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Psycho-pedagogical Counselling. An Important Stage in Students' Teaching Career Orientation

Iuliana Barna, Dragu Mircea *

University Dunarea de Jos Galati, 800003, Romania
University Dunarea de Jos Galati, 800003, Romania

Abstract

The present paper proposes a programme for training students for a teaching career, which primarily involves changes at the motivational level, but also at the level of psycho-pedagogical counselling. Educational counselling, an important social phenomenon, may develop into an intense and effective mentorship programme. Psycho-pedagogical counselling is necessary in the development of the personality of an individual, and its interdisciplinary status, helps the latter in the teaching career.

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Keywords: educational conseling, teaching career, training program for students

1. Introduction

The mission of higher education is to answer to the needs in education and professional training of individuals, but also to the needs of social and economic development of the community. The higher education institution achieves this quality standard only when it allows the individual and the society to reach performance in a globalized environment characterised by competition and dynamism. In this context, the role of counselling and orientation is to facilitate and prepare the transition towards the labour market, thus contributing to making higher education more effective, by providing professional workforce readily capable of accessing jobs on the labour market.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +0-000-000-0000 ; fax: +0-000-000-0000 .
E-mail address: iuliabarna@yahoo.com

Counselling, carefully analysed from its general to its particular aspects, and considering the activities employed in the process, presupposes: relationship, conversation, consultation and intervention. Educational counselling represents a whole, efficient process structured on objectives, procedures and specific contents. It is in fact an art, since it acts upon a sensitive field (educational matter), applies methods, techniques and procedures for shaping the subject's personality creatively and differentially, adapting the (educational) subject's behaviour to the reality of the (educational) environment. (Iucu B. R. & Panisoara, I. O. , 2000).

Educational counselling which aims at adjusting the learning process to the European standards brings also the mentorship activity to the fore. Once a mentorship /training programme is established for the graduate who wishes to pursue a didactic career in compliance with the new laws and regulations, the best profile for the future teacher specialised on a specific field will also be established. This programme aims first at facilitating the trainee's integration into the school's life. The training programme must be drafted so as to support the trainee student to enhance his/her strong points in the teaching activity and also to determine him/her gradually identify interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary elements required for future improvement.

1.1. A mentorship programme includes:

- assistance/ guidance/ counselling provided to the apprentice (graduate student or practitioner) by stimulating the reflection on their own practice;
- the facilitation of the process of conceptualizing one's own experiences, as well as that of usage and dissemination of the examples of good practice and of the strategies of self-development;
- the encouragement of the practices based on active learning, learning through discovery, using cooperation and mutual teaching-learning as organisational forms of the instruction.

An effective mentorship programme includes both a general programme, which includes themes and strategies applicable to all students, and an individualized programme, structured on personal needs and aims. The efficiency of the mentorship programme depends, first and foremost, on the update and implementation of the national standards for the teaching career. The national standards have a complex, normative character, and they are often adapted to social changes, thus ensuring the necessary balance for a dynamic and flexible teaching career.

1.2. A series of stages prior to the practical act are of the essence in mentorship:

A careful monitoring, from the early stages of the mentorship activity, in view of assuring quality;

The identification of the student's type and of their adaptation to the specificity of the school in which they will work;

Communication and educational partnership between university, school and inspectorate, and the periodical evaluation of the process;

Pedagogical counselling is of utmost importance for the student's professional formation. It is related to the planning and development of the activities of learning, teaching and assessment (firstly, the student's knowledge is checked, and then the educationalist or mentor leads the students towards new acquisitions necessary for the practice of their activity). This type of counselling gives the student an educational model; it is pre-emptive and meant to stimulate the individual potential. When it is effectually combined with pedagogical counselling, instruction leads to self-awareness and facilitates the educational process through adaptation and optimal integration in the educational environment. In the pedagogical counselling programme for students, the psychologist should eliminate or at least reduce possible emotional blocking.

The organisation and coordination of the mentorship activity considers the attributions of each participant in the educational process: the mentor-teacher, the university professor and the student.

1.3. Skills and perspectives in didactic mentorship:

Mentorship should be a teamwork process centred on the school's problems;

It should be a process founded on the competences of each active participant;

The aim is not the product, but the quality of the educational act;

Educational activity is based on reflection;

The mentorship act is experiential and non-defining.

It presupposes participation and building in view of an effective training for a teaching career.

1.3.1. Objectives of the mentored student:

1. to develop a wide range of strategies meant to ensure control in the classroom, especially in the case of disruptive behaviour with repercussions on learning;
2. to get familiar with the evaluation techniques in view of improving planning and making teaching more efficient.
3. to understand correctly the ways of relating to the mentor, the students and other teachers involved in the instructive-educational process.

1.3.2. Perspectives of mentorship at the motivational level (Stevenson , Miclea & Opre,2007)

- appreciation for positive results
- increased self-esteem
- the encouragement of the professional dialogue
- the encouragement of the analysis and assessment of the activity
- the promotion of the positive relations at the group level
- the discussion on the way of overcoming cognitive and affective blocks
- ensuring leadership through the power of example
- finding balance between personal and school interests
- easing the way from instruction to teaching
- identification of the needs for professional training
- counselling in critical situations
- professional self-improvement
- systematic observation of the colleagues' activity
- discussions on typical attitudes and behaviour in school
- the encouragement of partnership between colleagues, at school and outside the school
- stimulation of risk-taking
- stimulation of self-assessment.

2. Purpose of Study

In what follows, we propose an action plan for the students who participate actively in the mentorship process, from the perspective of the competences acquired, of the learning contents, and of the performances required by educational management.

Competence: Developing communicative abilities and psycho-social relations in educational mentorship		
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Objectives	Methods / Activities	Evaluation criteria
<p>Customisation of the relation incurs the adaptation of the informational contents and its transmission codes in accordance with the particularities of the group.</p> <p>Social and individual development through role behaviour. Students will change their behaviour and implicitly their attitudes after acquiring and processing the information in the didactic message; they need to be motivated, in an optimal cognitive and/ or affective state.</p> <p>Empathy development draws in a number of direct and indirect advantages: unified communication, removal of individual censorship, supportive feedback; increasing trust in the other, removal of prejudice and stereotyping; increasing tolerance.</p> <p>Communication situational analysis The correlation between verbal and non-verbal communication. Observing and analysing the phenomenon of socio-educational interaction in teaching situations; a mentor competent cognitively and communicatively must adequately combine all communication forms so that to acquire coherence in the utterance of a logical message.</p> <p>Evaluation of the educational environment: the mentor will create a non-anxious environment, by creating a climate of trust, security and support: a stimulating climate for the resources, possibilities and skills of the student; a climate favourable for affirming one's personal values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conversations • case study • role play • interviews • group conversations • SWOT analyses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>self-analysis</i> • <i>self-reflection</i> • <i>self-teaching</i> • <i>crisis analysis</i> • <i>adaptation to the educational environment</i>

Competence: the development of the teaching and assessment skills and the formation of the educational management skills

Objectives	Methods / activities	Evaluation criteria
<p>To permanently correlate the students' activities with the objectives of pedagogical training.</p> <p>To observe the trainees in the context of the learning system provisioned by the curriculum.</p> <p>To monitor the progress of the trainee in view of avoiding difficulties which they might encounter during pedagogical training (at level of contents or methods).</p> <p>To establish the performance level of the trainee, at interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary levels.</p> <p>To foster the trainee's self-esteem and self-assessment skills.</p> <p>To select the appropriate type of feedback according to the stage of the pedagogical training and to the individual needs of the trainee. Feedback should be realistic, positive and focused on the didactic activities to be pursued and on the future professional development of the student.</p> <p>To analyse the positive and negative aspects of the teaching activity in which the trainee and the mentor are involved.</p> <p>To develop a personal theory on teaching and formation of competences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consolidation; • conversation • case study • exercise • problem solving • interviews • group conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the ability of the trainees to understand the necessity of professional development;</i> • <i>flexibility in selecting the methods for reaching an important objective of the didactic planning;</i> • <i>the ability to lead feedback sessions towards a positive, objective and encouraging analysis of the didactic planning.</i>
<p>The objective analysis of the activity of the trainees in relation to the major aims of pedagogical training. The student is always in charge – he solves indiscipline problems effectively. The analysis is well-documented, with respect to the acceptable standards of professional competences, which the student acquires via educational counselling.</p> <p>The student is aware of his role in an experts team, therefore, is capable of developing effective work relationships with the other team members (school psychologist included)</p> <p>The student is capable to draft action plans, and willing to experiment and to take risks for professional development.</p> <p>The mentor capitalises all the opportunities so that to affirm the human potential of the students. (Marinescu, M., 2007).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frontal conversation • SWOT analysis • problem solving • interviews • group conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the ability to objectively analyse the activity of the trainee in accordance with the aims and objectives of the pedagogical training</i> • <i>the self-assessment ability of the trainee</i>

3. Dysfunctions or vulnerabilities in the formation for a teaching career (Barna, Dragu & Dobrota, 2011)

The inefficiency of the pedagogical internships. Recommendation: mentorship programmes for each academic year.

The absence of an effective formula for selecting the students of the psycho-pedagogical courses at the Teachers Training Department. Recommendation: psychological counselling; simulations of didactic/educational activities as selection criteria for the students geared towards a teaching career.

The peripheral position of the psycho-pedagogical disciplines in the academic curriculum. Recommendations: re-evaluation of the curricula, especially for the specializations accessible for an educational field.

3.1. Recommendations

In order to be effective, a mentorship programme should follow the following pattern:

- the first stage is represented by the individual's personal development; during the programme, s/he will develop personal autonomy, responsibility and the ability to make decisions regarding various alternatives;

- the second stage corresponds to the development of the views on the direction to be taken. The student opts for a set of values, necessary for personal development;

- the third stage presupposes the implementation of one's personal vision into practice. At this stage, one may establish a list of professional objectives, career steps and stages to be accomplished, performance indices and instruction needs for the development of certain abilities and skills. The final stage requires permanent feedback and psycho-pedagogical support.

Conclusions:

Educational counselling for a teaching career is a planned programme of curricular activities and learning experiences. Its aim is to help the students develop the necessary knowledge and skills in order to make successful choices, and to ease the transition from school to the workplace. It is compulsory today to redefine the teachers' social and professional status, by re-examining the professional role of teachers, with regard to the changes in the curriculum, in evaluation, in management (e.g. organization and management of the learning experiences, curriculum planning, etc.). Such an undertaking will lead to a new level of professionalism for teachers and to a new mentorship model for the trainee.

The European Commission collaborates with the member states in view of improving the quality of formation of teachers in the EU, as part of a global process of political cooperation in the field of education which is to encourage and support national reforms.

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