

Mentoring-values and profiles in primary and preschool education.

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<https://doi.org/10.52744/AUCSFLSA.2024.01.12>

Abstract

Because few schools consistently provide a sustainable preparation for the school of the future and for life, it takes a person to make us see, learn and apply what we cannot see, learn, apply on our own. More precisely, an experienced person, willing to share real personal creative experience, for the benefit of other people, of the institution in which he integrates through a relationship based on management, on respect and trust, on superior knowledge, on existing legislation, on intuition and self-created opportunities. This person is the leader, the coach and even the mentor. The field is naturally called leadership, and on a managerial and didactic-professional level it is called mentoring. A quality mentoring activity has an important role in anticipating and reducing the difficulties that could intervene in the teaching career of future teachers. I will reflect on the training and career development of teachers from the perspective of the importance of mentoring, in order to ensure a quality education for children through adequate training of teachers. In order to achieve performance, it is necessary to combine theory and practice harmoniously and to acquire the ability to use the knowledge gained in new learning contexts. The study will identify solutions for improving the quality of education by introducing the role of mentoring in the development of the teaching career. After carrying out the research, I will know the degree of satisfaction of the actors involved, with special reference to their activity in kindergarten and school and to the real and harmonious progress of preschoolers and students.

Keywords: *mentoring, training, support, counselling, beginning teachers*

Introduction

Education systems are currently facing multiple pressures from economic disruption, international tensions, large-scale migration, aging populations. The lack of qualified teachers, the decline in the status of this profession among young people, the criticism of teacher training institutions, the increased attractiveness of other fields of activity, the lack of selection at the level of the teaching profession, the lack of support and

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support when starting the profession, leaving the system only after a few years of activity, are aspects that imperatively lead to the need to rethink the teacher training systems.

Therefore, the educational systems are looking for solutions to streamline and modernize the school and education, and one of the components that must be taken into account is the quality of human resources, namely the teaching staff. That is why the value of mentoring programs for teachers at the beginning of their teaching careers is being discussed more and more frequently.

The period of the professional debut must be analyzed through the lens of the problems faced by the beginning teaching staff, their sources of help, with the aim of building strategies to facilitate the professional and personal integration at the workplace, of the beginning teaching staff. Initial training and continuing training must be aimed at equipping the teaching staff with the necessary skills, so that they feel comfortable in all situations that may arise during their teaching activity.

Mentoring in the educational field is a challenge for educational systems and is a necessity for the continuous optimization of the instructional-educational activity carried out by teachers. The present study is about mentoring and identifying the role and impact of mentoring activities on increasing the quality of education by supporting and advising novice teachers in effective integration into the workplace. Mentorship has the function of supporting the career of beginning teachers, through career guidance, skills development and providing psychosocial, emotional support and role modeling.

Mentoring for teachers in Romania is prone to a series of challenges, these being related to a limited number of mentors, an insufficient understanding of the mentoring process, which represents work tasks and additional responsibilities for the mentor or beneficiary, which prevent regular meetings or deepened by mentoring and which can undermine its effectiveness. In Romania, research related to the mentoring of teaching staff is rare, being generally carried out within projects with European funding, but within them the general efficiency associated with the mentoring process was not analyzed. The gap would be that there is no data related to the management of mentoring and it is not known what its real effectiveness is. These assessments require more than completing a to-do list, a task journal or a portfolio that provides some evidence of engagement. These methods fail to sample or assess the quality of the trainee's experiences, or their success in acquiring the necessary skills and meeting performance standards. Mentorships should be designed to be meaningful and professional learning experiences. They should be intended to provide a long-term assessment of a teacher's teaching ability,



with mentors having a role as evaluators of the potential of an aspirant or a beginner in the teaching profession. It is necessary to know to what extent the performance has been improved, whether the skills and competences of the beginning teachers have improved, whether they have become more effective in their work. Starting from the belief that effective mentoring relationships for beginning teachers can support their career success, this study advocates for the creation of a culture of effective mentoring in Romanian education.

The specialized literature highlights the existence of several definitions, explanations for the terms mentoring/mentor. The essence of the idea of mentoring: a process of passing on some knowledge, ideas, skills from experienced people to beginners. However, there is no universally accepted definition of mentor and mentee. Mentoring is a „complex professional activity carried out by a mentor teacher that involves, in detail, the specific action of pedagogical mediation, guiding the activity, facilitating learning and professional development, counseling, support, guidance, offering beneficial professional experiences, integration in (micro) community etc” (Bocoş, 2018). Suzanne Faure, considered that „mentoring is a supportive learning relationship between an interested individual who shares his knowledge, experience and wisdom with another individual who is ready, willing and able to benefit from this exchange in order to enrich the professional experience” (Faure, 2000).

The mentoring relationship often emphasizes institutional values, norms, expectations and orientations, career planning, collaborative interactions with colleagues, extended social relationships, discipline teaching, transitions to different levels of professional status, work-life balance (Leslie & Whyte, 2005). The absence of a strictly operational definition of the mentor concept, as well as other complementary terms, also determines a lack of precision in the formulation of indicators by which mentoring programs and their effectiveness can be evaluated (Bernatchez et al., 2010). The measurement tools lack sufficient clarity regarding the characteristics of the programs, the functions of the participants and the expected results, and the evaluation methods are not standardized. There is also a lack of longitudinal research regarding the impact or influence of mentoring on the professional success of the mentored person (Thorndyke et al., 2008). Some researchers are of the opinion that the mentoring elements that would lead to the success of new teachers are too little confirmed by research, they are valued as positive following subjective opinions, expressed by people who have been involved in these programs. However, there is a lack of a clear description of the processes, as well as the identification of the challenges presented



by an effective and experienced tutor, or evidence about the effectiveness of the analyzed programs (Leslie et al., 2005). The benefits of mentoring are identified in mainstream qualitative research, which tends to show that mentoring has educational impact by promoting teacher success. However, mentoring relationships must be analyzed with caution because they can also have unintended influences (Stringer Cawyer et al., 2002). In terms of mentor interventions, the mentor's help should be directed towards development and support, but in a more individualized way, rather than using an institutional training and development approach (Trorey & Blamires, 2006). Although the specialized literature offers many directions of study for the issue of mentoring in the educational field, aspects regarding the qualities sought in a mentor, the components of mentoring relationships, the development of procedures, guidelines regarding the development of the mentoring process are not clarified. Necessary precautions need to be taken so that teachers gain adequate knowledge, as well as appropriate attitudes and behaviour starting from the pre-service training period. There are increasing concerns among researchers in this regard student performance which is determined by the quality of its teachers. Therefore, the national objective of providing quality education to children, it is essential that efforts are focused on developing and maintaining high quality teachers in every community and at every grade level. (Alliance for Excellent Educators, 2005).

Method

Participants

For data collection, I will apply questionnaires to a sample of beginning primary school teachers and beginning preschool teachers and mentor teacher from urban and rural schools and kindergartens. The selection criteria of the participants were: the specifics of the school unit where they carry out their activity; willingness to engage in the study.

Procedure

In the present study, data collection will be done through two questionnaires, one questionnaire addressed to mentors (Questionnaire to measure perceptions of the need for acquisition) and one questionnaire addressed to beginning teachers (Questionnaire to measure beginning teachers' perceptions of their expressed and felt need for support). Questionnaires were used to assess the importance of mentoring support, the mentoring relationship, and the mentoring process for beginning teachers.

Before administration, participants are informed of their rights and sign an informed consent form. The procedure is consistent with the



current ethical standards for data collection in Romania. Questionnaires have value as set items to find out what we previously set out to do. Introductory and passing questions are the exception.

The questionnaires comprise two parts: general information and examining the effectiveness of mentoring as perceived by participants. The structure of the questionnaire is funnel-type, making the transition from general to particular. The questionnaires contain between 25-30 questions and have a completion time of approximately 30 minutes, so that we get an increased quality of answers. I will use Google forms to create the questionnaires and send them to the participants online.

Statistical Approach

After the administration of the two tests, the data will be entered into the SPSS operating system, where several statistical analyzes will be performed. First of all, I will test the internal validity of the instruments translated and adapted for the Romanian language, then descriptive, frequency and correlation analyses. Statistical analyzes will measure mentors' perceptions of the need for acquisition and novice teachers' perceptions of their expressed and felt need for support.

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