/she makes.
- Jm4: It is important that the mentee becomes aware of my evaluations of his/her professional practice.
- Jm5: It is important to ensure that the mentee becomes aware of what he/she does that is not beneficial.

*Self-efficacy*

- Se3: I am certain I will manage to ensure that even the most uncertain beginning teachers experience good support in their first year of practice.
- Se4: I am certain that I will be able to practice good mentoring, no matter how well the beginning teachers master their job.
- Se5: I am certain I will be able to answer the beginning teachers' questions in a way which supports them in their first year of practice.
- Se6: I am certain I will manage to help the beginning teachers to master difficult situations in their work as teachers.

*Role clarity*

- Rc1: I know how to approach the role of mentor of beginning teachers.
- Rc2: I know exactly what my responsibilities as a mentor for beginning teachers are.

- Rc3: I know how to make use of the time I have for mentoring in a suitable way.
- Rc4: I know exactly what is expected of me as a mentor to beginning teachers.

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