



KEY COMPETENCIES REQUIRED IN PEER MENTORING ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

This article provides information on the key competencies required for the effective organization of peer mentoring activities. The content of a peer mentor's communicative, socio-emotional, pedagogical-guidance, ethical, organizational, and reflective competencies is described. The importance of these competencies in establishing effective communication with the mentee, understanding their needs, guiding them toward independent decision-making, developing a relationship of trust, and organizing mentoring activities consistently is also explained. A peer mentor's awareness of their duties and limits of authority, responsible attitude, and regular analysis of their own activities are identified as important factors in ensuring the effectiveness of the mentoring process.

Introduction

Today, one of the important pedagogical tasks in higher education is not only to equip students with professional knowledge but also to support their adaptation to a new educational and social environment. During their university years, young people face new educational requirements, the need to organize independent activities, establish relationships with peers and academic staff, and find their place in various social situations. Under such conditions, the support of a peer who understands the student's needs and can provide guidance based on personal experience is of particular importance.

Peer mentoring is a form of support based on mutual trust, cooperation, and the exchange of experience, in which a student with relevant experience helps another student navigate educational and social matters. A peer mentor is not someone who solves the mentee's problems on their behalf, but rather a partner who helps the mentee recognize available opportunities, consider alternative options, and make independent decisions. The relative similarity in the participants' age, status, and life experience facilitates open and sincere communication.

However, the effectiveness of peer mentoring is not determined solely by the mentor's personal experience or willingness to help. A mentor must possess certain competencies to establish appropriate communication with the mentee, understand their thoughts and feelings, provide relevant guidance, maintain trust, organize meetings systematically, and

evaluate their own activities. These competencies integrate the mentor's knowledge, practical skills, personal qualities, and responsible attitude.

Communicative, socio-emotional, pedagogical-guidance, ethical, organizational, and reflective competencies play an important role in peer mentoring. Being closely interconnected, they contribute to the development of effective cooperation between the mentor and the mentee. This article describes the content, distinctive features, and significance of the key competencies required for peer mentoring activities.

MAIN PART. Competence is an integrated combination of knowledge, skills, experience, personal qualities, and a responsible attitude that enables an individual to perform a particular activity effectively. Peer mentor competence refers to the professional and personal capabilities demonstrated by a mentor in establishing effective cooperation with a mentee, providing appropriate guidance, and carrying out mentoring responsibilities in a responsible manner.

Communicative competence is the peer mentor's ability to establish effective communication with the mentee, express their thoughts clearly and understandably, listen attentively to the interlocutor's views, and provide feedback appropriate to the situation. This competence encompasses oral and written communication skills, the ability to formulate questions correctly, guide a conversation purposefully, and maintain a culture of exchanging ideas.

During communication, a peer mentor should listen to the mentee without interruption, ask questions that clarify their thoughts, and avoid misinterpreting the views expressed. Conducting communication in a sincere, respectful, and understandable manner contributes to the development of a relationship of trust between the mentor and the mentee. If communicative competence is insufficiently developed, the mentor may misunderstand the mentee's needs or perceive their views superficially.

Socio-emotional competence is the peer mentor's ability to recognize and manage their own emotions, understand the mentee's emotional state, and demonstrate an empathetic and impartial attitude toward them. This competence involves accurately understanding interpersonal relationships, being attentive to emotional states, responding appropriately to the situation, and creating a supportive environment.

In certain situations, the mentee may not directly express their problems or feelings. In such cases, the mentor should pay attention to changes in the mentee's speech, mood, and attitude. However, understanding the mentee's feelings does not mean making decisions on their behalf or solving all their problems. Socio-emotional competence enables the mentor to understand and encourage the mentee and, when necessary, motivate them to seek appropriate sources of support.

Pedagogical-guidance competence is the mentor's ability to provide purposeful guidance that helps the mentee understand the current situation, consider available opportunities, and make independent decisions. This competence involves providing support appropriate to the mentee while considering their individual needs, interests, capabilities, and experience.

A peer mentor is not someone who provides the mentee with ready-made instructions or makes decisions on their behalf. The mentor's role is to discuss the problem, help consider possible solutions, and assist the mentee in recognizing their own capabilities. In this process,

the mentor may use questions, explanations, relevant examples from personal experience, and useful information. Pedagogical-guidance competence supports the mentee's independence, responsibility, and active participation.

Ethical competence is the peer mentor's ability to adhere to ethical standards in mentoring relationships, respect the mentee's honor, dignity, opinions, and personal boundaries, and understand the limits of their authority. It includes qualities such as honesty, impartiality, responsibility, reliability, and discretion.

The mentor should handle the personal information shared by the mentee responsibly, refrain from devaluing the mentee's views, and avoid imposing their own opinions. Furthermore, the mentor should not attempt to resolve psychological, medical, legal, or other complex issues that fall beyond the scope of their capabilities. When necessary, the mentee should be advised to consult an appropriate specialist. Ethical competence ensures the reliability and safety of the mentoring relationship.

Organizational competence is the peer mentor's ability to plan mentoring activities purposefully, use time and available opportunities efficiently, and perform their responsibilities consistently. This competence encompasses arranging meetings, identifying issues for discussion, determining priority tasks, and monitoring the work completed.

The irregular organization of mentoring meetings or the failure to complete agreed tasks on time may negatively affect the mentee's trust in and interest in the process. Therefore, it is important for the mentor to value both their own and the mentee's time, honor agreements, and maintain regular communication. Organizational competence helps ensure that mentoring activities are structured, purposeful, and continuous.

Reflective competence is the peer mentor's ability to analyze their own activities, behavior, and relationship with the mentee, evaluate the outcomes achieved, and identify areas requiring improvement. Reflection enables the mentor to draw conclusions from their experience and consciously improve their subsequent activities.

After each meeting, the peer mentor may reflect on how the communication proceeded, how accurately the mentee's needs were understood, how useful the guidance provided was, and what should receive attention in the future. Accepting the mentee's feedback and drawing appropriate conclusions from it are also important manifestations of reflective competence. This competence enables the mentor to develop their strengths, recognize their shortcomings, and gradually enrich their mentoring experience.

The competencies described above do not manifest separately in peer mentoring activities but operate in an interconnected manner. Establishing effective communication requires socio-emotional sensitivity, while providing the mentee with appropriate guidance requires adherence to ethical standards. Organizational competence ensures the consistency of mentoring activities, whereas reflective competence helps the mentor analyze their experience and continuously improve their practice. Therefore, the insufficient development of one competence may also affect other aspects of the mentoring process.

A peer mentor's competence is determined not by solving every problem for the mentee, but by listening to them, helping them understand the situation, showing them available opportunities, and supporting their independent decision-making. In this process, it is important for the mentor to understand their responsibilities and limits of authority correctly,

respond responsibly in complex situations, and refer the mentee to an appropriate specialist when necessary. The integration of these competencies contributes to the development of reliable, purposeful, and effective cooperation between the mentor and the mentee.

Conclusion

Peer mentoring is a pedagogical activity that contributes to the development of mutual support, the exchange of experience, and reliable cooperation among students. Its effectiveness depends not only on the mentor's willingness to help and personal experience but also on the possession of specific competencies that enable them to perform mentoring responsibilities appropriately.

Communicative competence ensures effective interaction between the mentor and the mentee, while socio-emotional competence helps the mentor understand the mentee's emotional state and needs. Pedagogical-guidance competence supports the mentee's independent thinking and decision-making. Ethical competence ensures mutual respect, trust, and responsibility. Organizational competence enables mentoring activities to be organized systematically and consistently, while reflective competence helps the mentor evaluate and continuously improve their own practice.

The integration of these competencies enables the peer mentor to act responsibly and appropriately in various situations. The mentor should not solve the mentee's problems on their behalf but should guide them in understanding the situation, identifying available opportunities, and reaching an independent solution. It is also important for the mentor to understand the limits of their authority and, when necessary, direct the mentee to consult an appropriate specialist.

Thus, the development of key competencies in a peer mentor contributes to reliable, meaningful, and effective mentoring relationships. The continuous development of these competencies is important not only for the mentor's personal growth but also for supporting the mentee's educational and social engagement.

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