

The Mentoring Role for Maritime Cadets' Guidance in Seafaring Carrier

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Abstract: This article is a result of a joint research conducted by the international team of SEAMENTORS project "SEafarers Experiential Knowledge Based MENTORS", project no. 2021-1-RO01-KA220-VET-000029622, (www.seamentors.eu), implemented under Erasmus+ KA220 Vocational Education and Training, by Romanian Naval Academy (coordinator), Lithuanian Maritime Academy, Bulgarian Naval Academy, Polish Naval Academy, Spinaker Co and Maritime Innovators. According to the project objectives, the research team has concluded a survey study, applied on the cadets' and professionals' perception, aiming to disclose the importance of the mentorship programs during the cadetship training stages at sea. For this purpose, the authors have developed a KAP Survey Model (Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices questionnaire), seeking to collect the opinions and to analyse the impact of mentorship practices onboard the commercial and military ships. In compliance with the STCW standards, STW 44/3/2 Leadership and Teamwork, HTW 5/3/2 Leadership and Managerial Skills, correlated with HTW 5.3.5 Crisis management and human behaviour training, as developed under the supervision of the Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping, the study is revealing in its concluding remarks, the role of mentoring for assuring an effective and smooth insertion of seafaring professionals onboard the ships, in balance with educational, training and coaching operational dimensions.

Keywords: STCW, Professional life, Training.

1. Introduction

The SEAMENTORS, project no. 2021-1-RO01-KA220-VET-000029622, "SEafarers Experiential Knowledge Based MENTORS" (www.seamentors.eu), has been implemented within the framework of Erasmus+ KA220 Vocational Education and Training strategic partnerships, under Romanian Naval Academy coordination, joining 3 universities (Polish Naval Academy,

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Bulgarian Naval Academy and Lithuanian Maritime Academy) and 2 organisations. The major objective of the project, was from the beginning to cover one of the major gaps from academic to the professional life, namely the access of the graduates to the experiential knowledge in the maritime field, smoothing the transition from theory to practice, from descriptive to applicative sides of the training. Then, the joint partners aimed to create a platform for seafarers' career development at sea and ashore, by sharing experiential knowledge for the benefit of such training, providing an environment for counselling, and mentoring in carrier path to facilitate the transition to the professional life at sea, onboard the ships.

As part of the project, the authors have aimed to identify both the perception of cadets and young graduates regarding the mentorship value and impact, collecting their opinions about what this designed platform should bring as services for embarked cadets. The survey has been distributed through SeaMentors's project partners within various social media applications including the website (<https://www.seamentors.eu/questionnaires.html>, <https://marplat.eu/mod/url/view.php?id=559> and <https://forms.gle/piewSmMhk9kiYsy59>), LinkedIn, Facebook, ADL platform (<https://marplat.eu/course/view.php?id=50>) and direct email notices. The survey had been submitted by applicants throughout a period of 6 months, during March 2023 – October 2023.

2. Literature review

The concept of mentoring and the scientific depiction of mentoring process in its complex and dynamic determination, call for two distinctive approaches: an empirical approach, related to the mentorship implementation in practice within different professional domains and the scientific approach, drawn as an integrative perspective, highlighted by systematic studies in the specialized literature [1, 2, 7, 9].

Referring to the first category of arguments, the term of mentoring originates in the ancient times, the mentor being the central mythological character, masterfully described even by Homer in his work, the *Odyssey* [2, 6]. Homer may have chosen the name Mentor because, translated from the ancient Greek, it means "to counsel, to think, to remember" [2, 4]. Therefore, the Mentor, has been seen from the past centuries as the wise counsellor who guides and protects the mentees in the profession and not only, considered as a symbol of moral authority, a landmark of the professional excellence, a prior example to be followed [1, 13, 16].

The second path of mentoring process approach is the scientific axiological perspective, the most often versions being focused on leadership

area [11, 12] or on the psychological mechanisms to achieve learning contexts or, rather, contexts of psychological growth with an implicit impact against the professional adjustments in the carrier path [3, 7]. In the current sociocultural context, the education system promotes as a systematic model of training and education cognitive learning of a pedagogical type, centred on the transmission, assimilation of information and the acquisition of multidisciplinary skills, a formative process that mainly refers to the transformative evolution of the psychic structures assigned to the cognitive, affective, volitional, or cognitive dimensions [5, 8, 10, 14].

Moreover, the process of continuous adult learning, based on the exploration and experimentation of life situations, can be encountered as a continuous training courses, when the employee will assume norms, values, rules on the spot of work, as a disciple of a professional, following the model of a formal or informal chosen mentor [6, 15, 16].

3. Study methodology

In order to identify the actual perceptions of the cadets and young officers regarding the role and impact of mentorship programs onboard the ships, the authors as SeaMentors project team members, have developed a survey, to be submitted on the focus group of maritime students and your practitioners enrolled of graduates of the partners universities within the project framework, namely the Romanian Naval Academy, the Polish Naval Academy, the Bulgarian Naval Academy and the Lithuanian Maritime Academy.

The survey was conceived as a KAP type of survey, aiming to depict the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding the mentorship programs. Following the research imperatives, the questions were targeted the general frame of onboard formal and informal mentoring, to reveal the general perceptions but also the barriers to, as well as the major drivers of the best practice, at sea and on shore. The survey has been validated by direct interviews conducted with cadets and professionals in maritime field, during the project implementation, the video testimonials, being briefed in an online mentoring library, to be accessed on <https://www.seamentors.eu/library.html>.

As structure, the survey consists in 16 qualitative items and the structure has been centered on 5 groups of items chosen in direct connection to the project research objectives, as following:

a. Group definition and validation (4 items) – to classify and to group the respondents of the survey in the right categories;

b. Mentoring definition – study on mentorship perception and attitudes (3 items), designated to reveal the cadets feel of sense of experiences impact in relation with the mentorship program;

c. Mentorship experience (5 items) dedicated to the analysis of the seafaring practices in implementing mentorship programs, formally or informally onboard the ships;

d. Mentorship impact and way to go (4 items) group of questions has designed to reveal on perceptive level, the mentorship impact in professional carrier and the way to go.

The selected participants to this survey were cadets and young officers, classified on their university of origin, speciality, gender and experience accordingly. To be considered as valid, there was a pre-requirement for experience, consisting in a minimum of two months onboard ship serving as cadet, and a maximum of 12 months as 3rd Officer/Engineer/ETO in short or deep-sea voyages, in case of young officers. The cadets' responses to the addressed questions were both collected, from navy and merchant fleet.

In the pursued study, 290 questionnaires were distributed, while 262 valid responses were collected with a response rate of 90 percent. The following Table 1 shows the respondents' profile of the survey.

Table 1 - Profile of respondents.

Variables	Categories	Frequency
Designation	Deck Cadet	92
	Engine Cadet	58
	Electrical Cadet	16
	3rd Officer	15
	3rd Engineer	22
	Electro -Technical Officer (ETO)	3
	Navy Cadet	56
Education	High School	68
	College	65
	University Graduate	93
	Post-graduate (Master)	30
	Post-graduate (PhD)	6
Total respondents		262

There was a total of 262 responses collected, out of which 222 (84.7%) were cadets respondents and 40 (15.3%) were young officers respondents. From a total of 222 responding Cadets, 25% were Navy cadets and 75% were merchant fleet cadets. In Table 2 is depicted the nationality pools for the survey participants – then, 9 different nationalities were represented, were Polish and Romanian respondents were dominant for most of the categories.

From 262 respondents, 33% were Romanians, 34% Polish, 22% Turkish and 7% Bulgarian, the pool of respondents being focused on the partners' origin countries involved in SeaMentors project implementation. For concluding on distinctive categories with peculiar features, the respondents were grouped in Navy and merchant fleet representatives, as depicted in Figure 2. The data from the figure below, shows that 78.6% from respondents represents merchant fleet and 21.4% were from Navy.

Table 2 - Respondents' nationalities.

Nationality	Categories	Frequency
Romania	Deck Cadet	29
	Engine Cadet	20
	Electrical Cadet	14
	3rd Officer	4
	3rd Engineer	16
	ETO	1
	Navy Cadet	3
Poland	Deck Cadet	11
	Engine Cadet	28
	3rd Officer	1
	3rd Engineer	2
	Navy Cadet	49
Bulgaria	Deck Cadet	9
	Engine Cadet	4
	Electrical Cadet	2
	3rd Officer	1
	ETO	1
	Navy Cadet	3
Turkey	Deck Cadet	41
	Engine Cadet	5
	3rd Officer	8
	3rd Engineer	2
	ETO	1
	Navy Cadet	1
Norway	Engine Cadet	1
Uruguay	Deck Cadet	2
India	3rd Officer	1
Scotland	3rd Engineer	1
Ukraine	3rd Engineer	1

The distribution of cadets and young officers on departments/specialty as shown in Figure 1 is dominated by deck professionals (52%), but the engine (39%) and electric (9%) departments are represented, too.

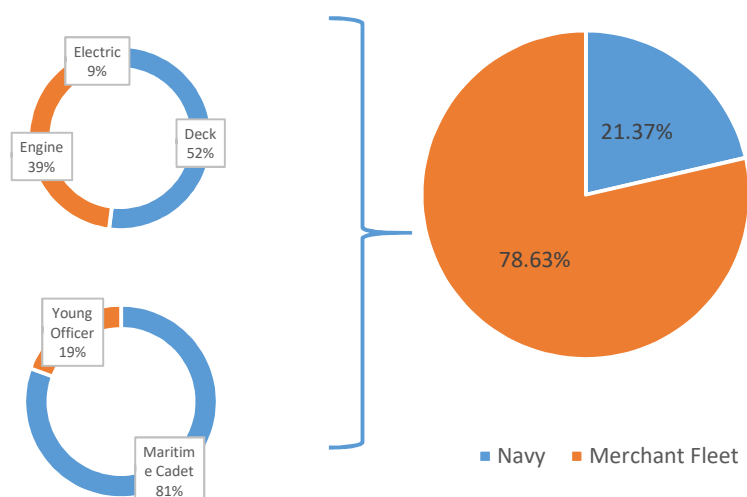


Fig. 1 - The KAP respondents' distribution.

4. Survey analysis and interpretations

The KAP survey had been administrated by different platform sources, the collected replies being related in a database, from which the authors have extracted the validated answers. The major sources of replies collection were online, following the next threads: <https://www.seamentors.eu/questionnaires.html>, <https://marplat.eu/mod/url/view.php?id=559> and <https://forms.gle/piewSmMhk9kiYsy59>. The mean of responding options were on the focus of the study conclusions development, each item conducting to the qualitative interpretations depicted as in the following lines. Also, the interpretations were validated by more than a hundred of interviews conducted with cadets and professionals in maritime field, under the project team members guidance during the project implementation, several of statements being caught in the video testimonials, saved on the project platform: <https://www.seamentors.eu/library.html>. Therefore the below interpretations, as the final conclusions are taking under consideration both, the qualitative majority of survey replies, but also the validation through direct interviews.

4.1. Item 1: Have you participated in other mentoring programs in the past?

As shown in Figure 2, about 67% of respondents confirmed that they were participated to a mentoring program, a formal one, in the past, most of the responses of participants referring to both formal and informal mentoring programs. The informal mentoring process is considered in the literature as being more organic, unstructured and “bottom-up” with individuals developing a mentoring relationship amongst themselves to offer support from a personal and skills development perspective [9].

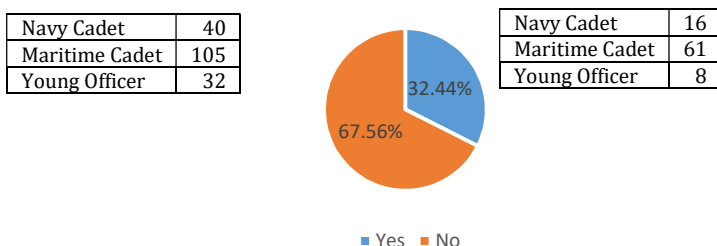


Fig. 2 - Distribution of respondents' attendance to a mentoring program.

The distribution of participants responses showed that mentoring program (formal or/and informal) is used in merchant fleet and Navy. 82% of respondents that participated to a mentoring program are cadets, both Navy and merchant. But, in the same time, 91% of respondents that answer “no” to the question are cadets, too. In conclusion, looking at the data from above figure, it can be said that is possible that some navigation companies or onboard navy ship, when a cadet or a young officer was embarked on ship it was designated formally, one of the members of crew, as a training officer.

Results interpretation. As determined due to the conducted interviews, most of navigation companies or Navy units, are assigning one of the crew members, as a training officer for newly embarked cadets or young officer embracing the informal type of mentorship [5].

4.2. Item 2: What is mentoring at sea to you?

Cadets and young officers were asked what represents the mentoring at sea for them. They had to choose from 6 available answer options. Top 3 of their choices is available in Figure 3.

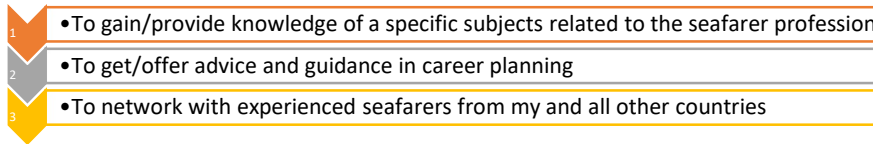


Fig. 3 - Top 3 answers of mentoring at sea definition.

On the first place of their responses with 38.17% was to "gain/provide knowledge of a specific subjects related to the seafarer profession", followed by "to get/offer advice and guidance in career planning" (18.32%) and, on third place, by "network with experienced seafarers" (16.41%). Therefore, mentoring at sea for cadets and young officers means more importance to acquaintance contents related to their next jobs onboard ship than get/provide guidance for recruitment and selection processes. A detailed distribution of respondents' responses is showed in Figure 4.

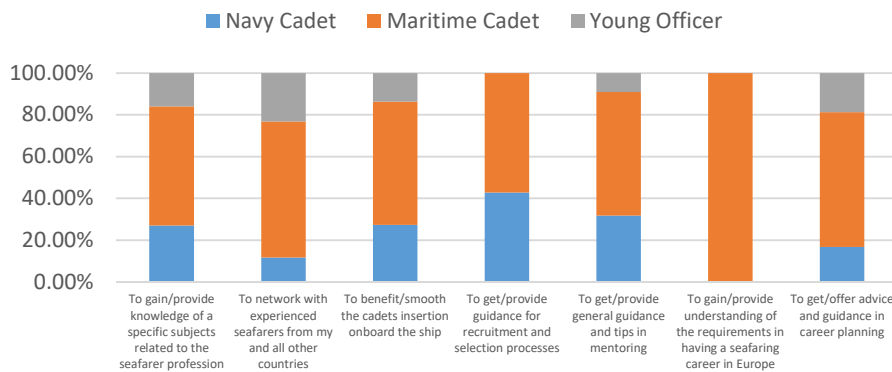


Fig. 4 - Distribution of responses, by categories.

Mentoring at sea for Navy cadet are important to gain/provide knowledge of a specific subjects related to the seafarer profession, to get/offer advice and guidance in career planning and to get/provide general guidance and tips in mentoring. Maritime cadets and young officers' choices for what means mentoring at sea are: to gain/provide knowledge of a specific subjects related to the seafarer profession, to get/offer advice and guidance in career planning and network with experienced seafarers.

Results interpretation. Mentoring at sea for cadets and young officers means more importance to acquaintance contents related to their next jobs onboard ship than get/provide guidance for recruitment and selection processes.

4.3. Item 3: What topics are likely to be approached by your mentor during a potential mentorship program to be part in?

Another question asked participants about topics are likely to be approached by mentor during a potential mentorship program to be part in. The top 5 of the received responses can be found in Figure 5.

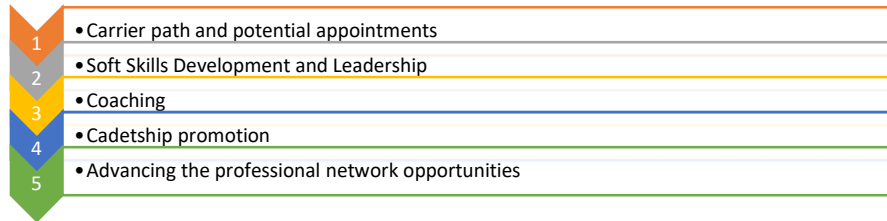


Fig. 5 - Top 5 topics likely to be approached in a mentoring program.

From respondents' replies has resulted that the carrier path and the potential appointments are the first choices in the topics likely to be approached by a mentor. Soft skills development and leadership, coaching, cadetship promotion or advancing the professional network opportunities were the following topics, considered important by cadets and young officers to be approached in a mentorship program.

The distribution of topics likely to be approached in a mentoring program, by category, is depicted in Table 3. Navy cadets are more interested in topics like soft skills development and leadership, cadetship promotion or carrier path and potential appointments. Topics like carrier path and potential appointments are more important for merchant fleet respondents (27.9%), cadets and young officers. Also, maritime cadets (24.4%), would be interested in coaching while young officers (27.5%) could be engaged in topic like soft skills development and leadership.

Table 3 - Distribution topics likely approached in a mentoring program, by category.

Topics	Frequency		
	Navy Cadet	Maritime Cadet	Young Officer
Cadetship promotion	13	28	5
Advancing the professional network opportunities	1	12	3
Carrier path and potential appointments	10	44	13
Soft Skills Development and Leadership	22	29	11
Coaching	5	40	2
Career Counselling	3	4	4
Cultural Aspects	-	1	1
Interview in job market	1	4	1
Publications and presentations	1	2	-

Results interpretation. Mentoring is perceived differently by the cadets, who are oriented toward the basic professional levels, inclined to coaching approaches, while the young officers are more focused on skills and abilities development.

4.4. Item 4: Who is more suitable to be a mentor?

The survey sought to identify the range of rank positions onboard the ship or onshore, that could be more suitable to be mentor for cadets/interns or young officers, as shown in Figure 6. More than 72% of survey participants considered that managerial positioned professionals are more competent to be mentors, while 27% believed that operational position onboard ship are better.

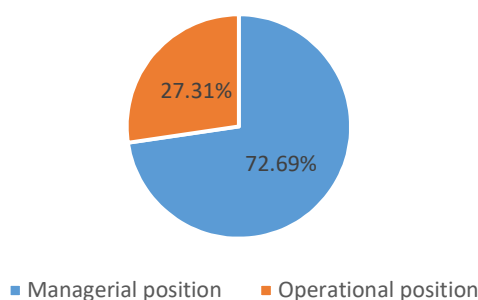


Fig. 6 - Who is more suitable to be mentor.

As confirmed by the interviewed professionals, whatever mentor's position, the time availability is the main barrier for mentoring and learning onboard ship (see the online library: <https://www.seamentors.eu/library.html>). Crew members are already stretched in their roles and therefore have no time to teach or mentor cadets or the new employees.

Results interpretation. Therefore, adding the survey conclusions to the interviews' opinions, can be stated that no matter the mentor's position, the time availability is considered the main barrier for mentoring and learning onboard ship. The respondent's options can be referred to lack of trust in the ability or experience of the above rank and therefore less expectations to learn from them. Although, based on the followed interviews conducted in during the project but also as drawn from mentorship meetings organized by the partners (<https://www.seamentors.eu/library.html>), the cadets

declared that would rather prefer young mentors, instead of experienced officers.

4.5. Item 5: Which factors would effectively stimulate the mentorship understanding or mentoring program implementation?

Cadets and young officers had to choose factors that would stimulate the mentorship understanding or enable the mentoring program implementation. The top 5 choices are available in Figure 7.

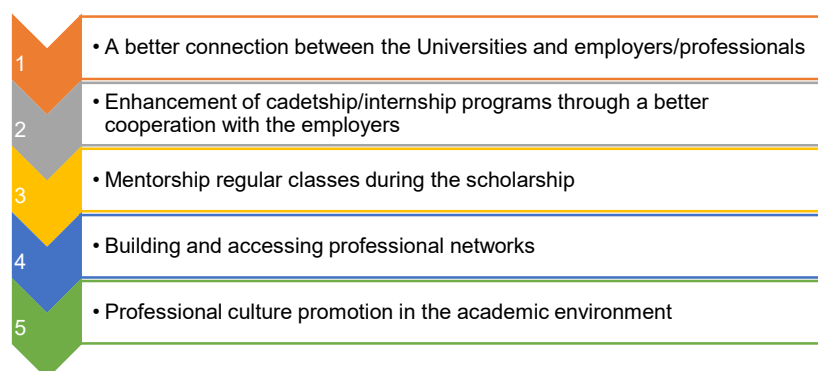


Fig. 7 - Top 5 factors likely to enable a mentoring program implementation.

On the first place, respondents consider that a better connection between the universities and employers/professionals would be a stimulative factor for an effective implementation of mentoring program. The second and third options, enhancement of cadetship/internship programs through a better cooperation with the employers and mentorship regular classes during the scholarship, are strong related with first one and these three factors comprise 61.5% from all responses.

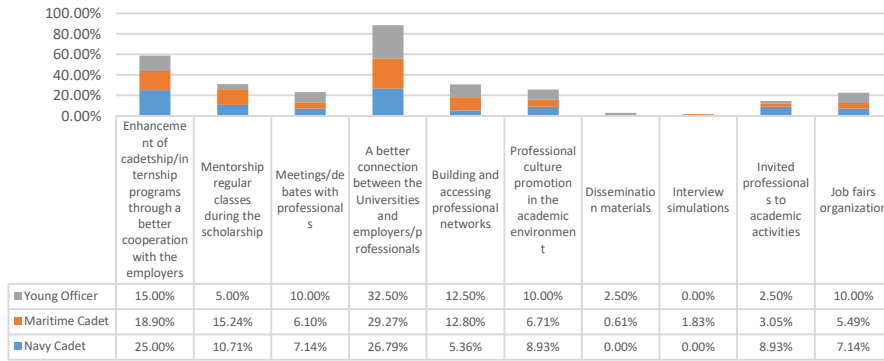


Fig. 8 - Distribution of factors that would stimulate a mentoring program implementation, by category.

First two options of the respondents are the same for all categories as showed in Figure 8. Building and accessing professional networks, professional culture promotion in the academic environment or invited professionals to the academic activities are factors that showed Universities the importance of career counselling and guidance for their students. That's the perfect context for organizing activities related to maritime industry.

Results interpretation. Building and facilitating professional networks, the promotion of professional culture in the academic environment or invited professionals to the academic activities are factors that showed the importance of career counselling and guidance for their students during the studies.

4.6. Item 6: Which are the most positive outcomes that you would experience valuing the relationship with the mentor

Positive outcomes of a mentoring program as cadets and young officer are valuing is highlight in Figure 9. More than 34% of respondents said that improvement of soft skills as communication, leadership, team work, stress management are very important outcomes of a relationship with the mentor.

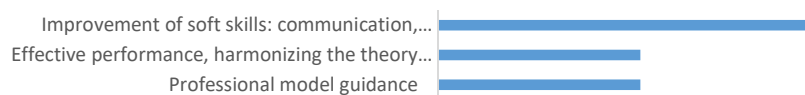


Fig. 9 - Top 3 most positive outcomes in a mentoring program.

Therefore, the mentor can provide support for cadets/interns or for young officers by providing the lessons learnt in practice in completion to the theory or by providing a professional model guidance. The distribution of most positive outcomes identified from the literature review as being the most relevant during or after a mentoring program, has been depicted by category are shown in Table 4 [5, 6, 7, 17, 18].

Table 4 - Distribution of most positive outcomes from a mentoring program, by category.

Topics	Frequency		
	Navy Cadet	Maritime Cadet	Young Officer
Improvement of soft skills: communication, leadership, team work, stress management etc.	22.92%	70.83%	6.25%
Effective performance, harmonizing the theory with practice	20.00%	57.78%	22.22%
Professional model guidance	18.75%	72.92%	8.33%
Enhancement of confidence	15.00%	67.50%	17.50%
More efficient insertion in the first job	33.33%	46.67%	20.00%
Stimulation of job resilience	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%

For Navy cadets, a mentor would help in providing a smoother and more efficient insertion in the first appointment. In other perspective, about 10% of maritime cadets consider that a positive outcome of having a mentor is significantly enhanced by trust and confidence. About 15% of young officers considered the mentorship as an opportunity for job resilience stimulation. All factors mentioned above are very important for the company, since a positive outcome could be the loyalty assurance to mentees in relation with the employers.

Results interpretation. For seafaring cadets, a mentor would help in providing a smoother and more efficient insertion in the first appointment having a mentor is significantly enhanced by trust and confidence, whilst the young officers considered the mentorship as an opportunity for job resilience stimulation.

4.7. Item 7: Which factors do you consider that are actively hampering the mentorship successful implementation during the cadetship or internship programs?

The factors considered as actively hampering the mentorship successful implementation during the cadetship/internship programs, have been explored in the literature review as in the survey, the participants being asked to highlights the most relevant from them [14, 15]. Then, the 5 most cited responses have been reflected in Figure 10.

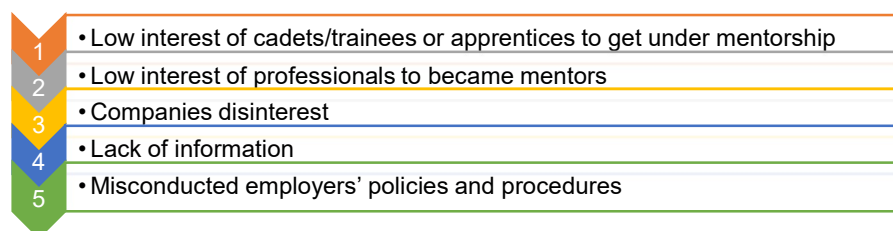


Fig. 10 - Top 5 factors considered as actively hampering the mentorship successful implementation.

The factors as "low interest of cadets/trainees or apprentices to get under mentorship", or the "low interest of professionals to become mentors" are on the first places with more than 50% of collected responses. Poor levels of cadets' and young officers' motivation were sometimes a concern for mentors who suggested that they were more likely to help those ones who were carrying to help themselves. Time is a precious resource at sea and the lack of free time can restrict the mentoring effective implementation. Therefore, it can be a significant reason explaining the low interest of master/chief officer/chief engineer to become mentors. There is an interesting distribution of responses between navy cadets and maritime cadets as showed in Table 5.

Table 5 - Distribution of factors considered actively hampering the mentorship successful implementation, by category.

Topics	Frequency		
	Navy Cadet	Maritime Cadet	Young Officer
Low interest of cadets/trainees or apprentices to get under mentorship	42.86%	19.51%	52.50%
Low interest of professionals to become mentors	0.00%	35.37%	0.00%
Companies disinterest	16.07%	18.29%	10.00%
Lack of information	17.86%	10.98%	22.50%
Misconducted employers' policies and procedures	19.64%	9.76%	12.50%

Thereby, more than 35% of maritime cadets responded that the low interest of professionals to become mentors is the main factor acting against the mentorship successful implementation during cadetship program, when

42% of Navy cadets considered the low interest of cadets/trainees or apprentices to get under mentorship as the most important factor affecting the mentorship efficiency.

Results interpretation. Poor levels of cadets' and young officers' motivation are a real concern for mentors who suggested that they were more likely to help those ones who were carrying to help themselves (self-development orientation). Time is a precious resource at sea and the lack of free time can restrict the mentoring effective implementation, therefore, it can be a significant reason explaining the low interest of master/chief officer/chief engineer to become mentors.

4.8. Item 8: In which professional dimensions, the mentorship could better serve and contribute to the next generation of professional development?

Cadets and young officers were asked to identify professional dimensions that mentorship could better serve, in order to contribute to the next generation of professional development. In Table 6 the received responses were depicted, by category, being completed by the suggested topics collected from literature review [10, 11].

Cadets' and young officers' responses showed that the respondents are acknowledge by the importance of technical skills improvement and it is a fact that a proper mentorship can lead to the achievement of professional tasks. Although, the respondents do not consider that the job retention can be seen as a result facilitated by a successfully mentoring program.

Table 6 - Distribution of professional dimensions, by category.

Topics	Frequency		
	Navy Cadet	Maritime Cadet	Young Officer
Technical skills improvement	51.79%	42.07%	37.50%
Quality culture and appetite for excellence	5.36%	13.41%	27.50%
Work culture	10.71%	16.46%	7.50%
Leadership culture	10.71%	13.41%	5.00%
Enhanced motivation and job satisfaction for entry level	14.29%	8.54%	7.50%
Gender management and diversity management	1.79%	4.88%	10.00%
Retention in the maritime sector	5.36%	1.22%	5.00%

Results interpretation. The cadets considered more inclined to attribute the mentorship merits for improving the professional technical and leadership skills. The respondents do not consider that the job retention can

be seen as a significant result facilitated by a successfully mentoring program.

4.9. Item 9: Would you consider to maintain contact with your mentor after the mentoring program ends?

Another question in survey was about the option preference for maintaining the contact with the mentor, after the end of the mentoring program. The slides in Figure 11 shows that only 22.5% of respondents wouldn't maintain the contact with their mentors.

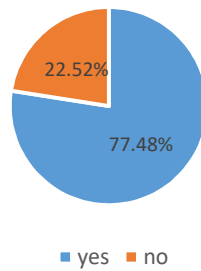


Fig. 11 - The option to maintain contact with the mentor after the mentorship program ends.

If the responses are correlated with the conclusions from previous question, by which 32% of respondents confirmed that had participated in a mentoring program in the past, then it can be concluded that maybe some of the interviewed cadets had a bad experience with their mentor. In these cases a more careful attention for selecting the right person to be assigned on this informal position as model for young officers, would be required, as part of the organisational culture.

Results interpretation. When over 77% of respondents believe that mentoring can be a long-term investment even when mentorship program ends, then the relationship between the mentor and mentee can be considered as a supportive tool, which would positively affect all future stages of career development.

4.10. Item 10: Which of the following services and options are you think that are most suitable for the SEA MENTOR platform to offer?

One of the objectives of SeaMentors project is to develop an online training platform for cadets in direct connection to the mentorship network

and tools. Therefore, participants were asked to contribute, by selecting the services and options that are most suitable for the SeaMentors platform (www.seamentors.eu). Top 5 of their choices are depicted below, in Figure 12.

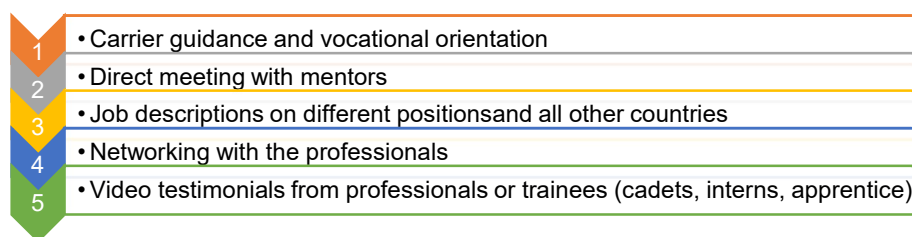


Fig. 12 - Top 5 of most suitable services to be considered as options for SeaMentors project platform design (www.seamentors.eu).

Almost half of responses indicated carrier guidance and vocational orientation and direct meeting with mentors as most valuable services for a mentorship web platform. Other services as job descriptions on different positions or networking with the professionals are interesting for cadets and young officers, too (Table 7).

There are some differences in top 3 choices of suitable services observed, comparing the Navy cadet options versus the maritime cadets/young officers replies. Navy cadets considered that the direct contact or the online meetings with the mentors are the most efficient services to be facilitated through the mentorship platform, while the merchant cadets and young officers had dominantly opted out for carrier guidance and vocational orientation online tools.

Table 7 - Distribution of most suitable services to be considered for SeaMentors project platform development, by category.

Topics	Frequency		
	Navy Cadet	Maritime Cadet	Young Officer
Carrier guidance and vocational orientation	14.29%	26.83%	27.50%
Direct meeting with mentors	26.79%	25.61%	10.00%
Job descriptions on different positions	16.07%	9.76%	15.00%
Networking with the professionals	10.71%	11.59%	7.50%
Video testimonials from professionals or trainees (cadets, interns, apprentice)	5.36%	8.54%	10.00%
Interview – selection/recruitment methods, techniques	7.14%	7.32%	7.50%
Training course on mentorship topics	12.50%	4.88%	2.50%
Dissemination/informing materials from sector	1.79%	3.05%	15.00%
Forum for open discussion and chat	5.36%	2.44%	5.00%

Results interpretation. The cadets indicated the carrier guidance, vocational orientation and the direct meeting with mentors as being the most valuable services to be inclined for a mentorship web platform. Other services as job descriptions on different positions or networking with the professionals are interesting for cadets and young officers, too.

4.11. Item 11: Do you have other comments or suggestions regarding this program improvement?

The last topic on the survey sought to collect some suggestions or comments regarding the mentorship program. The received comments and suggestions are shown in Figure 13.

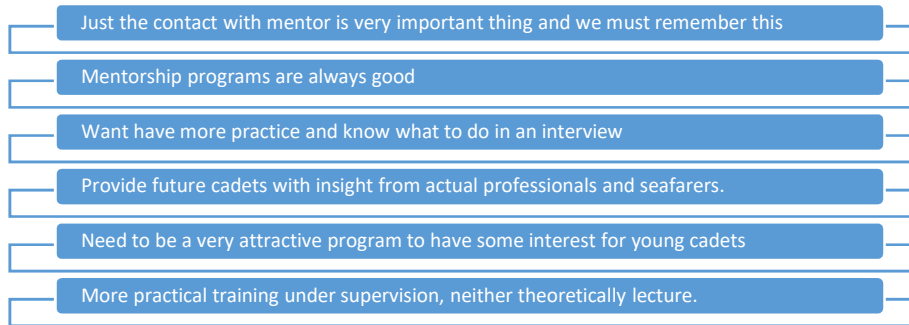


Fig. 13 - Received comments and suggestions.

5. Concluding remarks

The survey has highlighted that some shipping companies have already invested consistent resources for mentoring programs implementation, although these are only few and the progress is just incipient so far. In order to enhance these programs, to be further recognized as priority for an effective transition of the cadets toward the professional onboard life, the support for mentoring programs should be encouraged and actively driven by the shipping companies and by the crewing agencies, in particular. If this mentorship programs would be correlated with the academic programs, then the efficiency could find a more efficient focus on harmonizing the theory in practice. The lack of formal mentoring schemes is resulting in an enhancement of the informal mentoring as the most often type of onboard guidance for newcomers in the profession.

In the boundaries of the present survey analysis but supported by the interviews qualitative results, limited by the selected pool of respondents,

the survey conclusions have suggested that an effective mentoring program may provide the following positive results:

- the assurance of technical and non-technical skills and knowledge support for trainees during the first voyages as newcomers in the profession;

- offers active support to the cadets by encouragement, motivation, industry experience, career development advice and networking opportunities;

- recognizes the need for masters and officers to take charge of their teams, with an early involvement attitude, in terms of communication, leadership and professional skills development.

Seeking to valorise the cadets' and young officers' collected responses and suggestions, regarding the services and options considered as being the most suitable for an online mentorship platform (see Figure 12), the project team has designed and developed the web platform for SeaMentors project in its structure and content (<https://seamentors.eu>). Therefore, the website comprises in its structure a carrier guidance and vocational orientation portal, a list of mentors for direct meetings facilitation, a set of job descriptions for different appointments onboard ship, video testimonials from professionals or trainees (cadets, young officers, chief, master etc) and various dissemination materials from maritime industry sector, seeking to become an useful orientation tool for the young graduates in their transition toward the professional life in the maritime domain.

Anticipatory, the following surveys applied to the professionals within the SeaMentors project, analysed together with the applied interviews with potential mentors, have revealed the following imperatives to be developed in the seafaring graduates' profiles:

- *resilience (stress management, diluted sensitivity);*

- *authority understanding (both leadership and followship);*

- *self-discipline (i.e. keep the routine, sleep management) ;*

- *flexibility in equipment acquaintance (basics tech fundamentals and principles);*

- *adaptive based self-development (self-study, autonomy in learning);*

- *multiculturality skills (accommodating in an international team);*

- *diversity management (gender/diversity perspectives).*

All these features are to be depicted in further research article of the authors in the concluding phase of the project.

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