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Eötvös Loránd University
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DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

Mentoring in higher education: The case of Kazakhstan

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Abstract

In fact, when entering professional path frequently a new entrant is not familiar with the diapason of the specialization in the given profession. The more complete and deep knowledge about the occupation occurs during the early steps into the profession.

To understand the experiences of novice teachers, learning their perspectives, thoughts, and actions is crucial. The research indicates that work in higher education is mostly challenging and stressful for newly hired academics.

To assist and help a new faculty member, it is necessary to provide emotional support, informational support and instrumental support in his/her induction period and mentoring carries out these functions. Mentoring as a means for professional growth and socialization enhances sense of community and cooperation as well as engagement among faculty members.

The focus of this research is one particular context, Kazakhstani higher education institution, and the purpose is to explore how mentoring works, what the current problem issues and trends are – in the light of the latest literature. The primary focus of mentoring in present research is investigating mentorship relationships as a support mechanism for professional socialization and professional growth for new university teachers through personal interactions and relationship building

For data collection semi-structured individual (15 junior teachers and 10 senior teachers) and group interview methods (one with junior teachers and one with senior teachers) were used.

The findings evidenced that mentoring is existing among Kazakhstani university teachers in the form of providing help and assistance, advice and support, reflection, attending in class observations, personal care and encouragement and in doing so it contributes to form and develop a culture of teacher professional development. The results indicate, both senior and junior teachers benefited from mentoring by co-constructing knowledge and skills, thus, learning and developing personally and professionally. In doing so mentoring found to foster beginning teachers' critical thinking and motivated them to enrich their professional experiences and skills linked to prior knowledge.

List of publications

1. Kairat, G. (2018). Adult learners and their motivations to be involved in the learning process. HERA Évkönyvek V. Innováció, kutatás, pedagógusok, 218-225.
2. Kairat, G., & Nurmukhanova, D. (2019). Informal professional development of higher education teachers in Kazakhstan. Rural Environment. Education. Personality (REEP). Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference, 12, 273- 278. DOI: 10.22616/REEP.2019.035
3. Kairat, G. (2019). Informal faculty mentoring practices in higher education in Kazakhstan. Journal of Education in Black Sea Region. 4(2), 85-95.
4. Kairat G., & Mandel K.M. (2019). Induction of university teachers: perceptions, problems and perspectives. PedActa Journal, 9(2), 47-56

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the problem

Nowadays mentoring is considered an initiative which from the world of business progressively penetrates into the field of education (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Israel, Kamman, McCray, & Sindelar, 2014). Higher education institutions function as a platform for innovations, a source for forming future project teams, for searching for effective, highly skilled, and qualified employees. Mentoring actively contributes to all of these processes, being an additional tool of education and professional socialization in higher education institutions. It serves as a means for “professional networking, counseling, guiding, instructing, modeling, sponsoring as well as a developmental mechanism, and an opportunity for identity transformation” (Tillman, 2001, p.296).

Problem Statement

Taking the first steps into an academic path or making a move to a new academic job can be extremely complex and demanding (Staniforth & Harland, 2006), including both professional and personality development concerns. The requirements for research and teaching staff in the higher education sector are to be in possession of high professional knowledge and skills, mastering of modern pedagogical methods and techniques, as well as acknowledged personal responsibility for the quality of education, development of creative and erudite professionals responsible for well-being of students and society in general.

To understand the experiences of beginning teachers, learning their perspectives, thoughts, and actions is crucial (Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006). The research indicates that work in higher education is mostly challenging and stressful for newly hired academics (Boyd, Harris, & Murray, 2011; Cawyer & Friedrich, 1998; Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis, 2002). Most of the examinations and observations on teacher education have considerably neglected the questions of what a new university teacher needs to know and how he/she learns it (Dinkelman et al., 2006).

To assist and help a new faculty member, it is necessary to provide emotional support, informational support and instrumental support in his/her induction period (Cawyer et al., 2002) and mentoring carries out these functions.

We considered important to study mentoring in the field of higher education in Kazakhstan because as indicated in the State Programme for Education Development for 2011-2020 in Kazakhstan (www.planipolis.iiep.unesco.org), there are no specific programmes or special conditions for attracting young specialists in higher education which results in ageing of the staff, and the statistics indicate descending of the number of university teachers working in higher education institutions (www.stat.gov.kz). Moreover, not all faculty junior teachers perceive mentoring in the same way because there is no formal faculty mentoring programs in Kazakhstani higher education institutions. Implementing and practicing a combined mentoring system would help to develop reflective culture of university teachers and communicative interaction as an essential means for professional and personal development as well as job satisfaction and teacher retention.

Mentoring as a means for professional growth and socialization enhances sense of community and cooperation as well as engagement among faculty members (Lumpkin,

2011). Moreover, mentoring is regarded as one of the essential parts in faculty development and retention, and academic environment, specifically mentors can help their mentees, for example, in conducting research, writing publications, to pass the transition period easily and with less stress (Knippelmeyer & Torracco, 2007; Zeind et al., 2005).

Research strategy

Purpose of the research

In this research, the author seeks to examine the role of faculty mentoring as a form of professional socialization where a more experienced faculty member stands as a guide to a less experienced member with the aim to develop and elaborate their skills and abilities, knowledge and cultural understanding of a particular organization or institution (Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007). The focus is one particular context, one Kazakhstani higher education institution, and the purpose is to explore how mentoring works, what the current problem issues and trends are – in the light of the latest literature.

Research questions

For the purpose of the research, three primary research questions were developed with two or three sub-questions each respectively:

- 1. How does informal faculty mentoring work in Kazakhstani higher education institution?**
 - a) How do academics conceptualize mentoring?
 - b) What kind of mentoring model(s) and forms occur at the university?
- 2. What are professional responsibilities and competences of a mentor/mentee?**
 - a) What key competences should mentor possess in ensuring successful mentorship outcomes?
 - b) What attributes are regarded as important in ensuring effective mentoring relationships?
- 3. What are the challenges and risks in mentoring relationships?**
 - a) What challenges do young academics face during their early career period?
 - b) What potential pitfalls may occur between the parties of the mentorship relationships which would hinder its development?
 - c) How does the context impact on the development of mentoring relationships?

Significance of the study

The literature emphasizes the importance of mentoring in faculty by stating that it increases job satisfaction, expands newly recruited faculty member's constellation of developmental relationships, providing them not only with career guidance but also psychosocial and emotional support with less work conflicts (Illes, Glover, Wexler, Leung, & Glazer, 2000; Janasz & Sullivan, 2001). This research contributes significantly to the research-based literature on faculty mentoring in the context of Kazakhstan since, as far as we know, there are no other studies conducted in Kazakhstan on this issue.

In the dissertation, the author analyzes how mentoring can facilitate young academics' professional development and collaboration in higher education as an additional tool of education and a form of professional socialization (Cawyer et al., 2002; Zambrana et al., 2015) in higher education institutions, focusing specifically on the individual level. It also delineates the importance of implementing a combined mentoring system among faculty members. Findings from this research may help department leaders in the universities to understand the importance of mentoring for newcomers, its benefits for the university and the relative advantages and applications of different types and forms of mentoring relationships. Additionally, findings can be used in improvement of faculty development tools, in particular, it provides insights on mentoring as a collaborative endeavor between senior and junior teachers.

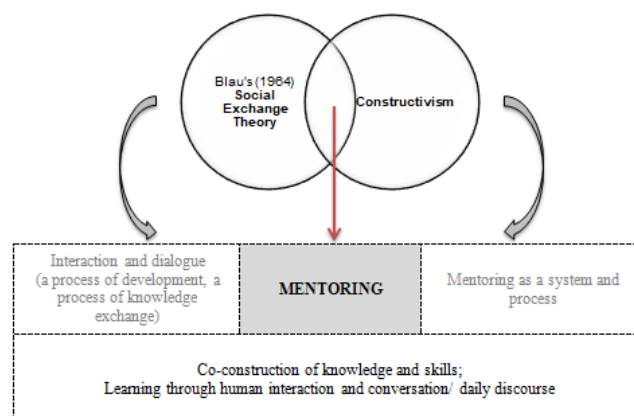
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This paragraph pinpoints the development of the theoretical framework for underpinning mentoring in academia. To do this, a theory was required to outline the focus of this thesis and identify the research questions.

In qualitative research there are numerous types and ranges of theoretical frameworks which emanate in a large number of diverse fields of study and disciplines in the social and natural sciences. This diversity and richness of theoretical frameworks allow researchers 'to see in new and different ways what seems to be ordinary and familiar' (Anfara & Mertz, 2014, p.24). The main goal of any theoretical framework, as highlighted in Mills and Bettis (2015), is 'to make sense of the data, to provide some coherent explanation for why people are doing or saying what they are doing or saying' (p.97).

The primary focus of mentoring in present research is investigating mentorship relationships as a support mechanism for professional socialization and career growth for new university teachers through personal interactions and relationship building. I consider two different frameworks for this study which will provide the researcher a more flexible lens in terms of understanding how junior academics experienced professional socialization and develop their professional growth (*Figure*): Blau's Social Exchange Theory and constructivism. I believe that the integration of two theoretical frameworks will deepen our understanding of a phenomenon.

Figure. An integrated theoretical framework of the research



Source: Author

My interest in this integrated theoretical framework (*Figure*) led all aspects of this research, from identifying the focus of the study, to sample selection, to the analysis and interpretation of data collection.

Blau's Social exchange theory

Blau (1964) strived to understand social structure through the analysis of social processes operating the relations between individuals and groups. The main idea is in understanding how social life is organized into increasingly complex structures of associations among people.

Blau (1964) focused on the process of exchange which, according to him, operates a considerable part of human behavior and it is the cornerstone of both interpersonal as well as intergroup relations. The scientist investigated four-stage sequence directed from interpersonal exchange to social structure and further to social change: interpersonal exchange, differentiation of status and power, legitimation and organization, and, lastly, opposition and change.

According to the Theory of social exchange, the linking mechanism in complex social structures acts norms and values existing in the society. For newcomers in the realm of academia, commonly accepted norms and values serve as mediators in social life and connecting bonds of social interactions. The new member complies with the norms of the group, that is, the norms of the department where he or she works. Collective values of various types can be understood as means of social regulation allowing to expand the range of interaction and structure of the relations within social space and time.

Constructivism

Mentoring relationships represent a process of knowledge exchange which is achieved through the development of relational trust. Since “all forms of knowledge are inevitably reinterpreted according to the postulates, ends, and sociocognitive experiences of the person who takes an interest in them”, (Larochelle, Bednarz, & Garrison, 1998, p.4) mentorship fosters critical thinking and motivates teachers to enrich their experiences linked to prior knowledge.

From the constructivist perspective, learning is an active process (Bruner, 1999) and this happens in the social interaction (Matthews, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism promotes learning contexts in which collaboration is put in the center of the learning environment. Thus, building mentoring relationships, be it formal or informal, will shape a reciprocal learning environment for the involved parties where they benefit from these relationships and construct critical-reflective meaning-making exchange (Greyling & Du Toit, 2008).

Research participants

The focus of the research is Sh. Ualikhanov Kokshetau State University in Kazakhstan.

Sh. Ualikhanov Kokshetau State University is one of the leading universities in the Northern part of Kazakhstan which trains specialists in different directions such as Education, Human and Social Sciences, Arts, Business, Natural Sciences, Agricultural

Sciences, Technical Sciences and Technologies, etc. The languages of instruction are Kazakh and Russian. According to the official webpage of the university (at the time of writing this research) there are more than 11,000 students, with 271 Master degree students and 33 PhD students. As to the teaching staff, it comprises 410 university academics: 20 professors, 13 PhDs, 92 associate professors and 214 teachers with Master's degree. 35 university teachers hold the State honor "Best Higher Education Teacher".

In current dissertation it was intended to involve senior and junior faculty teachers, professors and academics working at Sh. Ualikhanov Kokshetau State University, at the Faculty of Philology and Pedagogics and its six departments: Department of Kazakh Philology, Department of Russian Philology, Department of English Language and Teaching Methods, Department of Foreign Languages, Department of Pedagogy, Psychology, and Social Work, and Department of Social and Age Pedagogy. The aim was to ask them to share their subjective perspectives and experiences about informal mentoring system at their departments, which were then interpreted by the researcher.

The selection of the faculty under review is justified with the fact that the big number of junior teachers of this university work in this faculty.

It was planned to involve junior staff members with maximum of five years of work experience in the field of higher education as the interviewees. After five years of working at the university, teachers apply to be promoted as 'senior teachers' in Kazakhstan. Some teachers can get this status after three years of work experience if they meet the requirements of the application. Bearing this in mind the invitation letters were disseminated to junior teachers in six departments of Sh.Ualikhanov Kokshetau State University.

The second group of the respondents is senior staff members from different departments of the university who has more than 5 years of work experience.

Junior staff members who volunteered to participate in this survey, aged from 26 to 32, have different length of work experience in the higher education institution. Only one interviewee was a male, the rest 18 were female which corresponds to the usual ratio of gender in Kazakhstani higher education institutions.

As for the senior teachers, the number involved in individual interviews composed 7 seniors from four departments, aged from 32 to 60. The minimum work experience of seniors consisted of 7 years working specifically in higher education sector while the maximum experience amounted to 37 years. Apart from these 7 seniors, three experts were invited to take part in this research who were administration of the departments. This allowed us to envisage the answers from different perspectives.

As for the focus groups, the selection procedure was the same as with individual interviews. Both focus group interviews were conducted in English at the university under study. The participants of group interviews were selected from two departments at the university: Department of English Language and Teaching Methods and Department of Foreign Languages. Interviews in groups lasted between 40-60 minutes.

Table. Target groups and sample size

<i>Sample units</i>	<i>Individual interview</i>	<i>Focus group interview</i>
Beginning teachers as mentees	15	3
Experienced teachers as mentors (among them: 2 Heads of the departments and 1 Dean of the faculty)	10	5
<i>Total sampling size</i>	33	

Source: Author

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to explore how mentoring works in Kazakhstani higher education institution, what current problem issues are, and, thus, make a contribution to the growing research-based literature on this issue. This research provided insights into the issues and challenges of informal mentoring at Kazakhstani university.

The author strives to present the interpretation of the findings in the light related to the research questions and in relation to the literature review concerning faculty mentoring in the academic setting.

Discussion of the findings related to the research questions

In examining the first research question of the present study it was endeavored to investigate *how informal faculty mentoring works in Kazakhstani higher education institution*.

To begin with, teacher plays a key role in education. Promotion of teacher's status in the society is one of the priorities of current educational policy in Kazakhstan. In order to increase the number of the academic staff, the State program for Education Development plans a 20% increase by 2020 of the annual who have passed training and retraining (EU, 2017).

To enhance teachers' professional development primary centers are established: National Center for Professional Development (ORLEU center), centers for professional development within pedagogical higher education institutions, Faculty of Education at Nazarbayev University and "Center of Excellence" at Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools. During 2012-2015 3,900 teachers from 38 higher education institutions could participate in professional development activities, including trainings abroad (EU, 2017).

Kazakhstan joined the Bologna process in 2010. Despite strives and changes made in education, the country still faces major challenges in the implementation of the principles of the Bologna process. Primarily, these challenges concern in developing a coherent national qualifications framework (NQF) and granting full autonomy to institutions. Moreover, there are some points of divergence between the standards and the current situation in the country which include levels of academic integrity and freedom, the exceedance of teacher-centered learning, teaching and assessment practices, the qualifications of teaching staff and the ongoing monitoring and review of the programs.

Together with the reforms and innovations in education the system of mentoring has also fallen under the changes. Thus, when digging the question of the development of mentoring at university in focus, it was revealed three different forms of mentoring depending on the experiences of teachers: *formal mentoring, informal mentoring and naturally occurring mentoring*.

It is essential for a beginning teacher to have at least one person who is “expert-who-has-the-answers” (Portner, 2008, p.8) and he/she is supported and assisted in any questions he/she may have. Today, in six departments of Sh.Ualikhanov Kokshetau State University mentoring is not implemented on the systematic level yet, though only particular independent endeavors were identified to use this mechanism as a support and growth tool for beginning teachers through personal interactions and relationship building.

Notwithstanding the fact that mentoring is not formally implemented in the departments, several types of informal mentoring were identified during the data analysis: *group mentoring, reverse mentoring, research mentoring and informal mentoring* which demonstrates teachers' motivation to cooperate in order to increase peer-to-peer interactions, foster knowledge-sharing, boost self-confidence and heighten group interactions. More than that, the engagement in mentoring relationships for teachers was to set up a more professional organizational culture which was one of the strategic goals of the departments to reach through collaborative work.

The actual value of mentoring is in providing with an opportunity for a mentee to watch and observe how a mentor works and how his/ her mentor solves timely permanent problems in so called real time conditions. That's why for beginning teachers professionalism comes through observing their senior colleagues, receiving feedback from their peers, cultivating collegial relationships, and participation in lifelong experiences.

On the assumption of definitions on the contents and specifics of mentoring designated by different authors, their points of views can be systematized as follows. Firstly, mentoring is deliberated as a pedagogical phenomenon, as a means for developing an individual from various aspects, as a vehicle for career development. Secondly, mentoring is regarded as a social institution which performs and accomplishes the process of transferring and acceleration of social experience. It is a form of generation continuity which provides outputs of moral qualities of new group shift. Lastly, the importance of mentoring is seen in professional and technical preparedness of young generation, it is considered as a means for reproducing the working class. Broadly speaking, mentoring is a long-term phased, purposeful process of a young worker's achievement and development of his personhood, his professional as well as personal horizons, spiritual values -all these contribute positively to his professional socialization, strengthening of his motivation to the chosen professional area and professional growth.

An attempt was made to identify what *professional responsibilities and competencies a mentor* should possess for effective and productive mentoring relationships which comprised the second research question of this study.

Although it was difficult to specify what roles and competencies should a mentor entail due to informal, particularly, naturally occurring mentoring in all departments, the researcher made an attempt to define them. The mentor attributes derived from the

interviews were further developed into three core development competencies: professional, career and psychosocial.

These dimensional qualities for a good mentor derived from the research participants serve as mentor typology for ensuring effective mentoring relationships because as Plamondon (2007) states successful mentoring relationships set up a claim of a balance of skills, attributes and qualities of a mentor. This typology is a list of mentor characteristics which are either critical or desirable for a mentor to take possession of in order to be in a fruitful relationship with a positive impact on a mentee.

Mostly, beginning teachers elaborated more on psychosocial competencies and responsibilities from their assigned mentors together with mentor's communicational and organizational skills, honesty and open-mindedness. Interestingly, early career teachers wanted their mentors not to regard them as just younger versions of themselves. It was evidenced in those interviews where new teachers, narrating on the challenges of their transition period, mentioned how senior teachers faulted them for hanging their heads easily while in the time of senior teachers they were more motivated and more studious. In worse cases this led to isolation of new teachers.

The findings of the research identified some conditions and key factors for building effective mentoring relationships which included the feeling of *trust* together with the perception of being understood and respected, *mutuality* and *reciprocation* between the involved parties. Mentoring, first of all, should be regarded as a *partnership* where a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and experience takes place.

One of the core features for building a solid partnership is to enter this relationship with senior teachers' pure *willingness* to guide and assist, help and support, and young beginning teacher's *motivation* to gain the necessary professional skills and competencies and increase confidence to overcome challenges in a new working place. These important features were fundamental to the quality of mentoring relationships.

The third research question was about to explore if there occur any *pitfalls and challenges that would hinder the development of mentoring*.

Before analyzing the challenges in mentoring relationships, first of all, it was intended to investigate the challenges of the beginning teachers in their induction period and in doing so to examine for the necessity of implementing mentoring as a support mechanism in the given departments.

In the course of the current research it was found that most of the beginning teachers experience particular difficulties in their early career in doing one or another aspect or component in field of teaching, research and service. Having analyzed all activities in the decreasing order of difficulties and hardships, it was noticed that the utmost challenges occur in working as an advisor (a curator as called at the university) for a group of students. Young teachers who carry out this function encounter into difficulties connected mainly with a lack of knowledge to execute an advisor's duties and responsibilities. Accordingly, it is problematic for beginners to define goals, tasks and contents of this function. Working as an advisor reduces itself not unfrequently into taking control and monitoring students' progresses in their studies and it is challenging for new teachers to engage students in organization and holding out-of-university events or activities.

Further, the challenges go concerning with the organization and teaching of lessons. In particular, junior teachers feel lack of monitoring and disciplinary skills. As the findings

indicate beginning teachers make focus on the content and presentation of a particular material, fulfilment of the planned activities, on themselves, on their behavior or speech, but not on students, on their progress, not on the effects or outcomes of what he or she does. Therefore, it is hard for beginners to lead a lesson and simultaneously make a managerial analysis of lesson. It is also problematic to determine the appropriate methods and approaches for the classes, and make modifications in the content of the presented material. Besides, as the senior teachers mentioned, irreflective and random changes can have a significant impact on general focus and productivity of the lesson. That's why experienced teachers highly recommend following the plan from a start.

The data with the junior teachers instantiates, directly or indirectly, that the involvement of juniors in mentoring relationships supported their *ongoing professional development*. Three forms of self-directed professional development were singled out in mentoring relationships for upgrading young teacher's skills: *learning by observing*, *learning by doing* and *learning by asking* through professional learning sessions, collaborative practice, knowledge creation and research.

There was also recognition that peer and class observations are indeed deemed to be an exchange of knowledge and experiences and, thus, one of the important types of methodological and collegial work which enhance any young teacher's level of methodological preparation. This method of professional development was established in all six departments to support faculty members' roles including fostering their teaching practice and improving their professional content knowledge. In its turn, mentor teachers benefited observing young teachers' teaching and they advanced their own critical self-reflection on teaching practices by providing feedback and suggestions for improvement. Additionally, collaboration with beginning teachers was a new source for new practices for senior teachers like in reverse mentoring where young teachers assisted them in making video-lectures.

From this perspective it can be stated that mentoring as an imperative part of professional development strategy is a core factor for faculty improvement since it has an influential impact on the effectiveness of teaching and learning as well as on forming a supportive working environment. Although there was no well-defined link found between professional development and mentoring, early career teachers did indeed acknowledge the activities undertaken together with their informal mentor teachers as part of their professional development.

In conjunction with exploring how faculty mentoring supported university teachers' practice and professional development in the induction period, the results of the study also indicate to the fact that there is a need to consider the quality of informal mentoring relationship and major factors that determine this quality.

These factors are mainly referred to the challenges and obstacles appeared during the informal mentoring experiences of junior faculty members.

The concept and process of matching the parties based on voluntariness in mentoring partnership was found as a crucial fact which impacts the quality of this relationship. Since there is no structure and organization in informal mentoring mentor teachers were predominantly assigned by the heads of the departments at the beginning of the academic year and during the year there was no control or supervision over the matched pairs.

Most of the barriers with mentors come from beginning teachers who are employed from outside. This means that in most cases the departments hire their own graduates and it was easier for new teachers to graduate and start to work with those people who were their own professors and lecturers. Even if the heads of the departments officially do not assign mentors to them, they could easily reach their senior colleagues and ask for help in solving the challenges they face.

One of the negative aspects happening in mentoring relationships was found to be the *mismatch* of the involved parties. This was especially true when it came about matching the old experienced one with the new entrant. The heads of the departments are in the wrong belief if they assign an old mentor and hope for effective and productive outcomes from this relationship. This was also reflected in the literature when Faurer, Sutton and Worster (2014) reported to pay attention to the knowledge of institution resources and organizational context together with interpersonal attributes instead of regarding the length of experience and mentors' academic rank when selecting mentors.

One of the other incompatible attributes in selecting mentors with those of the new comers is in the lack of interpersonal skills of mentor teachers. The interview with one beginning teacher indicates to *mentor's interpersonal incompetency* when the mentor avoided working with the appointed informal mentee under the pretext of having no time.

This *interpersonal incompetency* also come out from the side of mentee teachers in failing to accept mentor teachers' critical feedback given to their teaching practice.

Since it was not possible to examine mentor's compatibility with mentees in-depth, future research may have a dig on both mentors' and mentee teachers' attitudes and beliefs rather than just relying on a couple of young teachers' perception.

One a separate note the question should be thoroughly addressed on which *type of mentoring* is more beneficial and practical in the university setting because as the findings show both informal and formal mentoring have its own disadvantages together with advantages. In the former case the mentee teachers lacked more support and guidance from their mentors since there was no control and structure over their work whereas in the latter case there seemed to be fear of control and hierarchy from mentor's side which hindered the further development of their relationships. That's why it was important "*not to have a person who is just too high on the hierarchy to prevent that formality of mentoring*" (Group interview with mentee teachers).

Willingness and motivation from both mentor and mentee were found to be crucial in facilitating mentorship.

Lastly, *insufficient and poor support* of time and tools (like technology) for mentoring from the side of the heads and leaders of the faculties and departments had a huge impact on the development of mentoring as a mechanism of supporting young teachers in the departments.

The interviews with the leaders push us to conclude that predominantly employers do not conceive what should be done in order to implement mentoring as a system in their organizations. Although this constitutes the whole complex of arrangements, including not only the selection of mentors, but also mentors' motivation with the adequate tools (settings, ICT and financial support, time), evaluation of the effectiveness of their work, and trainings and facilitation to develop mentors' competencies in the field of accomplishing this mission. If employers are ready to support the implementation of

mentoring mechanism in their departments, then it is necessary to be involved in all steps of implementation of mentoring at earliest stages since mentoring is like a career technology. It will be effective only if supported from HE organization's and its leaders.

Apart from that, the data analysis opened the floodgates to formulate a conspicuous pack of precise requirements on how mentoring should be organized at the university. Particularly, in order to obtain good results a mentor should daily cooperate and collaborate with his/her mentee.

Without prejudice to the above, the analysis of the interviews with the junior teachers shows in what particular direction it should be worked intensively: young specialists conceive that mentors can influence on them in stabilizing in the chosen profession. Consequently, it is necessary to train mentors to be oriented in that position effectively as well.

Discussion of the findings in relation to the literature

In relation to the literature this current research has pinpointed that the results are mainly reflective of the literature studies regarding teacher-to-teacher mentoring in the context of the higher education. At the same time the results also indicate that this research made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on this topic.

To start with, it was congruent with the literature that it is important to address the professional socialization of beginning teachers. The findings of the present research demonstrates that the questions of what a new entrant of the department need to know and how they learn it are neglected, also as was investigated in Dinkelman, Margolis and Sikkenga (2006). Barely right after their graduation new teachers face struggles in teaching, research and servis responsibilities. That's why it is particularly challenging and stressful (Boyd et al., 2011; Cawyer & Friedrich, 1998; Cawyer et al., 2002).

The university in focus is a mostly pedagogical-oriented university which means that most emphasize is made on teaching. By contrast to the literature where the researchers find that new teachers are prompted to make stress on publications, as for example in Carmel and Paul (2015) or in Bogler and Kremer-Hayon (1999), the analysis of the interviews with junior staff members shows that teaching prevails over research. But there are support initiatives in the departments such as research councils for young beginning teachers where they get proper help and assistance in writing publications. Apart from that, writing articles with senior colleagues in co-authorship was another support and help for newcomers.

The challenges in the induction period fall in with those challenges which were examined by Izadinia (2014), specifically real-world challenges and emotional tensions reviewed in the literature part of the research. Additionally, the feeling of isolation is derived mainly because of the overwhelming workload of both mentors and mentees which is one of the most mentioned problems of early career teachers in the literature in the field of higher education institutions (Bogler & Kremer-Hayon, 1999; Cawyer & Friedrich, 1998; Cawyer et al., 2002; Martinez, 2008). Clearly, the findings refer that the beginning teachers needed support programmes such as mentoring in their induction period.

Unlike traditional forms of learning where, at first instance, knowledge is delivered and achieved or trainings in which skills and competencies are formed or developed,

mentoring is a unique mechanism for new members in transferring of accumulated wisdom and experience of senior staff members in the organization as well as values and ethics of the organizational culture.

The literature on faculty mentoring extensively made an attempt in identifying mentor roles and characteristics. This typology included a mentor to be a guide, advisor, protector, assistant, helper, supporter, a means for professional networking, counseling and many others. From the interviews with beginning teachers it was pinpointed two sides of the roles of mentors at their departments: first, professional development which is seen in transferring knowledge, skills and competencies, encourage in acquisition of new experience, development of one's motivation, and second, sociocultural induction which is seen in feeding with organizational culture, its values, norms and rules. These findings beg to acknowledge those findings examined during the literature review for this research (see for example Faurer et al., 2014; Sands, Parson, & Duane, 1991).

Since mentoring as a support mechanism is not implemented in all six departments, formally or informally, it was extremely difficult to specify commonly educed benefits for both mentor teachers and mentee teachers. But, still, conversations with senior and junior faculty members allowed to indicate the benefits gained during naturally occurred mentoring, group mentoring, research and reverse mentoring. Most basically, these benefits were similar to those found in literature: boosted self-esteem, upgrading teaching skills, increased job satisfaction, productivity and improvements in teaching and research as well as in professional competency (Beane-Katner, 2014; Boice, 1992; Huling & Resta, 2001; Johnson, 2007; Luna & Cullen, 1995; Zeind et al., 2005).

The analysis of the literature and in practice (in this research) on developing effective mentoring relationships concurred concerning its foundational principles: constructive professional interrelationship between mentor teacher and mentee teacher, the selection of a mentor should be made with the perspective of appropriateness of teachers in line with the principle of voluntariness. Additionally, mentors should possess high level of empathetic understanding as well as keeping professional tact in the relationship with beginning teachers.

The analysis of the data collected from the research participants acknowledges the fact from the research-based literature that if there are no formal mentoring programs at universities, the system of mentoring can be especially problematic (Carmel & Paul, 2015). This was seen in experiencing obstacles to mentoring as examined in the third research question above. The current research is line up with the literature investigated and reviewed that mentoring, be it formal or informal, should be aligned to the department's strategic goals for faculty development.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays teaching is becoming exciting, rewarding, and uplifting (Parkay, 2013). Teacher roles involve interpreting, but not mere translation of information; communicating, not mere informing; moderating; facilitating – actively assisting in terms of self-education; tutoring – consulting; managing; initiating educational actions, generating ideas, and coordinating common efforts. But it is also very challenging, especially for beginner teachers.

The strategy of training future teachers in the conditions of formal, non-formal and informal education is directed on: getting a high quality in education which gives an

opportunity to create professional competences necessary for practical activities of a teacher, acquisition of strong skills which increase graduates' competitiveness and promote the development of their professional career (Hendrix, Luyten, Scheerens, Sleegers, & Steen, 2010; Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Lüdtke, & Baumert, 2011). Moreover, one of the central aims evolving with the implementation of new state educational reforms in Kazakhstan is to advance the level of the personnel capacity and professionalism of employees working in higher education. However, the present system of preparation of pedagogical staff education programmes and technology of training academics for working in higher education institutions do not enable beginner teachers to cope with the tasks, as noted in OECD document: "The lack of national standards for teachers - an important element of professionalisation - presents an obstacle to high and consistent quality in initial and continuous teacher education in Kazakhstan" (OECD, 2017, p.98).

Professional socialization of newly hired specialists is indispensable. Besides the professional knowledge, they need to get accustomed to a new social circle, to organization's traditions and fully developed norms as well as to the new forms of educational management. Though all participants of the survey experienced elements of informal faculty mentoring, they highlighted that it is crucial to implement faculty mentoring programmes since it is a good opportunity for a young academic to learn and discover together with a mentor all the necessary components of the professional activity, mainly its purpose, subject, approaches and techniques, results and outcomes, conditions in the field of this profession.

An integrated theoretical framework based on Blau's Social Exchange Theory and constructivism helped the researcher to frame the concept and process of mentoring as a system and generate its meaning in applying mentoring as a means for professional socialization and growth of a new teacher in the higher education context. Through the lens of this integrated framework it was possible to conclude about the nature of mentoring at the university in focus: the social exchange explained by Blau (1964) was irreciprocal as senior teachers only desired to guide and help the beginning teachers without expecting anything from them in return. However, as the results indicate, both senior and junior teachers did benefit from mentoring by co-constructing knowledge and skills, thus, learning and developing personally and professionally. In doing so mentoring found to foster beginning teachers' critical thinking and motivated them to enrich their professional experiences and skills linked to prior knowledge.

Even though the research participants experienced naturally occurring mentoring, the findings evidenced that mentoring is existing among Kazakhstani university teachers in the form of providing help and assistance, advice and support, reflection, attending in class observations, personal care and encouragement and in doing so it contributes to form and develop a culture of teacher professional development.

As a researcher, I truly believe that the findings of this study will provide valuable and relevant insights towards a better understanding of informal mentoring in the Kazakhstani context. The significance of mentoring shouldn't be underestimated because as one of the junior staff teachers highlighted, *"To be mentored means you can just be successful and satisfied with your job"* (Junior teacher 2).

Potential implications for the Kazakhstani context

In the light of the conclusions reached in this current research, several key implications of the research for university teachers and administration specifically in the university realm were determined but also it can be implemented to other related fields of education. But generally acknowledged, *“It is the reader, not the researcher, who determines what can apply to his or her context”* (Merriam, 2009, p.51).

One implication of the present research is that university teachers may need to learn the nuances of being a mentor as well as to mentor. The interview analysis confirms the assumptions in Daloz’s (1986) mentoring model: the more a new teacher gets support and assistance, the more he/she enhances successfully his/her professional growth. Junior teachers of the research needed to be guided and assisted by their peers and senior colleagues. Emotional support was also found to be of great importance in the induction period.

Based on the analysis of the conducted data, a mentoring model was developed for this particular context which presents key features for implementing mentoring as a support mechanism for new young academics which includes the relative strengths formal and informal mentoring.

Recommendations for future research

It is only through research that the essential parts and components of the needs can be disclosed, discovered and developed. Based on the findings of this investigation, some key recommendations were formulated.

Since the question regarding faculty mentoring is an emerging topic in the field of higher education in Kazakhstan, this topic needs to be theoretically qualified. Currently, the research on informal mentoring practices in Kazakhstan is relatively unknown. Additionally, due to a female dominated sample the gender difference wasn’t taken into account. It would be imperative to explore mentoring in relation to this issue in the future.

Overall, the current research indicates within its limits that there is a need to revise, reexamine and explore the context of the Kazakhstani higher education institutions to implement and practice of mentoring as a support mechanism for newly hired members.

Some of the implications of the research directly verify research-based literature on how to support newly hired specialists in the higher education. As the results of this research indicate, departments need to implement a mentoring programme which will be a combination of formal and informal mentoring forms. Since the outcomes from informal mentoring were not structured and organized as well as were not monitored and evaluated, it is necessary to conduct systematic evaluation of mentoring system to ascertain the constructive effectiveness of mentoring relationships and experiences of university teachers and to achieve professional development goals.

The involved parties in mentoring should establish a partnership that fosters teacher’s practice and enhances teacher’s professional knowledge and experience. The heads of the departments need to monitor and evaluate over this kind of relationships, otherwise as findings indicate obstacles may happen which prevent the mentoring development. It is important that such negative mentoring experiences are managed effectively. Failing

that can lead to a potential risk of teachers' resisting to facilitate the mentoring relationship in the future.

In establishing mentoring as a core teacher support tool, it is important for the departments to make a shift from its traditional dyad model to a more innovative and collaborative model as was demonstrated in the case of group mentoring or reverse mentoring.

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