

# The Institution of Mentoring in the Greek Educational System

Keramida Konstantia

Phd, Msc, Principal of 2th High School Exedorou, Thessaloniki, Greece

**\*Corresponding Author:** Keramida Konstantia, Phd, Msc, Principal of 2th High School Exedorou, Thessaloniki, Greece

**Abstract:** Every newly appointed teacher, at the beginning of their professional career, needs encouragement and proper guidance in order to integrate smoothly into the school environment. This important role is undertaken by the mentor, a widely accepted figure who can significantly contribute to the support and guidance of the newly appointed teacher. The present study aims to explore the role of the mentor within the Greek educational system and to document their duties and actions. Furthermore, this research identifies the factors that influence the mentoring relationship and contribute to its success or failure, as well as the benefits that educators derive from a successful mentoring experience. A key finding of this research is the observation that, while in many other countries new teachers have been supported for years through the institution of mentoring, in Greece it has only recently been introduced into the educational system. Additionally, research conducted mainly abroad, involving teachers who had participated in mentoring relationships, showed that they were more informed about the curriculum, had better relationships with colleagues and students' parents, used a variety of teaching tools and methods, provided more motivation for learning and collaboration, and experienced greater job satisfaction. On the other hand, teachers who did not receive mentoring support were often preoccupied with issues of classroom discipline and organization. Therefore, the mentor plays a crucial role, as they help new and newly appointed teachers face emerging challenges and provide significant support in the execution of their teaching and pedagogical work.

**Keywords:** Mentor, newly appointed teacher

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's modern era, it is widely accepted that the quality of education is closely linked to the continuous professional development of teachers, as well as their ongoing encouragement and guidance. Within this context, the institution of mentoring holds significant value. Specifically, the mentor is a person who supports and guides newly appointed teachers, while also providing assistance and training to more experienced educators. It is worth noting that the mentor's role is internationally recognized as a form of professional development, where educators learn from one another through interaction and collaboration in the course of their professional duties.

The primary aim of this paper is to investigate the role of the mentor over time within the Greek educational system, and secondly, to define their responsibilities, actions, the factors that influence the mentoring relationship and contribute to its success or failure, as well as the benefits educators gain from a successful mentoring experience.

Furthermore, it is commonly accepted that newly appointed teachers are called upon to face numerous daily challenges. The lack of teaching experience, combined with high levels of stress, often creates emotional strain and insecurity. These new teachers strive to meet the various responsibilities assigned to them and to rise to the complex role they are expected to fulfill.

Based on the above, both the necessity and importance of the mentor's role become evident, especially within the framework of the ongoing support and guidance provided to newly appointed educators.

## 2. DEFINITION OF MENTOR

The concept of mentoring first appears in mythology, specifically in Homer's *Odyssey*. Before departing for Troy, Odysseus entrusted Mentor with the upbringing and guidance of his son, Telemachus, especially in assuming his royal duties. The relationship between Telemachus and Mentor

was characterized by respect, trust, affection, and mutual commitment. According to Homer, Mentor's role was advisory, motivational, and guiding (Pappa & Iordanidis, 2017, p. 113; Raptis, 2018, pp. 77–78).

In our time, the term "mentor" refers to someone who supports individuals or groups by directing their actions, showing them the path to success or the realization of an idea, suggesting the right way and appropriate means. Therefore, a mentor advises, collaborates closely, and provides intellectual and emotional guidance either to individuals or to specific social groups (Pappa & Iordanidis, 2017, pp. 113–115).

In the context of education, the mentor's role has gained significant importance since the year 2000. On one hand, it facilitates the smooth transition of a newly appointed teacher from student life to professional practice, and on the other, it motivates experienced educators to pursue ongoing training in areas related to their teaching subjects. With regard to new or incoming teachers in primary and secondary education, the mentor provides pedagogical guidance, technical advice, and emotional support, contributing to their professional socialization and the formation of their teaching identity. In this case, the mentor serves as a model educator—one who inspires and demonstrates, acts as a sponsor by transmitting knowledge, and supports and trains new teachers in achieving educational goals and providing meaningful learning opportunities. All of this contributes to mentoring as a method of instructional modeling and helps new teachers adapt to school culture (Deligianni & Matthaoudaki, 2008, pp. 26–27).

Additionally, for experienced educators, the mentoring relationship primarily aims at improving teaching effectiveness and enhancing student learning. To achieve this, the mentor must identify areas where the teacher may need to acquire new knowledge based on recent research and developments in teaching and subject expertise, or where reflective thinking is needed to explore and possibly revise existing beliefs (Deligianni & Matthaoudaki, 2008, p. 30).

The term "mentor" has been extensively discussed in international research, particularly in training programs for newly appointed teachers. It is worth noting that in Greece, there is very limited research regarding the mentor's role in education, which highlights the originality of the present study.

From the literature review, it becomes evident that a mentor is a thoughtful and motivating individual who inspires others. They are a respected, progressive, innovative, charismatic, and cultivated educator who continuously guides and encourages without stereotypes or prejudice. The mentor is a role model in teaching, a leader, assistant, critical friend, collaborator, and guide. They are responsible for addressing the novice teacher's lack of teaching experience, helping them manage the emotional intensity of a stressful transitional period, and supporting them in integrating school norms and expectations into their professional goals. Ultimately, the mentor helps orient the teacher's professional development towards educational transformation (Raptis, 2018, p. 81).

Considering all of the above, it is clear that the mentor's role is both multifaceted and influenced by multiple factors. Naturally, the term does not only apply to education but is also relevant in other fields such as medicine, the arts, research, sports, the military, and more.

### 3. SUCCESS FACTORS IN THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between a mentor and newly appointed teachers—due to its unique characteristics, as analyzed extensively above—must be oriented toward the professional growth of educators and the improvement of pedagogical practice in order to be successful. However, success in the mentoring relationship is not always guaranteed, especially when the process is approached superficially or carelessly. The main factors that determine the degree of success in such a relationship include the following (Frydaki & Mamoura, 2013, pp. 8–10; Trikas & Kasimati, 2018, pp. 19–20):

#### 3.1. The Mentor's Solid Training

A well-trained mentor is one of the key elements in a successful mentoring process. A mentor should not simply replicate traditional teaching methods but should be familiar with the most up-to-date learning theories, be able to apply them effectively, and pass them on to the new teacher. It is essential that the mentor understands the principles of adult education, sets clear goals, adopts a hands-on rather than overly theoretical approach, offers frequent and constructive feedback, and possesses high emotional intelligence along with well-developed communication skills.

### 3.2. Proper Selection of the Mentor

Choosing the right mentor involves more than just evaluating educational, pedagogical, and communication qualifications. Research shows that communication between mentor and mentee is more effective when they belong to the same school unit, as this allows for easier exchange of ideas and mutual classroom observation. It is also preferable for both individuals to teach the same subject, which enables more targeted and meaningful guidance.

### 3.3. Sufficient Time Available for Both Parties

Availability of time is essential on both sides to allow for mutual classroom observation and thorough follow-up discussions. In this regard, the school principal plays a facilitative role, often organizing meetings and ensuring that class schedules do not conflict with mentoring activities. Additionally, the principal is responsible for fostering a collaborative atmosphere among colleagues.

### 3.4. A relationship of Trust between Mentor and Mentee is Crucial

Mentoring cannot be successful in an environment of competition, lack of understanding, or when the mentor assumes the role of a strict critic or evaluator. Trust, mutual respect, and open communication are foundational to the success of the mentoring relationship.

## 4. THE BENEFITS OF A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Based on all of the above, it becomes clear that a successful mentoring relationship offers numerous benefits. According to the comparative literature review by Ingersoll & Strong (2011, p. 225), teachers who participated in induction programs—such as mentoring—performed better in various teaching situations. Specifically, they:

- Keep students focused on the lesson topic and maintain control of the classroom.
- Use effective questioning and answering techniques.
- Adapt classroom activities to match students' interests.
- Foster a positive climate and good atmosphere in the classroom.
- Achieve effective classroom management.
- And their students score high on national academic achievement tests.

In summary, newly appointed teachers become successful and effective educators from the very first year of their career, as they rapidly develop their knowledge of teaching and pedagogical practices, while also helping their students achieve high performance.

Furthermore, according to Smith & Ingersoll (2004), newly appointed teachers who experienced a good mentoring relationship were less likely to leave the teaching profession or request a transfer to another school after their first year. This indicates that mentoring contributed to their high levels of professional satisfaction.

Another benefit, highlighted by McCaught et al. (2005, pp. 337–338), is that both mentors and mentees experience an increase in self-confidence through the mentoring process. As mentors guide others over time, their own confidence grows—an effect that also reflects on the mentees, boosting their self-esteem in turn.

In Fairbanks et al.'s research (2000, p. 108), mentors reported realizing that they could learn from the new colleagues they were guiding. Although new teachers may lack experience, they often possess more up-to-date scientific knowledge, having recently graduated from university. Through collaboration, they share this knowledge with their mentors, and together they find ways to apply theory in practice.

When mentors are part of the broader educational and research community that shapes national education policy, they can become agents of change. Implementing reform that exists only in policy documents requires time and willingness from frontline educators. Here, mentors play a pivotal role. They can influence new teachers' perceptions of teaching, promote reform-oriented practices, and help mentees redefine and replace outdated methods with innovative approaches (Bradbury, 2010, p. 1067). In this way, the mentor becomes a vehicle for educational reform.

Taking all of the above into consideration, it is evident that the mentor contributes significantly to the professional development of newly appointed teachers and helps boost their confidence by offering appropriate emotional, pedagogical, administrative, and instructional support (Trikas & Kasimati, 2018, p. 22). Finally, it is worth mentioning that topics such as the duties, qualifications, and modes of action of mentors are analyzed in detail in the following sections.

### 5. THE INSTITUTION OF THE MENTOR IN THE GREEK EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

#### 5.1. Legal Framework of the Mentor Institution – Historical Overview

In 1985, the Greek educational system introduced the “Introductory Training” for newly appointed teachers through the Regional Training Centers (P.E.K.). This training phase aimed at theoretical updating, practical application, and cognitive and methodological practice under real conditions (Law 1566/1985, Article 28). Later, in 2010, the institution of the mentor was officially introduced, designating an experienced educator to guide the newly appointed teacher (Law 3848/2010). According to Article 4, Paragraph 5 of the law, the new teacher serves for two years as a probationary educator to prepare for the full assumption of teaching and pedagogical duties. Paragraph 6 states that the mentor is appointed by the educational advisor in cooperation with the school principal. The mentor must have extensive teaching experience and work in the same school or school cluster.

Currently, the mentor institution is integrated into the “New School” framework. In the educational community, a mentor is considered a teacher with extensive teaching experience, pedagogical training, the ability to utilize new technologies, involvement in innovative programs, and deep understanding of school culture and dynamics.

The Ministry of Education launched a public consultation on the mentor institution from November 29 to December 14, 2010, collecting 354 online comments from educators, citizens, university departments, and organizations. The proposed qualifications for mentors included a minimum of five years of experience and active teaching duties during the last two years. Mentors were expected to:

- Identify the needs (professional, instructional, pedagogical) of the mentee and design a program to address them.
- Provide support in teaching, pedagogy, psychology, administration, and professional development, mentoring up to five new teachers.

These priorities reflect the main goals of the “New School”: high-quality education and professional development, supported through consistent guidance and emotional support, delivered via structured mentoring relationships.

In summary, mentors are expected to have significant teaching and pedagogical experience, a strong academic background (especially in pedagogy), proficiency in technology use, and familiarity with innovative projects and school culture. Their role involves identifying the needs of new teachers and offering tailored guidance, training, and encouragement in all aspects of educational practice.

Mentoring spans the first two years of a teacher's career and includes:

- Model lessons by the mentor observed by the mentee,
- Lessons by the mentee observed by the mentor,
- Joint teaching sessions.([opengov.gr/ypepth/?p=365](http://opengov.gr/ypepth/?p=365))

Despite this well-defined framework, the mentor role remained inactive in Greece until 2022. Although efforts were made in 2011 to legislate mentoring, the law was never passed due to various political challenges (Raptis, 2018, pp. 77). As a result, there were very few studies on mentoring in Greek education between 1985 and 2022.

In August 2022, Ministerial Decision 102919/GD4/2022 (Government Gazette 4509/B/25-8-2022) formally introduced the *Pedagogical Counselor–Mentor* role in both Primary and Secondary Education. Their purpose is to inspire, guide, and support newly appointed, recently transferred, substitute, or hourly-paid teachers with up to five years of experience. The mentor promotes their teaching quality and educational effectiveness.

They also support the development of professional skills, serve as role models, provide encouragement, suggestions, explanations, and continuous feedback. They collaborate with Education Advisors to implement support actions and are responsible for organizing at least three teaching sessions per school year:

- One taught by the mentor with the mentee observing,
- One taught by the mentee with the mentor observing,
- One taught jointly.

Mentors also guide teachers in effective communication with parents and students. At the end of the school year, mentors submit an annual report detailing their mentoring activities to the school principal. Their duties are performed outside teaching hours but within work hours and they are not exempt from other school responsibilities.

According to Article 3, the number of mentors per school varies based on staff size. For 1–8 mentees, one mentor is appointed; for 9–16, two; and for 17 or more, three. If a mentor does not share the same specialization as the mentee, an experienced teacher from the same subject is assigned to assist. Mentors are appointed by the school principal for one academic year and may also serve as in-school coordinators. However, principals themselves cannot be appointed as mentors.

Article 4 outlines the criteria for mentor selection:

- At least 15 years of teaching experience, or 10+ years of educational experience (or 7 and 6 years respectively if needed).
- A PhD or master's degree in a relevant field.
- Previous mentoring experience or relevant leadership/training roles.
- ICT training certification (Level A or B) and foreign language knowledge.
- A permanent teaching position at the assigned school.

Any objections to the mentor appointment can only be made through the hierarchical appeal process defined by Law 2690/1999 (Article 24).

In conclusion, while the mentoring institution has only recently been reactivated in the 2022–2023 school year, its full impact and effectiveness have yet to be evaluated. Nonetheless, it now operates under a clearly defined legal and institutional framework, aimed at improving teacher integration and professional development in the Greek educational system.

### 5.2. Literature Review of Greek Research Studies

During the literature review process, it became evident that, apart from one doctoral dissertation completed in 2018, no other doctoral-level studies on the mentor institution in Greek education currently exist. This observation highlights the need for further exploration of the subject, as mentoring remains largely undocumented and underexplored in the Greek context. In contrast, on an international level, mentoring relationships and the mentor's role have long been well-researched. This gap underscores the importance of examining the topic within the framework of the Greek educational system.

Below are the most significant research efforts in Greece that investigate the mentor's role in teachers' professional development and the need for integrating the mentor institution into the national education system:

**Vassiliadis (2012)** conducted a study based on data from the Ministry of Education's 2010 public consultation regarding the formation of the mentor role. Using the method of Analytical Induction, the study concluded that new teachers need support from experienced educators with specific communication and relational skills—skills that can be developed through proper training (Vassiliadis, 2019, pp. 114–119).

**Ravanidou (2013)**, in her postgraduate thesis, recorded the views of 10 primary and secondary school teachers from Eastern Macedonia and Thrace about the implementation of mentoring as defined by Law 3848/2010. The teachers expressed general support for the institution but also skepticism regarding its practical application. They stressed the need for a support mechanism to empower new educators and emphasized the



importance of merit-based mentor selection and its separation from formal evaluation processes (Ravanidou, 2013, pp. 112–115).

**Frydaki & Mamoura (2014)** explored how mentoring contributes to teachers' professional development. Their qualitative study of five secondary teachers involved in a training program identified four types of mentoring: introducing innovative practices, reflective questioning, forming informal learning communities, and encouraging peer collaboration. The study emphasized mentoring as a transformative and knowledge-building experience (Frydaki & Mamoura, 2014, pp. 10–12).

**Makropoulou & Iordanidis (2016)** interviewed 11 secondary teachers in Larissa and found five key themes related to mentoring structure: mentor selection, meeting frequency, external incentives, mentor training, and evaluation. They also noted the necessity of mentoring due to university training gaps and inadequate induction programs. Expected benefits included increased self-confidence, improved teaching practices, and stronger school cohesion. Mentoring was viewed as a way to revitalize school culture and improve professional communication (Makropoulou & Iordanidis, 2016, pp. 159–167).

**Pappa & Iordanidis (2017)** conducted research with 215 primary educators in Thessaloniki. Participants supported piloting the mentoring institution, recognized its importance in promoting collaborative culture, and emphasized the need for individualized teacher support. However, some expressed doubts about mentor selection processes and criteria. The study highlighted the need for continued training and updated knowledge among mentors (Pappa & Iordanidis, 2017, pp. 112–123).

**Raptis (2018)**, in his doctoral dissertation, studied mentoring in early childhood education. He mentored 10 preschool teachers and observed changes in their knowledge and attitudes toward physical education. His findings also revealed a transformation in the mentor's own perceptions. The study confirmed that reflective, collaborative inquiry can lead to improved practices and overall educational quality.

**Trikas & Kasimati (2018)** interviewed 5 primary educators from Euboea and confirmed that mentors play a critical role in easing new teachers into the school community and supporting their pedagogical work. Their study highlighted the mentor as both a guide and a support system (Trikas & Kasimati, 2018, p. 9).

**Charisi (2021)**, in her postgraduate thesis, explored educators' perspectives on the role of mentors in their professional development. Fourteen teachers from public and private schools in Athens participated in case studies and semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed a general recognition of the mentor's contribution, the value of mentoring relationships, and the need for institutional implementation. Barriers included fear of evaluation, lack of awareness, and governmental inaction. The study concluded that mentoring should be integrated into each school's internal policy framework and tailored to current teacher needs and school conditions.

These studies, while limited in number, collectively highlight the importance and potential of the mentor institution in the Greek education system. They reflect the need for systemic support, clearly defined roles, and continuous professional development for both new and experienced educators.

## 6. CONCLUSION

While in many other countries new teachers have been supported for years through the institution of mentoring, in Greece the concept has only recently made its appearance in the educational system. Rather than bringing relief or approval, it has caused confusion and concern among educators, primarily due to its unclear implementation procedures and insufficient information.

Mentoring refers to the relationship established between an experienced teacher—the mentor—and a less experienced, usually newly appointed teacher—the mentee. This relationship aims to provide support, guidance, and constructive feedback. The mentor, by striving to enhance the professional skills of the mentee, becomes a role model. They teach, inform, explain, inspire, advise, challenge, and encourage their new colleague. In doing so, not only is the novice teacher's hesitant first step made easier, but the quality of their teaching is also significantly improved.

The goals of mentoring, depending on existing needs, may focus purely on instructional aspects (such as classroom management and lesson preparation), social integration within the educational system and school environment, or psychological empowerment.

International research comparing mentored teachers with those who did not receive mentoring support has shown that the former were more informed about the curriculum, enjoyed better relationships with colleagues and students' parents, employed a wider variety of teaching methods and tools, motivated students more effectively, and reported higher levels of job satisfaction. In contrast, non-mentored teachers often remained preoccupied with discipline issues and classroom organization challenges.

These findings underscore the value and necessity of implementing a well-structured, clearly communicated mentoring system in Greek education—one that supports, empowers, and ultimately transforms the teaching profession.

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### AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY



Konstantia Keramida, PhD MSc. Principal of 2th High School Exedorou. Teacher of computer science in secondary education. She taught various disciplines at the University of Macedonia for four years including Latent Variable Models, Economic Ethics, Macroeconomics Models and Policies, Analysis of Productivity and Business Innovation. She is a member of the Greek Statistical Institute, Greece.

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