Mentor: A Wise Friend and Counselor

—A Revolutionary Process for Tomorrow's Policy in Education

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Abstract

The institution of Mentor is not well-known in Greek educational reality since it has recently been introduced. Many teachers face it with skepticism however, it should be noted that the mentor is not only a teacher but also a student partner. He does not compete and do not interfere in the teachers' work, he simply facilitates and guides them in the increased needs arising in school everyday life. The purpose of the present research is to detect the intention of teacher concerning their future collaboration with the mentor. A questionnaire was given to 40 teachers of different specialties in four schools. The qualitative analysis of the questionnaires revealed that the teachers are more receptive to a possible collaboration with the mentor.

Keywords: mentor, role, benefits, advisor, counselor, policy, education

1. Introduction

1.1 Definition: What Is the Mentor?

Mentor is a teacher who is constantly with the same class and follows the students from the first to the third grade of secondary school, or from the first to the third grade of high school. In a bolder application, he could accompany students from the First grade of junior High School until Third grade of senior high school.

The tasks of the mentor are not related to the specialization of (degree and postgraduate) his studies. He is co-teaching with the teachers of all other disciplines. He is the determining factor for the implementation of modern teaching methods, such as the Internal Differentiation, Group work, the Local Teaching, etc Role planning [1], and teaching techniques[2] such as Project, conceptual map, e-portfolio etc.[3]

(*[1].Matsagouras I. 1998, 1 volume 144-145, 2 volume 20-21, 453-458)*

(*[2]Dimitropoulos E. 2007, 118-119), ([3]Psycharis S volume 2, 78-85)*

1.2 Selection: How He Is Selected

The mentor is selected through ASEP[4] procedures. The main criteria are communication skills and global education. The examination process includes a written test in which the questions cover a wide range of knowledge such as encyclopedic, news, sports, history, art, psychology, ICT, etc. and interview, by which the communication skills of the candidate are assessed. Candidates must hold a university or Technical College degree also doctoral or master's degrees are welcome, however specific categories (large families, disability rates, etc.) as additional selection criteria are not taken into account.

[4].A.S.E.P. Supreme Council for Personnel Selection (ASEP), which was established by Law 2190/1994 as an independent body responsible for monitoring the proper implementation of the provisions on recruitment in the public sector.

1.3 Education: How He Is Educated

The prospective mentor is trained in ASPAITE[5] mandatory for one year. He attends all EPPAIK courses, namely the annual Teacher Training Program, with an additional course that deals specifically with the role of mentor. In school he will learn about the skills the modern student must acquire as well as the tools that must be provided to

build and extent his knowledge at school and then through lifelong learning.

At the same time, the candidate will participate annually in a mandatory seminar equivalent to SBC (with exams in the form of projects), for two reasons: firstly in order not to be alienated from his position as "student" and thus have the essential ability of empathy in the classroom and secondly to maintain his ability for continuous training within the modern educational process, which is a process constantly emerging and modifiable, especially in terms of ICT.

The courses in ASPETE, as it functions today, are the following: Introduction to Pedagogy, Methodology of Educational Research, Educational Technology (theory and workshop in both semesters), Educational Assessment, Teaching Specialization Courses, Teaching Methodology, General and Developmental Psychology, Educational Policy and Management, Counseling and Guidance, Educational Psychology and Interpersonal Relations, Sociology of Education, Philosophy of Education and Contemporary Teaching Directions.

However, for the education of the mentor, the addition of one extra course that is absent from ASPETE and unfortunately from most of the Faculties of Education, the Course of Special Education is necessary.

(⁵ *ASPETE. School of Pedagogical and Technological Education)*

1.4 Working System: How He Is Working

The modern school has upset the traditional educational culture: first it has been evolved in learner-centered, using new teaching methods, such as group work, methods of comprehending concepts, methods of internal differentiation, methods of external modulation, Critical thinking, Exploratory teaching, case studies etc.[6] as well as the construction of new knowledge is done, now, with techniques such as ICT, Project[7], e-portfolio, CMap, experiential techniques etc[8]

The abovementioned elements require students that learn how to learn. This in turn requires that students have a teacher next to them, a member of their team and whenever necessary a mentor, who knows how to apply these methods, and also to know how each student learns, (multiple intelligence). The mentor, therefore, in the educational reality is able to know the specific features of each student, to trace his extracurricular environment, organize groups, to discover the acquired skills. He is the one who has the knowledge of Computers and Art History to First Aid, but not as a specialized "scientist" in all these subjects, but as a mentor, namely a "supporter, counselor and spiritual mentor to someone younger" (Wiki-internet).

The idea of the mentor and the transfer or detachment are concepts that do not go together. With the traditional approach to the student, the teacher is not provided with the opportunity or the time to penetrate deeply into the student personality, analyze and interpret the multitude of observed student behaviors. Moreover, the frequent changes of school for teachers of the country with different headmasters, new colleagues and the spatiotemporal characteristics of each place, do not to facilitate the complete and therefore more successful approach of the student.

In conclusion, the mentor acts as a determining factor in the teacher-student relationship: in conjunction with the first he will determine the course of the lesson but not the content, he will cater to hand in the projects and help in their development, if so requested, he will mediate for the interdisciplinary approach, he will be involved possibly in the evaluation process, obviously not to the generated knowledge result but to the axes of the effort, the approach, originality, etc. (RUBRICS).[9]

In addition, the mentor will deal with absenteeism and the necessary documents, the time and method of handing in students' marks, communication with parents and specialists and the organization of educational excursions. Also, regarding students who in the educational process have particular emotional, learning or other type needs, he will help them having received the appropriate training, in reference to the respective specialists.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the mentor is not only a teacher but also a student partner. He does not compete and do not interfere in the teacher's work, he simply facilitates and guides him in the increased needs arising in school everyday life because of the diversity of the students[10] and the special and unique data of each class[11], as an autonomous and particular system. He does not function as an "advocate" of the student but as a beacon of the harbor called education.

(⁶ *Matsagouras I. 1998, 1 volume 144-145, 2 volume 20-21, 453-458)*

(⁷ *Dimitropoulos 2007, 220-222, Gliaou, N. (2002).*

(⁸ *Kassotakis, Flouris, 2005, 220-221)*

(⁹ *Matsagouras I. 1998, 2 volume 267-277), (*¹⁰*Matsagouras I. volume 2, 244,344), (*¹¹ *Matsagouras I. volume*

2,149)

1.5 Selection and Evaluation: How He Is Selected and Evaluated

Two basic characteristics play a major role in selecting the mentor: the "lack of fanaticism" and "moderation." The mentor may be a bigot only as regards the prohibition of dogmas and unilateralism. He should also be distinguished by extensive knowledge of educational practice, special, specific and deep knowledge of the role, namely, in general, to be "open-minded."

Moreover, the mind openness is a prerequisite for the professional - and not only – adequacy regarding the classroom demands. The interaction with the students, who are young people which has an effect on emotional and cognitive level, such as controversies, reactions, etc. innovations. This requires adaptability so that the person involved with the educational process, can be readily accepted by students without reducing his validity.[12]

Regarding the second feature, "moderation", the mentor must consciously maintain a low profile, not to be distinguished by exaggerated zeal and a tendency for "championship" as well as not refuse to negotiate even potential weaknesses or deficiencies. For example, in a religious question, the answer cannot be " I do not deal with these issues" but "good question, I'm not sure if I can answer this now, I'll tell you tomorrow," and using authoritative sources (e.g., fellow theologian, Internet) to provide the answer. The goal is always the student and his "interest".[13]

In terms of systematic and continuous assessment there will be the responsible School Director while the director, students and parents will jointly participate in the assessment of the mentor.

The mentor will be able to make an evaluative suggestion for the teachers with whom he collaborates in the areas of development new teaching methods and communication with students.[14] Moreover, this may contribute to a meaningful evaluation of the teacher in Greek school reality. In no case, however, it is not implied that the mentor should be construed as "superior" to other educational and non colleagues, since he will also be assessed accordingly.

The organization that will play the decisive role in the success of this institution is ASEP. With the adequate staffing of ASEP by manpower capable of setting the appropriate criteria for selecting and evaluating potential mentors, the role of the mentor will no longer seem so utopian.

([12] Pirgiotakis I. 287-290), ([13] Matsagouras I. 1998, 1 volume, 131), ([14] M, Kassotakis, G. Flouris, volume B, 64-65)

1.6 General Responsibilities and Obligations in the Classroom

First and primary responsibility is the maintenance of files in electronic form for each student, with individual code for each case, access to which will also have the student himself. The data files will be editable in some areas by the mentor and in some others by the student.

The file will contain all the typical personal data of student's school attendance, such as grades, absences documents, etc. However, the basic performative function of this file will be, as far as possible, a complete visualization of the learning progress of the student that is why it will also involve student's projects, teacher observations, etc.

Through this file, the student will be able to do, for example, project work with his classmates[15], with students from other classes of the same school, with students from other schools or even with students abroad. This file will accompany the student from the first grade of secondary school until the third grade of high school. In this file the Career Counselor will find relevant data, in a part of the file the teacher of each specialization can find any information about the work of his former colleagues but particularly the student will refer to it for feedback and self-assessment in order to achieve the great goal of the modern educational practice, metacognition.[16]

Another responsibility of the mentor is the coordination of interdisciplinary and trans disciplinary approach to courses.[17] In cases where nowadays this approach is neglected, this is not due to refusal or negligence of the teachers but on the one hand to the limited time and on the other in the absence of a trigger factor that will motivate the entire process. The mentor, therefore, aims to take this role.

The modern organization of work requires skills, initiative, creativity, imagination, accountability and teamwork. These skills are cultivated through active-experiential teaching methods and not teacher-centered teaching.[18] Interdisciplinarity, speed and group work are the main keywords. The mentor is aware of subgroups of the class. He monitors their progress, identifies whether some of them are excluded or overshadowed and intervenes if necessary. The continuous contact with the class, allows the efficient observation and effective intervention, which is extremely essential.

Regarding multiculturalism[19] which is the new reality of the modern Greek school, the mentor will help in the attempt to overcome the various problems that arise due to sociocultural diversity and he will make clear, through educational practice, the practical utility and advantages of this new social reality.

([15] Dimitropoulos E, 118), ([16] Matsagouras I. 1998, 2 volume, 75-76, 277-278), ([17] Matsagouras I. 1998, 2 volume, 244), ([18] Matsagouras I. 1998, 1 volume, 131), ([19] Pyrgiotakis I., 251-252, 453-454)

1.7 Actions and Duties at School

A significant activity of the mentor in school is to propose various student issues to the teachers' Association. Students certainly have their own "voice", with fifteen- member councils[20] however, the mentor is able to detect a variety of issues, not formulated as questions to the students' institutions while simultaneously their negotiation and resolution require intuition and experience. Especially in punishments, his suggestion is of great importance as the mentor knows due to his position more about the conditions of the manifestation of student delinquent behavior.

His working hours are in accordance with the program of the students and therefore he will be rewarded accordingly.

The contact of the mentor with parents and the Association of parents is understandable. Also, the achievement of the cooperation among the mentors of various classes where this is possible and conducive to learning is very important. Finally, his contribution to the implementation of various programs (e.g., Environmental or Cultural Education, Health Education etc.) that require contact with the Ministry, agencies, individuals, namely, bureaucratic procedural issues and practical issues is significant.

The mentor does not override the Director of the school, does not replace the School board, and does not undertake the role of psychologist, social worker or anything like that. He is a link between all these and the student.

([20] Γ2/4094/23-1986 Ministry of Education. School communities-Legislation)

1.8 Advisor and Supporter of Students

It is known that the modern student needs to acquire the skills and the tools with which he will build and continuously update his personal functional knowledge, a process which is expected to be a lifetime one. In the modern era of information overload, the ability to build cohesive and flexible knowledge systems will be one of the most important skills of the young man.

In order to achieve this, the expansion of general education and the development of core-general skills and abilities that are similar for all disciplines and by extension for all occupations is considered to be important. The general courses should be interconnected with the special ones, in order to reflect the value in implementing any future profession and give meaning to the acquisition of school knowledge.

For example, the same homework will not be assigned to a student who has internet access, parent programmer and lives within walking distance of the school and to his classmate who lives 2 hours away from school, has no computer and has a parent working as a driver. Obviously, the educational objectives will be, of course, common for both students, but the techniques and methods will be adjusted depending on each case. Therefore, the role of the mentor is to help in this area.

Alternatively, suppose that a new student, child of military officials or civil servants, or a child of immigrants comes to the class. When, how and at what cost will he be part of the class? The mentor with the tools he has and knowing well the potential of the class will facilitate the child's integration. At this point, the communication with the former mentor, will be more auxiliary while the electronic, personal student file will help teachers learn what skills have been built on knowledge level by the student and in what way.

The coexistence within the same class of immigrant pupils, students with learning difficulties or gifted ones makes the teacher insufficient while the traditional teaching method requires the teacher to address the average student. One, in a strict framework, defined relationship between mentor and student aims at reducing this deficiency, while the constant contact will result in more effective knowledge acquisition. The mentor will listen to the particularities of each pupil, the particularities of the class, will predict adverse situations and will prevent them.[21] He will see and will highlight the student as a unique and valuable entity, learning to cooperate, to speak and to become aware in a society that at present is the classroom and tomorrow will be the society.

Additionally, such a relationship will change the traditional teaching system that reproduces social inequality, since, in that way, some students that the present conditions may limit their expression, will find voice and presence. [22]

Therefore, the lessons of modern pedagogy will be applied complete in practice. Modern pedagogy requires methods that will inspire students and encourage them to experience the knowledge in order to gain the full educational benefit and also demands the student to "steal" the role of the teacher, get the learning process in his hands and to "experience" the subject.

(*21 Matsagouras I. 1998, 2 volume, 149), (*22 Fragoudaki A., 93)*

1.9 Parent Information

In the area of contact and cooperation with parents, awareness of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor framework that characterizes the student makes communication more effective. The mentor undertakes to inform parents about absences as well as the school activity if asked. He offers answers to questions that the traditional teacher might not have, not because he is not capable, but because he does not "live" with the student for a long time to draw enough information.

1.10 Potential Disadvantages of the Role

The case of a "bad" mentor will create more problems than the ones he is required to solve. There is an obvious influence that he will have on the student since he will be with him even longer than his parents, who nowadays are both working. There will be control by the Director, the Director of School Mentors, parents and students, but given the Greek educational bureaucracy and inflexibility, the negative effects of such a case are likely to be extremely adverse for students.

A 'bad' mentor is mostly indifferent while he may also be overprotective and unilateral. Generally bad is the one who departs from the strictly predetermined and clearly delineated role.

A major drawback is the long stay with the same students. The "debunking" of the teacher, the development of preference or not, conscious or not, to one or some students and the general possibility to extend beyond the role of his educational tasks, to get into the roles of parent or big brother is increased compared with the "classical" teacher.

One other disadvantage is the requirement of the State to hire large numbers of employees to fill this new position, as well as the burden assigned to the ASPAITE to meet the needs of training.

However, the main drawback, perhaps-is the expected negative reaction of the colleagues. The presence of a third person in the class without the corresponding specialization who participates in the educational process, is involved in the evaluation, who must cooperate and in no case will carry out his schedule is a big thorn. The current teacher is not trained to collaborate, to be evaluated and be educated not only by his own responsibility but primarily by the state. The presence of the mentor will bring these features to the center of the school scene.

1.11 Benefits of the Role

The mentor will be the most up to date teacher about modern teaching approaches and new methods and will know how each student builds separately the knowledge. He knows, overall the specificities of the class and acts as the carrier of "modern education policy" to students, colleagues, school.

Group collaboration, internal and external differentiation, development of critical thinking, knowledge construction, volume production of new knowledge, distinctiveness, individuality, lifelong learning, new techniques of knowledge production, feedback, experientialism, metacognition[24], ICT, scaffolding[25], @ project, ADHD[26], pervasive developmental disorders[27], unknown words for the majority of teachers are just some of the key concepts of Mentor and the tools of his work.

Each era is characterized by specific choices of educational objectives, defined by central agencies such as the Pedagogical Institute. The institution of mentor will contribute decisively to the achievement of such objectives as the use of new technologies in the acquisition of knowledge of interdisciplinarity and multiculturalism. It could be said that he is the most direct and effective way from the Ministry of Education to the student.

It is widely known that the access a student has to "special"-psychologists, social workers, school counselors, counselors of professional guidance is a great extent formal and not substantial. It is also known that, usually, students who really need special counseling do not approach the specialists of the area of Mental Health. Everyone, on the other hand, is able to feel that a teenager will experience the divorce of his parents traumatically but few know exactly how this is manifested in level of student behavior. We will notice, perhaps, the delinquent behavior or generally strange reactions, the mentor, however, perhaps will be able to easily detect both the exact reason for the tension and help in the treatment not only of the behavior but also its causes.

(*24 Matsagouras I. 1998, 2 volume,75-76, 277-278), (*25 Psycharis S., τόμος 2, 94), (*26 Attention Deficit*

Hyreractivity-Disorder) ([27] *Stathis F. 43-45, 80-86).(Manos, K. G. (1977),(Vakalousi, A. (2002).*

2. Methodology

2.1 The Goal of the Questionnaire

During the conduct of this project, I frequently put under discussion this issue with colleagues in my working place (SNE), in the area of ASPAITE (classmates) and my friendly environment (teachers in different schools). The response was basically discouraging, especially from friends colleagues. A typical reaction was that of a friend teacher who claimed that a second person with any position in the class will be a great source of conflict.

An extensive sample of the distributed questionnaire is presented in Appendix A.

The purpose of the research, therefore, is to detect the intention of teacher concerning the collaboration with the mentor. The preparation of the questionnaire proved to be very difficult not only because of the inherent difficulty of this process but also because of the almost nonexistent literature on this subject. Therefore, the aim, is a small, qualitative study[28] on an issue that has not previously concerned specialists or not, and is not mentioned in the literature.

([28] *Paraskevopoulos I., 20-21)*

2.2 Sample

The questionnaire[29] was given to 40 teachers of different specialties in four schools, in one school of Special education in Attica, in a Vocational High School in Piraeus, in a Lyceum at Karystos and a Lyceum at Salamina.

The criterion for participation of teachers in the survey was their employment in secondary education in any working status – permanent teacher, substitute teacher or hourly teacher. However, in the school of special education the colleagues of the Special Auxiliary staff, whose role is not the educational process, were excluded.

([29] *Paraskevopoulos I., 83-98)*

2.3 Method

The questionnaire was distributed to each school day by day, in the third week of April 2010. We followed the process of random selection of teachers during break, in the teachers' room. The questionnaire was given to the first ten teachers regardless of their willingness to cooperate, without any questions or other information solely with the questionnaire data. The questionnaires that were not answered were not replaced.

The variable[30] examined was consensus on cooperation of the teachers in case they would co-teach with the mentor. The process of collecting the questionnaire and the qualitative analysis of the data collected were the next steps.

([30] *Paraskevopoulos I., 147-149)*

3. Result Analysis

In the sample of 40 teachers questioned, we had 40 answers. A response was accompanied by comments of ironic content, which, however, was included in the total of responses.

In the first question, which was the key one, 23 answered YES (57.5%) and 17 NO (42.5%).

Would you accept to teach your lesson in cooperation with the mentor?
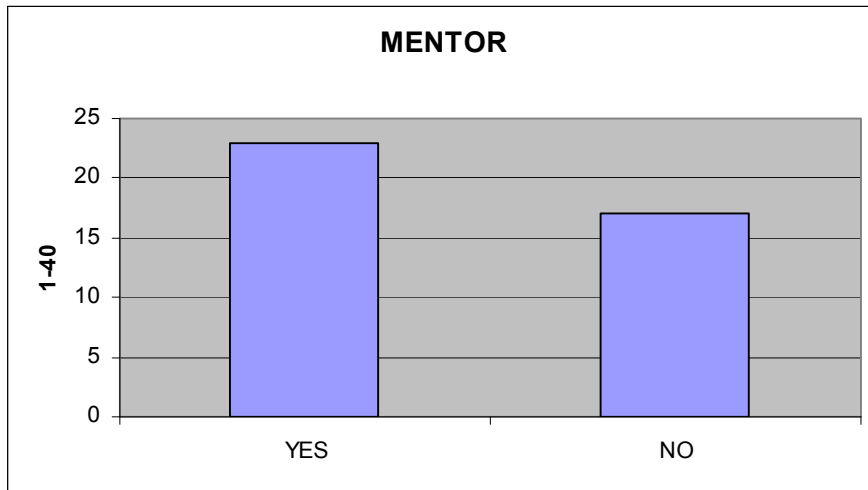
Figure 1. Question 1

In the total of 40 teachers, 10 were of Technical Expertise (Agriculturists, occupational therapists, IT, etc) and 30 of General Expertise (philologist, mathematician, Theologians, etc.)

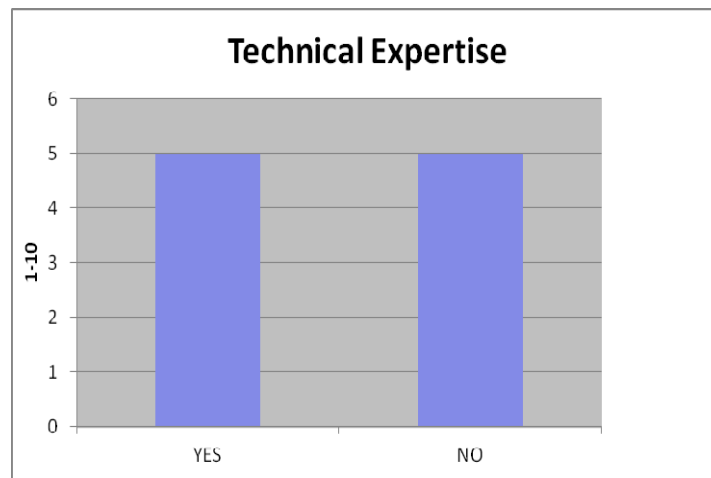In the technical teachers, their 10 answers are equally divided, 5 YES (50%) and 5 NO (50%).

Figure 2. Question 2

However, in the teachers of General Expertise, 30 answers were given in total, 18 were YES (60%) and 12 were NO (40%).
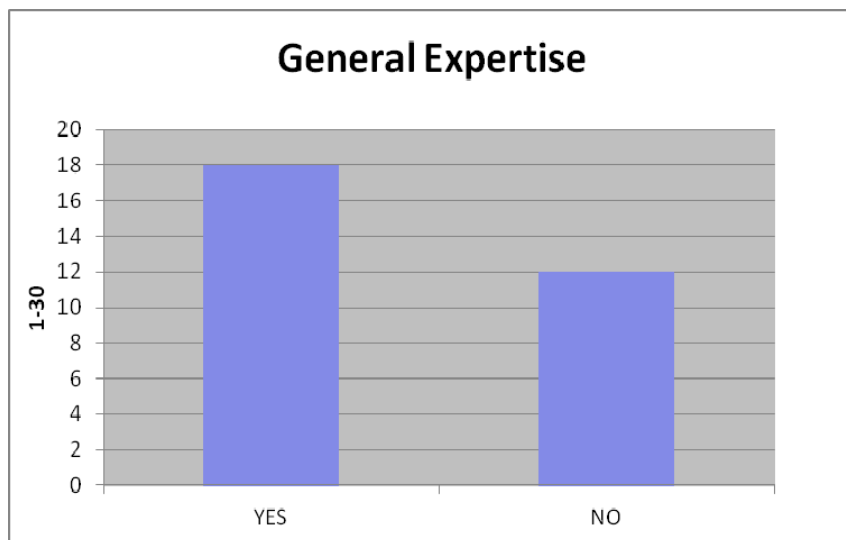
Figure 3. Question 3

As far as the other questions are concerned the following answers were given:

➤   *Do you know what ADHD is?*

Do you know what internal differentiation is? YES 14 (35%) and 26 NO (65%)
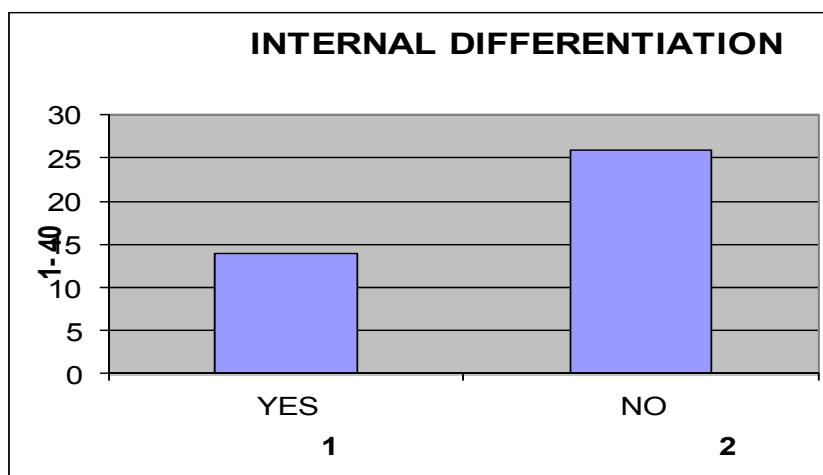

Figure 4. Question 4

And in General Expertise in total of 30 answers, 12 were yes (40%) and 18 no (60%).

➤   Do you know what ADHD is?
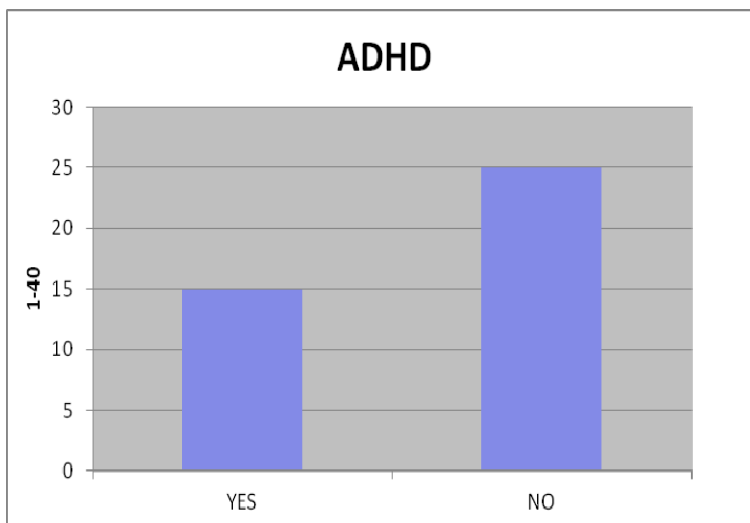➤   15(37,5%) YES, 25 NO (62,5%)

Figure 5. Question 5

For ADHD, the teachers of Technical Expertise answered 5 Yes (50%) and 5 No (50%) while the General teachers responded with 10 Yes (33%) and 20 No (66%).

Do you know what rubrics is?
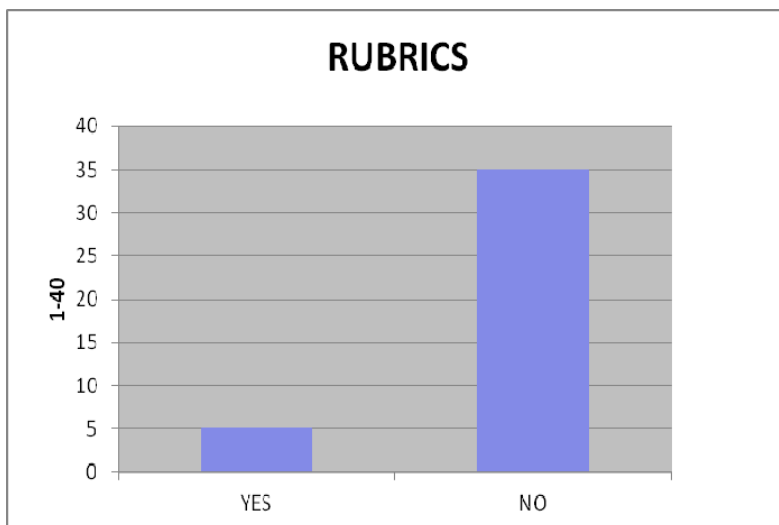
5 YES (12,5%) και 35 NO (37,5%).

Figure 6. Question 6

In technical expertise teachers 0 answered YES (0%) and 10 NO (100%) while in the 30 teachers of general expertise 5 answered YES (16.7%) and 25 NO (83.3%).

Regarding the question about the experience, many hourly waged and substitute teachers reported their overall experience in the public and private sector and as a result this item could not be used since both the teaching objectives and the conditions are very different in the classroom environment in comparison to the tutorial class.

4. Conclusions

In general, it should be noted that given the very small sample we cannot actually talk about drawing conclusions but only about the detection of some trends. Therefore, based on the above elements, it seems that teachers are more receptive to a possible collaboration with the mentor. During the preparation of the survey, there was a widespread feeling that the negative responses would be by far more than the positive ones. A serious deterrent factor was also the coincidence of this questionnaire with the institution of mentor that in the meantime the Ministry introduced to the newly appointed teachers. In reality, the mentor of the ministry, as a new institution, is treated with suspicion by the teachers' family and this was conveyed to some extent in the conduct this research.

However, the positive responses were more than the negative ones, even this was a small difference, it strengthens the belief that the teacher feels the need to modify his teaching so as to become more effective. Another worth noting point is that the technical expertise teachers that have not received pedagogical training, was more skeptical about the role of the mentor, than the General teachers, when such courses are easier to be connected with the everyday life and be carried out with new methods and techniques, so the corresponding teacher needs more help in teaching, since he does not have the theoretical knowledge about how to implement them.

It was not possible to draw any conclusion about the relationship between educational experience and willingness to introduce in teaching innovative methods since, as it has already been mentioned, there was no differentiation between working experience in the public school and tutorial classes. as a result, it was impossible to detect any relationship between the teacher's age and his willingness to cooperate for the introduction of new methods.

The findings relating to the secondary questions of the questionnaire are also significant and could be the subject of systematic research in the educational field. More specifically, regarding the method of internal differentiation, negative responses, mostly from technical teachers are dominant. We can conclude, therefore, that the need for teacher training is essential. The processing of the responses to the questions about ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder-) and the method of evaluation RUBRICS leads us to the same conclusion.

In particular about ADHD, we would probably have more negative responses, if we did not include in the survey the special school in which all the teachers of all disciplines, responded positively, which is expected since they specialize in Special Education. This question, however, is about the General Education, where the negative responses were dominant, thus the training of teachers in this area is necessary.

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