

A PEDAGOGICAL MODEL FOR DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES THROUGH MENTORING ACTIVITIES

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20406212>

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Abstract

This article examines the role and significance of mentoring activities in developing students' professional competencies in the modern higher education system on the basis of a pedagogical model. Considering mentoring as a soft bridge between theory and practice, the article systematically analyzes its four fundamental components: goal-oriented guidance, content-cognitive development, process-communicative support, and result-reflective evaluation, as well as its logical stages of development.

Keywords

mentoring activities, professional competencies, pedagogical model, mentor-apprentice tradition, intellectual navigator, independence and differentiation, personal pedagogical style, Education 4.0, reflective analysis.

In the modern higher education paradigm, the process of forming professional competencies in students is changing from simple knowledge transmission into a complex pedagogical system aimed at designing their professional self. Mentoring activity, which appears as the central mechanism of this system, serves as a soft bridge between the student's theoretical preparation and direct practical activity. The pedagogical model for developing professional competencies through mentoring includes the following fundamental components as an integral system.

The goal-oriented component forms the strategic basis of the mentoring process and serves to transform the theoretical knowledge acquired by the student at the higher education institution into direct practical activity. At this stage, the main focus is on developing a sense of professional responsibility and corporate ethics in the future specialist. The mentor identifies clear professional goals for the student and directs him or her toward expected outcomes.

Within the content-cognitive component, the mentor teaches the student to systematically analyze complex and unexpected problems in the professional field. In this process, the mentor is not a person who provides ready-made solutions, but an intellectual navigator who directs the student's thinking into a professional channel. This component deepens the student's theoretical knowledge and strengthens the ability to apply it in specific professional situations.

The process-communicative component ensures the successful adaptation of the future specialist to the professional team. The mentor teaches the student the culture of the organization, the art of establishing effective communication with colleagues, and the unwritten ethical norms of the professional community. This process develops the student's communication culture and teamwork skills and increases his or her socio-professional activity.

The result-reflective component expresses the student's ability to critically analyze the results of his or her activity, objectively assess achievements, and independently identify methodological or practical mistakes. With the support of the mentor, the student reconsiders his or her professional development trajectory and develops effective strategies to eliminate identified shortcomings. This component serves as the final link in forming the student's professional self-awareness and need for continuous self-improvement.

The stage of acquaintance and goal setting is the foundation of cooperation; here, priority is given to creating an atmosphere of mutual trust between mentor and apprentice. In this process, the student's strengths and weaknesses are analyzed, and his or her future individual development trajectory is outlined. At this stage, the mentor identifies the apprentice's professional aspirations and clearly plans the expected results of cooperation.

The development stage is the period during which the mentor provides temporary and systematic support to the student for performing complex tasks that the student cannot yet complete independently. By assigning complex tasks that the student cannot yet perform alone but can accomplish with qualified assistance and guidance, the mentor ensures growth within the student's zone of proximal development. During this period, the mentor introduces the student to the internal mechanisms of professional activity and serves as a supportive bridge in acquiring practical skills. As the student's competence increases, the level of assistance provided by the mentor is gradually reduced.

The stage of transition to independence and differentiation is the final and highest point of the mentoring cycle. At this stage, the student leaves the mentor's constant supervision and forms as a professional specialist with his or her own individual working style.

1. Transition to independence. At this stage, the mentor’s main task is to minimize assistance and fully transfer responsibility to the student. Professional autonomy means that the student no longer asks the mentor what to do when conducting lessons or solving pedagogical problems; instead, the student makes independent decisions. The mentor’s role changes from instructor to consultant. The mentor no longer corrects the apprentice’s mistakes directly, but creates conditions for the apprentice to analyze those mistakes independently. This represents positive separation: the hierarchy between mentor and apprentice disappears and they become equal colleagues.

2. Differentiation. Differentiation, from the Latin *differentia* meaning distinction or separation, is the process of dividing a whole into parts, groups, or stages according to its characteristics, features, or qualities. In this context, it means revealing the student’s individual self that distinguishes him or her from other colleagues. At the stage of differentiation, the student stops copying the mentor’s teaching style and, based on personal character, talent, and creativity, creates a personal brand style, for example, a tendency toward game technologies or reliance on strict discipline. Recognition of uniqueness also begins. The mentor supports features in the apprentice that differ from the mentor’s own approach, for example by saying: You explained this topic differently from me, but in a very interesting way. The main results of this stage are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Main results of the transition to independence and differentiation stage.

No.	Process	Result
1	Decision-making	The student can make independent strategic decisions in unexpected pedagogical situations.
2	Creativity	The student goes beyond standard methods and applies non-standard, innovative solutions.
3	Self-assessment	The student can objectively analyze his or her own activity without waiting for external evaluation from the mentor; reflection is formed.
4	Professional position	The student feels like a full member of the team and a specialist in the field.

Within the mentoring model, the process of forming professional competencies is systematically implemented on the basis of the logical stages and cycles proposed by D. Kram. These stages express the evolutionary path of the relationship between student and mentor from simple acquaintance to professional autonomy.

The acquaintance and goal-setting stage is the foundation of cooperation; creating mutual trust between mentor and apprentice is a priority. In this process, the student's strengths and weaknesses are analyzed, and his or her individual development trajectory is outlined. The mentor identifies the apprentice's professional aspirations and clearly plans the expected results of cooperation.

The transition to independence and differentiation stage is the final and most important point of the mentoring cycle. The main task at this stage is not to suppress the student's independence but to gradually prepare him or her for autonomous professional activity. The student learns to make responsible decisions without constant mentor supervision, find creative solutions to problems, and independently analyze his or her own activity. At this stage, the mentor simply becomes a consultant and creates conditions for the apprentice to find a place in the professional team and form a personal working style.

Within this model, the student's professional formation is not merely a process of accumulating information, but a deep transformational stage carried out under the qualified support of the mentor. Each component of the system, from goal-oriented guidance to result-based reflection, develops the future specialist's ability to adapt quickly to changing labor market requirements and to make independent strategic decisions in complex professional situations.

The integrity of the pedagogical model lies in the fact that it organically connects the student's theoretical preparation with the real requirements of practice and turns the student from a passive recipient of knowledge into a creative subject of his or her profession. The cognitive flexibility formed in this process enables the specialist to continuously improve qualifications independently in accordance with the requirements of Education 4.0 and to achieve high efficiency in professional activity.

Therefore, the proposed mentoring system raises the content of higher education to a qualitatively new level and becomes a reliable mechanism for training not only a knowledgeable specialist, but also a mature professional with a stable professional position and high acmeological aspirations. Below, the pedagogical model of mentoring is presented in the form of an infographic and mental structure.

The fundamental components consist of the following four main pillars:

Goal-oriented component: the mentor transforms the student’s theoretical knowledge into practical skills and develops professional ethics and responsibility.

Content-cognitive component: the mentor, as an intellectual navigator, teaches the student to analyze complex situations and strengthen the methodological base.

Process-communicative component: this stage involves adaptation to the professional team, mastering corporate culture, and improving teamwork culture.

Result-reflective component: this stage develops the ability to critically analyze one’s activity, identify mistakes, and reconsider the personal development trajectory.

This model aims to train the student not merely as a knowledgeable person, but as a qualified specialist:

Metacompetencies: cognitive flexibility and rapid adaptability to a changing market.

Creative subject: transformation from a passive learner into a creator of one’s profession.

Education 4.0: the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which creates the opportunity for continuous self-development and high performance.

Table 2.2. Components of the mentoring model.

No.	System level	Component / Stage	Task and content
1	Strategic	Goal-oriented guidance	Transforming theory into practice
2	Intellectual	Content-cognitive component	Systematic analysis of complex problems
3	Social	Process-communicative component	Team communication and adaptation to corporate culture
4	Analytical	Result-reflective component	Self-awareness and reflective analysis

Figure 2.1. Pedagogical model of mentoring: infographic structure.

This infographic structure helps to visually understand the pedagogical mentoring model studied in this article. It clearly shows the fundamental components, dynamic stages, and expected final results; it also includes a table of model components.

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