MENTORING IN EDUCATION AS AN ESSENTIAL ACTIVITY IN ENSURING AN EFFICIENT EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Abstract: The concept of a successful mentor is associated with the following characteristics, qualities or psychic abilities: high professional expertise, enthusiasm, naturalness, mental flexibility, availability for communication, desire to share with the younger ones their own experience or generativity, ease in interacting with others and building a climate of trust, integrity, patience, encouragement and supportive attitude towards the trainee, the ability to empathize and, last but not least, openness to permanent learning. Mentoring activity means guidance, counseling, support, guidance towards development, orientation towards solutions, past experiences, integration into the community, support, communication, orientation, guidance; helps to discover one's own potential, facilitator of the learning process, mediates the relationship between mentor, novice teacher and students.

Keywords: mentor, mentoring, educational process, communication, mentoring program

The main objective of educational mentoring is to promote and improve the quality of training for students from pedagogical faculties and novice teachers to meet the requirements of optimal integration into the workplace and for didactic improvement. In any profession, practice is a major challenge for newly qualified beginners. They go through a period of training and putting into practice the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired during an education program. It is a period of transition, the beginner finding himself in a situation of great challenge, that of finding a mentor who will guide his activity, give him the necessary confidence to consolidate his theoretically acquired skills. It is the period when the practitioner needs guidance and support to develop his confidence and competence.

The mentoring is a different approach to consulting in that it brings something extra, namely the sharing of previous and personal experiences that the mentor has lived and overcome successfully. In other words, according to Starr (2022) , the mentor is the one who appeals to the lessons that he personally acquired through the experiences lived within mentoring programs and offers them in the form of examples to the one who chooses to request support from a mentor within a mentoring activity. The role of these shared experiences is to support someone's development in the different plans of life, whether we are talking about mentoring in personal life, or we are talking about mentoring for the professional side of life. Very often the mentor within a school institution participates in mentoring courses organized by various forums at national or international level. (Pop, 2017) Participating in a mentoring course brings them various benefits: developing learning, analysis and reflective skills; improving the level of knowledge about the organization/institution and professionally; increasing the level of understanding of social life; creating opportunities for the mentee to practice and have their own experiences; increasing the willingness to take risks; improving autonomy and independence; accelerating maturation. (Craşovan, 2005)

In the educational field, mentoring proposes the integration of academic and practical requirements in new ways that will determine the development of teacher education systems: developing the skills to learn in and from practice; developing educational research carried out by practitioners; capitalizing on them in university curricula. The streamlining of practical training activities for students aspiring to become teachers, through a mentoring program, aims at both learning outcomes and psychosocial aspects of relationships and reporting to others, with benefits for all parties involved: practice coordinator (university), mentor (application school) and novice practitioner.

Mentoring has two main components, namely: a socialization component, intended to ensure the integration of the student into the life and activity of the school and a professional and personal development component of future teachers. Learning the profession has as essential elements the activity of observation, reflection, feedback and teaching in partnership. Mentoring is a support relationship established between two people where knowledge and edifying experiences are shared, and skills specific to the profession are activated. The mentor, based on a relationship of trust and mutual responsibility, advises and supervises a young student or beginner in the teaching profession. He offers himself as professional and personal support, is a modeler and a good advisor in everything that represents the development of the young beginner's teaching skills.

Mentoring therefore involves a relationship based on protecting the novice, finding opportunities for learning, experimenting and practicing in order to increase self-confidence, develop independence, autonomy and maturity. The mentoring relationship is based on mutual trust and respect, openness and honesty, it is a relationship that allows the novice to learn to grow in a safe and protected environment. (Pop, 2018) For a successful outcome, both the mentor and the novice must feel comfortable in this relationship. At the beginning of a mentoring relationship, the novice is somewhat dependent on the mentor, over time he learns to be independent in his actions, confident in implementing his own ideas and knowledge. In this situation, the mentor will have the task of guiding the novice; of giving him freedom of action and, very importantly, of making him reflect, self-appreciation.

The mentor is not a crutch and should not make the novice dependent on him, but rather develop his independence and autonomy so that in the end he can even surpass the mentor. A true mentor is the one who participates with all conviction in the actions of the mentee, is the one who incites to action by encouraging and finding previously prepared solutions and feels satisfied only when he is surpassed in the performance of the disciple. The mentoring activity is a complex interactive process of guidance, relationship between two or more people that aims to develop knowledge and skills in a certain field. The mentor provides constant support, trust and help to the young mentee. The mentor we choose is usually a very well-trained person in the field who is eager to share with us the secrets of his career, knows how to be friendly and open.

Mentoring activity can be spontaneous, unplanned, non-formal when an experienced person (usually older) shows interest in unconditionally sharing his or her own experience with a person (usually younger) with less experience and the planned instrumental activity that occurs in an organized instructional process, where objectives are established to be achieved. Mentoring activity makes the young person aware and responsible for acquiring qualities, skills and abilities in the field in which he or she wants to specialize, he or she has a

role model in front of him or her, which shows him or her the path to a higher level of development.

Mentoring can be understood as a kind of specific training activity for work in school, in the classroom. In a broader sense, the term mentoring is used to describe the support provided by a person (usually more experienced) in order to develop and train another. A mentor is a person who encourages, advises and supports you in your career development. At the same time, he offers you practical assistance to ensure that you have the opportunity to achieve your professional and personal development goals. Mentoring is the transmission of many things: wisdom, encouragement, listening. Although being a good teacher is a condition for becoming a good mentor, this does not mean that every good teacher will automatically become a good mentor. From a professional point of view, a mentor is extremely important in explaining and guiding both ways of behavior and the rapid transfer of knowledge. This knowledge is the process of filtering and accumulation over many years of experience. (Ungureanu, 2001)

Mentoring activity is not just about sharing professional experience, but also involves finding common ground together that will lead to a successful outcome. For beginners, mentoring activity aims to: develop design skills; carry out teaching activities; evaluate teaching activities. Carrying out these activities involves achieving the following specific objectives: knowledge of the human and material resources of the school unit, the organization and functioning of an educational unit; developing the ability to study and know the personality of students, their learning abilities and styles; developing the ability to analyze the framework plan and the school curriculum, the ability to prepare and complete school documents, to plan and design teaching activities; identifying lesson types and lesson moments in the dynamics of teaching activities; developing the skills to identify and apply teaching methods and procedures in various learning situations; developing the ability to design and coordinate teaching activities; developing communication and collaboration skills with parents; developing the ability to observe and evaluate students' school and social behavior; developing the ability to evaluate and self-evaluate teaching activities in the evaluation of teaching activity; developing the ability to identify educational crisis situations and adopt the best negotiation strategies. (Craşovan, 2005)

Educational mentoring involves a relationship based on trust, professionalism and openness between: the internship mentor and the intern. In the educational field, the intern is the novice teacher during the internship period in a school unit (in which he is employed) and who benefits from guidance and mentoring assistance from the internship mentor and other factors involved in assisting him until obtaining his final qualification in education. An internship mentor is a teacher with experience in the school unit in which the intern works, specially trained to be a mentor and who monitors the professional development of the intern in order to practice the teaching profession at quality standards. The internship mentor fulfills certain roles and functions on which the success of the mentoring activity depends. (Pop, 2019)

Being a model of human personality and professional behavior, the internship mentor fulfills the following roles: is a model for the practitioner/intern through the quality of teaching performance and through involvement in the life of the school organization; receives the intern as an observer in his/her lessons and activities, including extracurricular activities

led by him/her; the intern works in a team with the mentor for didactic design, teaching and evaluation.

The internship mentor is a learning resource for the intern. By assisting in classes and analyzing the intern's activity, the mentor provides him with feedback on the quality of the design, behavior during teaching and evaluation. The mentor supports the intern in selecting and acquiring bibliography and guides him in exploring it in his teaching activity. The internship mentor is an advisor for: teaching activity management; professional and personal development; career development options; integration into the school's organizational culture; development of interpersonal relationship skills; mediation of potential conflicts; development of documentation skills, self-evaluation skills, etc. (Craşovan, 2005)

Among the functions performed by the internship mentor, we mention: establishes together with the intern his professional needs and, based on them, establishes jointly the objectives and general strategy of action in close relation to quality standards; provides practical and efficient models for didactic and extra-didactic activity, carrying out a large part of these activities in a team with the intern; observes the didactic and extra-didactic activity of the intern; provides pedagogical assistance for the design of professional activity; provides constructive feedback for all aspects of the intern's professional activity; provides counseling regarding the management of student classes, self-evaluation, other roles; facilitates the integration of the intern into the organizational culture of the respective school; supports the intern in his or her efforts to learn about the profession; contributes to highlighting the intern's qualities; periodically evaluates the intern's progress (progress sheet) improves possible malfunctions, etc. drafts the final annual report on the intern's activity (based on progress sheets and current observations). (Pop, 2019)

The knowledge that the internship mentor must have: understands the general concepts and principles in the field of quality assurance through the initial teacher training process; knows the basic documents in quality assurance, has a high level of understanding of the problems faced by Higher Education in the current stage of harmonizing programs and strategies in accordance with those promoted at the European level and a superior understanding of the problems faced by educational institutions in terms of human resource quality; has his own vision regarding improving the quality of the training process of future teachers so that some of the deficiencies personally identified can be improved and overcome; has high standards of competence and recognized expertise in the field. (Maciuc, 1998)

The mentor has the ability to program, analyze and evaluate; is willing to share what he knows; has empathetic abilities and care for those he trains; has communication skills. Values and attitudes supported by the mentor: concern for affirming excellence in the field in which he/she manifests himself/herself; respect for the abilities of others; willingness to offer support whenever needed; trustworthy; openness, flexibility, creativity; self-confidence and ability to provoke this feeling in those he/she trains; positive attitude in any circumstance to overcome problems and difficulties; ethical behavior in relations with those he/she teaches. The motivation underlying a successful mentoring program is the interest in increasing/improving the quality of education and the interest in the process of training future teachers. (Ungureanu, 2001)

Mentoring is a relationship that takes place in an environment of comfort and safety in which learning and experimentation take place through analysis, examination and re-examination, reflection on experiences on situations and problems, on mistakes and successes (of both parties) in order to identify learning opportunities. Mentoring is the process by which the mentor helps the newcomer to develop, to develop self-confidence, to become independent, autonomous and mature. It is a special relationship through which a bond is formed built on trust and respect, openness and honesty, a framework where each party can be themselves. The relationship is strong and emotional and to achieve good results the mentoring relationship must be qualitatively superior; if a bond is not formed and one or both parties do not feel comfortable in this relationship then neither the mentoring nor the learning process will take place.

When this relationship is fruitful, the need for personal development is recognized. In the early stages of such a relationship, the novice is relatively dependent on the mentor, and the mentor must provide support, be a friend, and encourage the novice teacher to learn and grow. (Zeus; Skiffington, 2008). As the relationship develops and the novice teacher becomes more confident and autonomous, the mentor must change his or her approach and focus on challenging and stimulating the novice teacher, providing sufficient space for reflection. This continues and deepens the mentee's learning process. If the mentor offers too many challenges and stimuli at the beginning of this relationship, it can intimidate the mentee and even cause them to withdraw from the relationship. (Parsloe; Wray, 2000)

The mentoring program is based on the relationship that is built between the mentor and the trainees. For this relationship to function properly, it is desirable to create an atmosphere, an appropriate framework for mentoring. In building such a formal context, the mentor's beliefs regarding the way adults learn are fundamental. Added to these are the interpersonal relationships that are established between the trainer-mentor and the trainees, true resources that are able to motivate those who develop professionally and arouse their desire to participate and progress in the endeavor in which they have engaged.

A mentor comes to the support of the novice teacher with the tools used in knowing the personality of the students, their abilities and learning styles, considering that this is the first step that the teacher must take in the classroom activity in order to be able to adopt the best teaching methods and strategies based on the knowledge of the class of students as well as their individual particularities. A good "advisor" designs the student's knowledge activity by finding the most appropriate methods and tools, supporting the beginner with psychological tests through which manifestations of the student's psychophysical behavior can be captured.

To know the student's individuality, the mentor can initiate the beginner in the development of the case study as a method and the stages that he must go through in order to develop it. The quality of a mentor consists in the dedication with which he shares his experience with a beginner, offering him a model of conduct, professionalism and support in everything that means design, teaching and evaluation. Considering that the didactic activity is closely linked to the age and individual peculiarities of the student, it is necessary to know the personality of the educated one. By carrying out part of the activities carried out in a team with the intern, the mentor has the task of initiating the future teacher to know the student's

individuality, to be able to dose the learning tasks, to organize differentiated activities depending on his/her individual particularities. (Ungureanu, 2001)

For a good knowledge, the mentor provides the trainee with the methods and procedures but also the ways by which he can know the student's personality. This knowledge involves studying the psychological profile of the school age, the psycho-physical development of the child. The mentor, having pedagogical experience, offers the beginner the tools and methods used in knowing the student, can support him in all his actions, being open to encouraging the finding of new effective techniques to capture the child's personality as naturally as possible.

Being a synthesis product, concentrating a set of essential data about the child's evolution over the years, this sheet has a particularly important role for the student when he moves to another level of education, the class teacher will know how to act in the sense of continuing the activities in support and interest of the student. (Craşovan, 2005) A mentor comes to the support of the novice teacher with the tools used to know the students' personalities, their abilities and learning styles, considering that this is the first step that the teacher must take in the classroom activity in order to be able to adopt the best teaching methods and strategies based on the knowledge of the class of students as well as their individual particularities. A good "advisor" designs the activity of getting to know the student by finding the most appropriate methods and tools, supporting the novice with psychological tests through which manifestations of the student's psychophysical behavior can be detected.

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