Chapter 14

The Leadership Competencies of Teacher Mentors as a Factor of Education of Leadership Competencies in Students

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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been more and more research done concerning the preparation of students for leadership. Although the significance of practical activity and mentorship has been emphasized, the lack of research has been felt that could reveal the connection between the practice of mentors of teaching practicum and leadership competencies of students. The display of these connections could help to create possibilities to purposefully act, fulfill expedient intervention into the processes of development of leadership competencies, teaching practicum, and mentorship processes in order to seek to improve them and achieve better results in development of students’ leadership competencies. The research using the strategy of natural experiment was carried out. It has been proved that the leadership competencies of students (after teaching practice) are related with the functions implemented by mentors by a statistically significant and linear functional connection. That proves that the leadership competencies of teacher mentors and their students are interrelated.

INTRODUCTION

In order to ensure that more teachers assume a leadership role the systematic approach to this issue is needed. One of the arguments is that students’ leadership competences need to be developed already at a higher school. This and similar arguments have encouraged to look at the development of leadership competences at higher school more attentively. The role of higher schools in educating of leadership competences in students has been reasoned before. It has been determined by scientific researches that each person has the leadership potential and students not only may enhance, but actually enhance their
leadership competences during the studying at the university or college (Zimmerman-Oster, Burkhardt, 1999; Pascarella, Terenzini, 2005; Skarbaliënė, 2017).

One of the strategies applied at higher schools while educating leadership competences is related to mentorship. Thus, it could be worth looking more attentively to the phenomenon of mentorship and search for theoretical justification of links between future teachers and leadership competences of their mentors in practical work.

THE CONCEPT OF A MENTOR AND MENTORSHIP

Long S. (2002) has stated that a mentor stands for an intelligent and reliable teacher or consultant, whereas the roots of this term lie in Ancient times when in this epic drama Odyssey Homer described how Odyssey went to Trojan war and left his son to be supervised by his friend Mentor. The contemporary perception of mentorship has been related to Levinson’s D. (1978, cit. Thibodeaux, Hays-Thomas, 2005) book The Seasons of a Man’s Life where the influence of mentorship on professional development has been revealed.

Quite a lot of explanations of conceptions of a mentor and mentorship could be found in literature. Alerd G. et al. (2000), Lankau M. J., Scandura T. A. (2002) have defined mentorship as a process during which more qualified and experienced person by means of one’s own example teaches, supports, encourages, and maintains positive relations with less skilled and experienced person aiming at faster professional and/or personal development of this person. The search for personal and professional development of a fostered person as a major function of a mentor has been indicated in the works of other authors as well. According to Girves J. E., Zepeda Y. and Gwathmey J. K. (2005), the function of personal support (sometimes called psychosocial support) in the mentorship process covers role modelling, encouragement, consulting, and collegiality, whereas the professional function of the one related to the career of a trainee covers teaching, instruction, and consulting. It has been proven that consulting activity is significant in the areas of both personal and professional education. Ladišienė M. and Monkevičienė O. (2007) have also emphasized the importance of consulting by claiming that consulting is highly necessary as it helps to orient in miscellaneous activities as well as promotes professional development. Aside from these functions, a mentor is an adviser, moral supporter, and the source of information whom a student can align with and seek to become like (Yahner, & Goodstein, 2012; Omatsu, 2012).

In the research of education related areas there has been more than one explanation of mentorship conception provided. For example, Sajienė L. (2005) has stated that a mentor is an experienced teacher who helps the ones seeking teacher’s qualification not only to train practical skills of teaching in real teaching/studying process, but also to integrate into specific environment at school by developing relations with colleagues, school administration, parents, and social partners based on pedagogical ethics. Pollard A. (2006) has claimed that a mentor is a more skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced person especially in the context of studying who supports, provides requirements, formulates tasks, and helps a novice teacher during first years of professional development. In the opinion of Pukelis K. (2003), a mentor is an experienced teacher who by means of personal activity helps a future teacher to combine successfully the aims of theoretical and practical studies as well as develop essential abilities of practical teaching, i.e. gain particular pedagogical competences of practical teaching. Pukelis K. and Sabaliauskas T. (2002) have stated that in the contemporary theory of teacher training the concept of a mentor means an experienced teacher who helps a future teacher during practical studies to convert theoretical knowl-
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