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Mentoring in the process of education: the need for a personalistic approach

Dorota Kornas-Biela

Abstract

Die in dieser Studie enthaltenen Überlegungen zum Problem des Mentorings in der Bildung wurden durch die Erfahrung formeller und informeller Treffen mit Professor Bernd-Joachim Ertelt inspiriert, der ein langjähriger Gastdozent am Institut für Psychologie, am Institut für Pädagogik und am Institut für Soziologie an der Katholischen Universität Johannes Paul II. in Lublin (Polen) war.

The reflections contained in this study, on the problem of mentoring in education, were inspired by the experience of formal and informal meetings with Professor Bernd-Joachim Ertelt, who was a long-term visiting lecturer at the Institute of Psychology, the Institute of Pedagogy and the Institute of Sociology at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin in Lublin (Poland).[1]

1 What is education?

The word "education" is derived from the following Latin words as follows: *educare* – to raise, to bring up, *educatum* – to train, *educere* – to draw out, *educo* – "e" meaning "out of" and "duco" meaning "to lead", "to lead out". In Polish, there are two distinct words and thus separate concepts of *educatum* (training, instruction) and *educar*e (upbringing), while in English, both of these phenomena tend to be referred to as education. *Educere* and *educo* are connected with both *educatum* and *educare*, respectively; while *educatum* refers to education as leading to a higher level of intelligence, knowledge and competence, *educare* refers to increasing emotional, social and moral development and acquiring important virtues that promote good behavior.

1 His knowledge and personality made these meetings a mentoring opportunity, with mutual sharing of knowledge and experience, advice, concrete support, professional and collegial assistance. Many meetings were strictly scientific debates. However, there were also many less formal and even completely informal social meetings. Faculty and students drew much from all these visits, not just scientific knowledge and practical professional and life experience, but also human values such as mutual respect, kindness, the joy of common moments, friendship and cooperation. These conversations about life and about what is most important in it – spirituality – have left a permanent mark in our hearts. Feasting together in restaurants, but also at dinners in a home atmosphere, telling life stories, chatting, joking, fireside singing – demonstrated Professor Achim Ertelt to be someone gifted with great knowledge, a beautiful character and most importantly – the wisdom of the heart, simply put – a good and wise man. With this short article about mentoring in education, I would like to thank Professor Ertelt for sharing with us his great mind and heart.

Therefore, in distinguishing between the two terms, it should be emphasized that education (which is dealt with by didactics) aims at transferring and acquiring knowledge, skills and competencies. It is related to teaching and learning processes (institutional and non-institutional) and is mainly oriented towards the cognitive sphere. Upbringing is the influence of man on man (conscious and unconscious, planned and spontaneous, rational and emotional) mainly in the sphere of mental experiences, patterns of conduct, moral norms and codes of culture (Kornas-Biela, 2020, pp. 277–278). In this process of education and upbringing, parents, educators, the elderly and experienced professionals in the field all take part. Some of them become mentors for their pupils, students and attendees of educational meetings (e. g. post-graduate studies, specialized studies, courses, workshops).

2 Who is a mentor?

The word "mentor" itself comes from Greek mythology and is present in the Ancient Greek epic poem *The Odyssey* (which dates back ca. 3000 years). Mentor was a trusted friend of Odysseus, to whom he commissioned the care of his son Telemachus before going off to fight in the Trojan War. For many years, Mentor took care of and supported Odysseus' son faithfully and with devotion; he protected and motivated him, aroused his self-confidence, gave him advice, led him through difficulties and helped him develop his abilities. And so it is, that someone who helps someone in a similar way at some stage of their lives is called a mentor today.

Through the annals of human history, there have been many mentors. Few of them have become famous,[2] but progress in human history has been based on mentoring because the process of an individual's growth and education requires mentors who lead them through life. One can quote Bernard of Chartres (c. 1060-ok. 1125): "we are like dwarves who climb on the shoulders of the giants to see more of them and reach further with our eyesight, not because of our eyesight or body height, but because we climb up and rise to the height of the giants" (Świeżawski, 2000, p. 487). It was, however, the "giants" as mentors who allowed their shoulders to be climbed on, so the "dwarves" could become the next "giants" bringing about the progress of mankind in various fields of science, technology, art and spirituality.

Contemporarily, the mentor is the wise adviser, the teacher, the guide, the leader, but also the tutor who can be trusted. A mentor is often the most important person or expert in a given field, branch, or company. The mentor has a great deal of knowledge and high competences and is a model for the mentee. Mentoring is a form of leadership in education, the workplace and business.

2 Well-known mentoring relationships in history were, for example, Socrates as mentor to Plato; Robespierre the mentor of Napoleon; George Mason, mentor to Thomas Jefferson; Mahatma Gandhi, mentor for Rev. Martin Luther King.

3 What is mentoring in education?

Mentoring in education may relate to a teacher starting his or her job as well as a student for whom a mentor may be a teacher, a volunteer mentor, or a professional mentor. The mentor for a student can be an adult or a peer. Mentoring – of various types, with different conceptual bases, programs and executives – has become a burgeoning field in social sciences, especially in psychology and pedagogy. It is impossible to make even a cursory review of the literature in this field.

Mentoring is a form of effective training and learning, recognized as very supportive and enabling. It is also the relationship formed with someone who has achieved significant success in a given area. A mentor is a person who is more experienced in life and work, has gained some mentoring skills during training, meets certain personality criteria and helps the mentee on their path of development. He or she is a companion on this path, which has obstacles that the mentor has already overcome. A mentor can be chosen by the mentee or can be assigned to him/her when the mentee takes on a new function and needs an introduction to a new role. Contact with a mentor who has successfully faced similar challenges is invaluable. It is about mentoring the mentee during the development of competencies, so it is not only about transferring knowledge and skills, answering questions and giving advice, but also about helping to shape personal and professional development.

It should be noted that mentoring is not based on a model of countering deficits, but "in the spirit of educational development, seeing it as enhancement and improvement, refining skills and developing new ones, would be a more caring and positive way of approaching mentoring." (Wisker et al., 2013, p. 11). Mentoring is not a form of social engineering, nor is it intended to lead to conformism, but to the personal and professional development of both participants in this relationship.

There are various forms of mentoring in the education system, e. g. teacher-pupil or a small group of pupils, peer-group mentoring (e. g. Pennanen et al., 2020), mentoring to students in the teaching profession[3] or an experienced teacher mentoring to a novice teacher (eg. Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Aspfors & Fransson, 2015).

The mission of the above-mentioned forms of mentoring is to improve the professional and personal growth of newly graduated teachers, by providing assistance, support, guidance and challenges and to create development opportunities for the mentoring teachers. A mentoring program for new teachers is a critical component of the induction of new teachers into the profession. It makes necessary connections between theory and practice and supports their professional and personal growth.[4] Mentoring is not expensive because it is based on the internal resources of a person,

3 In Poland, future teachers have internships in each year of their studies. As part of the obligatory internship, each student in an educational institution is assigned to a teacher working there, officially called a mentor, who helps future teachers to enter their new professional role.

4 This is the definition of teacher mentoring developed by the team of KUL employees (including the author of this article) who participated in the International Project "Promoting Mentors Work in Education – PROMENTORS" financed by the Erasmus+ KA2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices – Capacity Building in the Field of Higher Education, which aims to improve the quality of teacher education in Israel.

institution or organization. It can also be run one-on-one, in a small group of 1–2 mentors with one or several or a group of teachers. Tom Meyer argues that research based on using observations and interviews leads to the conclusion that "novice teachers could benefit from belonging to a learning community. Learning communities are groups of teachers who voluntarily gather for the purpose of learning about teaching and learning." (Meyer, 2002).

Mentoring can also be carried out as part of the student training of future teachers.[5] The provision by students of teacher training services, such as counseling for young people, is a very important part of their formation on the way to being a teacher (Lo, 2019). Participation in youth mentoring programs by students has a long-term effect on their lives. Research on 337 Israelis, carried out during a 5 to 10 year period after becoming a student mentor, has shown that the high evaluation of mentoring and its quality, was positively correlated with their later attitudes of civic involvement and activism. Former mentors showed an increased ability to understand and positively deal with young children and groups at risk of exclusion (Goldner & Golan, 2017).

4 Formal and informal mentoring

Mentoring can take three forms: working with one person face-to-face, working with a group of 2–3 people or e-mentoring (electronic mentoring, online cyber mentoring (Kaczmarek, 2013, p. 79; Martin et al., 2019). There are two types of mentoring – formal and informal (e. g., Funk & Ek, 2002, p. 4; Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014, p. 13). Formal mentoring is usually paid and this fact may affect mentoring and the perception of the mentor's role by the mentees (e. g., paid mentors may be more responsible and perceived differently by their mentees than volunteer mentors (Zand et al. 2009, p. 15)).

Formal mentoring is a structured relationship – it has a clearly defined purpose, program, rules of teaching and contact between mentor and mentee, schedule of meetings and evaluation rules and conditions determining who can be a mentor and mentee. Mentors, in a formal mentoring relationship, are professionally trained to lead their mentees and so they have their own mentors who have given them the knowledge and skills to be mentors. They are equipped with work tools and training materials. The purpose of this kind of mentoring is to convey the knowledge and skills needed for a mentor to fulfill a certain duty. An example of this type of mentoring is an experienced teacher's mentoring of a teacher who is just starting out in an educational institution or of a teacher or educator who has been entrusted with special care of and assistance to a pupil or group of pupils. In this form of mentoring, the mentor is as-

5 In this international project, PROMENTORS, a survey was conducted of 73 students of pedagogy from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin in Lublin who completed pedagogical internships preparing for the profession of pre-school and early childhood education teacher, special educator and teacher. Interesting results were obtained in the assessment by the students of knowledge, skills and attitudes of mentors, which are essential for their teaching profession (in the light of S. Kunowski's theory) – A. Bador, E. Świdrak, *Expected and realized skills, knowledge and attitudes of mentors, in the light of Stefan Kunowski's theory of integral development, in the assessment of students of pedagogy* (manuscript).

signed to the mentee because his or her job is to mentor a newcomer or a student in need. The mentor cannot be chosen. This type of mentoring is most beneficial for adults or for groups at risk of social exclusion.

There is also informal mentoring. It is based on a relationship, based on a social and emotional bond. It can sometimes result from and sometimes lead to a bond of friendship. It is characterized by the respect and admiration of the mentee for his mentor, whom he considers to be his master in a certain field and even in life in general. This type of mentoring is beneficial for young people. Direct contact with the mentor "face to face" not only facilitates the mentee's assimilation and understanding of new content, motivates them to acquire new skills and competences, develops them but it is also a source of inspiration for the mentee to reflect upon, to undertake their own activity in some field, to create, verify and possibly change their previous attitudes and habits, to shape their own hierarchy of values and even to redefine the meaning and purpose of life.

5 What is the difference between coaching, tutoring and mentoring?

Coaching, tutoring and mentoring are very similar, but there are also differences between them (Cleary & Horsfall, 2015). All these three types of relationships have emerged in recent times in response to the distress of the family, the collapse of authorities and the disappointment in mass education. It is difficult to master any field, without contact with someone more experienced, to support growth during the difficult periods that life brings. None of these activities have the character of therapy or specialist help, although the relationship with a tutor or mentor contains a therapeutic element, just as a longer, good, wise relationship helps in coping with life.

Coaching is a process aimed at defining and achieving customer objectives. Coaching is useful in two situations – experiencing a crisis and failing to cope with something, as well as the need to prepare for a new role or challenge and experience success. A coach, like a cab driver, asks where the client wants to go and his job is to take him there. That's why he listens to the client, asks open questions that direct the client to his own goals and strategies to reach them. The client is an active participant in the process of changing him or herself and/or his or her life identifies their own tasks and their plan to accomplish them. Coaching has a practical purpose and is not objective. It is connected with solving a specific task, so it lasts a relatively short period of time. It is most often found in business, in the personnel development sector, in the world of sports and music and in the job market. Coaching services are paid for. Coaching can be used in education, usually at a higher level as a one-on-one service or for a group of students.

Tutoring (the Latin "tutor" means a guardian or watcher), is in between coaching and mentoring. It is based on a relationship in which the tutor tries to motivate the client to think independently, decisively and to act and learn. It is said in the Polish

language that "a good tutor should be like a radiator – warm and hard" – to give emotional support and to make inspiring demands. A ping-pong or tennis game can also be an illustrative metaphor for the tutoring method. The tutor serves the ball and the student bounces, gradually doing so more efficiently. Although one of them is more experienced, both of them are needed for the game to go on (Brzezińska & Rycielska, 2009, p. 19).

Tutoring is particularly useful for educational institutions, kindergartens, schools and universities.[6] In the environment of mass education, it can happen that a teacher who does not want to teach, meets with students who do not want to learn. Both sides can tire easily. In tutoring, which is a voluntary interaction, someone who has something to share, meets with someone who wants to learn. The tutor is an intermediary between the student and the school/university. He or she brings the student closer to functioning well at their chosen institution, helps with learning, monitors progress and intervenes in the cases where the student has to deal with the authorities of the institution, if necessary.

Within the education system, coaching is the least direct method; tutoring needs to be conducted within a specific framework and mentoring has a clearly defined goal and program, rules of contact and evaluation of its effectiveness. It is more direct than coaching, but additionally, in this case, the mentee has a certain freedom. Coaching lasts for the shortest time, while mentoring is a long-term relationship between a person with more experience and a person with less knowledge and competence, or less seniority. The role of a coach can be played by any person trained to do so. A tutor is a mentor who often uses coaching tools. Tutoring requires psychological and pedagogical competence (e. g. knowledge transfer, explanation, motivation). It has its own time, place, aim and method and its sole purpose is not to instigate a formal completion of tasks but is an authentic encounter of people.

The greatest value of a mentor, on the other hand, is his or her knowledge, life and professional experience and the specific competences that he can share. The mentor has fulfilled their role if they are not only a good "professional" but also someone with a mature personality and high morale. They may not only be an authority in some field, but also a personal model. M. Budzyński describing the difference between these ways of influencing, stresses that the mentor is above all the one who knows and speaks; the tutor is the one who knows and asks, while the coach does not need to know much about the client but asks in order to motivate him, strengthen his self-awareness and responsibility for the tasks undertaken (see: Sarnat-Cake, 2015, p. 146).

6 The emergence of school tutoring in Poland became apparent in the early 90s having being inspired by classical forms of the Anglo-Saxon tutorial system and derived from the education of students at universities in Oxford and Cambridge. M. Budzyński mentions three types of tutoring conducted at polish schools: developmental, scientific and artistic (2009, p. 30).

6 Why is mentoring important for young people?

Nowadays, significant problems for children and teenagers are loneliness, isolation, experiencing anxiety, tensions and fears, low mood and even depression, lack of meaning in life, alienation from the real world, addiction to drugs and behavioral addictions such as the internet. This is caused by many factors, such as a difficult family life (e. g. broken families, single parenthood, small families with no siblings, dysfunctional families), overworked parents, the addictive influence of the media and the lack of an upbringing with values. Additionally for some, high standards and an expectation of educational achievements, results in a focus on getting good grades, winning competitions and mastering various skills, rather than developing one's personality and maintaining close relations with others, especially emotional ties with people close to one another.

Young people need mentors – people who will be close personal models, companions and even masters of life for them. But nowadays it is the media that acts as a mentor for young people and decides who should influence them and who should not be. The media promote certain people and their private lives and frequently highlight quotes or statements by them on various topics, even when they are not experts or an authority in the particular field. The bigger the scandal, the more attractive it is portrayed. Idols are popular, have their fans, are adored and uncritically imitated, while their personal, family and moral lives are often in complete ruins. There are also many impersonal "authorities", who influence the recipients of mass culture through hidden indoctrination, motivated mainly by commercial bodies, propagating a hedonistic and consumerist philosophy of life, utilitarian pragmatism and a secular vision of the world. In addition, social media (e. g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) does not help internet and computer game enthusiasts to discover valuable life patterns and to plan and implement a path of development, where there is room for education and self-development towards becoming a morally valuable person (Kornas-Biela, 2020, p. 290).

About one-third of youth in the US (roughly 16 million), do not have a trusted person with whom to share their concerns or receive advice and support and 9 million young people are at risk of educational and social exclusion (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014, p. 27). Studies from other countries also confirm the great need for mentoring, both formal and informal for young people, especially those at risk. Mentoring relationships, in the school and in the workplace, have been shown to have a positive impact on both mentors and in certain aspects of the lives of the youth.

7 What is the positive impact of youth mentoring?

As the organization "MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership", which is involved in youth mentoring in the USA, states on its website, "Mentors are supportive individuals who build relationships with young people by offering them guidance,

support and encouragement to help cultivate positive and healthy development [...]. Mentors are not meant to replace parents, guardians or teachers, or to play the role of disciplinarians or decision-makers. [...] Mentors can help encourage positive choices, promote high self-esteem, support academic achievement and introduce new ideas." (Mentor Washington, 2021) Rhodes (2002, 2005) attempted to describe the explicit pathways of influence on meaningful relationships of mentors with their proteges' development by (1) enhancing social skills and emotional well-being, (2) improving cognitive skills and (3) promoting positive identity development, by serving as a role model and advocate.

The results of research conducted within a formal mentor education programme offered to teachers of a secondary school by a university in Norway show that according to the teachers, "the mentor students in the programme moved from a practical towards a more conceptual understanding of mentoring. They developed 'a mentor language, a mentor network and a mentor attitude'" (Ulvik & Sunde, 2013). However, the quality of the mentoring relationship (e. g. the quality of the mentor-youth bond) significantly predicts youths' scores in most relationship-based outcomes (Thomson & Zand, 2010). Pilot data from four cross-national mentoring programs in the US (N=276) have shown that one factor of the Mentor-Youth Alliance Scale significantly predicted youths' scores in four competency domains: Family Bonding, Relationships with Adults, School Bonding and Life Skills, at 8-months post-intake. Higher competency youth were more likely to be female, younger on average and have a higher-quality relationship with their mentors than the lower competency youth (Zand et al., 2009). Research by these authors has confirmed the results of previous studies, indicating that "one 'good' relationship can serve an important ameliorative function, which can place high-risk youth on positive developmental trajectories" (Zand et al., 2009, p. 2). Studies have found that mentored youth are likely to have positive self-esteem, more self-confidence, improved relationships with adults and peers and peer connectedness, school and family connectedness, better school attendance, better attitudes towards school, improved grades and a decrease in discipline problems. Additionally, it was established that there was less nonviolent delinquency, fewer incidences of physical altercations, a reduction in drug and alcohol use, fewer unplanned pregnancies, more positive attitudes toward their elders and toward helping in general, improved relationships with their parents, increased health knowledge and a better understanding of the role that physical activity plays in one's social growth and relations, particularly in young people who are most disadvantaged or at-risk (e. g. seem to benefit the most from mentoring (Funk & Ek, 2002, pp. 3–4).

Having a mentor allocated to at-risk youth, enables engagement in more positive activities, formation of a plan to enroll in and graduate from college, regular participation in a sports team, club or other extracurricular activity at school, holding a leadership position in a club, sports team, school council or another group, regular volunteering in the community and encourages interest in becoming mentors themselves, especially those with a first-hand experience of having been mentored. The vulnerable youth, who establishes a "good relationship" with their mentor, are less likely to de-

velop problematic behaviors. Such a supportive relationship triggers processes that protect against the consequences of threats lurking in the environment, raises self-esteem and self-efficacy, minimizes negative chain reactions and opens up opportunities. The more risk factors a youth is exposed to, the more likely they are to say they wished they had a mentor. The longer the relationship lasts, the more helpful the mentor/mentee relationship is considered by the youth (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014).

Mentoring relationships provide valuable support to all young people, especially those with different kinds of disabilities, by offering them not only academic and career guidance, assistance in the workplace, but also effective role models, interpersonal and problem-solving skills and can place them on positive developmental trajectories. Results suggest that mentoring services may be a useful adjunct service not only for youth with emotional and behavioral disorders, with disabilities or from socially disadvantaged groups but also for their highly stressed families. As the authors of sample studies in this area write: "Participating in mentoring services was related to higher family functioning across a number of domains including child behavior, parenting stress, perceived parent social support and perceived parent-child relationship quality" (Jent & Niec, 2006). Parents who seek to mentor their children depending on the problems the child presents, prefer school-based or community-based mentoring programs. For example, Sourk, Weiler and Cavell (2019) summarizing a group of 131 parents of youth stated that for parents/guardians of youth participating in community-based mentoring programs, a top reason for wanting a mentor was the desire for children to have new experiences; for parents of children in school-based mentoring programs, top reasons included seeking academic support for children because one of their children had a physical disability or mental illness.

Mentoring is such an important factor for young people in their personal development and protection from the risk of derailment when based on mutual trust and a sense that one is understood, liked and respected (Rhodes, 2002; Keller, 2005). The quality of the mentoring relationship predicted positive youth outcomes for mentees (Zand et al., 2009). Rhodes (2002) describes the extraordinary positive potential that exists in such mentoring relationships between nonparent adults and youth but also points to the potential risk of unsuccessful mentoring relationships when mentors can harm at-risk youth. It should be remembered that adolescents are susceptible to risk factors and are also defenseless against unprofessional mentoring. In some cases, it is better not to offer to mentor than it is to cause possible harm to at-risk youth.

8 Is volunteer-based youth mentoring sufficient?

The literature on youth mentoring broadly discusses volunteer mentoring, especially from peers. A special place is given to volunteering by young people who used to be at risk, have managed and now want to help other young people at risk. The results of the qualitative research indicate six strategies that they effectively apply: honesty and directness, listening, informal activities, refraining from judgment and containing an-

ger and resistance, bridging the gap between youth and caregiving entities and cultivating a realistic sense of self-efficacy as volunteers. These strategies help to reach out to young people and provide support that professional mentors are not able to provide. Therefore, volunteer mentoring should be appreciated as it does not replace but complements mentoring by professionals. Both these types of mentoring create an emotional and social environment for volunteering that helps young people to avoid marginalization (Yanay-Ventura & Amitay, 2019).

A model of mentoring based on volunteering should be available if needed, especially for young people who are at risk from both their peers and older youths who have had such experiences and have solved their former problems positively. However, volunteer mentoring may not be enough; it may fail because it requires a great deal of commitment (long-term and full-time), good professional preparation and a specialist with experience in working with young people that have been exposed to certain forms of risk (e. g. drugs, gambling, pornography, trafficking in prohibited goods, theft, violence). Professional status ensures their credibility and authority and facilitates their work across multiple key contexts. Research indicates that full-time involvement and long-term commitment facilitated the development of deep relationships with the youths. This model of mentoring by experienced professional mentors shows promise when working with high-risk youth and mentors report high success rates (Lakind et al., 2014).

9 What can't be forgotten in mentoring?

Conceptual and empirical work on youth mentoring naturally focuses on the relationship between mentor and mentee. However, a parent/guardian, teacher/educator, social assistant and peers can also contribute to the success or failure of a mentoring intervention and the effects of the program can be partially mediated by the mentee's interaction with these people. Therefore, mentoring must be considered in the system model as an interdependent network of relationships between the mentor, the mentee, the parent/guardian and employees of educational support and various community organizations. A more holistic model of mentoring shows that it functions within a mutually reinforcing (or inhibiting) network of other relationships (Keller, 2005).

It should be noted that everyone gains in the process of mentoring, as the mentor also has the opportunity for professional and personal development. Good mentoring is a way to "grow for both" mentor and mentee (Hudson, 2013). Mentoring is a challenge and a learning experience. Many mentors emphasize that mentoring has been an opportunity to rethink one's views and attitudes, to change one's way of thinking and judging other people, life habits and perspectives and to renew one's motivation at work and personal development, to deepen one's sense of effectiveness, self-worth and positive self-esteem (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, pp. 55–59).

In considering the conditions of effective mentoring and its positive aspects for the mentor and the mentee, it is important to take into account the fact that mentors also sometimes need support in order to be able to cope well with their own emotions that arise in contact with the mentee and to deal with various complex situations that occur during the mentoring process. Their work is very demanding, emotionally charged and sometimes they trigger strong negative emotions (e. g. feelings of frustration, anxiety, disappointment and frustration). Research carried out in Israel on mentoring for novice teachers proves that the "organizational atmosphere is especially important in creating a comfortable working environment for mentors" as well as the "principal's decisive role in supporting the mentoring process and the mentor". Therefore, the authors propose "that those in charge of mentoring programs do more to engage principal's support and foster their understanding of their role in promoting supportive mentoring conditions." (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, pp. 61–62) Recommendations to support mentors and develop sustainable and satisfying mentoring relationships have been formulated by many authors worldwide (eg. Strapp et al., 2014). These proposals apply to every kind of mentoring, not only in the relationship between teachers and their students.

10 Towards a personalistic approach in the process of educational mentoring

The above considerations for mentoring in education lead to the conclusion that the work of a mentor goes beyond a technical and specialized dimension and should not be limited to current and everyday matters, sharing knowledge and competences. A mentor is supposed to introduce the mentee to the world of culture and values, witnessing moral values with his own life. The welfare of the mentee should be of the highest value for the mentor, who is supposed to help him or her to attain their full potential, to gain not only knowledge but wisdom. The mentor is a guide on the path leading to truth, goodness and beauty. He or she must also take care of his or her own development along with the comprehensive development of the mentee. Otherwise, he will inform the mentor through the transparency of his failures, fears and defensive mechanisms.

The subject of mentoring, as in any educational process, is the individual person – both the one who organizes the mentoring/education and educates others, as well as the one who is being mentored/educated. At the heart of the question of mentoring and education is the anthropological question: Who does a person consider him or herself to be? How do they answer the question? Who am I and who should I become? What is the essence of humanity? What should I improve in myself? From these questions, other questions directly arise, e. g.: Who is the other person? What is life for? What is the meaning of life (mine and others)? What are relationships to be based on? The answer to the question: Who am I – I the human? depends on the shape of education as a whole because the way a man treats himself is in turn how he relates to oth-

ers, how he shapes his reality on a whole, including the educational one, depends on how he uses acquired knowledge in life. One of the difficult questions facing education in the future is the answer to the questions: What is the truth about human beings? What are basic moral principles?

The fundamental principle for searching for a system of global humanistic ethical principles should be personal dignity and the awareness of the common good. An appropriate proposal for contemporary crises of education theory and practice, including various forms of mentoring, is personalistic anthropology because it aims at people becoming increasingly mature and achieving a full life. Accepting the personalistic concept of the human being implies a personalistic concept of education and its goal, which "is achieved through the world of values, helping to recognize the latter, understanding, accepting and making the proper choices, building one's own but proper hierarchy of values, realizing them (both in the individual and social aspects) and animating others to an axiological change." (Chałas, 2016, p. 18)

Personalistic anthropology presupposes that man is a person characterized by substance, uniqueness, autonomy in existence, unconditional dignity, reason, the ability to love and be fulfilled by being a selfless gift to the other, the orientation towards action in common with others for the realization of the common good, the ability to lead and take responsibility, the openness to spiritual values (truth, goodness and beauty) and transcendence (exceeding oneself, going beyond oneself, always "towards" and "for"). In other words, the basic assumptions of the personalistic concept of the person are: 1. The personal structure of man expresses the "most perfect type of being"; 2. Man is an entity that possesses that "something more" which distinguishes him from other entities. This is the dimension of reason, freedom and spirituality; 3. The person has the dignity of a person and represents the highest value in the world. The dignity of the person is the norm of morality, the criterion for all human acts; 4. The axiological dimension refers to the person – the human being is someone giving normatively to himself and to the other person; 5. The person is an entity that acts, expresses itself through the human act; 6. The person is open to the community (Lean, 1998).

Mentoring is a special kind of interaction that affirms the dignity of the mentor and mentee. The basis for this process is the unconditional acceptance of the other person and an attitude of respect for his or her dignity, which provides psychological safety for creative participation in the process of mentoring and reflection on one's own choices and actions. Readiness, willingness and the ability to reflect on oneself is necessary for every participant of the mentoring process (Brzezińska & Rycielska, 2009, p. 28). The personalistic approach is not limited to shaping virtues (Pennanen et al.) or the moral intelligence of the mentee (e. g. Kornas-Biela, 2016, 2020) but to discovering the dignity of each person, the absolute value of his or her life and the unconditional acceptance of the other person because of his or her dignity as a person.

This dual dignity of oneself and another person, discovered in the process of mentoring, not only demands affirmation but also "explodes" in a person with wisdom and goodness. From a personalistic point of view, mentoring is not about effectiveness

or even wisdom learned, passed on and assimilated methodically, but about the "sapienese" wisdom resulting from the discovery of personal dignity. This wisdom exists in the ability to discover what is important in the human being and to act in accordance with this particular knowledge, which requires an effort of self-awareness. The task of the mentor, therefore, is not so much to inform, shape or work out, but to make the pupil aware of the experience of personal dignity as a result of meeting him and giving him the opportunity to experience the other person (Szudra-Barszcz, 2019).

After discovering one's dignity and that of another person, moral duty and normal ethical action being apparent. By guiding the experience of dignity and revealing the apparentness of certain personal values (e. g. beauty, physical fitness, education, titles and social status), the mentee experiences that he or she is someone whose values are in his or her possession and capable of being affirmed and developed on a personal level and in other people he or she meets in life. Knowing one's own and another's dignity arouses a desire (will) to give, to share and thus to love. Mentoring as part of the process of education (upbringing) is a space for working on oneself, which can only be achieved through the other person and through meeting and dialogue with them. By teaching others, mentoring them, teaching and learning ourselves, we co-educate ourselves (Szudra-Barszcz, 2019).

The personalistic concept of a person as described offers a special opportunity for mentoring, as it is not only evaluated in terms of effectiveness but also in terms of morality. It is not a matter of not violating the other person's value system, accepting it or tolerating it. The point is that it is only in the course of a two or multi-subject interaction that all partners have the opportunity not only to act in accordance with the values they recognize (while respecting the partner's values and respecting his or her autonomy) but also to enrich, correct, transform, develop an attitude of mutual love and seek communion/unity.

There is no superiority in a personalistic attitude towards another person. Everyone treats himself and the other as equal not only in humanity and human dignity but also as capable of giving his personality, moral values, perceptions and the wealth of his experiences to himself and the other person. This requires each person to be humble, that is, to see himself in truth, to distance himself from himself in order to be able to accept that part of the truth, which is at times very different from the other person's own position. It also requires a plane of mutual respect, which creates a basis for free conversation, sometimes asking difficult questions, clarifying doubts, creative dialogue, discourse, negotiating positions or presenting a different position on a given subject or another solution to a given issue. In such a relationship, everyone learns new things, revises his or her own views and breaks the patterns of thought, gains new experiences and draws inspiration from the "freshness" of seeing the reality of another person. The very possibility of meeting within the framework of mentoring, which takes on a more or less formal character, is an opportunity to reduce social distance, establish intergenerational dialogue and take joint actions in the future (Olejarz, 2006).

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