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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING COMPETENCIES.
GUIDELINES AND INSTRUMENTS

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Abstract

Objectives: This paper presents the importance of the mentor relation for the development of a didactical career. We consider that a successful mentor relation is represented by the professional qualities of the mentor and by the way these qualities are being exteriorized and adapted to the students. For students, the mentor is a model of learning, a support for the formation and improvement of the didactical performances. In this way, we exploited the data obtained from an educational research regarding the pedagogical practice of students who are preparing for different professional domains.

Approach: Our propose starts from premise that the development of didactical competencies is a professional training process which is strongly influenced by the intervention of the mentor. Firstly, we present a few types of the mentor relation. Then, we identified the aspects which are optimizing the mentor relation. Also, we propose some guidelines and instruments to assist in the optimizing the relationship between the mentor and the mentored person. Using them it can be built the most appropriate model of mentoring relationship.

Results: The relation between the mentor and the student is being built in time, this is why the mentor and the students are conceiving together the instruments for planning and developing the stages of their professional cooperation. The paper may be a real support for those who are interested to have a successful mentor relation

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Keywords: Education, mentoring, professional training, didactical instruments.



1. Introduction

Amongst the preoccupations of the specialists in the domain of education, the training of the students for the didactic profession continues to have an important place, either under the aspect of the optimization of the strategies for the formation and the development of professional competencies, either under the aspect of the enhancement of the responsibilities of the students for their own training, implicitly of their professional motivation (Joița, 1998). In the same manner, another direction in the dedicated literature, even if less developed, is represented by the responsibilities of those involved in the psycho-pedagogical training of the future teachers and in the activities related to their role. However, the preoccupations regarding the optimization of the relation between the student and his mentor are less represented on the level of recommendations, good practices and teaching instruments. Using them it can be built the most appropriate models of conduction of mentoring relationship between the person mentored and the mentor.

The mentor relation should be understood as a relation that is being built in time and is getting individualized according to the personality and the potential of the person mentored, respectively of the mentor, and which should not be in contradiction

2. Problem Statement

Generally, between the person mentored and the mentor there can be drawn several types of relations, such as:

1. according to the degree of the students' involvement:

- the relation of cooperation, being constructed both by the student and the mentor;
- the relation of independence (the decisions being taken only by the student);
- the relation of subordination (the student listens to the intervention of his teacher without contributing to its dimensioning or orientation).

2. according to the scope of the relation:

- the relation based on the knowledge and documentation (the obtaining of information, cognitive acquisitions);
- the relation based on practice; (the interest is on the applicative activities);
- the relation of intimidation; (the student tries to copy the model of the mentor without discerning).

3. according to the type of the communication:

- the instrumental relation (the neutral relationship, the communication is only determined by the different instruments);
- the open relation (everything subject is possible to developing, everyone can be introduced in this relation);
- the relation based on the transmission (the mentor gives to him students all that they are need, the knowledge, documents, but he gives nothing more, not the explanations, not models to teaching, not affects).

4. according to the task:

- the relation orientated on the task (unilateral relation);

- the relation based on the teaching and the personal needs of the students;
- the bilateral relation (based on the real intervention of the student and the mentor).

It is difficult to recommend a certain kind of relation between the mentor and the mentored person out of the ones enumerated before, because in their construction there has to be taken into account the educative and communicative context in which they were formed, as well as of the psycho- affective and behavioural- cognitive structure of those who are developing it (Miclea, 1999). This is why, a successful relation is the one which can adapt to the situations encountered, being oriented on the training for the didactical profession and the construction of a successful career in the didactic domain

3. Research Questions

Between the student and the teacher/mentor the development of a flexible and open professional relation is encouraged, with the assumption of the obligations each of them must meet, according to the status they have (Moon, 1999). However, for the development of this relation didactic, they are needed to have some instruments.

A successful mentor relation can be defined, firstly through the professional qualities of the mentor and the way these qualities are being exteriorized and adapted to the students. This is why the enumeration of the qualities of the mentor is a difficult task (Crasovan, 2005), even if in the dedicated literature there are many propositions regarding this issue. A mentor needs to get sincerely, responsibly and confidently involved in the aid of the students in what concerns their training for the didactic career. For the mentored person, the mentor is a model of perpetual learning, an institutional support for the formation and improvement of the performances and of his own potential. From this perspective, the mentor is representing a professional eager to lead and support the student in the process of building his own didactic career

4. Purpose of the Study

Our propose starts from the idea that the relation between the student and his mentor has an important role on the training of the future teacher. In this sense, this paper proposes the following objectives:

- the presentation of the mentor relation from the perspective of the applicative activities developing during the school year;
- the identification of the problems which are hindering the development of a successful mentor relation;
- the elaboration of some didactical instruments which would make more efficient the relation between mentor and student;
- the proposal gives a few practical solutions regarding the establishment and the development of an efficient mentor relation

5. Research Methods

This paper exploits the data obtained from an educational research regarding to the pedagogical practice of students who are preparing for different professional domains. The present data is obtained using the Questioner Method and the Systematically observation during the period of pedagogical practice. This data determined the conception of the instruments which have been applied in practical activities. Using these instruments it demonstrated that they have a great importance on the construction an efficient and durable mentor relation.

6. Findings

In order to identify the aspects which are optimizing the mentoring activity, 10 mentors have been questioned.

These mentors had been active amongst the students who were preparing to become professors in the first-school and secondary school. The data obtained has been organized as following table:

Table 01. The observations of the research

Item	Date obtained	Supplementary explanation
<i>The relevance of the results of the activity with the students</i>	62 % of the mentors told that the students could prepare better than they have done	The quality of the results of the activity of the students is being by affected by a series of objective, factors as the following: the participation in the college activities; the students must participate to the courses and seminars which are too many for them. For these activities the students could individually prepare; the student have the familial obligations (most of they are married); the busy study timetable; a great part of them has other jobs;
	38 % of them think that the results of the students reflect their interest for the pedagogical practice and how they are prepared for these activities	the students have an insufficient pedagogical knowledge; they could not manage very well their time; a few of them don't wanting to became a teacher; several of them are satisfied with not very good results.
<i>The collaboration between the mentor and the mentored person</i>	75 % of them considered that the responsibility for the development of a successful relation belongs to the student, to the mentored person.	the opening of the mentor towards the training needs of the student is maximal, but this opening is influenced by the attitude of the student, by his professional interest, by his reaction to criticism, by his receptivity to recommendations, by the way he is preparing and sustaining his practical activities.
	25% of them considered that the real results of this relationship will be seen the later.	what is important is the development of the autonomy of the student, the mentor guiding him should pass unnoticed to the public; the emotional load is strong, so there is a need for a period of time during which the affective traits should be attenuated and the emotions decanted.
<i>The role of pedagogical practice in the professional motivation process of students</i>	66 % of them insisted on the importance encouraging to students in the practical activities.	the positive support for the students' responses, giving high grades for their encouragement; avoiding the mention of their mistakes which can be corrected by them by time; step by step involvement in the practical activities, to the point in which they will be able to teach a demonstrative lesson by themselves.
	34% of them insisted on the role of the explanations of the mistakes in the motivational process of students	the interest of students for the didactical profession is not a individual problem.

Out of the presented data, it can be noticed that the students are able to obtain better results, but they need to desire it and to have a responsible projection of their purpose in time. The model offered by the mentor is insufficient for them to become good professionals in education, so they need to get involved in the building of the mentor relation, so it can become the best one for each of them. This is why we believe that the continuous preparation of the relation with the mentor is very important, upon it constant and organized reflections being necessary. To this purpose, different didactic instruments might be conceived, which might borrow the shape of reflecting sheets, of controlling sheets, of monitoring questionnaires or individual planning of the practical activities, in which the accent should be on the purpose and on the results. Their conceiving and filling in together with the mentor will lead to the students' responsibility in what regards the organization and the development of the practical activity. In the same way, it will increase the trust in the mentor, the relation being adapted to the needs for personal and professional development of the student.

In order to build an optimal relation from the professional point of view, it is recommended the realization, periodically, of activities of reflection (Mark, 2007), through which there can be identified during time the aspects which are advantaging the communication between the mentor and the mentored person and which helps to the continuity of the formation and personal and professional development of the mentored person. The constructive feed-back aspect of this kind of reflections allows the rapid and efficient intervention in the reparatory sense, or in the developing sense, a fact which will help the student control his training in the domain of education.

One example might be the need to establish the individual level of performance of the student, the mentor having the possibility to apply different methods of observation, analysis and interpretation of the data obtained. During the practice, the mentor gathers the data, being able to offer to each student the real feed-back, constructive and relevant to his professional training. This instrument can be the following.

Table 02. The Sheet of the student

The week of meeting	Questions and problems	Principal preoccupations and personal interests	Cognitive dimensions: the knowledge, abilities, behaviors	Affective and motivational dimensions

Another preoccupation of the mentor is to establish from the beginning of the activity an open relation with the student, oriented towards the individual expectations (Nagata, 2006). In this way can use *The Reflection Sheet* referents to the representations of student about to what means the didactical career.

Table 03. The Reflection Sheet

The better teacher who I known	One motif which I want to be like him	One characteristic of him which I have it myself	One motif why I want not to be like him	What things the mentor about my reflections
<i>The undesired teacher who I know</i>	One motif which I want not to be like him	One characteristic of him which I have it myself	One motif which I want to be like him	What things the mentor about my reflections

One other example might be determined by the need to correlate the individual needs for the formation of the student with the expectations of the mentor. One instrument for this might be **The professional development questionnaire**, through which the mentor and the student can identify and plan the common directions for the action they will have in attention on the entire duration of the pedagogical practice.

Table 04. The professional development questionnaire

No. crt.	Professional needs of the person mentored	Expectations of the mentor	Common Actions (of both the mentor and the student)		
			Theme / Aim of the activity	Day of the realization of the activity	Results

Table 05. The Progress Sheet

I did not know / I not thought that I can do it	I learned / I was able to do it	I realized (something) / why had I success	What am I feeling now, when I achieved	What says the mentor about my achievement

These instruments were used by the mentors who participated on the research. The results have been promising, even if there have been noticed several problems. All the mentors considered that these instruments helped the mentor relation and their results began better.

Next, starting from the observations signalled by the mentors, we will enumerate some useful recommendations for the application of the proposed instruments. These recommendations are the following:

- these instruments should not overload the schedule of the student or of the mentor, should not be an obligation which complicates their activities;
- the instruments seem to offer the student an immediate response to the question whether he will be a „good teacher” or not;
- these instruments should not immediately confirm/ infirm the expectances of the student, but should support him in the desire to have a career in the teaching domain and become responsible for its construction;
- in order not to leave the impression of „a waste of time” or of „exposed intimacy”, the student should be convinced to understand these instruments from the perspective of the need for self- evaluation and self-knowing. Through them, the student will have the occasion *to confront himself*, from the social and professional perspective and *to reflect in a constructive and organized manner this fact*. Thinking at the „thing he has done” will help the student understand better the importance of the training in the domain of education, to identify the problems which are hindering him in obtaining the desired results, to look for individualized solutions in order to solve them;
- these learning instruments remain in the subjectivity, personal sphere. The filing of them by the student and his mentor cannot be critically/ objectively examined so they cannot be judged from the correctness perspective and appreciated or rejected according to their value of truth;
- the encourage the student to fill the reflection instruments. The student will achieve this „looking back” if he knows why he has to do this and only if he is interested to do so;

- the data obtained after the reflections might be stored for a longer time, a fact which might allow the student to evaluate the evolution, to save the solutions that have proven efficient in his professional training and to apply them in his future didactical activity or by promoting them in different scientific contexts etc.;
- it is important that the student performs such reflections in cooperation with his mentor teacher

7. Conclusion

Generally, the mentor relation offers the educational perspectives and the behaviours models, also it contribute to assuming the responsibility of the students for own training. A good mentor relation helps to the students to mobilize their internal resources for overcoming the obstacles of their professional training.

The relation between the mentor and the student is being built up during time, this is why the mentor and the students are conceiving together the instruments for planning and developing the stages of their professional cooperation, as well as instruments which would allow the reflection upon the results of this cooperation, with the purpose of optimizing the relation between the student and the mentor and the degree in which this relation responds to the specific needs for the formation of the student. This is why the student manifests trust in the support he is receiving from his teacher or mentor, being convinced by the professional and humane qualities confirmed through the status the latter one

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