A POSSIBLE MENTORING MODEL: THE GROW MODEL*

Florentina MOGONEA[1]

Abstract
The study aims to address the issue of mentoring, from the perspective of some mentoring models present in specialized literature and validated in pedagogical practice. The theoretical dimension of this study represents an incursion into the issue of mentoring, brought into the school, educational context, respectively of a mentoring model: the GROW model (establishing the Goal, examining the Reality, exploring the Options/Obstacles, setting the Way forward). The applied part represents an empirical research, of a constative type, which aims to carry out an initial assessment of the expectations of the students following a psycho-pedagogical training programme on the relationship with the practice mentor teacher, who is the coordinator of the pedagogical practice internship. The research method used was the opinion questionnaire, applied through Google Forms. The obtained results allowed an analysis of the factors, conditions, ways to ensure an optimal interaction of the students with the mentors, so that they can develop their pedagogical and didactic competencies.
Key words: *Mentoring; Pedagogical practice mentor; GROW model.*

1. Introduction

The issue of mentoring is a constant concern lately, in all fields based on interaction with people, in which the problem of passing over, transferring knowledge, skills, good practices models, attitudes, etc. arises. In this context, the educational field is also included, namely the methodical, didactic or managerial field. Given the complexity of a teacher's competency profile, in the process of his/her initial training, it is imperative for this training to be monitored by a mentor with experience in the field.

According to the current law, mentoring can take place within the pedagogical practice internship, which the student carries out during his/her studies, which is part of his/her initial training path, or through internship mentoring, after completing his/her studies, during one school year, under the guidance of a mentor teacher.

---

[1] Associate Professor, PhD, Teacher Training Department, University of Craiova, Romania, e-mail address: mogoneaf@yahoo.com

Taking into account the role and importance of the mentoring activity, the recent psycho-pedagogical literature tries to capture its specifics, essential characteristics, making, at the same time, conceptual delimitations, in the perimeter of a notional field, which also includes other associated, connective, correlative terms.

According to the authors of the Praxiological Dictionary of Pedagogy, mentoring is a "complex professional activity, carried out by a mentor teacher, which involves, in detail, the specific action of pedagogical mediation, activity guidance, learning and professional development facilitation, counseling, support, advice, offers of beneficial professional experiences, integration into (micro)community, etc. (Bocoş, Răduț-Taciu, Stan, 2018, p. 100).

The main association or distinction identified in the literature is that between mentoring and coaching. The authors of the aforementioned Dictionary, citing L. Ezechil (Ezechil, 2014, *apud* Bocoş, Răduț-Taciu, Stan, 2018, p. 103) believe that the two concepts must not necessarily be different, but, rather, associated, bearing in mind that the pedagogical practice or internships fulfilled after completing the studies, being limited in time, can be carried out, rather in the form of coaching.

According to the International Coach Academy, mentoring "is a method or process that helps the client realize his intention to get from his current state to the state he wants" (Kunos, 2017, p. 41).

In Thipatdee's conception, "mentoring is to help and support people to manage their own learning in order to maximize their potential, develop skills, improve performance, and become what they want to be" (Thipatdee, 2019, p. 169).

As we mentioned before, in the Romanian education system, there are two types of mentoring: pedagogical practice, internship/professional insertion.

Pedagogical practice mentoring (Ezechil, 2014, *apud* Bocoş, Răduț-Taciu, Stan, 2018, p. 102) has several essential characteristics:

- it is an initiation, familiarizing students with the school institution and the teaching profession

- it has an incidental character (the mentoring relationship is established with a certain periodicity, when the students move to the educational units, based on a carefully monitored program, both by the university and by the school)

- the roles of the practice mentor correlate with those of the university teaching staff, who supervise the entire development of the pedagogical practice activity.

Beyond these characteristics, the idea of mentoring implies a relationship of interaction, communication, collaboration between a mentor, who is an experienced person, and an apprentice (mentee), who needs initiation.

As in any relationship, however, the transfer that takes place is double-edged. Thus, even the person with a higher level of training and richer experience has new things to learn from a person with less experience.

2. The *GROW* model

The history of this model begins in 1974, when Timothy Gallway published "The Inner Game of Tennis" in the United States, the idea being taken up and moved to Europe by John Whitmore and Alexander Graham. Following the collaboration

with McKinsey, the original model, consisting of 7 steps, was transformed and reduced to 5, thus resulting the GROW model. This became, in a short time, a very well-known, popular model, representing, for many, the prototype of mentoring and coaching models.

The stages of the GROW model are the following:

• **G**oal – establishing the goal, the targets;

• (Current) **R**eality –examining the reality;

• **O**ptions (or **O**bstacles) – exploring the options, alternatives that can be exploited or the inventory of the possible obstacles;

• **W**ill (or Way Forward) – establishing the action plan.

Figure 1. The GROW model (Sir John Whitmor, 1996,
apud **Kunos, 2017, p. 42)**

The model includes aspects found in the Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1990, *apud* Breen, 2018, p. 13), proposing a solution-focused approach.

Transferred to the educational field, this model resembles the constructivist model of apprenticeship in expert scientific knowledge (Cognitive Apprenticeship), proposed by Colins, Brown, Newman, in 1989. According to this model, the learner can be initiated by the teacher, in the scientific knowledge, respectively in the process of building it, by accomplishing critical analyses, by formulating hypotheses, by solving problem-situations, etc., which is performed by an expert, as an individual with cognitive, resolutive, decisional experience (Joița, 2006, p. 147).

The GROW model promotes self-efficacy, as an engine of learning and optimization, developing behaviors that produce specific fundamental performances on one's own control on motivation and on the social environment (Bandura, 1977, *apud* Guedes, 2021, p. 5; Panchal, Riddell, 2020, p. 3).

The model has also received criticism over time. For example, Grant (2011), Clutterbuck (2015), Osatuke, Yanovsky and Ramsel (2017) highlighted various limits/shortcomings of this model (*apud* Breen, 2018, p. 13). These relate to the background that each person trained in a mentoring activity has, to the difficulty in differentiating between different types of goals, or to over-reliance on traditional measures.

As a result of these criticisms, the model has subsequently undergone adaptations and additions, so that it can prove its effectiveness in other contexts, such as the version of this model called I-GROW (Issues, Goal, Reality, Options, Will/Way forward) (Breen, 2018, p. 14), online mentoring (Bishop, 2015) or the RE-GROW version of the model, which clarifies the links between the structure of the coaching session and the self-regulation theory (Grant, 2022) or TGROW, where T comes from topic. Before moving directly to the objectives, an exploration of the topic the coachee would like to focus on better aligns with their expectations in a session (Miller, 2020).

Examples of questions to use at each stage of the GROW model (see table 1, after Madsen, 2019, p. 2).

Table 1. Examples of questions to use at each stage of the GROW model
(after Madsen, 2019, p. 2)

Stage	Questions
G - Establishing a GOAL	Tell me about the issue or what you feel is wrong? What do you want to achieve? How can you make that more specific? How do you imagine the situation when it is resolved? When do you want to have this goal achieved/ this issue resolved? What will achieving this goal mean for you? Which aspect is the most important for you to focus on right now? Where would you say you are today in achieving this goal/ resolving this issue?
R- examining the REALITY	What is the situation at the moment? What is happening right now? How do you know there is an issue? Can you describe/ explain that in more detail? What are all the different elements you need to consider when tackling this? What have you done so far to improve things? What worked? What did not work? What obstacles are in your way? Which good things do you want to keep doing? Which resources do you already have to help you achieve this? Who will be able to help you?

O - Considering OPTIONS	What could you do to resolve this? What steps can you take towards this goal? What could you do to move yourself just one step forward? What have you seen working in similar situations? What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail? If you could devote all your time to this one thing, what would you do then? What else could you do? Brainstorm your options to choose from/ list all your ideas. Which option would be the fastest /easiest /preferred? What are the pros and cons of each option?
W - WILL do / WAY forward	What are you ready to do to resolve this issue? What are your next steps? What will you commit to as action steps to move closer to your goal? What are the benefits of choosing these options? When are you going to start and complete each action? Where are you recording these actions? How committed are you to taking these actions? What might stop you carrying them out? What can you do to overcome this obstacle? What additional support do you need? Who can help you? Is there anything else you need to consider? How are you going to reward yourself when you achieve this?

The list of questions can be supplemented or adapted according to each specific situation.

3. Research Methodology

We carried out an empirical research, of a constative type, which aimed at the initial evaluation of the students' representations regarding the relationship with the future pedagogical practice mentors, during the internship, which they must achieve during the Psychopedagogical Training Programme, level II in-depth studies. The objectives pursued were the following:

- Knowing the students' opinion on the extent to which the pedagogical internship will ensure the development of didactic competencies;
- Identifying the dimensions of the competencies profile that students believe they will develop, as a result of the interaction with the practice mentor;
- Outlining a competency profile of the mentor, as designed by the students;
- Inventorying some ways that could contribute to the efficiency of student - practice mentor communication and collaboration.

The hypotheses of our research were the following:

1. The initial assessment of the students' representations of the relationship with the practice mentor will allow the knowledge of the dimensions/ aspects of the teaching style that the students could improve during the practice internship.

2. Investigating the students' opinion regarding the skills/ traits they want the future mentor to possess will ensure the outline of a desirable competency profile of his/ hers.

The research tool used was an opinion questionnaire, which included items of different categories (with closed answers, with open answers), through which we aimed to achieve the objectives and validate the established hypotheses.

The structure and content of each item will be detailed in the Results section, where the subjects' answers will be presented and interpreted.

The sample of subjects was made up of 23 students of different specializations from the University of Craiova, who are in the 2nd year of the Psychopedagogical Training Programme, level 2, respectively before the beginning of the pedagogical internship, within this program.

4. Results and discussions

The results recorded after the instrument was applied to the students will be presented from the perspective of how they enabled the validation of the established hypotheses.

We recall, in this context, the first hypothesis:

The initial assessment of the students' representations of the relationship with the practice mentor will allow the knowledge of the dimensions/ aspects of the teaching style that the students could improve during the practice internship.

The first item of the questionnaire sought to know the students' opinion on the extent to which they consider that the interaction with the mentor is necessary in the development of their pedagogical and didactic competencies. Their answers are reproduced in figure no. 2.
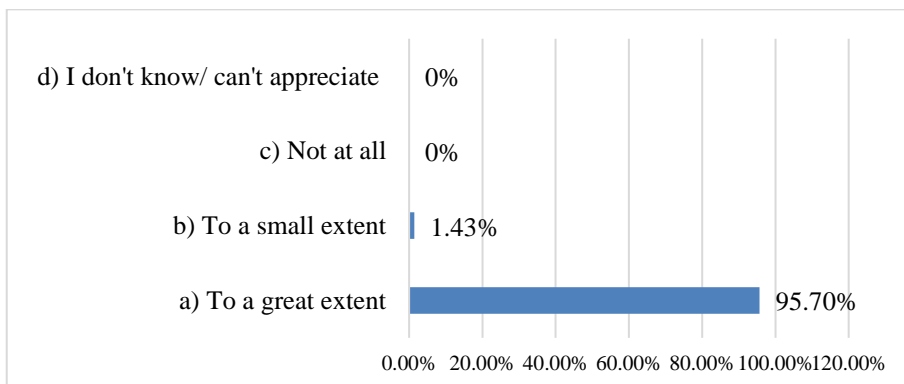
Figure 2. The students' opinion on the extent to which they believe that the interaction with the practice mentor will contribute to the development of pedagogical competencies

As there can be seen, most of them find the interaction with the practice mentor useful.

The students have the same opinion in relation to the beneficial effects of the pedagogical internship on their own teaching style (figure no. 3).
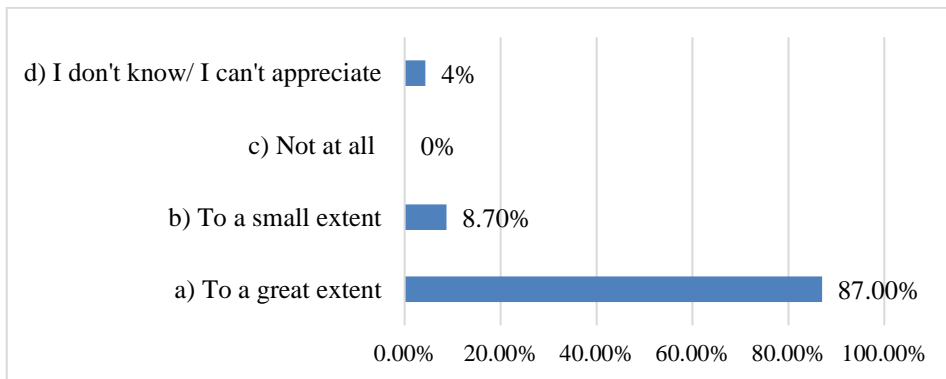
Figure 3. The students' opinion on the benefits of the internship on their own teaching style
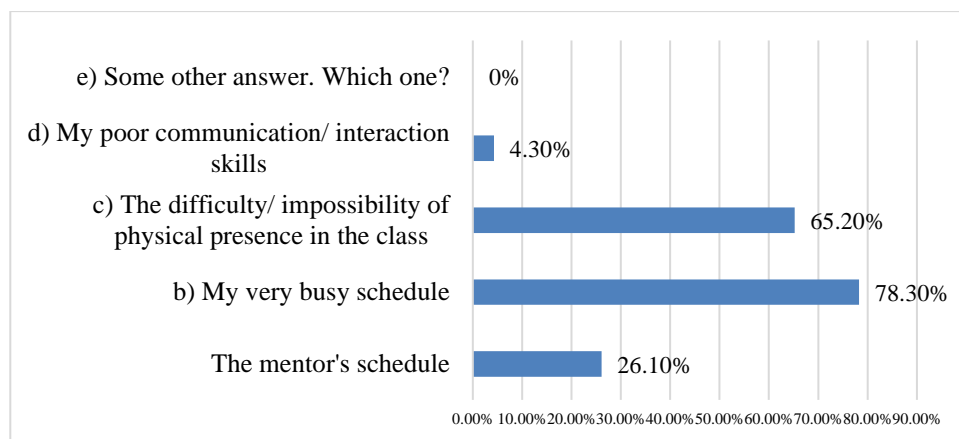
Another item of the questionnaire asked the students to express their opinion on the dimensions of the teaching style that they think they could develop as a result of their interaction with the mentor. For this item, the students had the opportunity to choose several answers. Their options are shown in figure no. 4.
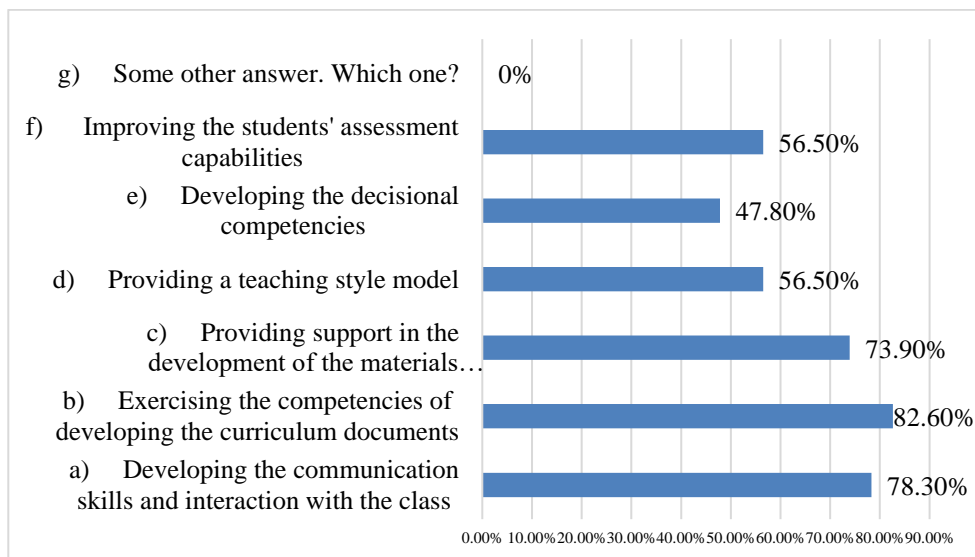
Figure 4. The students' opinion on the dimensions of the teaching style that they think they can develop, as a result of the interaction with the mentor

The anticipation of the obstacles regarding the interaction with the mentor and the proposal of ways to improve it were two other important components pursued in the investigation, accomplished through a semi-open item, respectively through an open-answer item.

The students' responses pointed to the very busy schedule and the difficulty of ensuring physical presence in the classroom as important inhibiting factors, as there can be seen in figure 5.

Figure 5. The students' opinion on the possible obstacles of their interaction with the mentor

Another item of the questionnaire was intended to mention three aspects of the teaching style, which the students believe they will improve as a result of their interaction with the mentor. The students' answers offered the following options: the oratorical style; improving the teaching style; the ability to manage specific situations; the psycho-pedagogical competency and the training strategies used, better control of emotions, the ability to listen and evaluate; the ability to stimulate the maximum development of each child's potential by assimilating the contents, to promote participatory, anticipatory, societal, creative learning, to form and develop interest, motivation, affectivity, will, intelligence, character; pedagogical tact; improving the interaction with the class of students; a correct application of methods in the classroom; a correct preparation of the curriculum documents; originality in the teaching activity; openness to innovation.

As ways to improve the collaboration with the mentor, the students stated: combining the direct activity with the online one; a program established by mutual agreement; communication throughout the internship; giving direct, constructive feedback; clear communication of tasks and advice; the use of online platforms.

As there could be seen, following the centralization of the students' answers to the mentioned items, we could outline the dimensions/aspects of the teaching style that they wish to develop, following the interaction with the pedagogical practice mentor.

The second hypothesis pursued aimed at:

Investigating the students' opinion on the competencies/ traits they want the future mentor to possess will ensure the outline of a desirable competency profile of the mentor.

One of the questionnaire items asked the students to mention 3 traits/ competencies that they would like the pedagogical practice mentor to possess. Next, we present a list of the qualities that were found most often in the students' answers: patient, understanding, calm, explicit, tolerant, involved, dedicated, professional, organized, empathetic, flexible, sociable.

The students also mentioned some essential competencies of a teacher-mentor: effective communication, coordination, cooperation, evaluation, to transmit knowledge, to form skills, to advise, to offer suggestions and recommendations based on their own experience and expertise, positive, open-minded attitude, engaging teaching style, the ability to conduct a lesson in an interactive manner.

Another item of the questionnaire concerned the evaluation of the initial representations of the students regarding the relationship with the pedagogical practice mentor, from the perspective of four dimensions, which correspond to the four stages of the GROW model: the goals to be achieved (Goals); exploring the initial situation (exploring Reality); offering options, alternatives (considering Options); Supporting actions, coordinating them (Will do/Way forward). The results obtained for this item are presented in table no. 2:

Table 2. The students' opinion on the role of the practice mentor in supporting the activity

Pursued aspects	4-Very important	3 - Important	2- Less important	1-Not important
a) The goals to be achieved	69.57%	26.09%	4.34%	0%
b) Initial evaluation	78.26%	17.4%	4.34%	0%
c) Offering options, alternatives	73.92%	21.74%	4.34%	0%
d) Supporting actions, coordinating them	78.26%	17.4%	4.34%	0%

As there can be seen in Table 2, the students believe that the practice mentor will have the most important role in supporting exploration, in the assessment of the initial state and actions.

5. Conclusions

The mentoring activity is essential in any field, including the educational one. In order to increase its efficiency, a real, permanent interaction of the two actors involved in this relationship is needed.

The present study sought to highlight some actual aspects regarding the relationship between the pedagogical practice mentor and the master's students during a psycho-pedagogical training programme, advanced level.

The aspects we pursued were aimed, on the one hand, at knowing the dimensions that master's students consider essential in the development of their didactic competencies, as well as the traits/competencies they would like in a mentor, from his/her perspective as a role model. We also had in mind the capture of the four dimensions of the GROW mentoring model, one of the models known in the specialized literature regarding the relationship between an apprentice, in full training, and a mentor, as a professional in the field.

REFERENCES

1. Bishop, J. (2015). An investigation into the extent and limitations of the GROW model for coaching and mentoring online: Towards 'prosthetic learning'. *Proceedings of the International Conference on e-Learning, e-Business, Enterprise Information Systems, and e-Government (EEE)*, 125-136. Retrieved at: http://www.worldcomp-proceedings.com/proc/p2015/EEE6132.pdf
2. Bocoș, M.D., Răduț-Taciu, R., Stan, C. (2018). *Dicționar Praxiologic de Pedagogie*, vol. IV. Pitești: Cartea Românească Educațional Publishing House.
3. Breen, A. (2018). The Effectiveness of Workplace Coaching among Line Managers in the Irish Civil Service. In *Psychology at Dublin Business School, School of Arts*. Department of Psychology Dublin Business School. Retrieved at: https://esource.dbs.ie/handle/10788/3453
4. Grant, A.M. (2022). Is it Time to REGROW the GROW Model? Issues related to teaching coaching session structures In D. Tee, J. Passmore (Eds). (2022). *Coaching Practised.* New-York: Wiley Online Library, 29-40. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119835714.ch3
5. Guedes, B.A.M. (2021). *What effect does the coaching model of professional development have on the building of teacher capacity?* DISSERTATION Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education. Melbourne: Melbourne Graduate School of Education The University of Melbourne. Retrieved at: https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/420293653.pdf
6. Joița, E. (2006). *Instruirea constructivistă-o alternativă. Fundamente. Strategii.* Bucharest: Aramis Publishing House.
7. Kunos, I. (2017). Role of Coaching Models. *International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management 4*(9), 41-46. Retrieved at: https://www.ijrbsm.org/papers/v4-i9/5.pdf
8. Madsen, S. (2019). *Coaching questions and the GROW model.* Retrieved at: http://www.susannemadsen.co.uk/uploads/6/3/2/3/6323088/grow_coaching_questions.pdf
9. Miller, K. (2020). What Is the GROW Coaching Model? (Incl. Examples). *Positive Psychology.* Retrieved at: https://positivepsychology.com/grow-coaching-model/

10. Panchal, S., Riddell, P. (2020). The GROWS model: extending the GROW coaching model to support behavioural change. *The Coaching Psychologist, 16*(2), 12-25. Retrieved at: https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/104381/ It
11. Thipatdee, G. (2019). The Development of Coaching and Mentoring Skills Through the GROW Technique for Student Teachers. *Journal of Education and Learning, 8*(5), 168-174. Retrieved at: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1229276.pdf