Investigating Teachers' Perceptions on the Advisory Role of the Mentor in the Context of the Operation of the School Unit

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Abstract: Teachers have to deal with several obstacles and difficulties in their everyday practice. As research relieves and it is also shown from everyday educational practice, effective management of such issues for both teachers and the school system cannot be undertaken separately by each teacher. Support from a mentor, a teacher with professional experience and knowledge, as well as specific relational and communitive skills and abilities, are needed. In this paper the teachers' perceptions on the advisory role of the mentor in the context of the school unit is investigated. In order to explore the perceptions of the teachers, empirical research was carried out using questionnaires and interviews with primary educators in the prefectures of Achaia and Heraklion, Crete. The results of the investigation show that effective exercise of the role of the mentor requires a variety of skills and competences such as readiness for assistance, availability of supply, open communication, empathy, active listening, conflict resolution, etc. The acquisition and development of these skills and competences can be achieved through continuous training and mentoring in the context of the implementation of training programs to support the work of the educators.

Keywords: Mentoring, Mentor, Mentee, School Unit

1.Introduction

Teachers in the course of their work have to face both minor and major difficulties and obstacles. According to the literature, this situation is not due either teachers' personality and abilities, nor their primary education and preparation - without, of course, questioning the importance of such factors, but on issues and difficulties related to the working conditions and expectations, the school system, the culture of teachers' profession that are related to their professional development and evolution (Kriwas, 2012).

As everyday educational practice shows effectively addressing these issues for the teachers as well as the educational system cannot be undertaken by each teacher individually. It needs support from a mentor, that is, from one educator with professional experience and knowledge, but also specific communicative and relational skills and competences (Kriwas, 2012; Fragoulis, 2013).

This educator helps the less experienced teacher and contributes to his / her professional development and growth, as the relationship between the mentor and the mentee gradually develops based on the mutual interest and trust (Scandura et al., 1996: 52).

Calderhead and Shorrock's (1997, as reported by Rajuan & Verloop, 2007) mentioned that the mentoring process contributes to the teachers' professional development as it promotes the development of five major areas of their personality. In particular, it contributes: to academic field development through the provision of knowledge, the teaching sector through the development and cultivation of teaching skills and the emergence of good practices, in the field of counseling through the development of problem solving procedures, the development of their personality through the development of a variety of cognitive, social and emotional skills, as well as the metacognitive sector through the development of critical thinking processes (Rajuan & Verloop, 2007).

2. Definition of mentor

The word Mentor origins in Greek mythology. When Odysseus left for his long journey left behind his friend Mentor with a request to educate his son Tilemahos (Mihiotis, et al., 2006: 22). In our the days, mentoring is a cooperative relationship

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between two people that allows the exchange of views, experiences, information and practical implications in an employment or actuation field (Cunningham & Eberle, 1993; Kefalas, 2005: 2). In the field of education teachers seek mentor when they want to evolve, improve educational and teaching practices, feel safe for their choices, develop knowledge and skills around an object. For his part, mentor, who has a larger experience in the given area or object, guides the trainees, transferring his knowledge, experience and good practices. He works for them as a trusted friend and supporter (Fragoulis, 2013: 2).

3. Purpose and objectives of mentoring in the context school unit operation

The purpose of mentoring is to provide assistance and support to teachers in order to manage effectively their education course, further develop their skills, improve performance and become more effective in their work (Mihiotis, et al., 2006: 24).

 The objectives of mentoring can be stated as following:

• Provide support, assistance and guidance from an experienced person to another with less experience, in the context of an interpersonal relationship between the two of them

• Give the trainee the broadest picture of the socio-economic and educational context within which the learning process is implemented

• Provide the mentee /protegé with learning opportunities at a non-threatening environment.

From the above we understand that mentoring as a counseling and teaching guidance process contributes to both teachers' professional support and the improvement of the quality of their educational task (Tang & Choi, 2005: 383; Fragoulis, 2013: 5).

According to Collin (1988), mentors can systematically support and effectively guide teachers in practicing their teaching task, as through their experience and education, they have developed to a considerable extent the following skills (Collin, 1998: 24):

•   Recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of the less experienced teachers.
•   Recognize the difficulties faced by teachers in effective planning, implementation and evaluation of the educational- teaching task.
•   Support teachers in difficulties and problems arising from the performance of their work.
•   Analyzing and dealing with difficulties.
•   Counseling and guidance for teachers**.**

4. Role and characteristics of mentors

The exact role of the mentor depends on various factors, the most important of which are identified in (a) the mentor's available time, (b) the environment and the organization of working patterns; (c) his skills, competences and experience, (d) the needs and interests of his trainees,(e) the culture of the educational unit that applies mentoring procedures.

Papastamatis (2010) mentions the following roles of the mentor:

•   Teacher - where the mentor creates learning opportunities for the trainees, using real and hypothetical situations.
•   Devil's advocate - where the mentor provokes and faces the difficulties of the supervised in order to assist them in the most effective practice of their work.
•   Coach - where the mentor supports the mentees with identifying, what is important for them to learn, what kind of skills and abilities must develop and to what extent.

Conway (1984) mentions the basic elements of the mentor's role in which are included the role of the supervisor, the trainer and the counselor. Moreover, emotional empathy as a mentor's quality is considered to be an important factor in the development of the mentor- mentee relationship. At the same time, creating a successful relationship between mentor and mentee, is vital for learning and professional support for the latter (Fragoulis & Balkanos, 2011: 271; Fragoulis, 2013: 3-4).

According to Zarkovic & Bizjak, (2000) for a mentor to be effective in the exercise of his mentor-counseling work the following characteristics are necessary:

•   Desire for offering help and support
•   Experience on the implementation of the mentoring process
•   Time to support others
•   Communication, cooperation and problem solving skills
•   Desire to learn
•   Responsibility
•   Desire to cooperate with his / her mentee

Cho et al. (2011) categorize the characteristics of the ideal mentor in five areas:

•   individual (compassionate, generous, insightful, altruist, sincere, calm, respectable etc.) and professional (collaborative, communicative, visionary, trained, etc.) characteristics
•   the way it guides professional development of the mentee (creation of a plan, adaptation of the

characteristics and the needs of the protected, providing opportunities action, etc)

• availability for collaboration and communication (frequency, availability, duration and quality of time devoted to the trainee)

• support of the mentees to maintain or achieve personal- professional equilibrium

• creating a "bank" of experiences and ways of implementation mentoring.

From the foregoing it is understood that the mentor, among others skills needs to have counseling skills in order to build a healthy relationship with his mentee. The mentoring relationship is a form of professional as well as emotional commitment between individuals. A relationship that will be characterised by acceptance, security, respect, (McKimm, Jollie and Hatter, 2003).

5. Research methodology

5.1 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' perceptions in relation to the advisory dimension of the role of the mentor in the framework of the school unit.

5.2 Research questions

1. Teachers' views on how to prepare mentoring process depend on their demographic characteristics.

2. Teachers' views on the content of the mentoring process depend on their demographic characteristics.

3. Teachers' views on the implementation of the mentoring process depend on their demographic characteristics.

4. Teachers' views on the advisory role of mentors depend on their demographic characteristics.

5.3 Population - research sample - restrictions

The sample consisted of 82 primary school teachers of the prefectures of Achaia and Heraklion, Crete, who apply the process of mentoring in their school units in the school year 2013-2014. Because of limited number of participants our research has an inventory character (Dimitropoulos, 2009: 50).

The research was carried out on a specific sample of teachers of the aforementioned regions, and therefore its effects cannot be generalized to all teachers involved in mentoring procedures throughout the territory.

5.4 Data Collection Tools

Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire, created by the authors for the purpose of the research. Moreover interviews were conducted, in order to collect the necessary qualitative and quantitative data (Cohen & Manion, 1997: 140-141; Kyriazi, 1999: 127-131).

5.5 Statistical process

Questionnaires were elaborated by the use of the statistical program SPSS v.22 which is used widely in social sciences.

6. Results

6.1 Demographic characteristics

Regarding the demographics characteristics of the individuals that participated in the research 34 of the 82 participants were men (41.5%) and 48 were women (58.5%). *In relation to age,* 30 subjects (36.6%) were in the 25-35 age group, 22 subjects (26.8%) were aged 36-45 years old, 26 subjects (31.7%) were in the 46-55 age group and 4 subjects (4.9%) were in the 56-65 age group. *As far as their degree* is concerned 16 subjects were educators (English, French, Physical Education) (19.5%), 62 were primary school teachers (75.6%) and nursery school teachers (4.9%) (Table 1), 34 had postgraduate degrees (41.4%) and 2 a PhD (2.4%).

Table 1

Degree distribution

Educators	16	19.5%
Primary School teachers	26	75.6%
Nursery School teachers	4	4.9%
Total	**84**	**100%**

In relation to the position in education 18 of the participants were Directors or School Chiefs Units (22.0%), 6 were School Unit Deputy (7.3%), while 58 were educators (70.7%). Regarding their *teaching experience* the majority of participants had 1-10 years of service (36.6%), 24 teachers had 11 to 20 years (29.3%), 24 teachers had 21-30 years (29.3%) and 4 teachers more than 30 years of teaching experience (4.9%). From the 82 respondents 70 were permanent teachers (85.4%) and 12 were teachers deputies (14.6%).

6.2 Teachers' views on its preparation and design mentoring process

To explore the views of teachers on the preparation of the mentoring process four questions were used. The participants' responses were as follows.

To the question "To which point does the context of elaborating the mentoring process clarifies your obligations?" the results of the one-variable analysis showed that very much and much was mentioned by 60 subjects (73.1%), enough by 20 subjects (24.4%), while little by a small number of 2 subjects (2.4%). From the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed among sex (p = .021) and working status (p = .001).

In relation to the answers to the question: "To what extent the aims and objectives of the mentoring process was clarified within the context of its formulation?" from the results of the one-variable analysis occurred that 56 subjects (68.3%) reported too much and much, 22 subjects (26.8%) reported quite a lot, while 4 subjects (4.9%) reported very little. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to age (p = .021), years of teaching experience (p = .020), working situation (p = .023) and having a postgraduate degree (p = .000).

Table 2

Clarification of goals and objectives mentoring process

Too much & much	56	68.3%
Enough	22	26.8%
Very little	4	4.9%
Total	82	100%

Regarding the answers of the subjects to the question: "To what extent during the context of the formulation of the mentoring process you were given the opportunity to express your fears and concerns?" the one-variable analysis resulted in the following: 48 subjects (58.6%) responded very much and much, 30 subjects (36.6%) answered enough, while 2 subjects (2.4%) responded very little. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to age (p = .002) and working status (p = .005).

To the question: «Have you been given the opportunity to express your expectations within the mentoring process?" 60 of the participants responded very much (73.2%), 14 (17.7%) enough while 8 very little and not at all (9.8%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to work situation (p = .029) and possession of a postgraduate degree (p = .000).

6.3 Teachers' views on the content of the mentoring process

To explore the perceptions of the participants in this field five questions were asked. Their responses were as follows:

Regarding the answers of the subjects to the question: "The content of the mentor relationship was in line with your educational needs? " results of the one-variable analysis resulted in the following: 28 respondents (34.1%) responded too much, much 30 respondents (36.6%), enough 18 respondents (22%) and barely 22 (26.9%) reported. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to the years of teaching experience (p = .017) and having a postgraduate degree (p = .000).

To the question: "The content of the mentor relationship was in line with your special interests and features?", 44 of the participants (51.2%) responded too much & much, 36 (43.9%) enough and 4 (4.9%) very little. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to age (p = .014) and having postgraduate studies (p = .000).

Subjects' answers to the question: "The content of the mentor relationship was in line with your experiences in the school area?" formed as subsequently. 52 of the respondents stated very much (63.4%), 24 enough (29.3%) and the 6 barely (7.3%). From the two-variable analysis the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to age (p = .001) and working status (p = .023).

Regarding the answers of the subjects to the question: "The content of the mentor relationship was in line with your available time? ", 48 subjects (58.5%) responded too much and much, 20 subjects (24.4%) enough and 14 subjects (17.1%) very little. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation with age (p = .000), years of teaching experience (p = .000) and having postgraduate studies (p = .026).

Finally, to question "The content of the mentor relationship was in accordance with your pace of

participation in the mentoring process ", 48 respondents said much and too much (58.6%), 26 reported enough (31.7%) and 8 very little (9.8%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to the age (p = .000), the employment relationship (p = .011) and holding a postgraduate degree (p = .000).

6.4 Teachers' views on the implementation of the mentoring process

To explore the views of teachers on the implementation of the mentoring process, seven questions were raised. The answers of the participants were formulated as follows:

To question "During the mentoring process, your interest for appropriate educational techniques was raised? " too much and much reported from 62 subjects (75.61%), enough from 12 subjects (14.6%), a little from 6 subjects (7.3%), while not at all reported from 2 subjects (2.4%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to age (p = .003) and working condition (p = .003).

In relation to the subjects' responses to "During the mentoring process the mentor used the adult learning principles?" according to the one-variable analysis 48 Subjects (58.6%) reported too much and much, 30 subjects (36.6%) reported enough, while 4 subjects (4.8%) reported little and nothing at all. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to age (p = .013), years of teaching experience (p = .020) and working status (p = .003).

Table 3

Use of adult learning principles by the mentor

Too much & much	48	58.6%
Enough	30	36.6%
Very little	4	4.8%
Total	82	100%

As far as the answers of the subjects to the question: "During the mentoring process has the mentor created the conditions for effective adult learning? ", 42 subjects (52.2%) responded very much and much, 30 subjects (36.5%) answered quite a lot, while 10 subjects (12.2%) replied little and nothing at all.

From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to sex (p = .005), the age (p = .000), the place in education (p = .042), the years of teaching experience (p = .0.18) and the working situation (p = .006).

To the question: "During the mentoring process, there time was handled properly?" 16 participants responded very much (19.5%), 36 participants (43.9%) much, 22 (26.84%) and 20 (9.8%) very little. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed with respect to age (p = .003) and years teaching experience (p = .029).

54 of participants responded very much and much (65.9%), 24 (29.3%) responded enough and 4 (4.8%) very little to the question: "In the mentoring process has formed an appropriate advisory climate?". From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to age (p = .000), years of teaching experience (p = .000) and working situation (p = .001).

Regarding the answers of the subjects to the question: "During the mentoring process have been developed equal cooperative and communication relationships with the mentor?" very much and much mentioned from 52 subjects (63.5%), enough reported from 28 subjects (34.1%), while 2 subjects (2.4%) answered very little. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to age (p = .003) and working status (p = .000).

Finally, to the question: "During the mentoring process there was a combination of theoretical knowledge with the possibility of practicing?", 46 respondents said very much (56.1%), 30 said enough (36.6%) and 6 very little and not at all (7.3%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to age (p = .001) and work status (p=. 006).

6.5 Teachers' views on the advisory role of mentor

To explore the views of teachers on advisory role of mentor, nine questions were used. The answers of the participants were formulated as follows:

To the question "To what extent do you think that during the development of mentoring relationship mentor demonstrated empathy?" 22 (26.8%) of the participants answered very much, 44 (52.76%) much, 10 (12.2%) enough while 6 (7.3%) answered not at all. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05)

was observed in relation to the gender (p=.014), the position in education (p=.049) and the work status (p=.001).

When asked "To what extent during the development of mentoring process the mentor used humor?" 28 of the participants said very much (34.1%), 38 (46.3%) much, 12 (14.6%) enough and 4 of them (4.8%) very little or not at all. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to years of teaching experience (p=.029) and having postgraduate studies (p=.000).

Subjects' answers to the question: "To what extent do you think during the process of the mentoring relationship, the mentor shown self-criticism and he recognized his mistakes? " were shaped as follows: 62 of them very much and much (75.6%), 12 (14.6%) enough and 8 (9.8%) very little . From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to age (p = .015), the years of teaching experience (p = .049) and the postgraduate studies (p = .000).

Regarding the answers of the subjects to the question: "To what extent do you think that the mentor was open to criticism in the process of developing the mentoring relationship?", very much and very mentioned 50 subjects (61%), enough reported 28 subjects (34.1%), while 4 subjects (4.9%) reported very little. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed with respect to age (p = .006), the position in education (p= .027), the years of teaching experience (p = .002) and the postgraduate studies (p= .028).

To the question: "To what extent do you think that in the development of the mentoring relationship the mentor used creative thinking?" 58 of the participants stated very much and much (70.8%), 22 reported (26.8%) enough and 2 very little or not at all (2.4%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed among age (p = .027), place in education (p = .019), years of teaching experience (p = .008) and the working situation (p = .007).

To the question: "To what extent do you think that during the development of the mentoring relationship the mentor used appropriately the pre-existing experiences of the trainees?" 62 (75.6%) of the participants stated very much and much, 16 (19.5%) enough and 4 (4.9%) a little. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation with age (p = .006) and years of teaching experience (p = .031).

Regarding the answers of the subjects to the question: "To what extent do you think that during the development of the mentoring relationship the mentor did recognize his limits/boundaries? ", very much and much mentioned 56 subjects (68.3%), enough 24 subjects (29.3%), and a little reported 2 subjects (2.4%). From the two-variable and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to sex (p = .003), age (p = .019), the place in education (p = .002) and years of teaching experience (p = .021).

Teachers' answers to the question: "To what extent during the process of developing the mentoring relationship, do you think the mentor set limits on the expectations of the mentees" were formulated as follows: too much and much reported 50 subjects (60.9%), enough reported 28 subjects (34.1%), a little mentioned 4 subjects (4.9%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed with respect to gender (p = .026), age (p = .003), place in education (p = .011), years teaching experience (p = .000) and working situation (p = .002).

Finally, to the question: "To what extent do you think that in the process of developing the mentoring relationship the mentor supported the consultants in achieving their goals?", 58 respondents said very much and much (70.7%), 16 enough (19.5%) and 8 a little (9.7%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance (α≤0.05) was observed in relation to age (p = .018), place in education (p = .021), the years of teaching experience (p= .000), the working situation (p = .002) and the having a postgraduate degree (p = .045).

Table 4

Degree of mentor support in the context of developing the mentoring relationship

Too much & much	58	70.7%
Enough	16	19.5%
Very little	8	9.7%
Total	82	100%

6.6 Teachers' views on the effectiveness of the mentoring process

To investigate this area, 8 questions were asked, the answers of which are described below.

Regarding the answers of the subjects to the question: "Do you think that through the participation in the mentoring process, your active involvement in all

stages of the implementation of the mentoring relationship, was accomplished? ", too much and much were reported by 56 subjects (68.3%), enough by 24 (29.3%) a little by 2 trainees (2.4%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to age (p = .004) and working condition(p = .003).

In relation to the subjects' answers to the question: "Do you think that through your participation in the mentoring process you were given the opportunity to develop initiatives during the implementation of the mentoring relationship?", the one-variable analysis resulted in the following: too much and much reported by 50 teachers (61%), enough 28 teachers (34.1%), and a little by 4 teachers (4.9%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to age (p = .0460) and working status (p = .000).

To the question: "You think that through your participation in the mentoring process has been given you the opportunity to develop initiatives to solve problems concerning school context", 56 of the participants stated very much and much (68.3%), 20 (24.4%) enough and a little 6 (7.3%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to sex (p = .021), years of teaching experience (p = .000), the working situation (p = .033) and the postgraduate study (p = .000).

The teachers' answers to the question: "Do you think that through your participation in the mentoring process you gained knowledge and skills in problem management within the school? " were formulated as follows: very much and much were mentioned by 54 subjects (65.8%), enough by 24(29.3%) subjects and a little by 4 subjects (4.9%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to the place in education (p = .047), years of teaching experience (p = .001), the working situation (p = .023) and the postgraduate degree(p = .000).

Regarding the answers of the subjects to the question: "Do you think through your participation in the mentoring process you were given the opportunity to develop a critical reflection on how to approach problems in the school area? ", very much and much were reported by 56 subjects (68.3%), 20 subjects (24,429.3%) have reported enough, a little reported by 6 subjects (7.2%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed among age (p = .001), the years of teaching experience (p = .003), the working situation (p = .007) and having a postgraduate degree (p = .000).

The participants' answers to the question: "Do you think that through your participation in the mentoring process have you been given the opportunity to revise effective practices in addressing problematic situations in school space?" 54 (65.9%) of the participants responded very much and much, 22 (26.8%) enough and a little, 6 participants (7.3%) From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to age (p = .013), the place in education (p = .032), the years of teaching experience (p = .005), the working situation (p = .001) and having a postgraduate degree (p = .000).

To the question: "Do you think that your participation in the process of mentoring has made it possible to apply and utilize the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes in your daily educational practice?", 58 (70.8%) of the participants stated very much and much, 16 (19.5%) enough and 8 a little (9.8%). From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to possession postgraduate studies (p = .000).

Finally, to the question: "Do you think that through your participation in the process of mentoring your professional development was supported?", 56 (68.3%) respondents said very much and much, 22 reported enough (26.8%) and 4 (4.8%) a little. From the two-variable analysis and the check x^2 criterion significant statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was observed in relation to the place in education (p = .017), the teaching years (p = .014), the working situation (p = .002) and having a postgraduate degree (p = .000).

7. Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the survey show that participants expressed a high degree of satisfaction in relation to preparing and designing the mentoring process. In particular they mention that their obligations in terms of their participation in mentoring were clearly stated, the aims and objectives of mentoring have been clarified and they were given the opportunity to express their aspirations from their participations in a mentoring process. More strongly, this was expressed by teachers aged 36-45 years, permanent teachers, and teachers with a postgraduate degree.

The subjects of the survey were pleased with the content and mentoring process. In particular, they said that the content of the mentor relationship was largely in line with their educational needs, their particular interests and characteristics, their experiences in school, as well as the pace of their participation in the school mentoring process. This opinion was more strongly expressed by younger

educators, (teachers aged 25-35), teachers who have 1-10 years' service, as well as teachers holding a postgraduate degree.

The majority of respondents expressed their satisfaction in relation to the implementation of the mentoring process. In particular, they said that their interest in engaging in the mentoring process using appropriate training techniques was considerably raised. Much of the principles and conditions of adult learning were used by the mentor. Adequate advisory climate was developed as well as equal partnerships and communication with the mentor. They also reported that theoretical knowledge was highly combined with the adoption of good practices to solve problems in the school environment. These positions were more pronounced by the younger teachers, permanent teachers, female teachers, and teachers who do not serve as education staff.

The majority of respondents were satisfied in relation to the advisory dimension of the role of the mentor. Particularly they said that in the context of the development of the mentoring relationship, the mentor highly expressed empathy, possessed humor, was open to criticism, recognized its limitations and supported the mentees in the attainment their objectives. This view expressed strongly by all teachers regardless their demographic characteristics (sex, age, position in education, years of teaching experience, employment status, postgraduate studies).

Participants in the survey as a whole considered the mentoring process to be effective as a high level of their active participation was achieved in all phases of its implementation. They also expressed the view that they have gained a great deal of knowledge and problem-solving skills in the school area and have developed critical thinking in problem management at school.

Finally, they revised their effective practices concerning the approach of problem situations in the school area and their professional development was significantly supported. This view was expressed more strongly by younger educators (teachers aged 25-35), teachers who were not executives of education, teachers with an experience of 1-10 years, and teachers holding a postgraduate degree.

The majority of teachers recognized and appreciated the contribution of mentoring both in their work in the school unit and in their professional development. They argued that the mentor should be a trainer with experience, skills, and mainly fulfill a counseling and guidance role. He have to be willing to offer not only scientific knowledge but also a variety of skills such as communication, cooperation, empathy and problem solving. All the virtues that can create a warm and friendly atmosphere for all educators must be concentrated on his face. Mentoring, if properly organized and implemented in a methodical and systematic way, can effectively help in the operation of the school unit. It can also help improve the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils as well as their effective functioning.

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