

THE ROLE OF MENTORING IN FOSTERING THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF FUTURE TEACHERS¹

O PAPEL DA TUTORIA NA PROMOÇÃO DA IDENTIDADE PROFISSIONAL DOS FUTUROS PROFESSORES

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¹ The article partially includes the results of the international research project of the Scientific and Technical Organization Teadmus OÜ (teadmus.org) "Artificial intelligence as a determinant of innovative ways of developing entrepreneurial initiatives in the context of population mobility: strategies and practices".

ABSTRACT

Relevance of the research. Identification of the individual with the chosen profession indicates a significant level of professional growth and readiness to systematically develop, improve professional skills, deepen knowledge, that is, to recognize oneself as part of an important professional process. The description of this phenomenon in the scientific literature is understood as the acquisition of professional identity. A professional identity for future teachers is a guideline that needs to be perceived while studying in a higher educational institution since it shows the teacher's readiness to work with children and reveals the possible quality result of this work. It is quite difficult to acquire a professional identity through independent self-development; consequently, the support and assistance of a teacher or a mentor is of particular importance in this case. The purpose of the research is to reveal the role of mentoring in the formation of future teachers' professional identity. The research methods are as follows: theoretical (analysis, synthesis, generalization), empirical (sociological survey, description), generalization. The academic paper is focused on revealing the specifics of the formation of future teachers' professional identity and analyzing the role of a mentor as a coach, advisor, and professional friend for future teachers. The research analyzes approaches to the interpretation of the concept of a mentor and mentoring as a process, as well as related concepts such as a coach, a tutor, and a facilitator. The understanding of the phenomenon of mentoring in Western European scientific thinking has been characterized. The primary focus of the academic paper is on the reformation of Ukrainian education, the New Ukrainian School Concept, and the importance of mentoring at the current stage of educational transformation. The research results emphasize that the functions of a mentor for future teachers are indispensable and important. According to the survey, the majority of respondents indicate that they are willing to seek help from their mentors and can become such mentors for junior students. Conclusions. The academic paper proves that professional identification is an important personal formation that characterizes a high level of professionalism of a specialist, in particular, a teacher. The function and role of mentoring is a way for future teachers to achieve professional identity. The survey conducted among master's students confirms the importance of mentoring for future teachers in general and for acquiring professional identity. A mentor has to concentrate on working with students from the beginning of their studies and progressively take on a more involved role by the end of their final year in order to be effective in carrying out these duties.

Keywords: mentor, mentoring, tutor, facilitator, coach, future teacher, pedagogical skills, professional identity.

RESUMO

A pesquisa que você descreveu concentra-se na relevância e importância da identidade profissional para futuros professores, especialmente no contexto do mentoreamento. Aqui estão alguns pontos-chave e a significância geral da pesquisa: Identidade Profissional na Educação: A pesquisa enfatiza que se identificar com uma profissão escolhida, especialmente no ensino, significa crescimento profissional e compromisso com a melhoria contínua. Essa identificação é chamada de aquisição de identidade profissional. Papel da Identidade Profissional para Futuros Professores: A identidade profissional serve como um princípio orientador durante o ensino superior para futuros professores. Indica a prontidão deles para trabalhar com crianças e revela o possível resultado de qualidade desse trabalho. Importância do Mentoreamento: A pesquisa destaca o papel do mentor como treinador, conselheiro e amigo profissional para futuros professores. O estudo analisa abordagens para a interpretação do conceito de mentor e mentoring, bem como conceitos relacionados como coach, tutor e facilitador. Resultados da Pesquisa: Os resultados da pesquisa enfatizam que as funções do mentor para futuros professores são indispensáveis e importantes. A maioria dos respondentes indica disposição para buscar ajuda de seus mentores e expressa o desejo de se tornarem mentores para estudantes mais jovens. Conclusões: O artigo acadêmico comprova que a identificação profissional é uma formação pessoal importante que caracteriza um alto nível de profissionalismo, especialmente para um professor. A função e o papel do mentoreamento são apresentados como uma maneira para futuros professores alcançarem identidade profissional. A pesquisa entre estudantes

de mestrado confirma a importância do mentoreamento para futuros professores em geral e para a aquisição de identidade profissional. Conclui-se que um mentor deve concentrar-se no trabalho com os alunos desde o início de seus estudos e assumir progressivamente um papel mais envolvente até o final de seu último ano para ser eficaz nessa função.

Palavras-chave: mentor, mentoria, tutor, facilitador, treinador, futuro professor, habilidades pedagógicas, identidade profissional.

Introduction

The education system in Ukraine is currently undergoing profound changes. These metamorphoses take place in the school, which acquires autonomy, where the teacher is a personality aimed at effective organization of the educational process with the help of various interactive technologies and an inexhaustible methodological palette, showing freedom in choosing educational material, as well as in the higher school of the pedagogical profile, which should provide educational institutions with such professional teachers, instructors and educators.

It is relatively easy to trace the interconnection between a teacher and a student. Along with this, his presence is especially important in the process of working on the formation of professional motivation, self-affirmation of the present student, a future teacher in the field of education, acquisition of professional identity, awareness of one's own pedagogical activity as a necessary component in the life of students and their fulfillment.

Many scientific works have been devoted to the interrelation of the teacher and the future teacher (Bahrii, K., Bekh I., Gibbons R., Holiardyk N., Hoffman V., Hurevych R., Yeriomenko O., Dyka L., Dolynska L., Maksymova Z., Skinner B., Feldman K., etc.), which confirm the effectiveness of preparing students, in particular, future teachers for professional activity. Such interactions are especially significant if they are formed on trust, camaraderie, friendship, positive perception of each other, and partnership. Scientific studies by States J., Detrich R. & Keyworth R. (2018) confirm that a positive climate in the learning environment, high expectations on the part of students, constructive and diplomatic dialogue, systematic willingness to help, giving an example and role model, and much more are not the whole list of necessary features of interaction and communication

between a teacher and a student that contribute to the formation of the future teachers' professionalism.

Kálmán B. G., Poyda-Nosyk N. (2023), studying digital, online education, other technological changes and innovations in pedagogy, still consider the relationship between a teacher and a student, positive interpersonal dialogue to be the basis for achieving academic success, developing pedagogical skills and mastery, and the key to the sustainability of education.

It is evident that the teacher should constantly maintain a balance between personal traits and purely professional, teaching skills. In other words, the educator should combine the presentation of educational material and the formation of professional competencies, while remaining emotionally close to the future teacher, empathically entering one's inner world, needs and beliefs, and professional uncertainties. The personal growth of a future teacher who spiritually and professionally identifies himself as a teacher depends entirely on the academic environment where the student studies and the personality of the teacher who teaches him. In other words, the professional skills of a modern student depend on the professional skills and indifference, interest of a modern teacher.

Mentoring as an ongoing process is provided by a mentor, a coach, that is, a person who is professionally competent in the field of interest and who is concerned with his own self-development, and constantly improves and grows professionally. If we are talking about mentoring in pedagogy, the teacher also reinforces pedagogical achievements with scientific studies, constantly improves his own pedagogical skills, and grows personally. Such a complex personality can have a significant impact on how a student or a future teacher forms and develops his professional identity.

Synonymously, a mentor as a supervisor can be correlated with the following concepts: coach, tutor, and facilitator. The phenomenon of mentoring both etymologically and from the point of view of pedagogical skills is most appropriate to use when we talk about the process of preparing a future teacher for work at school and forming his professional skills and identity. After all, a coach is better understood as a trainer; a tutor has associations with the phenomenon of

psychological and pedagogical support; a facilitator is much more of an organizer, a teacher-stimulant, and a conductor. Consequently, a mentor is a tutor, advisor, a consultant, and this means the highest level of a manager-teacher of a higher educational institution.

Teachers who fully comprehend and are consistent with their pedagogical vocation are needed to educate the next generation of learners since the goal of the modern school is to foster individuals who can not only acquire knowledge but also apply it to the real world, adapting quickly to changing circumstances. Educators who become mentors, role models, advisors, and highly qualified friends to their students may have the greatest influence on the professional identities of future teachers.

Therefore, the purpose of the research is to reveal the role of mentoring in the formation of the professional identity of future teachers.

The research objectives are as follows:

- to analyze the concepts of mentoring and professional identity in the scientific thoughts of Ukraine and foreign countries;
- to explore the effectiveness of the qualitative influence of a mentor teacher on the formation of a future teacher, his professionalism and self-identification with the teaching profession;
- to characterize the role of mentoring in the formation of future teachers' professional identity.

Literature Review

Considering the influence of mentoring as a process on the formation of future teachers' professional identity, we should first of all turn to the dictionary reference literature. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2021), a mentor is a person who provides assistance to a younger or less experienced colleague, as well as support for a certain period of time in learning and work. Vocabulary.com (2019), a supportive dictionary site for teachers and students, suggests that a mentor can be

viewed as: 1. a wise guide and counselor; 2. someone who imparts knowledge and skills.

The 11-volume Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language (1973) describes a mentor as a deputy tutor, leader, and educator.

Studies by Dovzhenko T., Nebitova I., Shishenko V. (2021) highlight the mentor taking into account the level of mentoring, and there are four such levels: teacher-mentor, teacher-tutor, teacher-coach, and teacher-facilitator. However, we believe that mentoring as a process cannot be one of the levels of professional growth in guidance but a completely separate phenomenon that is related to tutor, facilitator, coach, and is etymologically different.

According to the viewpoint of Sushenko A. and Andryeyeva K. (2022), a mentor should possess both an intense desire to serve as a mentor, friend, and adviser, as well as a strong motivation to assist future teachers. Moreover, the study of scientists on the importance of mentoring in the professional activity of a teacher, conducted remotely among master's students, proves the high efficiency of mentoring and the expediency of its use.

Doroshkevich K., Voronovska M., Salata I. (2017) consider mentoring as an innovative type of mutual assistance. The scholars emphasize that mentoring in pedagogy has spread to other areas of science and knowledge, including sociology and psychology, economics, political science, etc. It is an effective way to support and develop professionals interested in their own activities.

Comparative aspects of tutoring, coaching and mentoring are analyzed by Savchuk B., Pantyuk M., Kotenko R. (2022). Based on their own findings, the scientists emphasize that coaching indicates a more parity relationship between the coach and his mentee; they are like collaborators and the former helps the latter to fulfill. Moreover, mentoring contributes to the professional growth of an inexperienced specialist, although the mentor is the main player in this process. We would like to not entirely agree with this definition since both the mentor and the coach, as a trainer, take on the functions of a conductor in the process of work, and, therefore, play the main role.

Wuetherick, B. (2017) (The University of British Columbia) unequivocally supports mentoring in higher education, especially when it comes to the professional training of future teachers and educators. The scientist believes that mentoring contributes to improving students' academic performance, develops motivational perspectives, instills confidence in students' professional skills, and is an effective mechanism of cooperation for both bachelor's and master's students. In addition, Wuetherick B. (2017) points out that a mentor has a positive impact on students in the process of engaging in scientific work, which is a significant step in the formation of professional identity.

Modern innovations confidently support the initiative of mentoring as guidance. For instance, at the initiative of the King Baudouin Foundation, an international community GLOBAL MENTORSHIP INITIATIVE (2022) was created with the slogan "Every student deserves to become a champion". Students are able to find counselors and mentors on this foundation's website, and mentors can use it to search for students in need of their assistance.

Academic Mentoring (2023) is another online community formed by scientists, educators and psychologists in Los Angeles, where they offer young researchers, students, and educators the opportunity to freely seek a mentor and achieve success in a particular field.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the French scientist Tamayo J. J. M. (2008) noticed that the world is rapidly moving in the wake of technological challenges; students are changing every year and becoming more demanding. Consequently, approaches to teaching and professional development of students should be sought for new, modern, and effective. The researcher considers mentoring and coaching to be such approaches. Mentoring is a crucial factor in assisting students in overcoming their professional insecurity and developing their professional identities.

Professional identity as a psychological phenomenon and one of the components of a holistic personality has been studied by numerous scholars: Andrushko J., Ball G., Butcher D., Bykh D., Borysiuk A., Virna J., Wilton A., Erikson E., Zhuravlova O., Mary J., Liakh T., Liashch O., Fitzgerald A., Yuren E., et al.

Fitzgerald A. (2020) describes professional identity as a concept that combines professional skills and functions; knowledge and ethical values; personal identity; group identity. In other words, in order for a future teacher to identify himself as a teacher and a member of the educational process overall, he should possess the required knowledge, skills, and professional abilities, a high level of education, and stable classical ethical values.

The sociologist Webb, S. A. (2015) points out the particular importance of professional identity for professions that focus on working with people. Hamilton N. (2022) believes that professional identity is an awareness of oneself in the profession, a self-perception that develops gradually and with the formation of certain values and norms of professional behavior, as a result of which a person identifies himself as part of the profession. Vähäsantanen K. (2022) considers professional identity as a necessary component of every person's working life since it is the awareness of being a part of a profession, a part of the team in which you work that helps overcome difficulties at work, encourages ongoing professional growth and self-development. Wiles F. (2017) focuses on the fact that professional identity prevents the emergence of unprofessional behavior; it promotes resistance to stress at work and improves the contribution of the individual to the common collective effort.

It is evident that the topic of professional identity is widespread in foreign scientific thinking. Among domestic researchers, it is worth highlighting Zhuravlova O. and Bih D. (2022), who consider professional identity to be the result of the relevant choice of profession, the formation of the integrity of the student's personality and the acceptance of his own professional activity as a means of self-fulfillment. Liashch O. (2020) represents professional identity as a factor of self-fulfillment of the individual, and its essence, according to the researcher, lies in the independent and responsible construction of one's professional future, which implies a high readiness of the semantic and regulatory fundamentals of behavior in situations of uncertainty of the professional future to which the individual aspires. It is possible to discuss a developed professional identity only if there is such a specific property as an emotional state at different stages of professional

development. In turn, Dubinka M. (2022) considers professional identity as a determinant of the process of professional self-determination of a future specialist; the main criterion for professional development and the leading characteristic of the labor subject. An established professional identity is the key to effective modeling of one's own professional growth.

The issue of professional identity, as well as mentoring, is being actively discussed in scientific circles, including pedagogical ones. After all, the role of mentoring in the formation of self-awareness as a teacher, a master of children's souls, should in no way be underestimated. Bigar A., Prokop I., & Piz I. (2019) confirm with their own study that professional identity is a complex integrative concept that manifests cognitive, motivational, and value features of a personality that provide orientation in the world of professions and in the social environment. That is, professional identity is an unquestionably formed professionalism. Nevertheless, it is impossible to achieve a high level of pedagogical excellence without the support of a mentor, someone who will encourage, advice, and help you navigate both knowledgeably and emotionally and psychologically in the complex teaching profession.

The "New Ukrainian School" reform (2017) actively promotes the idea of mentoring in the development of future teachers. Following the experience of Finnish projects and teacher training practices in Finland, where a mentor supervises a student, a future teacher, throughout the entire period of study, our teacher training system is also beginning to undergo changes.

Methods

The following methods were used in the course of the research:

- theoretical (analysis, synthesis, generalization) to work with scientific sources and studies;
- empirical (survey, description of the survey) to work on the results of the pedagogical experiment;

- generalization to analyze and characterize the role of mentoring in the formation of future teachers' professional identity.

Results

The study of the role and effectiveness of the mentor's influence on the formation of the future teacher, his professional identity, in particular, requires a survey among master's students. The respondents of the experiment were 26 undergraduate students of Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions that reveal students' attitudes towards mentoring as a phenomenon of pedagogical support, assessment of their own strengths and capabilities to cooperate with students, their study and training, and future teachers' own identification with the teaching profession after a certain period of time.

Taking into account that master's students possess much stronger pedagogical experience than bachelor's students, deeper scientific potential and their own observations and studies, it seems more likely that their professional formation and identity will be influenced by the effective impact of a mentor, a teacher-mentor and an advisor.

Regarding the answer to the question about the consciousness of the pedagogical profession, 20 future teachers consciously chose the teaching profession while studying at school. This is quite a high figure since many people today have the false impression that studying at a pedagogical university is easy and accessible to everyone. Therefore, these stereotypes are beginning to break down, and the professional identification of the 20 respondents mentioned above began to form during the 1st year of study.

22 master's students agreed that they would seek help from their professors after graduation. 16 of the surveyed future teachers stated that they have a mentor who performs mentoring functions and positively influences the formation of their professionalism. Such person facilitates the process of learning and research, helps

with practical and effective advice during pedagogical internships, encourages participation in pedagogical competitions, etc.

Respondents believe that professional identity should begin to be formed from the 1st - 2nd year of study and that the role of a mentor is very important at this time (15 people). Another 9 persons indicated their readiness to become mentors for junior students.

Our survey does not claim to be scientifically rigorous since the number of future teachers surveyed was not significant; however, it encourages us to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the role of mentoring in fostering the professional identity of future teachers.

Discussion

According to the analyzed literature and the survey, the preparation of future teachers for school work and other educational activities to a large extent depends on the formation of a professional identity and the presence of a mentor who works effectively on this issue. Orientation to the Western system of higher education tends to lead to the search for a mentor for students starting from the 1st year. Such practice can be observed, for instance, in Finnish higher educational institutions or in the UK, where mentoring is common during the first two years of a teacher's work at a school. Obviously, such implementations will greatly facilitate the process of preparing students for school work and the beginning of this work; however, as practice and observation show, not all students in their first year of study understand the importance of pedagogical activity, identify themselves with it, and plan to be a teacher in the future. It is probably not advisable to practice mentoring under such conditions, and this would require a large number of teachers who would have to combine teaching and research work with mentoring functions. Along with this, focusing on senior students and masters is likely to be much more effective and justified. Therefore, this issue is quite controversial and requires further studies and experiments.

Conclusions

The analysis of the scientific literature shows that the process of acquiring a professional identity is quite complex and extended in time. Scientists believe that the phenomenon of professional identity is an integrated center of contiguity of various concepts, the presence of which indicates a high level of professionalism of a teacher, namely: identifying oneself with the future profession, seeing oneself as a part of the educational process and school community, systematic self-development and professional development, the ability to model work schedule and professional growth, etc. It is impossible to achieve this level of professionalism without a mentor.

Let us highlight the features of effective mentoring in the formation of the future teacher's professional identity:

1. The activities of the administration of pedagogical higher educational institutions (HEIs) on the selection of applicants who are focused on staying in the educational process or in the teaching profession.
2. Development of university websites for anonymous search for mentors among teachers.
3. Development of educational websites for searching for mentors for a wide range of students of different professional competencies. Such online student support communities operate in Europe and the United States.
4. Being a mentor to students, starting with their preparation for the first teaching practice and working with them until graduation.
5. Assistance to novice teachers after graduation and during their first few years at school.
6. Involvement of young teachers in work with students of pedagogical higher educational institutions.
7. Systematic interest of the mentor not only in the academic success of his students but also in their emotional state, needs, problems and experiences.
8. Attempts to organize training and practice activities to keep students involved in school work and cooperation with pupils and teachers.

9. Holding pedagogical competitions where future teachers can share their experiences or find answers to questions that concern them.

10. Systematical evaluation of one's own role as a mentor for the formation of the professional identity of future teachers.

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