

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com**ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 116 (2014) 3345 – 3349

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences5th World Conference on Educational Sciences - WCES 2013

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences- Applications in Mentoring Beginning Teachers

Roxana- Sorina Constantinescu *

PhD Candidate, University of Bucharest- Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, 90 Panduri Street, District 5 Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

This paper focuses on the relationship between mentoring the beginning teachers and multiple intelligences. Mentoring is a very complex process, taking into account the multiple roles a mentor should assume at different stages of his/ her activity. Using multiple intelligences, the mentor may create his/ her own working style that may be successfully used in the mentoring activity. The purpose of this paper is to identify to what extent multiple intelligences can be involved in the process of mentoring beginning teachers and to suggest types of activities that may be used in the mentoring process.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Education and Research Center.

Keywords: multiple intelligences, mentoring, mentor, beginning teacher

1. Introduction

The term *intelligence* has a lot of definitions, taking into account its complexity. Howard Gardner was the one who introduced the term of *multiple intelligences* (1983), as he identified seven, later they became eight, types of intelligences: musical, bodily- kinesthetic, logical- mathematical, linguistic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic. He speaks about "the existence of a number of different intellectual strengths, or competences" (Gardner, 1993, p. 59) and defines intelligence as referring to a biopsychological potential of our species to process certain kinds of information in certain kinds of way (Gardner, 2006, p. 76).

Although intended for psychology, the Theory of Multiple Intelligences has been widely used in education too, as teachers from all over the world use it in their classes. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences is usually perceived as having educational applications especially for pupils. Still, Gardner has recently shown interest in expanding its applications in the work place, so in working with adult people (Gardner, 2006, p.231- 250). Gardner states that the Theory of Multiple Intelligences may help individuals, teams and organizations to use more efficiently the human capital in a complex environment (Gardner, 2006, p. 249). Referring to individualization as one of the educational

*Corresponding author: Roxana- Sorina Constantinescu Tel: 34873467324
E-mail address: constantinescuroxana@yahoo.com

implications, Gardner stresses the idea that "since human beings have their own unique configuration of intelligences, we should take that into account when teaching, mentoring or nurturing" (http://howardgardner01.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/faq_september2012.pdf, p. 3). This means that „as much as possible we should teach individuals in ways that they can learn and we should assess them in a way that allows them to show what they have understood and to apply their knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts" (ibidem).

Discussing the Adult Multiple Intelligences, Viens & Kallenbach state that "looking at teaching and learning through an MI lens suggests analyzing instructional practices with an eye toward the availability range of learning opportunities across areas of students' intelligences and preferences" (Viens & Kallenbach, 2004, p.50).

Mentoring is a very complex process, taking into account the multiple roles a mentor should assume at different stages of his/ her activity. A mentor should be a counsellor, a teacher, an evaluator, a role model, a guide, a friend. A mentor should be able to develop different competences and strategies in different situations, at different stages, with different personalities. Using multiple intelligences, the mentor may increase the beginning teacher's confidence and may show a real understanding of the mentee's process of learning taking into account his/her strengths and weaknesses. Thus, the Theory of Multiple Intelligences may become a very useful tool that may be incorporated in the mentoring activity.

2. Methodology

The purpose of the empirical research was to identify to what extent the Theory of Multiple Intelligences may be used in training beginning teachers. We assumed that, taking into account the teachers' specializations in the subject they teach there may be noticed in the mentoring process means of methodological objectification of the Multiple Intelligences in relationship with experience in teaching.

The method was the interview. The questions attempted to gather information about the following topics: the level of knowledge regarding the Multiple Intelligences Theory, the perceptions and the attitudes regarding the use of Multiple Intelligences Theory in the mentoring process. We interviewed 38 teachers from Romania, and we interpreted the results collected from 14 mentors and 14 beginning teachers

3. Results

Most of the beginning teachers (85, 71%, $n=12$) had heard about the Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Nine of them (75%) considered that the theory might be applied in the mentoring process, while five (51, 66%) of them did not express their opinions. Only three (25%) of them indicated how the Theory of Multiple Intelligences might positively influence the mentoring process: it develops different competences; it provides the possibility of differentiated learning; it helps to establish a better communication between the partners involved in the mentoring process.

All the mentors had heard of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences and considered that it could be successfully used in the mentoring process, although they admitted that they had not thought of doing so before. The mentors considered that the Theory of Multiple Intelligences might be useful in the mentoring process because: the mentor uses his/her professional competences, while the beginning teacher is helped to form and/or to develop them; it is important to know and activate mainly the analysers which correspond to the dominant type of intelligence possessed by the beginning teacher; the beginning teacher feels more confident in the period of transition from a student to a teacher; it is helpful when the teams of beginning teachers are formed and distributed to a mentor; it is useful for the management of conflicts; the mentor is challenged to think more of the relationship established with the beginning teacher; the mentor may easier choose the suitable methods and strategies for the beginning teachers;

the mentoring process becomes more creative and stimulating; the beginning teacher becomes more interested in using new approaches in his/her teaching activity; it improves the *learning to learn* competence.

The responders were asked to rank the intelligences in accordance with their involvement in the mentoring process. The answers are illustrated in Figure 1. Both the mentors and the beginning teachers considered that the dominant intelligences that are used in the mentoring process are the linguistic (scored 92- mentors, 66- beginning teachers) and the interpersonal ones (scored 85- mentors, 65- beginning teachers). Still, it is obvious that the mentors considered that the two types of intelligences are a lot more involved in the mentoring process than the other ones, while the beginning teachers did not have significant differences between the eight types of intelligences.

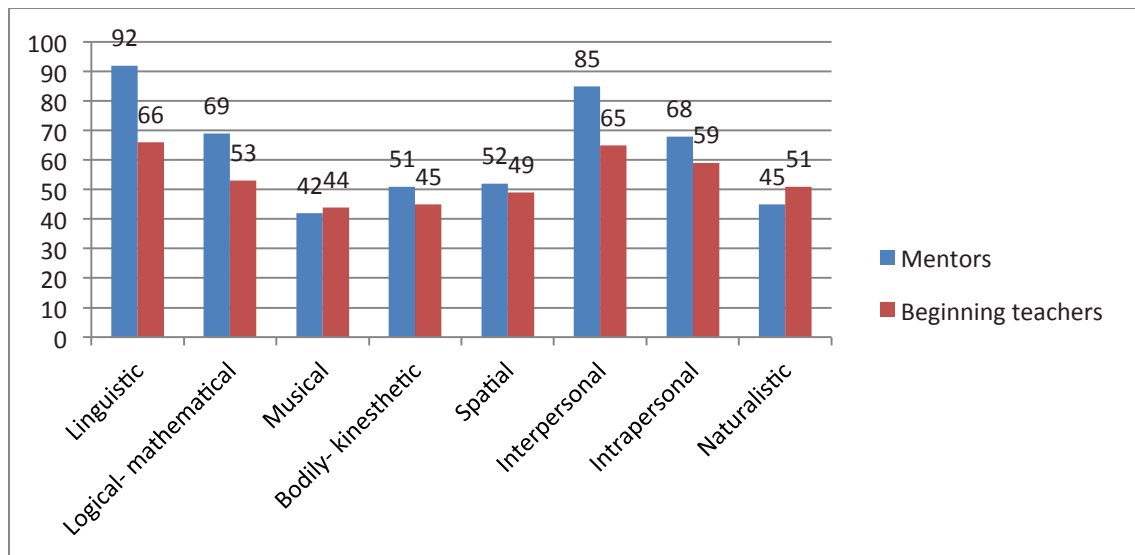


Figure 1. The perceptions of the mentors and beginning teachers on the involvement of Multiple Intelligences in the mentoring process

13 (92, 85%) mentors indicated their dominant type of intelligence: 6- interpersonal, 3- logical- mathematical, 4- linguistic. 12 (85, 71%) beginning teachers specified their dominant type of intelligence: 6- interpersonal, 2- spatial, 2- logical- mathematical, 1- linguistic, 1- intrapersonal.

The mentors indicated examples of activities that might be used in the mentoring process. The large number of activities indicated by the mentors proves that they are familiar with the Theory of Multiple Intelligences and that they use it during their classes. Although they had not thought of using the theory in the mentoring process, the mentors were able to adapt the activities used in the classroom with their pupils and/or to think of some more specific activities. The activities suggested by the mentors may be grouped into two: activities for learning and activities used in order to encourage reflection on the mentoring process. We shall list the activities indicated by the mentors for each type of intelligence:

Linguistic intelligence: exercises to acquire and correctly use the pedagogical and methodological vocabulary; debate; argumentation; oral and written communication; essay writing about the teaching experience; finding literary works, articles etc. which illustrate the relationship between the mentor and the beginning teacher/apprentice and commenting on them.

Logical- Mathematical intelligence: problem solving; logical deductions; computer programs; demonstrations; ordering the activities from a class in accordance with their importance; creating a mathematical formula which illustrates the relationship between the mentor and the beginning teacher.

Musical intelligence: exercises of diction and vocal timbre; listening to recordings from the class and deducing the type of activity; providing feedback through music; finding songs which are representative for the relationship between the mentor and the beginning teacher.

Bodily- kinesthetic intelligence: exercises to correctly use body language in different situations of communication; mime and pantomime.

Spatial intelligence: taking photos during classes and mentoring sessions; drawing.

Interpersonal intelligence: team building activities; peer mentoring, peer teaching; brainstorming; career counseling; stimulating conflictual situations in the classroom and managing them; negotiating.

Intrapersonal intelligence: keeping a journal to reflect on their actions and make critical judgement; exercises of emotional management in conflictual situations in the classroom; self reflection; self study.

Naturalistic intelligence: classroom decorating; conducting mentoring sessions outside school, in nature; exercises to identify elements from nature that may be used as metaphors for the mentoring experience.

It can be noticed that the types of intelligences that obtained higher scores are better illustrated. This may also mean that they are more known and used by the mentors.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

The interviews proved to be a self reflection exercise especially for the mentors. They reflected on their own activity both as mentors and as teachers and found new and challenging paths to follow in their future activity.

In order to determine the dominant type of intelligence, the mentor should observe the beginning teacher for a period of time, performing different tasks. The direct observation may be completed by interviews and/or tests. The mentor could identify the mentees' interests and strengths and devise a very personalized action plan for the future teachers. The next step would be generating a list of activities that fits the mentoring programme. In addition to the activities suggested by the interviewed mentors, we shall suggest some more:

The verbal –linguistic intelligence is considered by Gardner “the most widely and most democratically shared across the human species” (Gardner, 1993, p.78). This type of intelligence may be used in speaking and listening activities, such as group discussions, presentations in front of the other beginning teachers and mentors, telling the experiences that occur in the classroom. It may also be used in writing: the beginning teachers may be asked to write essays about a particular teaching experience, to write on blogs or forums of discussions for beginning teachers, to write newsletters or essays regarding different aspects of the teaching process.

If the beginning teachers prove to be more logical-mathematical oriented, the mentor should think of activities such as: open-ended problems to be solved by the beginning teachers; devising a strategy to achieve a certain goal from the action plan; creating/ using computer programs to perform certain tasks, or even creating a web site for beginning teachers; arranging pictures or parts of a text describing a didactic strategy in a logical order; asking the beginning teachers to make predictions about what might happen next in a sequence of a lesson; rating the mentees' activity and/or competences in accordance with a given performance standard. The explanations for such teachers could be given using analogies, mind maps, Venn diagrams, key concepts, graphics.

Gardner considers that bodily-kinesthetic intelligence entails the potential of using the body or parts of the body to solve problems, to create something, to express emotions (Gardner, 2006, p.23). For this type of intelligence, the mentor should use drama, energizers, jigsaw puzzles. Such mentees are probably more sensitive to body language, that's why the mentor might use it in order to reinforce the verbal message. The beginning teacher should be

allowed or even encouraged to move around the room while speaking in order to make him/her feel more comfortable. They may be also encouraged to study themselves in a mirror while performing some actions.

Gardner says that spatial intelligence is the potential to recognize and manipulate the patterns in spaces (Gardner, 2006, p. 22). The activities that may be used by mentors are: representing information/experiences using charts, diagrams, mind maps; highlighting main ideas with colours; watching and analyzing recordings of previous lessons; watching video recordings/ movies about the mentor- mentee relationship or teaching; taking photos during classes and making a chronological album with them; using pictures/ photos/ movies to stimulate discussions; arranging the modular furniture in the classroom to suit a certain activity.

Gardner believes that "the musical talent emerges the earliest of all the gifts that individuals may be endowed with" (Gardner, 1993, p. 99). The mentor may use activities such as: using audio recordings from classroom in order to identify the type of activity; recording the mentee's own voice while uttering different indications and analyzing them; using music to create a relaxed atmosphere before or even during the mentoring session.

The Interpersonal intelligence is recognized for playing an important role for teachers. Activities may include: collaborative learning experiences; cooperative learning activities; group discussions on successful experiences, barriers, blocks; interviews with pupils, mentors, other teachers; peer mentoring or peer teaching followed by debriefing sessions or SWOT analysis.

The intrapersonal intelligence allows the person to have access to his/ her feelings and emotions and to use them in order to understand and guide his/her behaviour (Gardner, 2006, p. 26). The mentor may use breath exercises in order to make the beginning teacher feel better in some stressful situations or to improve speaking skills. Taking into account the mentees' behaviour, achievements or/ and possible failures, the mentor may suggest self esteem enhancement activities.

There are many advantages of using Multiple Intelligences in the mentoring process: the mentoring process becomes more personalized, the beginning teachers become more aware of their intellectual competences; they also become better observers of their students and thus able to personalize the teaching-learning process.

It is not necessary for the activities based on the Multiple Intelligences Theory to be the only ones used in the mentoring process, but they may successfully complete the usual strategies. In this way, the options would become wider both for the beginning teacher and the mentor, as the last one may use the Multiple Intelligences when he/she has difficulties in reaching the mentees' in the traditional way. Thus, the mentor creates his/ her own working style that may lead to a better and more personalized mentoring activity, as Multiple Intelligences involve in the mentoring process not only the mind, but also the body, the feelings, the emotions, improving the way to success for both partners involved in the mentoring process.

References

- Armstrong, Thomas Dr. (2011). *Esti mai intelligent decat crezi: un ghid al inteligentelor multiple pentru copii*. Curtea Veche Publishing, Bucharest
- Gardner, Howard (1993). *Frames of Mind. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Thents anniversary edition*. Basic Books. New York
- Gardner, Howard (2006). *Inteligente multiple. Noi orizonturi*. Sigma, Bucharest
- Golu, Mihai (2007)- *Fundamentele psihologiei*. Ed. A V-a. Editura Fundatiei Romania de Maine, Bucuresti
- Viens, Julie& Kallenbach, Silja (2004). *Multiple Intelligences and Adult Literacy: A Sourcebook for Practitioners*. Teachers College, Columbia University
- http://howardgardner01.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/faq_september2012.pdf, accessed on 30.11.2013