

DEVELOPING COMPETENCIES IN SUPPORTING BEGINNING TEACHERS: COMPARING THE RESULTS OF TWO STUDIES IN A MENTORING CONTEXT

Nathalie Gagnon¹, Andréanne Gagné², & Julie Courcy¹

¹Department of Education, Université du Québec à Rimouski (Canada)

²Department of Pedagogy, Université de Sherbrooke (Canada)

Abstract

Mentoring involves providing professional and personal guidance to an assigned mentee through a supportive and caring relationship. It is one of the most popular strategies to help new teachers cope with and overcome the challenges associated with entering the profession (Gagnon, 2017). However, while some schools do make provisions for mentoring, it can sometimes be done in a haphazard manner (Sewell et al., 2017) notably due to the lack of clarity and structure in the mentoring approach (Ambrosetti et al., 2014). Furthermore, the responsibilities and skills required of a mentor are not innate: the development of those competencies are imperative to ensure a successful mentor/mentee relationship (Stanulis et al., 2014). Understanding the mechanisms behind the development of a mentor's skills represented the main objective of two Canadian studies. Using Le Boterf's (2011) model of competent action (*agir compétent*), these studies have identified various facilitators and obstacles to the development of mentors' competencies. The first research was conducted with mentors from elementary and secondary school involved in an induction program in Ontario. The second one was conducted with vocational education cooperating teachers that support trainees-teachers in Quebec. Although this context concerns cooperating teachers/teaching trainees rather than mentors/mentees, their relationship is similar to a mentoring relationship since these cooperating teachers support trainees who are already teachers and consequently, colleagues. The two studies focus on describing the overall experience of the mentors in an effort to better understand the mechanisms linked to the development of their mentoring competencies. Experience and competence were therefore the two main theoretical concepts leading these studies. As per methodology choices, simple case study methods were used in both. The set of data used was collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with 11 elementary and secondary mentor teachers in the first study, and 15 vocational education cooperating teachers in the second study. It was followed by the use of a data-driven semi-inductive analysis approach. This communication aims to present the commonalities of those two projects. Competency being an action resulting from the combination of personal resources (knowledge, abilities, qualities, experiences, cognitive capacities, motivation, etc.), environmental resources (databases, books, relationship networks, etc.) and working conditions, this communication also aims to specify the elements acting as facilitators or obstacles to the development of mentors' competencies.

Keywords: *Development of competencies, mentor teacher, cooperating teacher, mentoring skills.*
