



# Education Quarterly Reviews

**Fragkoulis, Iosif, and Dimakis, Marios K. (2019), Investigation of Special Education Educators' Views on the Necessity to Apply the Institution of Mentor in Special Education and Training Schools. In: *Education Quarterly Reviews*, Vol.2, No.1, 82-93.**

ISSN 2621-5799

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1993.02.01.41

The online version of this article can be found at:  
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Published by:  
The Asian Institute of Research

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# Investigation of Special Education Educators' Views on the Necessity to Apply the Institution of Mentor in Special Education and Training Schools

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## Abstract

This paper explores the views of special education teachers on the necessity of introducing the institution of the mentor into the educational act. In particular, the knowledge, skills, and qualifications required by the mentor candidate for the more efficient functioning of the mentoring process are explored. The sample of the survey consisted of 143 special education teachers from the Region of Western Greece, while the data were collected through a questionnaire. The statistical analysis of the questionnaire data was performed using the statistical software SPSS Procedure 24. The survey results show that teachers recognize the importance of mentoring for their educational work and highly express their demand to import the institution in schools. They find it particularly important that the mentor should have knowledge of pedagogy, psychology and teaching methodology, in order to effectively exercise his role. Finally, factors such as the teaching experience and possession of relevant expertise the development of a cooperative framework and the modification of the curriculum, on behalf of the mentor guarantee a proper guidance process in the school unit.

**Keywords:** Guidance, Counselling, Mentoring, Mentor, Special Education Teacher

## 1. Introduction

The importance of a good start for the newcomer in his / her educational career is indicated in several surveys (Day, 2003; Wong, 2004). In addition to the overall support that must be offered to the new entrant by all staff, a particularly important approach to meeting their needs is the institution of the mentor.

More specifically, in the field of special education and training, the necessity of the institution of the mentor is bigger as teachers are called upon to play a complex role and to cope with difficult and varied situations. The teacher's role in special needs education is complex (teaching, therapeutic, supportive, consultative, administrative work, etc.) and thus heavily charged (Dedrick & Raschke, 1990; Zoniou-Sideri, 1998), creating feelings of intense emotional loading and exhaustion (Antoniou, Anagnostopoulou & Gaki, 2010). In addition, an important reason for establishing the institution of mentor in the field of education is the lack of training programs run by the Ministry of Education on issues related to special education and the day-to-day management of school reality, taking into account the real needs of teachers.

### 1.1 Defining mentor - mentoring

The word "mentor" has Greek roots and is met for the first time in Homer's Odyssey. In the modern educational literature, several definitions have been formulated for the concept of a mentor, which differ according to the emphasis given by each on the multiple properties of the mentor role as applied to the school environment. Andrews (1987), considers a mentor, an experienced teacher nominated or voluntarily undertakes to perform a supervisory, advisory, or sometimes evaluative role for the new-appointed teacher.

Also, many and different are the definitions given for the process of mentoring. Everyone, of course, accepts that this is a collective process where the people are taking part improve and get benefits at a practical and symbolic level (Valasse, 2015). Essentially, this is a relationship between old and novice teachers in order to offer stable and systematic support, assistance and guidance (Strong & Baron, 2004).

### 1.2 The qualifications of the mentor

In order to be able to respond effectively to the needs of his role, the mentor is required to have specific formal and substantive qualifications, appropriate skills and essential knowledge. The formal qualifications the teacher wishing to take on the role of the mentor should have are, the age, years of service, the leading position he may have and the prestige he holds (Athanasios et al., 2008). Several researchers (Boreen & Niday, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Stanulis & Floden, 2009) consider it important that the mentor comes from the same school unit as the trainee because this way frequent communication between the two parties is achieved. In particular, mentor teachers must have: a) excellent knowledge of school life and all aspects of the teacher's work, b) ability to share their knowledge, c) ability to motivate work, d) ability to cooperate, e) a strong personality, f) knowledge of the basic stages of the professional development of teachers and g) knowledge of legal issues relating to the profession of teacher.

### 1.3 Effectiveness of the mentor relationship

The effectiveness of the institution and the relationship that develops between mentor-trainee during the program depends on various factors such as:

- The appropriateness and interpersonal characteristics of the mentor, the strategies he uses during the relationship, the preparation and the appropriate training he has taken before taking up his role and the environment in which the program is conducted (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009)
- The willingness of the learner to engage in mentoring procedures (Roehrig, Bohn, Turner & Pressley, 2008)
- The quality of the relationship that develops between the two parties (Bagakis, Tsigou, & Skorda, 2017)
- The mentor has a lot of free time, that will help to get prepared in order to take on this role (Abell, Hopkins, McInerney and O'Brien, 1995; Lee & Feng, 2007)
- Financial reward or some other form of recognition for the mentor's work (Simpson, Hastings, & Hill, 2007)
- The way they are matched with learners (Hobson et al., 2009). The lack of personal and professional bond between the two parties makes the relationship problematic.

### 1.4 Mentoring in the international and Greek educational reality

Since the 1980s mentoring plays an important role in the initial preparation, support and professional development of teachers in many parts of the world and many countries there is a massive increase in the number of formal mentoring programs for novice teachers. In the United States of America mentoring was the most widespread form of support for newcomers and used as a means of resolving the problem of dropout of educational work in several States (Heider, 2005).

In Greece the need to provide adequate support to new entrants during the first years of their service was recognized by the Ministry of Education and the law 3848/2010 establishes the support of newly appointed teachers through mentoring procedures. Unfortunately, however, due to the particular socio-economic conditions prevailing in the last decade in our country, this institution, was not supported either by the education community or the political leadership and was gradually abandoned.

## **2. Research Methodology**

### *2.1 Purpose*

The main aim of the research is to investigate the views and attitudes of teachers working in Special Education and Training structures regarding the institution of the mentor and the necessity of its implementation in the context of their educational work.

### *2.2 Research questions*

Do the views of special education educators on the institution of mentor depend on their demographic characteristics?

Do the views of special education teachers in relation to the mentor's qualifications depend on their demographic characteristics?

Are the views of special education teachers regarding the correct implementation of the mentoring process in the special education unit dependent on their demographic characteristics?

### *2.3 The sample*

The sample of the survey is made up of 143 Primary and Secondary Education Teachers belonging to the Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of Western Greece and working in special education schools. Specimen sampling was used to determine the sample (Creswell, 2011).

### *2.4 Data Collection*

In the present study, a structured questionnaire was used which included closed format questions. The questionnaire, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2008), is an easy-to-use tool for collecting data for reviews as it: a) provides "frequently constructed numerical data"; b) enables it to perform without the researcher is "relatively easy to understand and easy to analyze" (p. 414).

### *2.5 Data Analysis*

The coding of the data gathered from the questionnaire and their statistical processing was carried out with the statistical program SPSS 24, which is a widely used statistical analysis program in the field of Social Sciences.

### *2.6 Validity and credibility of research*

The assessment of reliability was carried out in two ways: a) the process of granting and re-submitting the questionnaire at two different time points to the same participants after a sufficient period of time. Comparing the results, there were no significant differences between the questionnaires completed by each teacher. b) Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (alpha) or internal consistency coefficient. An assessment of Cronbach's pointer was made for all 3 scales of the questionnaire, which was estimated at 0.89, which gives a particularly high level of reliability to the survey.

To ensure validity, the content of the questionnaire was first assessed by the supervisor to determine the extent to which the questions contained in it represent the area under study. Subsequently, the questionnaire was submitted to 15 teachers who could be part of the sample of the survey to determine the function of the questionnaire and possible problems in completing it.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Demographic characteristics

The distribution of the sample in relation to the demographic characteristics is as follows:

- **Gender:** From the sample of 143 special education educators surveyed, 60 (42%) were men, and 83 (58%) were women.
- **Age:** 33 (23.1%) belong to the age group 22-30, 52 (36.4%) in the age group 31-40, 39 (27.3%) are between 41-50 and 19 (13.3%) are aged 51 and above.
- **Marital status:** 89 (62.2%) were married, 51 (35.7%) were single and 3 (2.1%) divorced.
- **School Service Unit:** 42 (29.4%) work in Special Vocational and Training Workshops, 33 (23.1%) in Integrated Special Vocational Middle – High Schools, 31 (21.7%) in Integrated Classes of General Education Schools, 13 (9.1%) in Parallel Support and 1 (0.7%) in Special Vocational High School. Also, 18 teachers work in Special Primary Schools (12.6%) and 2 in Special Kindergartens (1.4%) (Table 1).

**Table 1. Sample distribution relative to sex, age, marital status, School served unit**

|                       |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------------------|--|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>Sex</b>            |  |           |         |               |                    |
| Valid                 | man  | 60        | 42.0    | 42.0          | 42.0               |
|                       | woman  | 83        | 58.0    | 58.0          | 100.0              |
|                       | Total  | 143       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |
| <b>Age</b>            |  |           |         |               |                    |
| Valid                 | 22-30  | 33        | 23.1    | 23.1          | 23.1               |
|                       | 31-40  | 52        | 36.4    | 36.4          | 59.4               |
|                       | 41-50  | 39        | 27.3    | 27.3          | 86.7               |
|                       | 51 and above                                     | 19        | 13.3    | 13.3          | 100.0              |
|                       | Total  | 143       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |
| <b>Marital status</b> |  |           |         |               |                    |
| Valid                 | Married  | 89        | 62.2    | 62.2          | 62.2               |
|                       | Single   | 51        | 35.7    | 35.7          | 97.9               |
|                       | Divorced   | 3         | 2.1     | 2.1           | 100.0              |
| <b>Service unit</b>   |  |           |         |               |                    |
| Valid                 | Special Kindergarten                             | 2         | 1.4     | 1.4           | 1.4                |
|                       | Special Primary School                           | 18        | 12.6    | 12.6          | 14.0               |
|                       | Integrated Special Vocational Middle-High School | 33        | 23.1    | 23.1          | 37.1               |
|                       | EEEEK  | 42        | 29.4    | 29.4          | 66.4               |
|                       | Integrated Classes in General Schools            | 31        | 21.7    | 21.7          | 88.1               |
|                       | Parallel Educational support                     | 13        | 9.1     | 9.1           | 97.2               |
|                       | Special educational Vocational High School       | 1         | , 7     | , 7           | 97.9               |
|                       | Other ..   | 3         | 2.1     | 2.1           | 100.0              |
|                       | Total  | 143       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

- **Conditions of Employment in special education schools:** 92 (64.3%) are full-time substitutes, 47 (32.9%) are permanent teachers, while only 4 (2.8%) are substituted for part-time work.

- **Teaching Experience:** 56 (39.2%) have 4-6 years of teaching experience, 36 have 5-9 years (25.2%), 22 have 10-15 years (15.4%), 19 have 16-20 years (13.3%), and only 10 have more than 20 years of experience (7%).
- **Working position in education:** 135 (94.4%) work as teachers, 2 teachers held the position of Deputy Director (1.4%), and 6 teachers were Directors (4.2%) (Table 2).

**Table 2. Sample distribution in relation to the type of work, the didaktiki experience and mean education**

|  |                                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>Working relationship</b>              |                                |           |         |               |                    |
| Valid                                    | Part time Substitute           | 4         | 2.8     | 2.8           | 2.8                |
|  | Full-time Substitute           | 92        | 64.3    | 64.3          | 67.1               |
|  | Permanent Teacher              | 47        | 32.9    | 32.9          | 100.0              |
| <b>Teaching experience</b>               |                                |           |         |               |                    |
| Valid                                    | 0-4 years                      | 56        | 39.2    | 39.2          | 39.2               |
|  | 5-9 years                      | 36        | 25.2    | 25.2          | 64.3               |
|  | 10-15 years                    | 22        | 15.4    | 15.4          | 79.7               |
|  | 16-20 years                    | 19        | 13.3    | 13.3          | 93.0               |
|  | > 20 years                     | 10        | 7.0     | 7.0           | 100.0              |
|  | Total                          | 143       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |
| <b>Position of subjects in education</b> |                                |           |         |               |                    |
| Valid                                    | Teacher                        | 135       | 94.4    | 94.4          | 94.4               |
|  | Deputy Director of School Unit | 2         | 1.4     | 1.4           | 95.8               |
|  | School Unit Manager/Director   | 6         | 4.2     | 4.2           | 100.0              |
|  | Total                          | 143       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

- **Basic studies and further training of the participants:** The total number of teachers, who participated in the research possess a university / TEI degree (100%). 76 (53.15%) hold a postgraduate diploma and 2 hold Ph.D. degrees (1.40%). In addition, 30 teachers have training of annual duration (20.98%), and 34 teachers have training in ICTs (23.78%).

### 3.2 Frequencies of the questionnaire scales

#### 3.2.1 Frequencies of the scale "Need to Introduce the Institution of the Mentor in the Special Education Structures."

The 78% (MD=2.10 ± 0.87) of teachers advocates that mentoring is internationally one of the most effective practices in the development of teachers and for this reason, its implementation in Greece is also necessary.

The 86% (MD=1.73±0.88) recognizes its contribution to the guidance and encouragement of newly appointed teachers in the early stages of their educational career in teaching and daily practice within the school.

The 81% (MD=1.92±0.82) claims to a high degree that the introduction of mentoring in school units is necessary to support the entire educational community regardless of teaching experience.

The 90% (MD=1.57±0.72) indicates that the institution of the mentor provides opportunities for high-quality learning.

The 85% (MD=1.90±0.85) of teachers think that mentoring as an effective support and development process for the teacher can help improve the quality of educational work within the classroom.

### 3.2.2 Frequencies of the scale "*Qualifications for the mentor candidate.*"

As far as the mentor level of knowledge is concerned, an important qualification is considered:

- the knowledge of Pedagogy (71 %, MD 1.34±0.58)
- the knowledge of Psychology (61%, MD 1.49±0.71)
- the knowledge of Teaching Methodology (60%, MD 1.52±0.73)
- the training in the use of ICT (74%, MD 2.13±0.95)
- the existence of postgraduate and doctoral studies (75%, MD 1.98±0.96)
- experience in mentoring programs, (78%, MD 1.97±1.02)
- the adoption of adult learning principles (79%) and participation in innovative actions and programs (78%).

Regarding the required skills the mentor candidate must develop:

- be cooperative (99%, MD 1.20±0.42)
- be communicative (100%)
- be flexible (97%)
- be receptive to the adoption of new ideas (97%) and innovative programs (95%)
- to adopt an active listening (96%) and show respect and honesty to the mentee (98%).

Additional qualifications of a mentor are:

- multi-year teaching experience (82%)
- the follow-up of training seminars of the Ministry of Education (51 %) and the program of ASPAITE (50%).

### 3.2.3 Frequencies of the scale "*Conditions for proper implementation of the mentoring process in the special education unit.*"

The prerequisites for the proper implementation of the mentoring process in the special education unit according to the views of the teachers are:

- acceptance by the educational community (77 %, MD=1.91±0.90)
- Pilot implementation of the mentor institution (77%, MD =1.94±0.84)
- selecting the teacher mentor through meritocratic procedures (68%, MD = 1.51±0.91)
- delimitation of mentor responsibilities (61%, MD=1.53±0.79)
- quality of mentor education (65%, MD=1.51±0.84)
- cognitive background and mentor skills (52%, MD = 1.60 ± 0.73)
- the aspirations of the mentor for co-operation (62%, MD=1.48±0.72)
- dissociation of mentor's work from educational assessment processes (77%, MD=1.87±1.12)

- the trainee's enthusiastic voluntary involvement in mentoring processes, (74%, MD=2.09±0.82)
- promoting the institution through analytical school curricula (39%, MD=2.23±0.92).

### 3.3 Correlations between the scales and sub-questions with the demographic characteristics of the questionnaire

Next, the correlations of the demographic characteristics "Gender," "Teaching Experience," "School Unit" and "Relationship of Labor" are listed with each of their scales and sub-questions.

Regarding the influence of **gender** on the scale of "**The necessity of introducing the institution of a mentor in special education structures**," male teachers appear to be more positive in organizing and implementing mentoring in the school context they work (80.64) than their female colleagues (65.75) (table.3).

**Table 3. The necessity of introducing the institution of mentor to special education structures and gender**

| SCIENCE A Need to introduce the institution of the mentor in the special education institutions | Sex       |           | p-value |
|---|-----------|-----------|---------|
|   | Man       | Woman     |         |
|   | Mean Rank | Mean Rank |         |
| SUM   | 80.64     | 65.75     | 0.033   |

Regarding the impact of variable **teaching experience** on the scale of "**Necessity to Introduce the Institution of Mentor in Special Education Structures**," teachers with a teaching experience of over 20 years seem to have a more positive attitude in the implementation of mentoring at school. In addition, these teachers consider to a greater extent than their other colleagues, that the implementation of the institution has beneficial effects, both for beginners and for the most experienced teachers, and that the institution is necessary because it offers quality education to students.

**Table 4. The necessity of introducing the institution of mentor to special education structures and teaching experience**

| CLIMATE A: The necessity of introducing the institution of the mentor to special education structures | Teaching experience |           |           |           |           | p-value |
|---|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
|   | 0-4                 | 5-9       | 10-15     | 16-20     | 20 <      |         |
|   | Mean Rank           | Mean Rank | Mean Rank | Mean Rank | Mean Rank |         |
| SUM   | 61.53               | 69.18     | 85.50     | 80.29     | 95.35     | 0.039   |

Regarding the effect of the variable "**School Unit**" on "**The necessity of introducing the institution of a mentor in the special education structures**" it appears that the teachers working in the Integration Department appear to have a more positive attitude in the implementation of mentoring at school.



**Table 5. The necessity of introducing the institution of the mentor to special education structures and the school unit**

| CLIMATE A: The necessity of introducing the institution of the mentor to special education structures | School unit           |                        |           |           |                     |                  |           |           | p-value |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
|   | Special Kindergarten. | Special Primary School | ENEEGYL   | EEEEK     | Integration Classes | Parallel Sypport | EEG       | Other..   |         |
|   | Mean Rank             | Mean Rank              | Mean Rank | Mean Rank | Mean Rank           | Mean Rank        | Mean Rank | Mean Rank |         |
| <b>SUM</b>  | 54.5                  | 70                     | 66.92     | 82.32     | 83.18               | 41.96            | 47        | 50.67     | 0.04    |

In addition, the effect of the "Labor Relations" variable on the "Need to Introduce the Institution of the Mentor in Special Education Structures" ( $p = 0.022$ ) was statistically significant. In particular, permanent teachers support a greater degree, the need to develop counseling services in the school where they work. So, based on the perceptions of permanent teachers, it is considered necessary to co-operate and provide their counseling assistance to their newly appointed colleagues (78.57,  $p=0.05$ ) and to promote the institution of the mentor in the provision of counseling in the school educational staff (83.20,  $p=0.042$ ). Moreover, mentoring is supported by the majority of permanent teachers as a necessary process for the professional development of both beginners and experienced teachers (78,36,  $p=0,003$ ) and contributes positively to the production of quality upgraded educational work.

**Table 6. The necessity of introducing the institution of the mentor into the special education and work relationship structures**

| CLIMATE A: The necessity of introducing the institution of the mentor to the special education structures  | Work Relationship              |                                |  | Permanent teacher Mean Rank | p-value |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|---------|
|  | Part time Substitute Mean Rank | Full-time Substitute Mean Rank |  |                             |         |
| A. It is a fact that mentoring is considered internationally one of the most effective ways of professional development of teachers and should, even with the delay, be applied to the educational system of our country.          | 70.50                          | 68.40                          |  | 79.17                       | 0.267   |
| B. The newly appointed teachers in the early stages of their educational career need support, guidance, and encouragement from a more experienced colleague who will advise them on teaching and daily practice within the school. | 34.00                          | 70.29                          |  | 78.57                       | 0.050   |
| C. Since the institution of the school counselor is preserved in school practice, I think it is an exaggeration to set up another similar institution, such as a mentor, in the difficult economic conditions of our country.      | 74.25                          | 66.18                          |  | 83.20                       | 0.042   |
| D. The introduction of a mentor institution into domestic  | 66.75                          | 64.38                          |  | 87.36                       | 0.003   |

educational practice should not only concern the support of newly appointed teachers but the reinforcement of all teachers in a school, as experienced teachers can improve not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better.

|  |              |              |              |              |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| E. In the early years of my training career, I had the support of experienced colleagues who voluntarily helped me to complete my teaching and extra-curricular duties.                                      | 44.88        | 70.78        | 76.69        | <b>0.281</b> |
| F. The high-performance education system should provide the educational staff high-quality learning.   | 55.75        | 72.05        | <b>73.29</b> | 0.658        |
| G. Mentoring as an effective support and development process for the teacher can help to improve the quality of educational work within the classroom.   | 54.25        | 68.36        | 80.63        | 0.121        |
| H. I consider it necessary to apply in practice the institution of the mentor for the newly appointed teacher in the Greek educational system, as it has already been voted in accordance with Law 3848/2010 | 87.88        | 66.47        | 81.47        | 0.065        |
| <b>SUM</b>   | <b>54.50</b> | <b>65.91</b> | <b>85.41</b> | <b>0.022</b> |

The statistical processing of data and execution of correlations resulted in a statistically significant effect of demographic characteristics "**Sex**," "**School unit**" and "**Employee**" with the range "**Qualification of the mentor institution in SNE structures**," which includes "Knowledge," "Skills" and "Other Qualifications" sub-scales.

In particular, the variable "**sex**" in scale "**Qualifications of the mentor institution in special education structures**" shows teachers male to have on average the highest degree in scientific fields which they consider should be held by the prospective mentor like psychology (83.10,  $p=0.002$ ), ICT training (76.42,  $p = 0.042$ ), postgraduate and doctoral studies and previous experience in mentoring programs (80.78,  $p = 0.021$ ).

In addition, the effect of the **gender** variable on the **skills** sub-scale was statistically significant regarding the qualifications deemed necessary by the teacher mentor ( $p = 0.042$ ). In particular, male educators have a higher tendency to develop specific skills on the implementation of mentoring than female educators.

The variable "**school unit**" on the scale "**Qualifications of the institution of the mentor in special education structures**" shows that the teachers of the Special Kindergartens argue that the presence of research work and articles (112.25,  $p=0,008$ ), experience in counseling guidance programs (102.75,  $p=0.009$ ) and in innovative research programs (95.00,  $p=0.038$ ) significantly enhances the mentor's mentoring role.

Also, there is a correlation between the variable "**School unit**" and the scale "**Conditions for proper implementation of the mentoring process in special education school unit**." Specifically, teachers who work in Special Vocational High Schools focus on four criteria for the effective implementation of the teaching mentor project. These are including the recognition of the value of the application of the mentor institution on part of the educational community (84.50  $p=0.014$ ), the amendment of the detailed curriculum (111.50,  $p=0.033$ ), appropriate training of candidate mentors (110.50,  $p=0.040$ ) and the appropriate matching mentor-mentee (126.00,  $p = 0.006$ ). On the contrary, the teachers of Primary education focused on issues of meritocracy in the teacher mentor selection procedures (82.86,  $p = 0,021$ ) and on the separation of the assessment procedure and the implementation of the mentoring guidance (126.00,  $p=0,040$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

Research results show that teachers have a high level of conceptual perception of mentoring, strongly reflecting their demand for the introduction of mentoring in schools, while recognizing the positive influences of a) the educational maturity of novice teachers, b) the professional improvement of the most experienced, c) the provision of quality teaching to students and the development of qualitative performance skills by teachers, d) the enrichment of the knowledge acquired during their university studies and e) strengthening of insightful thinking and generating ideas with orientation in training new mentors in Special Schools. The above conclusions are consistent with findings from the international literature (Babione & Shea, 2005; Billingsley, 2004; Hobson et al., 2009).

From the statistical processing of the data, it was also found that the gender of teachers is an essential parameter that determines their perceptions and attitudes about their intention to satisfy their mentoring training needs for their contribution to psycho-emotional support for teachers, the relationship with the mentor teacher, the design of educational programs, and the influence of mentoring on the quality of the educational project. More specifically, according to the findings of the survey, it was revealed that male teachers expressed more positive attitudes towards the need to apply the institution of a mentor in the school environment, aiming at the psychological strengthening and resistance of teachers. This conclusion is in contradiction with the data from the international literature, according to which women teachers argue that monitoring mentoring programs is particularly effective for their colleagues. Also, the results suggest that experienced teachers appear to have a clearer view of the need to apply mentoring to the school environment and were in favor of its positive influence on all teachers of the school community. In the international literature, there are presented studies (Hanson & Moir, 2008; Gschwend & Moir, 2007) demonstrating the beneficial effect of mentoring on the careers of experienced teachers, which are consistent with the findings of our investigation and inquiries where teachers with less working experience showed more positive attitudes towards attending mentoring educational programs than their more experienced colleagues (Aspfors & Bondas, 2013; Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004a; Devos, 2010; Hobson et al., 2009).

The permanent teachers surveyed expressed more positive views regarding the presence of Special Education mentor in the school unit in comparison with their colleagues who were employed as part time or full time substitute teachers underlining the need for counseling in the professional development of all teachers of a school unit, while pointing out the importance of counseling to young teachers. This conclusion is in line with research findings from the international literature (Dempsey, Arthur-Kelly, & Carty, 2009; Ewing & Manuel, 2005).

As far as the qualifications must have mentor teachers recognize highly the cognitive characteristics that the Mentors should have while regarding the required skills, the teachers' knowledge also accounted for a very good level. The above findings are identified with research findings by Martschinke et al. (2004), where teachers were found to be well aware of the cognitive characteristics the teacher must have in order to be effective in his counseling work. The statistical processing of the questions revealed that the gender of teachers was a predictive factor of perceptions about the cognitive characteristics and skills of the mentors. Specifically, men appear to have more knowledge about the skills of mentors, such as psychology, ICT and postgraduate studies.

The majority of teachers believe that there are a number of factors that are a prerequisite for mentoring teachers to express their particular abilities and the effectiveness of their work. Such parameters are the possession of specialized knowledge, the development of a cooperative framework, the modification of the curriculum, the mentoring experience of the mentor, the appropriate matching of mentors and mentee, etc. From this research, it can be seen that the application of guidance counseling techniques attracts the interest of teachers by overcoming through mentoring the fears, the anxiety or the insecurity often caused by the "disturbing" behavior of the pupils in the room.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of international literature that the need for knowledge and skills development by mentors is considered not only to be important but also indispensable (Amos, 2005; Gagen & Bowie, 2005).

Completing research and studying the outputs of the need for further investigation emerges. In particular, a future survey could include a larger sample of all educational regions in Greece in order to produce safer conclusions. In addition, further research could include Special and General Education teachers, in order to compare and evaluate the knowledge and perceptions of these two groups regarding the institution of the mentor. Exploring the views of special education teachers on the use of mentoring in the context of their educational work compared to the views of general-class teachers is an interesting issue to be explored. It is also important to determine the degree of impact of the effective implementation of mentoring in general in the field of education.

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