

# REPRESENTATION OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS AND STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TERMS OF TEACHING PRACTICE

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**Abstract.** *This article presents an analysis of the research aimed at students' attitude towards representation of mentoring relationships and an opportunity for their professional development in terms of teaching practice. The study is based on the assumption that the diversity of mentoring relationships and differences in their representation during teaching practice relate directly to the opportunities for students' professional development. Mentoring is widely considered to be one of the models of support used in many different areas of society to meet the growing needs for personal and professional development. It is acknowledged that mentoring is a relationship between a more experienced, professional individual (a mentor) and a less experienced mentee. However, the following practical problem is identified: mentors themselves do not always recognise the variety of mentoring relationships or their impact on students' professional development, i.e., opinions diverge when it comes to clarifying: What do mentoring relationships mean in terms of students' professional development? What explains the divergence of opinions or even the disagreement on the concept of mentoring relationships? How do different mentoring relationships affect students' professional development in terms of teaching practice? Searching for answers to the above problem questions provides new insights and possible practical solutions for analysing students' professional development during teaching practice. Thus, the goal of the study is to represent mentoring relationships and the professional development of students in terms of teaching practice. Research methods: analysis of scientific literature and questionnaire survey. Research results: the research shows that the multi-meaning of mentoring relationships depends on a context of an individual's activity or a social field in which mentoring relationships take place. Research participants pointed out that mentoring relationships are understood by practice supervisors-mentors quite categorically, which restricts the professional development of students. During the research, it was found that mentoring relationships during students' practical training should be expressed in different forms and practices to provide more opportunities for their professional development.*

**Keywords:** *mentoring, mentoring relationships, professional development.*

## Introduction

The benefits of mentoring in many areas are undeniable. This is one of the reasons why interest in the subject is growing and the number of research studies

and publications is increasing. Despite the wealth of academic literature and research on mentoring, it is only relatively recently that scholars have begun to address the issue of mentoring relationships and their positive impact on the professional development of protégés (mentees) (Boudreault, 2016; Duchesne, 2010; Hudson, 2016; Izadinia, 2016). It is generally agreed that mentoring is one of the support models used in many different spheres of society to meet the growing needs for personal and professional growth in private and public enterprises, education, vocational training, etc. (Hurtel & Guillemette, 2022). There is also agreement that mentoring is a relationship between an experienced, professional person (the mentor) and a protégé (mentee) with less experience (Lajiness, 2021). However, there is a *practical problem*: mentors themselves are not always aware of the diversity of mentoring and its relationships and their impact on students' professional development, as opinions diverge when it comes to clarifying what a mentoring relationship means and what a mentoring relationship may look like in terms of students' professional development. This has led to *the main problem questions of the present study*: What explains the divergence of opinions and the disagreement on the concept of mentoring and mentoring relationships? How do mentoring relationships and their variety manifest themselves during the student teaching practice? How do different mentoring relationships affect students' professional development in terms of teaching practice?

Answering these problem questions provides new insights and possible practical solutions for the analysis of students' professional growth during their teaching practice. Therefore, *the aim of this study* is to uncover the expression of mentoring relationships and students' professional growth in the context of teaching practice. Research methods include analysis of scientific literature and questionnaire survey.

## **Literature review**

Mentoring is probably the oldest form of formal support giving rise to other forms of support for professional and personal growth long before school education (Paul, 2020). In recent decades, mentoring has been extensively analyzed in a variety of social contexts as a key component of social capital related to professional development (Hudson, 2013), career success (Bozionelos et al., 2016), organizational commitment (Craig, Allen, Reid, Riemenschneider & Armstrong, 2013; Donaldson, Ensher & Grant-Vallone, 2000), organizational civic behavior (Ghosh, Reio & Haynes, 2012), the role of the mentor and its impact on the mentee and the interaction (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Kang, 2021; Dani et al., 2021), mentor identity (Badia & Clarke, 2022), employee retention (Craig et al., 2013; Payne & Huffman, 2005) etc. However, there is often a possible divergence of views observed, even a contradiction in the very notion of

mentoring and its relationship. While researchers and practitioners recognize the impact of mentoring relationships on professional development and career success, it must be said that most studies have not taken into account the multidimensionality of the construct. Therefore, in order to reveal the expression of mentoring relationships in relation to students' professional growth during their teaching practice, scientific literature on the typology of mentoring relationships was analyzed.

This study is based on Hurtel and Guillemette's (2022) typology of mentoring relationships. In a meta-analysis of the literature, the authors identified 10 distinct types of mentoring relationships and their main characteristics (Hurtel & Guillemette, 2022). The type of *Experience transfer* values the duration and richness of practical experience more than anything else. It means one-way mentoring relationships - the mentor as the sender of clear, interesting information and the mentee as the receiver. The relationship is focused on the professional development of the mentee. In the type of *Expert practice transfer* the relationship between the expert and the newcomer/trainee is strongly hierarchical. It is a one-way mentoring relationship - mentor-initiated sharing of ideas, guiding conversations and controlling discussions. The relationship is focused on the professional growth of the mentee. In the type of *Service to the organization*, the mentor and mentee are seen primarily as resources for the development of the organization. The mentor's activities are focused on the benefits and well-being of the organization rather than on meeting the professional development needs of the mentee. The type of *Support for occupational integration* helps the mentee to integrate into a new workplace. The mentoring relationship is bi-directional - the mentor's activities are both focused on the organization's objectives in terms of employee retention and on supporting the mentee in building their resilience in order to protect them from failure during the trial period, in the form of on-the-job training, long-term internships, pilot placements, etc. In the type of *the Model*, the mentor inspires the mentee in terms of values and professional ethics. It involves unidirectional mentoring relationships where the mentor is consciously aware of their role as a role model and provides more value to the mentee than if the mentee is merely a passive observer. The relationship is focused on the professional growth of the mentee. In the type of *Coaching*, the mentor guides the mentee's day-to-day adaptation necessary to take up the job. The unidirectional relationships are focused on the professional growth of the mentee, but at the same time allow for adaptation to future changes. The mentor encourages, supports, gives feedback and is positive about the mentee's slightest achievements. In the type of the *Teacher*, the mentor provides the necessary resources to develop the mentee's skills and knowledge. Such a relationship only occasionally allows, in some situations, for the development of the mentor's and the mentee's knowledge and competences. In the type of the *Guide*, the mentor gives instructions to the mentee in order to help the mentee move forward by correcting mistakes and

developing professional autonomy. In the type of *Apprenticeship*, the mentor provides emotional support and protection in the form of friendship. It involves a unidirectional mentoring relationship, where the mentor's entire activity is devoted to the professional development of the mentee, promoting the mentee's reflective abilities. The *Collegial type* is a co-worker relationship involving mutual support and a bi-directional relationship.

The individual types of mentoring relationships identified may not exist in their pure form as they are usually not limited to any one type. Empirically, the predominant cases are mixed or transitional, in other words, " ... mentoring relationships belong to the world of ideas; this is the meaning of the term of the ideal according to Weber's concept of the ideal type" (Hurtel & Guillemette, 2022, p.20). Each mentoring relationship therefore contains several types of characteristics.

The typology is useful in cases where it is desirable to clarify the essence and meaning of mentoring relationships, to understand what mentoring relationships are experienced in practice and how they can be adjusted to different situations of performance and professional growth. The student's professional growth begins during their studies when the student applies theoretical knowledge in practice in an educational institution under the supervision of a mentor. Professional growth in this study is analyzed as development and deepening of professional competences throughout the period of active professional activity (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2018). At the same time, it is a process during which a student's personality is created, based on individual human experience, and it is the person's willingness to change, grow, and improve in their professional activity (Mičiulienė & Brandišauskienė, 2021).

## **Methodology**

The study is based on an assumption that the diversity of mentoring relationships and their expression during the teaching practice is related to the students' professional growth opportunities. To achieve the research objective, a quantitative study was employed - a written survey (questionnaire) with closed and open-ended questions. This instrument was chosen in order to assess the attitudes of the subjects towards certain phenomena, i.e., the expression of mentoring relationships and their diversity, the main characteristics of mentoring relationships, and the impact of mentoring relationships on students' professional growth in the context of teaching practice.

*The research instrument, validity and reliability.* The questionnaire was developed by the researchers. It consisted of three groups of questions including a total of 24 mixed type questions (closed and open-ended) divided into three blocks according to the research problem questions. The questionnaire presented the main characteristics of the mentoring relationship (Hurtel & Guillemette,

2022) in order to find out the participants' attitudes towards the expression of the mentoring relationship during their teaching practice. Other questions were designed to reveal the impact of the mentoring relationship on students' professional development, the nature of the relationship and the benefits of mentoring for the mentee, the mentor and the host organization. However, the article only analyses some of the research findings that illustrate the types of mentoring relationships, their expression, and their impact on professional growth. In order to determine whether the developed instrument was clear and understandable for the participants of the research group, 10 copies of the questionnaires were prepared and distributed to the colleagues responsible for teaching practice at Klaipėdos Valstybinė Kolegija/HEI and Klaipėda University. Considering the respondents' comments, the wording of some of the questions was adjusted. After obtaining the respondents' answers in the first testing of the survey, the internal consistency of the questionnaire items was calculated (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.80$ ).

*Statistical data analysis.* The data obtained during the study were processed with SPSS software (version 24). Graphical analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The following statistical analysis methods were used: descriptive statistics, chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test, Spearman correlation coefficient. A difference was considered statistically significant if  $p \leq 0.05$ .

*The study sample.* The questionnaire was placed on the "www.manoapklaus.lt" website. Non-probability sampling method was used, and respondents were selected through purposive sampling. The sample was selected based on the aim of the study and specific criteria. The study was guided by the criterion that respondents should be limited to teachers who worked in the pre-school and pre-primary education curriculum and who had supervised at least one educational placement. The sample consisted of 298 educators working in Lithuanian pre-schools and hosting students from colleges and universities for teaching practice.

*Research ethics.* The principles of goodwill, respect, fairness, confidentiality and anonymity were respected during the research.

## Research results

*The expression and diversity of mentoring relationships in real practice.* The study aimed to find out how often mentors practise the following types of mentoring relationships in student teaching practice. They were asked to read carefully the description of each type and to rate each statement on a five-point Likert scale.

**Table 1 Percentage of types of mentoring relationships practised during teaching practice**  
(compiled by the authors based on Hurtel and Guillemette, 2022)

Type of mentoring relationship and main characteristics	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Very often (5)
1. <b>“Experience transfer” type.</b> Emphasis is placed on the mentor's professional experience, its transferability and duration	1.00%	4.00%	35.85%	42.8%	16.35%
2. <b>“Expert practice transfer” type.</b> The emphasis is on the transfer of knowledge and competences rather than duration or transfer of professional experience	0%	1.16%	14.31%	56.27%	28.26%
3. <b>“Service to the organization” type.</b> The emphasis is on sharing a common organizational culture with the mentee, introducing the mentee into the team, and guiding them towards expert activities	7.21%	42.43%	24.27%	28.63%	22.32%
4. <b>“Support for occupational integration” type.</b> Emphasis is placed on introducing the mentee to the professional environment, networks, opportunities for professional growth, and providing the necessary help and support for the mentee to make connections, join professional networks, and integrate into activity groups	4.1%	31.54%	26.15%	18.21%	20.00%
5. <b>“Model” type.</b> The emphasis is not on imparting or imitating knowledge or skills, but on a form of active learning where the mentee is genuinely engaged in the learning process. Applying various strategies, the mentor plays a role model, not guiding the mentee or conveying learning content	12.11%	37.14%	32.23%	6.00%	12.52%
6. <b>“Coaching” type.</b> The emphasis is on monitoring the mentee's performance of specific actions to achieve the intended goal, and on accurate counselling, which does not involve sharing advice. The mentee is asked questions with a variety of questioning techniques to seek answers to challenges	45.78%	40.35%	7.27%	4.2%	1.00%
7. <b>“Teacher” type.</b> The mentor's activities are highlighted in order to improve the mentee's practice, growth of knowledge and competences, anticipation of learning needs, didactic goals, content, assessment of achievements, minimization of errors, and constant monitoring of the mentee's performance (shadowing)	1.03%	2.14%	13.27%	38.15%	45.41%
8. <b>“Guide” type.</b> The focus is on the mentee's initiative, independence, ability to independently identify effective strategies and resources for effective performance, and the mentor's advice on improvement	28.20%	14.26%	42.34%	12.27%	2.93%

<p><b>9. “Apprenticeship” type.</b> A distinctive feature of this type of mentoring relationship is the protection of the mentee. It emphasizes the mentor’s emotional support considering the difficulties faced by the mentee</p>	22.36%	41.25%	15.12%	9.99%	11.28%
<p><b>10. “Collegial” type.</b> The distinctive feature is that a mentor and a mentee are colleagues. The emphasis is on the mentor-mentee community. The mentee determines what he/she wants to do to develop his/her skills, to improve their practice, based on certain reciprocity between them and the mentor.</p>	73.25%	12.2%	8.31%	4.00%	3.24%

Analyzing the data presented in the table, it can be said that very often and often (28.26% and 56.27%) teachers use the *Expert practice transfer* type during the students’ final teaching practice. The *Experience transfer* type was not far behind - very often (28.26%) and often (56.22%). In the third place was the *Teacher* type - very often (45.41%) and often (38.15%). Statistically significant differences were found in terms of the frequency with which respondents practise the listed types of mentoring relationships using a chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test (*Expert practice transfer* type -  $\chi^2 = 9.855$ ;  $lfs = 4$ ;  $p = 0.043$ ; *Experience transfer* type -  $\chi^2 = 8.724$ ;  $lfs = 3$ ;  $p = 0.042$ ; *Teacher* type -  $\chi^2 = 9.172$ ;  $lfs = 4$ ;  $p = 0.043$ ) in terms of the respondents’ location. The results of the study suggest that the teachers living and working in the city are more likely to practise the *Expert practice transfer* type compared to teachers living in the country (town, village). The least popular type of mentoring relationship - *Coaching* - is practiced very often (1.10%) and often (4.2%) by only a small proportion of respondents, while *Collegial* type is practiced by a slightly higher proportion of respondents - very often (4.00%) and often (3.24%). The *Guide* type mentoring relationships are also not frequent, being practiced very often (2.93%) and often (9.99%). The frequency with which respondents practise the listed types of mentoring relationships was assessed with a chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test (*Coaching* type -  $\chi^2 = 7.528$ ;  $lfs = 3$ ;  $p = 0.045$ ; *Collegial* type -  $\chi^2 = 8.271$ ;  $lfs = 3$ ;  $p = 0.046$ ; *Guide* Type -  $\chi^2 = 8.173$ ;  $lfs = 4$ ). A statistically significant difference ( $p=0.000<0.05$ ) and a statistically significant direct, weak correlation ( $r=0.292$ ,  $p=0.00<0.05$ ) for age were found. The other types of mentoring relationships (*Service to the organization*, *Support for occupational integration*, *Model*, *Apprenticeship*), as it can be seen from the data presented in the table above, occupy an intermediate position in their practice.

Consequently, one-way mentoring relationships of instrumental nature are prevailing, with insufficient attention paid to the psychosocial and organizational dimensions of the relationship, and there is a lack of expression of the diversity of mentoring relationships.

Participants were asked whether they practise single types of mentoring relationships or a combination of them in their work. Their answers were as follows (Table 2).

*Table 2 Practicing individual types of mentoring relationships and their combinations (created by authors)*

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I practise individual types of mentoring relationship	31.14%
I practise combinations of mentoring relationship types	42.14%
I cannot answer the question	26.27%

As it can be seen from the responses, almost half of the participants practise a combination of mentoring relationship types (42.14%), while fewer (31.14%) practise single types, and almost a third (26.27%) of the participants were unable to answer the question. Statistical analysis revealed statistically significant differences between the age groups of respondents for this attribute. Younger educators in the 30-45 age group were more likely to practice combinations of mentoring relationship types than older educators in the 45-60 age group ( $\chi^2 = 47.71$ ;  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Although the participants in the study advocate combinations of mentoring relationships, with a relatively low expression of diversity in the relationships, the combinations will not be varied.

Participants were asked to identify ways of acquiring the skills needed for mentoring. Their responses are shown in Table 3.

*Table 3 Ways of acquiring the skills needed for mentoring (created by authors)*

<b>Ways of acquiring the skills</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I read literature, keep up to date on social media	30.15%
I take part in forums and professional development seminars	16.52%
I ask my experienced colleagues for advice	17.34%
I remember my mentor and copy their model	28.56%
I'm in a formal mentor training programme	7.43%

The survey revealed that in most cases, teachers and practice supervisors acquire the skills needed for mentoring through self-learning and non-formal learning. Only 7.43% have had an opportunity to participate in a formal mentor training programme. More people in the age group 30-45 years participated in a mentor training programme than those aged 45-60 years ( $\chi^2 = 47.71$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Almost one third (28.56%) of all participants in the study reported that they copied the working model of their former mentors. This trend can be seen as rather negative, as the knowledge and skills developed through experience are not always scientifically valid and correct. No statistically significant differences were found when analyzing the data by place of residence.



*The impact of different mentoring relationships on students' professional development in the context of teaching practice.* The participants were asked which of the following types of mentoring relationships practiced in the context of teaching practice have the greatest impact on students' professional growth. Their responses are presented in the table below.

**Table 4** *The impact of the type of mentoring relationship practised during the student teaching practice on students' professional growth (created by authors)*

Type of mentoring relationship	Percentage
1. «Experience transfer» type	27.34%
2. «Expert practice transfer» type	31.12%
3. «Service to the organization» type	8.21%
4. «Support for occupational integration» type	4.26%
5. «Model» type	7.35%
6. «Couching» type	1.68%
7. «Teacher» type	13.66%
8. «Guide» type	2.00%
9. «Apprenticeship» type	2.28%
10. «Collegial» type	2.10%

Analysis of the data in the table indicates that the *Expert practice transfer* type (31.12%), *Experience transfer* type (27.34%) and *Teacher* type (13.66%) have the greatest impact on students' professional development. The Spearman's test ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r = 0.585$ ) revealed a positive moderate relationship between the types of mentoring relationships practiced during teaching practice and the influence of relationship types on students' professional growth. The three types of mentoring relationships selected by the study participants as having influence on students' professional growth do not reveal the potential diversity of mentoring relationships, nor the more diverse nature of the relationship, which in the *Expert practice transfer* or *Experience transfer* cases is only unidirectional, focused on the student's professional growth (Hurtel & Guillemette, 2022).

## Discussion

*The expression and diversity of mentoring relationships in real practice.* From the point of view of the research participants, the most common type of mentoring relationship practiced in student teaching practice is the *Teacher* type. The expression of mentoring relationships seems to depend on the context or social field in which they are practised. In the case of this study, the students' practice is organized in educational institutions, and the mentor is a teacher who is familiar with this type of mentoring relationship. It is possible that a different type of relationship and a completely different concept of mentoring may be present in a business organization. The divergence of views could be explained

by the fact that mentoring is not only manifested in different contexts of human activity, in different social fields, but also in different forms of expression, for example, formal mentoring and the many manifestations of informal mentoring, which differ in their practices. In the case of the *Teacher* type of relationship, the mentor's activities are aimed at developing the mentee's competences and accumulating knowledge. The mentor initiates activities to teach the mentee how to improve their professional practice. In assessing the mentee's achievements, the mentor is guided by the learning objectives, targets and a competency description, which includes performance criteria and progress indicators (Bernatchez, Cartier, Bélisle & Bélanger, 2010; Brondyk & Searby, 2013; Jarnias & Oiry, 2013; Nick et al., 2012). However, Mallet (2000) points out that the evaluative function of the mentor can undermine the mentoring relationship. However, this type of mentoring relationship enables, in some situations, the development of the mentor's and mentee's own body of knowledge and competences (Geeraerts et al., 2015). In this way, the mentor and the mentee become learning partners.

Another type of mentoring relationship practiced by the participants in the study is *Expert practice transfer*. In the case of the *Expert practice transfer* type, the number of years of experience is not that important. The mentor needs to be successful, effective, have evidence of their professional performance, knowledge, and skills (Devos, Mouton & Marigliano, 2013), be recognized as an expert in the field, and have the quality education required for an expert (Brown, Katz, Hargrave & Hill, 2003). In this type of mentoring relationship, the mentee is seen as a newly employed, young person who must learn everything. In a mentoring relationship, the mentor takes the initiative sharing ideas, guiding conversations and controlling discussions, conveying to the mentee what the mentee does not know or is not able to perform. The mentor is an expert in their field and may not have pedagogical communication, facilitation or other learning needs (Bearman, Blake-Beard, Hunt & Crosby, 2007; Campbell, 2007). In this type of relationship, there is a risk that the mentor will benefit more from the mentoring relationship than the mentee, as the mentor gains a deeper understanding of their own competences, knowledge and day-to-day practice by sharing expertise with the mentee. Some researchers, however, question whether the mentor's expertise, proficiency and knowledge are sufficient to successfully transfer to others (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

The study also identified another type of mentoring relationship that is commonly practised - the *Experience transfer* type. In the perspective of mentoring, it is the most common type of mentoring relationship (Hadchiti, 2021), where the mentoring relationship is seen as support and transferring the mentor's experience to an untrained or less experienced mentee (Kang, 2021). The most important feature of this relationship is the long professional experience and its sacralization. However, questions arise as to whether the mentor's years of experience will enable the mentor to maintain a productive mentoring relationship

with the mentee. Can time alone, as if waving a magic wand, make an employee a great mentor (Mallet, 2000, p. 86)?

The *Coaching*, *Guide* or *Collegial* types of mentoring relationships are little practised during teaching practice. Although the latter would certainly benefit from more attention, as, for example, the *Coaching* type of mentoring relationship is particularly oriented towards professional growth and autonomy of the mentee (Eby, Rhodes & Allen, 2007), but at the same time it also provides for the possibility of adapting to future changes. In the *Guide* type of mentoring relationship, the mentee takes the initiative. The mentor accompanies and advises the mentee (Carter & Hart, 2010) but remains at the service of the mentee, not only in performing tasks, but also in improving the performance. The goal of such mentoring relationships is the autonomy of the mentee, the ability to independently discover effective performance strategies and the necessary resources for effective performance and professional growth.

The *Collegial* type of mentoring relationship was also not a common choice among the participants. At first glance, the *Collegial* mentoring relationship may seem to be somewhat contradictory to the very notion of mentoring, which implies the 'supremacy' of the mentor over the mentee, but this theoretical type of mentoring relationship identifies an aspect of the mentoring relationship that specifically exists when the relationship is established based on the collegiality of the mentor and the mentee. They are primarily colleagues. The relationship is based on what they have in common. This type of mentoring relationship is one of equals. It is peer mentoring or mentoring that takes place between colleagues. The relationship is characterized by mutual trust and mutual support (Leslie, Lingard & Whyte, 2005). Only in meetings and particular exchanges will the mentor have a little more initiative than the mentee in managing the interaction, and the latter will have more initiative in choosing the agenda items. There is no hierarchical relationship, as the mentor shares responsibility with the mentee (Bonneau, 2015). The mentor learns as much as the mentee, as both are involved in the same process of professional growth and improvement of professional practice, reflecting on performance, or mobilizing the same sources of knowledge.

*The impact of different mentoring relationships on students' professional development in the context of teaching practice.* The study revealed that educators - practice supervisors in most cases acquire the necessary skills for mentoring through self-learning and non-formal learning. It is therefore unclear whether the competences acquired in this way are adequate to ensure the professional growth of students during their practice. Negative factors of mentoring have been observed in studies by Eby, McManus, Simon and Russell (2000), and Monkevičienė and Autukevičienė (2013). Could a lack of mentor competences be a factor in inhibiting students' professional growth if the relationship is characterised by excessive monitoring of the student's performance, authoritarian behaviour, prejudice, strictness, prohibition of

improvisation and initiative, and underestimation of the student's professional knowledge, more frequent emphasis on misbehaviour, criticism, lack of attention, ignoring the student, not sharing best practice, indifference, unsupportive, dismissive attitude, setting an inappropriate example because the mentor's competences are only acquired informally or through self-learning and are not formalised? Such negative factors in the mentoring relationship prove that mentoring can not only promote students' professional growth, but also inhibit it.

As Abonneau and Campoy (2014) point out, the impact of different mentoring relationships is not systematic or equivalent, and it is therefore necessary to distinguish the type, nature, and key characteristics of each relationship. Moreover, most studies do not consider subjective success, which is nowadays very important when combining several different types of mentoring relationships, as confirmed by the results of our study. Based on the analysis of the scientific literature, it can be stated that the following factors contribute to a student's professional growth: a positive attitude towards the trainee, mentor's sharing of best practices, giving advice, praise, empathy, tactfulness, cooperation, setting a good example, support, targeted training, understanding, listening to and accepting opinions, suggestions, respectful behavior, support, motivation, goodwill, professionalism, a comfortable, friendly atmosphere, and feedback. These qualities should prevail in any mentoring relationship. On the other hand, if a mentoring relationship, which is theoretically focused only on the professional growth of the mentee, is one-sided and not oriented towards the well-being of the organization (Duchesne, 2010), it may in the long run pose some limitations for the placement of students, as the host organization will not always take a favorable view of it.

Therefore, it is assumed that mentoring relationships during students' professional practice could take on more diverse forms and practices that would provide more opportunities for professional growth for both the students and mentors, and organizational development. There is an apparent lack of initiatives and efforts that would make educators more willing to model mentoring situations that promote the professional growth of the student trainee, help the student trainee to pay attention to and define the moral aspects of the activity, the values, the understanding of their own role in the chosen profession and the ethical aspects related to it, and build a functioning mentoring system that is based on sincere and respectful communication and cooperation.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the analysis of the scientific literature, it was found that there are different types of mentoring relationships with specific expressions. This specificity of types allows us to understand the different aspects of mentoring relationships while promoting a particular combination of specific experiences.

The expression of mentoring relationships depends on the context in which they are practised in a person's professional activity or social field, which can lead to very different, even contradictory, approaches to mentoring relationships.

The empirical study found that in the context of student teaching practice, three main types and/or combinations of mentoring relationships prevail: the *Teacher*, the *Expert practice transfer* and the *Experience transfer*, which are characterized by unidirectionality (orientation towards the student's professional growth). However, there is a lack of diversity in the forms of mentoring relationships and practices, which would allow for a more bi-directional relationship (mentor-student professional growth). It was found that instrumentality tends to dominate the mentoring relationship, which may limit students' development at a psychosocial or organizational level. When mentoring relationships are instrumental without sufficient attention to the psychosocial and organizational dimensions of the relationship, it is difficult to see their impact on professional development at the collective level.

In most cases, teachers - practice supervisors acquire the competences needed for mentoring through self-learning and non-formal learning, so it is not clear whether the competences acquired in this way and not formalized, are adequate to ensure the professional growth of students during their practice.

The insights from this study may allow seeing possibilities for future research design in terms of the flexibility of the mentoring relationship, and its modelling in terms of adaptation to professional and organizational environments, the specific characteristics of future professionals, the specific analysis of the communicative aspects of the mentoring relationship in relation to issues of relevance, etc.

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