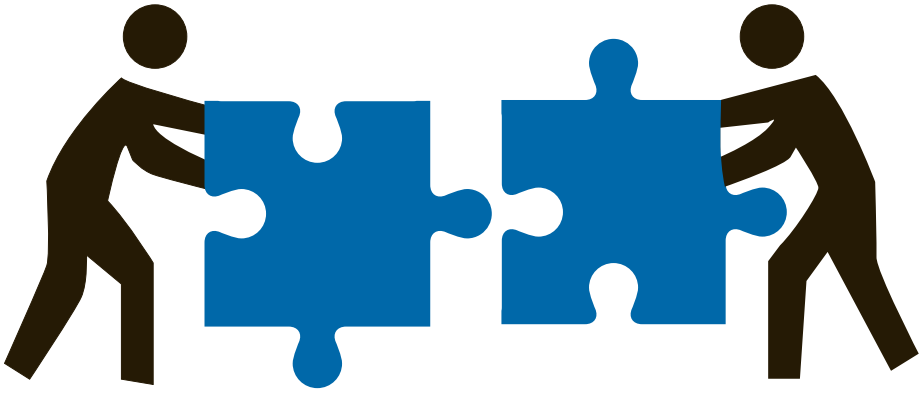

MENTORSHIP
IN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING

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A European Perspective on Mentoring

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Abstract

The sign language interpreting profession is still a relatively young profession, which has undergone a rapid development during the last two decades in Europe (de Wit, 2008 & 2012). To identify the mentoring needs of current interpreters, this article reports on the outcomes of an online survey among sign language interpreters in Austria, Italy, and the Netherlands. The results provide an insight and a current perspective on the general mentoring needs of interpreters and more specifically on peer mentoring and mentoring for interpreters working with Deaf professionals.

Keywords: *mentoring, quantitative, peer, multiple definitions, need, develop specific interpreting skills, theoretical, group, setting, expert to novice, build confidence*

A European Perspective on Mentoring

The sign language interpreting profession is still a relatively young profession which has undergone a rapid development during the last two decades in Europe (de Wit, 2008 & 2012). There are currently over 65 educational programs for sign language interpreting in Europe, ranging from a two-year associates degree to a five-year masters's degree. At the first European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli[1]) working seminar on curriculum development of sign language interpreting programs in Europe in November 2011 in the Netherlands, the need for mentoring for students, but also for working interpreters, was expressed by the participants.

A survey conducted by efsli in 2010 indicated that there are few continuing education opportunities for sign language interpreters offered. As a result, efsli has offered tailored trainings on-demand in the respective member countries: Denmark, Austria, and France. Considering the request for continuing education from current interpreters and the changing profession, it is assumed that interpreters are also in need of mentoring. Napier (2006), Hawkings & Walker (2008), amongst others, provide an overview of the different concepts

[1] efsli: lower case spelling is standard usage for the acronym of this organization

of mentoring which could be or are applied within the sign language interpreting profession. In this chapter the following definition of mentoring is used: Mentoring is a developmental partnership through which one person shares knowledge, skills, information, and perspective to foster the personal and professional growth of someone else.

To identify the mentoring needs of current interpreters, this chapter reports on the outcomes of an online survey among sign language interpreters in Austria, Italy, and the Netherlands. The results provide an insight and a current perspective on the general mentoring needs of interpreters and more specifically on peer mentoring and mentoring for interpreters working with Deaf professionals.

Survey Findings

Responses

The number of sign language interpreters varies greatly per European country (de Wit, 2012). Each country has a different registration system of sign language interpreters, and some countries have no means or system to identify and register sign language interpreters. In Austria and Italy, sign language interpreters are registered by the national association of sign language interpreters respectively ÖGSDV and ANIOS. In the Netherlands, interpreters are registered by an independent foundation for the registry of sign language interpreters, Stichting RTG. All registered interpreters, for whom their contact data was publicly available, received an invitation by email to the online survey that was conducted in the spring of 2012, with 93 in Austria, 98 in Italy, and 321 interpreters in the Netherlands, for a total of 512. The survey was open for a period of three weeks.

A total of 108 interpreters participated in the survey: 62 (19%) from the Netherlands, 21 (23%) from Austria, and 25 (25%) from Italy. Of the respondents in each country, 90 percent are women and 10 percent men. All of the respondents from the Netherlands completed a formal education as a sign language interpreter, in Austria 75%, and in Italy 88%.

Figure 1

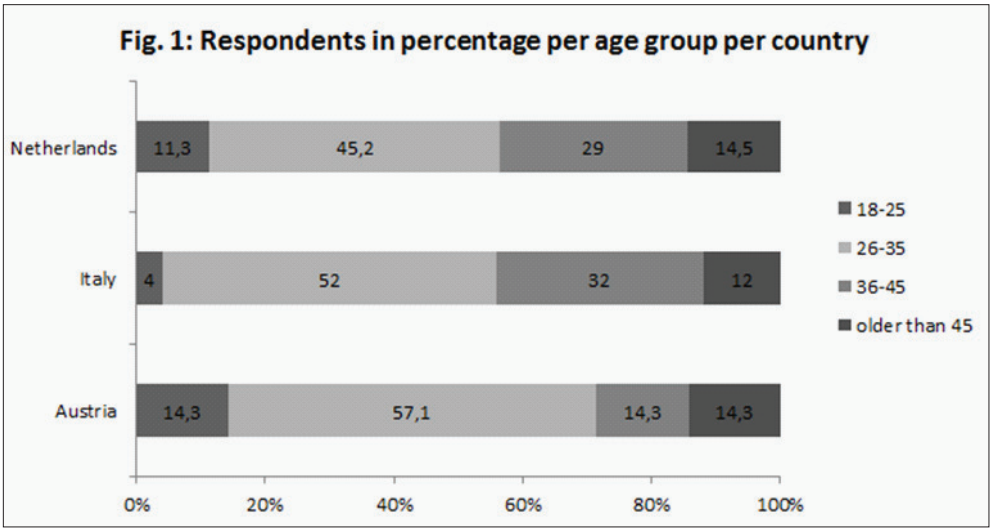

Figure 1 shows that the majority of the respondents in the three countries are between 26 and 35 years old. In Italy, the majority of interpreters finalized their training within two

years of responding to the survey; in the Netherlands this is four years; and in Austria, there is greater variety, ranging from one to six years.

Education and Mentoring

The training of sign language interpreters differs in the three countries. In the Netherlands there is one educational program for sign language interpreters, namely a four-year bachelor's training at the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences. During this training, professional skills and methods are taught so students learn how to interact and support each other within a professional circle of sign language interpreters. The Dutch term for this is *intervisie*, which does not have an equivalent in English, but for this chapter, the term 'professional peer support' will be used. The professional peer support is an actual meeting of sign language interpreters who have agreed to undertake this meeting on a regular basis to exchange and discuss professional issues and dilemmas. The meeting is conducted by a set of prior agreed-upon rules and procedures, and its aim is to come to a best practices solution through questions and discussion. Of the Dutch respondents, 87% replied that they had learned these professional skills during their education.

In the above context of professional peer support, the term mentoring is not applied in the Netherlands. The term mentoring is mostly used in the Netherlands within the field of sign language interpreting when a professional interpreter is a mentor to a student, who is carrying out their practical placement within the training program.

In Austria, 75% of the respondents completed a formal education as a sign language interpreter. Since 2002/2003, there are two programs, a five-year master's training at the University of Graz (Styria) and a three-year, full-time interpreter training program in Linz (Upper Austria). In addition, the Austrian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ÖGSDV) offers weekend seminars for a period of one and a half years for students who are competent in sign language and would like to learn about the interpreting profession. After completion of the seminars and the obligatory internship hours of, the students are required to pass the qualifying examination carried out by the ÖGSDV, which officially allows them to work as an interpreter in Austria (Brück, 2011). The Linz program (GESDO) is the only program that offers supervision (based on the Demand Control Schema by Dean and Pollard, 2001) to their students. In addition, GESDO organizes regular mandatory meetings, in class or face-to-face with interpreting instructors, where the students can reflect upon their practical experiences. This is similar to the professional peer support offered in the Netherlands.

Of the Austrian respondents, 93% learned to discuss professional issues over an assignment with a peer interpreter during their training. As in the Netherlands, the term mentoring is not applied to this scenario in Austria. The Austrian interpreters indicate that, following their formal education, they miss a structured method of developing partnership, sharing knowledge, skills, information, and perspectives.

In Italy, there are no educational programs for sign language interpreters at the academic level (bachelor's training). So far, a variety of vocational training programs have been offered by different training institutions and associations. They all differ in length and structure as no standard curriculum has ever been implemented (although the National Association of Italian Sign Language Interpreters, ANIOS, has developed a set of guidelines and these programs may have similar modules). Of the Italian respondents, 88% were formally trained by attending a two-year course (58.6%) or a three-year course (9.1%). The remaining respondents attended shorter trainings or had no training at all (12%).

Common subjects included in training programs are professional skills and issues, such as how to share feedback and support with colleagues and how to discuss an assignment in a professional manner. The Italian respondents (72.7%) learned these skills by attending classes on ethics and professional attitude or behavior, especially the younger generations of sign language interpreters. The latter also usually spend a certain number of hours ("tutored hours" which vary from program to program) working as "trainees" (or trained students) under the supervision of a tutor or experienced interpreter. "Tutor" and "tutoring," often used as a term in their original English form, are familiar words to Italian students and interpreters more than "mentor" and "mentoring" (and sometimes they are wrongly used as synonyms). Thus, it is no surprise if only one respondent from Italy stated that he or she learned to discuss professional issues over an assignment with a peer interpreter by attending a workshop on "mentoring" after completing the training.

The Desire for "Mentoring"

Formal education prepares interpreters to enter the profession and face the market with appropriate skills and knowledge (Janzen, 2005). According to the survey results, respondents from Austria (40%), Italy (36.4%), and the Netherlands (43.5%) experienced a good transition from formal education to working as a professional interpreter. As for Italy, it is important to note that only 22 out of 25 responded and another 31.8% reported that the change "could be better." This may suggest that the quality of education may have an influence on the good start of interpreters' professional careers.

Through the survey, the need and the importance of co-working and mentoring were indirectly investigated through a set of five statements, asking the survey respondents to express their opinion about them. A scale of appreciation/agreement was given to help them evaluate the extent of their agreement or disagreement on each given topic. Results follow, reported in detail:

1. Sign language interpreting can be a very lonely job sometimes, because of quite often working alone without appropriate support and feedback.

Country	*I totally agree*	*I mostly agree*	*I partially agree*	*I hardly agree*	*I disagree*
Austria	23.8%	33.3%	23.8%	9.5%	9.5%
Italy	24.0%	28.0%	28.0%	16.0%	4.0%
Netherlands	24.2%	38.7%	19.4%	14.5%	3.2%

2. I would like to broaden my professional scope, but I would need consultancy by a senior colleague.

Country	*I totally agree*	*I mostly agree*	*I partially agree*	*I hardly agree*	*I disagree*
Austria	15.0%	45.0%	15.0%	20.0%	5.0%
Italy	40.0%	48.0%	8.0%	4.0%	0.0%
Netherlands	11.3%	24.2%	35.5%	22.6%	6.5%

3. Some assignments are very stressful for me and I would like to reflect on them with a colleague.

Country	*I totally agree*	*I mostly agree*	*I partially agree*	*I hardly agree*	*I disagree*
Austria	57.1%	23.8%	9.5%	0.0%	9.5%
Italy	40.0%	48.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Netherlands	16.1%	38.7%	19.4%	19.4%	6.5%

4. I would like to receive qualified feedback on my work and look into my strengths and weaknesses.

Country	*I totally agree*	*I mostly agree*	*I partially agree*	*I hardly agree*	*I disagree*
Austria	61.9%	28.6%	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Italy	76.0%	16.0%	0.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Netherlands	19.4%	43.5%	22.6%	6.5%	8.1%

5. While working I often have unsolved ethical issues, which I would like to reflect on and discuss with a colleague to find an answer.

Country	*I totally agree*	*I mostly agree*	*I partially agree*	*I hardly agree*	*I disagree*
Austria	42.9%	9.5%	28.6%	14.3%	4.8%
Italy	44.0%	28.0%	16.0%	8.0%	4.0%
Netherlands	6.6%	36.1%	29.5%	19.7%	8.2%

Results show an agreement, in general terms and with some differences among the three countries, on the importance of support and feedback from a colleague for the enhancement of individual professional standards and for the improvement of self-reflection and problem-solving skills.

Professional Skills

Generally, (peer) mentoring focuses on professional development. The responses collected from this section dedicated to "professional skills" show a good level of satisfaction among respondents from each country with reference to interpreting and professional skills. However, there are areas of expertise for which the support of a mentor or a peer colleague is considered useful and appreciated. Among others, interpreters' professional attitude, ethics and dilemmas, sign to spoken language interpreting, and interpreting in specialized fields (medical or legal settings) were mostly highlighted.

As mentoring assumes a one-to-one relationship, some human features are of extreme importance in order to build up an exchange of knowledge for mutual benefit. For this purpose, respondents felt that feedback should be given in an honest and positive way and should be based on trust and open attitudes toward each other. This attitude seems to recall the Greek Mythology from which mentoring owes its name. In particular, the character of

Mentor, Ulysses' friend to whom Ulysses entrusts his son Telemachus (Odysseus, Homer). Trust is the foundation and the pre-requisite to get the process of (peer) mentoring started but also the ground where human development and the improvement of professional skills interweave. It would be interesting to further investigate how interpreters intend to build up a shared sense of trust within a team and a (peer) mentoring relationship.

The estimated need for improvement of professional performances with the help of an experienced mentor or a peer colleague ranged from being a "strong need" (Austria 42.9% and Italy 44%) to a need that "sometimes" is felt (the Netherlands 48.4% and again Italy 44%). Moreover, responses on how to improve interpreting performances with the help of a colleague when working in pair or in a team, took into consideration different actions and behaviors, such as:

- Good preparation together
- Feedback during the assignment on specific points
- Using each other's strengths and identifying weak points
- Discussing the interpreting choices made after the assignment
- Watching colleagues while interpreting

For conference interpreting, some respondents from Italy mentioned the interpreter coordinator as a crucial actor in the mentoring process. The interpreter coordinator is seen as a *super partes* mentor for the whole team and is responsible to provide a working environment where co-working interpreters can reinforce their knowledge and improve their skills. Thus in conference settings, but also in other working situations, for some interpreters, an effective mentor seems to be an external member of the team who can express his/her feedback in a more detached way. This also reinforces the idea of a mentor being a more experienced colleague instead of a peer. Peer mentoring offers a different perspective: each actor involved in the mentoring process can help establish a better working relationship and contribute to the evolution of the profession. As one respondent from Italy stated, "Regardless of the number of years of experience, sometimes someone who has been working as an interpreter for a few years has a wealth to give."

Peer Mentoring: The Current Experience

In the introduction, a general definition of mentoring was provided. A more specific form of mentoring is peer mentoring. Based on Allen et al. (1999) and Kram & Isabella (1985), the following definition of peer mentoring is proposed and used in this chapter:

> Peer mentoring is a form of mentorship without hierarchical structure that takes place as a mutual two way exchange between a person who has lived through a specific experience (Peer Mentor) and a person who is new to that experience (the Peer Mentee).

The essential distinction between mentoring and peer mentoring is that in peer mentoring there is no hierarchy in age or rank between the mentor and mentee, whilst a mentoring situation is based on a one-way helping dynamic (Kram & Isabella, 1985). In addition, peer mentoring programs can be semi-structured planned programs with specific guidelines and frequently with a set number of meetings and activities within a predetermined amount of time. This can also be done for mentoring.

The interpreters in Austria (42.9%), Italy (76%), and the Netherlands (56.5%) indicated that they are familiar with the concept of peer mentoring. In order to see if the interpreters

knew the concept of peer mentoring or if there were misconceptions or different views, the interpreters were asked in an open question format to give their definition of peer mentoring. The replies were as diverse as the group of respondents. The overall similarity in the responses was that in all three countries there is some information about what "peer mentoring" entails. The majority of the interpreters think it is a specific way of giving or receiving feedback, more or less frequently, a rather informal relationship between someone who shares knowledge with a less experienced colleague. None of the respondents used the terms "mentor" and "mentee" (or protégé) to characterize the persons involved. The most commonly used terms were: accompany, support, feedback, advice, (self-) reflection, observation, exchange of experience, and role model. This shows that the difference between mentoring and peer mentoring is not always clear and that, at the moment, there is no clear distinction between the two terms in the interpreter communities in the three countries.

In the second part of the survey, which focused on current experiences in peer mentoring, the question was asked if the interpreters had actually experienced peer mentoring in their professional life. The following results were found: in Austria 61.9% and Italy 44% stated that they have already experienced peer mentoring during their professional career. In the Netherlands, the interpreter community has heard of the concept more often than interpreters in Austria and Italy, but the number of interpreters that actually experienced peer mentoring is lower, only 38.7%. The reason for this mismatch was explained in the additional comments that were given. The interpreters described their experience with peer mentoring mostly as feedback from interpreters who guided the student during their practical training, as working in a team, giving feedback after an assignment, as coaching of a colleague, or during interpreter meetings/ further education. These comments also indicate that the distinction between mentoring and peer mentoring is not clear. Shaffer and Watson (2004) give the following explanation for this phenomenon:

> "For the interpreting profession, mentoring has traditionally looked much like an apprenticeship: a master practitioner dispenses knowledge to a novice in order to mold them into an effective professional." (p. 77)

Shaffer and Watson point out that the group of interpreters seeking professional growth is very diverse and represents a wide spectrum of skills, backgrounds, and experiences. By definition, mentoring is a reciprocal relationship where both the mentor and mentee learn from each other. Therefore, the authors believe that it is time for a paradigm shift: from a "one-way" dynamic mentoring relationship to a "two-way" communication with an open heart and an open mind using a philosophical framework which asserts that every person has expertise and a means to make a contribution. The result is the Peer Mentoring Model, which meets the different needs in the field.

Peer Mentoring: The Future

In the previous section, the current situation in peer mentoring was characterized. The future possibilities and contemplations in peer mentoring of interpreters in Austria, Italy, and the Netherlands show a different picture than the current one. In Austria, only 9.5% of the interpreters expect to carry out the role of a mentor, 47.6% would prefer to be a mentee, and for 42.9% both roles are possible. In Italy and in the Netherlands, more than 50% of the interpreters see themselves taking both roles; they are equally ready to act as mentor or mentee.

Among Austrian, Dutch, and Italian interpreters, there is a high demand for a more structured and specific form of mentoring on a regular basis. They want a practical scheme with theoretical input, where support, improvement of their individual skills, and career development are combined. The theory would entail a foundation of how to provide mentoring to a colleague. In addition, many respondents mention their wish to be observed while working and to receive feedback on a specific question or on an issue they want to explore further. The majority admit that they are unaware of the effects of (peer) mentoring. Questions are raised by the respondents, such as what are the qualities of a mentor? How can I be mentor and colleague at the same time? How do I find a suitable mentor? And who is going to pay for mentoring service?

There are several aspects of mentoring which are considered to be important by the respondents and are all very similar in the three countries. The respondents emphasize that they would like the mentoring to be carried out on the basis of equality, openness, respect, and trust. There should be sufficient time for feedback which should be constructive and provided and received in a safe environment. Further aspects that the respondents mention include: advice, support, cooperation, and sharing.

The respondents of all three countries expect the following benefits from mentoring: improvement of their skills, constructive feedback, a better insight into their performance, increased awareness of their attitude, and further growth as a professional interpreter. Some of the Austrian interpreters expect prevention of "burnout" and reduction of emotional stress by analyzing their weaknesses and strengths. They hope for more self-assurance, higher motivation, and more fun on the job. The responses show that all of the expectations focus on the mentor bringing recognized expertise and experience and the mentee as the one who is seeking that knowledge. The roles are not seen as interchangeable. Shaffer and Watson (2004) describe this duality as follows:

> "The assumption is that mentees will achieve a definable and overt benefit, whereas any growth or wisdom that is achieved on the part of the mentor is incidental." (p. 78)

The possible benefits for mentors are not mentioned by the respondents. Walker (2003) stressed that mentoring is an advantage for both sides and that there are several benefits to the mentor too. Gordon and Magler (2007) confirmed that mentoring is not only for new interpreters. In fact, fully certified interpreters tend to have areas for which they would like or need further training, and for their own growth, they will seek additional support.

The interpreters in the three countries were asked to describe the qualities and skills of a good mentor. It is common sense among the respondents that the mentor play the role of active listener, empowerer, and facilitator allowing the mentee to explore their role in a personal and professional context. An effective mentor is seen as respectful, reliable, patient, trustworthy, a very good communicator, and a role model with a wealth of experience and excellent interpreting skills. In addition, the respondents mention that the mentor should be able to give constructive feedback and stimulate the mentee to the fullest. As Walker (2003) summarizes in his definition of an effective mentoring process:

> It is an opportunity for a Mentee to receive 'quality time' to focus on their development in the context of their work, career and ambitions. The Mentor will be experienced and knowledgeable about the issue in question and will allow the Mentee to develop his or her own line of questioning in which to find her/his own solution or coping strategy. (p. 18)

The respondents in all three countries view their contribution to this process as follows: willing to be supportive, sharing experience and knowledge, finding 'blind spots,' providing the mirror to others, being a role model, reflecting together, and giving support in ethical dilemmas.

The implementation of a mentoring system would support the profession in meeting the demands of sign language interpreters and maintaining standards. Thus, the respondents express their interest in establishing a mentoring network and their need for developing a mentor training program. Although the respondents are convinced of the benefits of realizing a mentor training program, the obstacles they foresee in realizing such a program are insufficient time and the lack of financial compensation for both the mentors and mentees.

Deaf Professionals as Mentors

Until today, limited research has been conducted on interpreters working with Deaf professionals (Bristoll 2009, Cook, 2004; Hauser & Hauser, 2008; Kale & Larson, 1998). Deaf professionals are persons who are Deaf and employed or who run their own business. In these employment or business settings they can regularly work together with one or more interpreters and develop a professional relationship other than using ad hoc interpreting services. The previously mentioned studies indicate the need for these designated interpreters and discuss the additional skill sets that interpreters must have to work with Deaf professionals. Interpreters and Deaf professionals who work together on a regular basis could also undertake peer mentoring together, being the mentor for each other.

The interpreters in Austria (57.1%), Italy (40%), and the Netherlands (51.6%) indicated that they regularly work with a Deaf professional. Of those regularly working with a Deaf professional, 59% (the Netherlands), 66% (Austria), and 80% (Italy) consider their cooperation as a form of mentoring. The majority of the respondents, in all three countries around 85%, believe that Deaf people can act as mentors to interpreters (e.g. in providing the Deaf consumer's view on sign language performance and Deaf culture aspects).

Interpreters also indicated a need for mentoring at a meta-level with the Deaf professional, such as on the interpreting process and matching the unique needs of the Deaf professional (e.g., networking requests and jargon, through specific interpreting and professional skills). They mentioned that a Deaf person as mentor would increase the understanding between interpreters and Deaf persons and provide insight in each other's work and related needs, possibilities, and limitations. Examples mentioned were the feedback from the Deaf person as an expert on sign language and desired social interaction skills with Deaf persons. The end result is a close cooperation between the interpreter and the Deaf professional to ensure the most effective communication in the professional setting.

Following the outcome of the survey, three Deaf professionals were asked if they see the possibilities of Deaf professionals as mentors, or as peer mentors with sign language interpreters. The Deaf respondents suggested several models that they considered feasible. First, the Deaf professional acting as a mentor to a novice interpreter to assist in further developing the newly obtained skills. Second, the Deaf professional and the interpreter as a combined mentoring team to students during their practical placement. Third, peer mentoring with an experienced interpreter to fine-tune their cooperation and optimize communication in the interpreting setting.

The Deaf professionals confirmed that the suggestions from the interpreters, that Deaf professionals serving as mentors could provide feedback concerning sign language skills and Deaf culture, but also in regard to the comprehensibility of the interpreted concepts into

sign language. The three Deaf professionals indicated that an exchange of views between the interpreter and the Deaf professional is essential in order to improve the cooperation between them. In addition, they mentioned the need for further research on the concept of mentoring between Deaf professionals and interpreters.

According to two of the Deaf professionals, the interpreters they would work with would need additional skills sets, such as knowledge of the Deaf professional's background, related jargon, communication style, as well as their specific demands. One Deaf professional mentioned, "If the interpreter possesses these additional skills, this would save time and make my work also more effective." The second Deaf professional said:

> "If I work with the same interpreter regularly, my expectations on the interpreter's skills rise. I then assume a faster understanding of concepts and thus lesser time needed to prepare the interpreting assignment. In addition, in my experience the interpretation has then a more natural flow and is less tense."

The interpreters and Deaf professionals indicated that a common theoretical and practical framework for mentoring must be created if Deaf persons and interpreters are to be peer mentors. It was suggested that this can be realized through a tailor-made training where interpreters and Deaf professionals participate, but also where Deaf professionals can train other Deaf professionals to become mentors.

In Austria and Italy, the interpreters would like to see the interpreter association carry out this training, which is not the case with the Dutch interpreters. All the interpreters in Italy, the Netherlands, and Austria do think that this form of training should be recognized as further professional education.

Conclusion

This chapter reported on the outcomes of a survey on the mentoring needs of sign language interpreters in Austria, Italy, and the Netherlands. The chapter investigated the concepts of mentoring, peer mentoring, and the Deaf professional as mentor.

Considering earlier European studies carried out by the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (2003 & 2010), it was assumed that the 108 interpreters participating in the survey would express a need for mentoring. Less than half of all the respondents reported a good successful transition from their formal education to their professional life as an interpreter. As a consequence, the results of the survey indicated that the majority of the respondents would like to see more mentoring opportunities being offered, and a specific interest was shown in peer mentoring. The current interpreters mentioned that only a limited number of programs, if any at all, in mentoring are now offered to working professional interpreters in their countries. There are a range of mentoring opportunities for students who carry out their practicum placements, but very few or none for working interpreters.

The concept of peer mentoring was presented to the participating interpreters in the survey. The respondents mostly indicated that the concept of peer mentoring would match their needs and interests. At the same time, the interpreters expressed their concern on the feasibility of peer mentoring, due to the lack of awareness, training, and proper remuneration to carry out peer mentoring. To solve this dilemma, a first step can be taken by the interpreters or related organizations for interpreters, to establish a mentoring program. Hawkings & Walker (2008) provide steps on how to establish such a program, which they call a mentoring scheme. This literature could assist in investigating the next steps from demand to real

opportunities in terms of mentoring in sign language interpreting. The respondents indicated that mentoring is very much needed for existing interpreters to maintain but also improve the standards of the profession.

In the last part of the chapter, a first step was taken to investigate the possibilities of Deaf professionals and interpreters in peer mentoring. The majority of the interpreters and the three interviewed Deaf professionals see an opportunity in improving their cooperation and skills through peer mentoring. In order for this concept to be successful, both parties mentioned the need to develop a specific training with a common theoretical and practical framework. This framework should be based on further research and on existing studies and best practices on mentoring and cooperation between Deaf professionals and interpreters.

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through several iterations. There are members of the supervision leading team that are scattered around the nation, thus eliminating the option of all getting together face-to-face. The initial training was a "hybrid" event in which most of the participants were face-to-face and then a few joined via distance technology. The drawback to this was that the folks on video were often overlooked or an afterthought to what was happening in the room. Primarily, we work synchronously, and we have utilized Google Hangouts to accommodate this format. With the use of Google Hangouts we connected via video, allowing for speech or sign or both to be used throughout the supervision process. There is a text chat feature allowing for "side" conversations, clarifications, or additions to the discussion, and there is a means for all sharing a single Google Doc, collaborating in text to capture the case. All of these features have made the leap to distance supervision not only possible but also equally as beneficial, in a different way, as face-to-face supervision. Through trial and error we have found that the groups function best if everyone is using the same format - all online or all face-to-face. Hybrid groups have been less successful and less collaborative in nature.

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The previous examples speak directly to current projects in mentoring at a distance in the field of interpreting. While the concept of mentoring at a distance may be relatively new to the field of interpreting, it is not a new concept for pre-service teachers. Much of the research on e-mentoring currently focuses on emerging programs that offer distance mentoring opportunities for pre-service teachers. McAleer and Bangert (2011) designed a mentoring program for new science and mathematics teachers in the hopes of improving retention. Through the use of discussion forums and a collaborative, dialogue-driven environment, they found that mentors' activity level did positively relate to perceived professional growth. Beginning research which points to the positive construction of mentoring experiences for professional growth can help lead us down a path of effective mentoring practices for improved practice and further development of communities.

The platform in which the practice of mentoring at a distance may take place can vary from weekly meetings via Skype to sitting in a library reviewing pre-recorded videos for analysis, to sharing experiences and information on a collaborative Glogster project. The process of building knowledge and experiences through technology is not defined simply by the type of technology, but must also consider the various strategies for learning in a digital environment and the ways in which we construct these opportunities. Additionally, by having an identified purpose to reshape our ways of thinking and define our chance for success of learning at a distance, we increase our chances for success.

Conclusion

While research on mentoring at a distance does exist in the field, it does call for an updated context, considering the swift movement of Web 2.0-based synchronous and asynchronous tools and emerging research in mentoring at a distance. As the practice of mentoring becomes increasingly relevant to the profession, so too does providing opportunities to reach those professionals, novice and beyond, who do not have direct physical access to organizations, colleges/universities, and colleagues.

We are in an age where maximizing our resources and sharing our experiences for the advancement of the community is critical for success. We have the opportunity to grow and

learn from one another through improved discourse and to significantly shift in our way of thinking when it comes to mentoring at a distance. This only happens from developing communities of learning that allow for professionals to collaborate through discussion and scaffold learning through shared knowledge and reflective practice.

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