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Self-Authorship in the Mentoring Process at Pre-School Education

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Abstract

There are relatively few scientific sources, which help to reveal the phenomenon of self-authorship in the mentoring process, when a social contact is established between a young, less qualified person and a senior specialist with more professional experience. Thus, this study strives to find the answers to the emerging research questions: what are the preconditions for the emergence of self-authorship in mentoring; what are the interrelationships between these processes. Semi-structured on-line interviews using an interpretative research approach were conducted. The 12 pre-school mentor teachers participated in the research on voluntary basis. After thematic analysis of the interview data, the 2 major themes and 5 sub themes have emerged. Pre-school educators perceive self-authorship as a cognitive journey, i.e. the process of creating their own personal qualities and self as a mentor via helping others, as well as cognition of the young educator's motivation to work in pedagogy and develop themselves at the same time. Self-authorship manifests an informal assistance to mentees. This support presupposes the need for collegial learning, sharing of experience, that promotes the overall growth of the whole teaching staff. The study findings express the need of a deeper analysis of how self-authorship contributes to the formation of a new role of a teacher-mentor in pre-school education. It is also necessary to explore the propensity of pre-school educators towards collegial learning in a more detailed way. Finally, the study contributes to the understanding of the critical concept of self-authorship in professional contexts.

Keywords: self-authorship, pre-school teacher, pre-school education, mentoring, semi-structured interview.

1. Introduction

Self-authorship, as an “internal capacity to generate one's own views on the world, oneself, and relationships with others” (Baxter Magolda, 2014: 25) is receiving increasing attention from researchers. The most extensively researched is students' self-authorship (McGowan, 2016; Ricks et al., 2021; Cohen et al., 2013; Pizzolato, 2003; Sandars, Jackson, 2015), the self-authorship of

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future teachers being relevant as well (Brownlee et al., 2011; Mascadri et al., 2017; Survutaitė, 2006). Among the research themes there are also highlighted the issues of the impact of teachers on students' self-efficacy (Stone, Surmitis, 2018; Mondisa, Adams, 2020) and the interrelation between students' peer mentoring and self-authorship processes (Del Prato, 2017; Pizzolato, 2008). However, there are few scientific sources that help to reveal the phenomenon of self-authorship at an older age, especially when social contact is established between a young, less experienced person and an older one with more professional experience, as it is in the process of mentoring. Gunersel et al. (2013) state, that self-authorship enables the continuous accommodation to new phenomenon and ideas. Thus, studying how pre-school teachers exercise self-authorship in their role as mentors provides a valuable insights into the contextual aspects of development. In order to reveal the phenomenon under discussion, first, a literature review focusing on self-authorship within the lifelong process was conducted by constructing a conceptual framework for this study; the second part presents the research methodology and method; qualitative research findings are presented and discussed according to research questions.

2. Literature review

The self-authorship concept has been analysed by a great number of researchers (Pizzolato, 2008; Brownlee et al., 2011; Gunersel et al., 2013; Sandars, Jackson, 2015; Del Prato, 2017; Stone, Surmitis, 2018; Ricks et al., 2021). Their main ideas can be generally interpreted concentrating on the statement that individuals' self-authorship continues to develop throughout their lives as they grow into new roles. Still, this major issue is very closely linked to leading theory of Baxter Magolda (Baxter Magolda, 2012, Baxter Magolda, 2014, Baxter Magolda, 2020), stating that self-authorship is "a holistic meaning-making capacity" that is characterized by internally dictating one's beliefs and values instead of depending on external values and figures (Boes et al., 2010: 4). Pizzolato (2003) defined self-authorship as a relatively enduring way of understanding and orienting oneself toward provocative and uncomfortable disequilibrating situations in which the person recognizes "a) the contextual nature of knowledge and b) balances this understanding with the development of his or her own internally defined goals and sense of self, which may be expressed via created personal interior voice" (p. 32).

The underlining of enduring way of understanding and orienting oneself toward provocative and uncomfortable disequilibrating situations, the development of his or her own internally defined goals and sense of self may imply the fact that at each stage of personality development, an individual faces significant challenges and obligations at that time, sets different goals for himself, and solves new life problems. Today, pedagogues have to balance the scope of very different needs (personal, educational, work, family), change themselves and change their students, solve problems of the content of the pedagogue's professional role, respond to the demands placed on his/her activity and personality.

Even bigger challenges are faced by young pedagogues who have just started working, who, according to Monkevičienė and Rauckienė (2010), experience "a reality shock" after feeling a huge difference between their visions and the realities in schools. What happens in the surrounding reality and in one's life is beyond the control of one's capabilities, but trusting one's interior voice, identifying and following one's inner authorities and beliefs help one choose the way how to respond to these events. Trusting personal interior voice allows you to be more flexible and adapt to change. This ability to manage and grow through interactions across diverse contexts while balancing divergent needs, values and beliefs is reminiscent of self-authority, as Pizzolato and Olson (2016) describes. It is emphasized that self-authorship begins when a person is able to integrate and harmonize three dimensions: personal beliefs (epistemological level), identity (intrapersonal level) and social relations (interpersonal level) (Pizzolato, Olson, 2016; Augustiniene, Ciuciulkiene 2013). Epistemological foundation refers to "the evolution of the assumptions about nature, limits, and certainty of knowledge;" intrapersonal foundation can be described as "individuals' sense of who they are and what they believe;" and interpersonal foundation refers to "how one perceives and constructs one's relationships with others" (Baxter Magolda, 2014: 28). Thus, it is possible to state that self-authorship is a complex process that manifests itself through self-knowledge (development of positive qualities and changing negative qualities), realization of one's aspirations (goals), value system (formation of attitudes, beliefs, attitudes, priorities), relationship with the environment (communication), taking over experience and sharing it.

Self-authorship grows from external to internal forms of meaning making (Edwards, 2014). The developmental process toward self-authorship conform to what Baxter Magolda (2012) calls *The Learning Partnerships Model* (LPM). The model can take place in educational, workplace, or community settings, and is based on three main assumptions as presented in Table 1.

Self-authorship also takes place in the mentoring process. Premkumar (2007) observes that the mentor uses his/her own experience as the main source of knowledge and shares it with the mentee, promoting the learning process and individual growth. It is important for the mentor to know the mentee, identify his/her opportunities and encourage him/her to engage in the processes of self-knowledge, self-esteem and continuous self-improvement and self-realization. The research, that explored students' progress towards self-authorship after completing an authentic workplace learning, showed that mentors co-construct self-authorship strategies with mentees; work with their mentees to help them learn how to build persistence; want their mentees to recognize their own strengths to exude confidence; and learn about their mentees' experiences (Mondisa, Adams, 2020). Work placements proved useful for gauging and developing self-authorship, making meaning of students' learning experiences (Jackson, Trede, 2020). In alignment with dimensions of the learning partnerships model, mentors' engagement with mentees contributes to mentees' development as self-authors of their experiences.

If we assume that in reverse mentoring young and technologically adept junior members can consult senior colleagues (Kemmis et al., 2014), it is possible to look for the incentives of senior teachers for self-authorship. Kochan and Trimble (2000) argue that if the mentee is not waiting to be discovered but rather is discovering him/herself, and the mentor, rather than serving as a font of perfect knowledge, become a co-learner in a process of discovery, this relationship is seen to grow into a mutually developmental one. Thus, mentoring as a construct has shifted away from the traditional notion of being a hierarchical, one-way relationship (Ragins, 2012) to a developmentally enriching relationship.

Conceptual framework and research questions

Noting that little empirical research had linked self-authorship and mentoring, we tried to extend the development of self-authorship within mentoring process in workplace settings. An understanding of developmental transformations a conceptual framework, that represents ways of thinking about a problem or ways of representing the inner workings of complex phenomena (Bordage, 2009), is required. The conceptual framework for this study (see Table 1) is based on the LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2012), that, as Meszaros (2007) noticed, grows from the tenets of self-authorship and provides a practice model linking learning and development for implementing the transformations needed to become self-authored. Mentoring serves a developmental purpose as well with the mentor fostering the development (Ragins, 2012).

Table 1. Conceptual framework for self-authorship within mentoring process build on LPM Assumptions

Dimensions of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2012)	LPM assumptions (Baxter Magolda, 2012)	Mentoring process
Epistemological	Knowledge is complex and socially constructed	Construction of knowledge and belief system in the context help to build persistence in everyday activity
Intrapersonal	Self is central to knowledge construction	Construction of own identity on personal beliefs and values, recognition of own strengths
Interpersonal	Shared authority and expertise in mutual construction of knowledge among mentor and mentee	Development of the capacity for interdependence and interaction with different social groups

In Table 1, three dimensions of self-authorship are promoted by way of mentoring:

- the personal epistemological dimension – Knowledge about pre-school child education – during the mentoring process means, that prior assumptions are evaluated, interpreted, and judgements in light of evidence relevant to the context are constructed to develop own internal belief systems (Baxter Magolda, 2012). Construction of knowledge and belief system helps mentees to learn how to build persistence in everyday activities at work placement (Mondisa, Adams, 2020);

- The intrapersonal dimension – Sense of self – refers to internal identity or personal beliefs and values about the self and work with children that support the knowledge construction process. Developing self-authorship within mentoring process, the mentees need to sense how they explore, reflect on and internally choose enduring values to form their identities rather than by simply using those of others (Edwards, 2014);

- the interpersonal dimension – Sharing authority and expertise assists in the mutual construction of knowing. During professional engagement, as Edwards (2014) describes, the self-authored person respects one's own and others needs, negotiate other perspectives and engage in genuinely mutual relationships. Such person is able to interact with different social groups, are less judgemental and more open.

Therefore, development of self-authorship by way of mentoring requires mentees to think critically about what brings meaning to their professional engagement, and mentoring offers a coaching mechanism that guides the developmental process. The question arise, whether self-authorship is only a one-way process in the mentoring. Therefore, in this study, we tried to look at mentoring from a different perspective addressing the research questions as follows:

- how the phenomena of self-development and mentoring are perceived at an older age?
- what are the preconditions for the emergence of self-authorship in mentoring process?
- what kind of interrelationships between these processes they experience?
- what are the characteristics of the interaction between self-development and mentoring?

3. Method

The lack of research revealing the relationship between self-authorship and mentoring led to the fact that a qualitative research paradigm was chosen for empirical research, which helps to know and understand human experience and social reality, to reveal the subjective meaning and interpretation of cases of individual experience without separating them from the context (Creswell, Poth, 2016). Qualitative research is based on induction and the description of results, and its purpose is to explore and understand complex phenomena, with their characteristics, and to present various meanings and viewpoints about the studied phenomenon from the perspective of research participants (Creswell, Poth, 2016; Flick, 2018; Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The qualitative research approach creates the preconditions for obtaining data on self-authorship during mentoring as a little-researched social phenomenon directly from the research field, revealing the meanings, motives and practices of the research participants' perceptions. A semi-structured interview was used to find out how the research participants understand self-authorship and mentoring, what interrelationships they experience between these processes. During the interview, open-ended questions were used to obtain detailed descriptions of the studied phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009).

Using qualitative datasets, samples must be selected purposively in accordance with the research questions (Joffe, 2011). Therefore, research participants were selected using criterion sampling. The following criteria were applied:

- have at least a higher pedagogical education,
- have at least 3 years of age work experience in the field of preschool education,
- engage in mentoring.

A total of 12 participants were included in the study. All of them had higher education, and their work experience in preschool educational institutions ranged from 12 to 40 years. Research participants had to be involved in mentoring from one to several times. The number of participants involved meets recent guidelines for sample size in qualitative research (e.g. Baker, Edwards, 2012; Fugard, Potts, 2015). For instance, Baker and Edwards (2012) consider that a relatively few people, such as between six and a dozen, may offer insights into little-researched problem.

While following the main ethical principles of the study, the participants were introduced and explained the purpose of the study, the usefulness of the study, as well as the right to safety, privacy, confidentiality, and fairness were ensured. Study participants took part in the research voluntarily, and individuals' agreement was obtained. In order to ensure and maximize the security of research participant's identification, they were coded as T1 [Teacher1], T2, etc., participants.

Due to the pandemic situation, the interviews were conducted online. Each interview lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. To ensure the internal validity of the study, the most accurate method of data recording was chosen – the interview was recorded, then the text was transcribed verbatim. The detailed data were received.

Following Clarke et al. (2015), the thematic analysis was conducted in the following sequence: familiarization with the data (transcribing the data, active and repeated reading of the data, searching for meanings and noting primary codes, initial research ideas); generation of primary codes (selection of data ideas, systematization of repeated codes into meaningful groups, comparison of data with code correspondence); searching for themes (grouping codes into broader themes, assigning data to each potential theme, thinking about connections between themes and codes, interrelation among themes, regrouping themes); review of topics (assessment of internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity of topics); definition and accurate naming of topics (assessment of consistency of topics, creation of clear names for topics); description of the analysis process (selection of the most vivid and vivid examples of data, final description of the data, interpretation, argumentation, linking it to the research question and scientific literature). For greater reliability, the authors of this work performed the first stage of the thematic analysis, namely the initial coding of the available data, independently of each other, and then checked the correspondence of the extracted sub themes and themes.

4. Results

During the qualitative research, applying the data processing method of thematic analysis, two major themes were formed, which reveal the phenomenon of the interaction between self-development and mentoring of preschool teachers, consisting of continuous cognition and teamwork processes. In the narratives of the participants, these processes are so closely interrelated that they can only be separated analytically. Therefore, we see the relationship between self-authorship and mentoring as two sides of the same coin.

Table 2. Data analysis result

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes (frequencies)
Self-authorship as a journey of cognition	The process of self-knowledge	Continuous self-improvement (7) The need for self-assessment (5) Association with traveling (4)
	Knowing the motivation of the young pedagogue for self-authorship: when theoretical knowledge is not enough	Theoretically inclined young specialists (8) Feeling the motivation of a young person (7) Importance of self-authorship (7)
	Developing oneself in the role of a mentor by helping another	Personal and professional growth (9) Incentives to be active (6) Two sides of mentoring (5)
Mentoring as a team growth	Informal help inspired by empathy	Support, encouragement are needed (9) “A friendly help” (5) Empathy for a young specialist (4)
	Community professional development	Team work (10) Opportunity to learn from several senior colleagues (8)

In Table 2, the themes, sub-themes and the codes with frequencies of participants' statements are displayed. Following this sequence, the data of the study on the self-authorship and mentoring processes of preschool teachers will be presented.

Self-Authorship as a Journey of Cognition

The research revealed that when discussing the phenomenon of self-authorship the participants talk about self-education in general, as a process common to all preschool education pedagogues (even all people), and then link it to the self-education of young pedagogues and experienced pedagogues.

The Process of Self-Knowledge

Research participants understand self-authorship as continuous self-improvement: *I understand self-authorship as self-improvement. And it seems to me that self-authorship must take place throughout a person's conscious life (T1). The process of self-authorship is the development of the person himself/herself (T6).*

In this process, according to the research participants, it is necessary to self-assess what the person is missing. Some participants indicate that it is necessary *to polish* what a person lacks: *his/her personality, his/her will, character traits (T1), spiritual and value attitudes (T2)*. Others believe that *it is necessary to find those strong beginnings in oneself and improve them as much as possible (T6)*, because one cannot know everything. Although the elements of the intrapersonal dimension (Pizzolato, Olson, 2016), such as will, character, values, are mentioned, the respondents' answers often include elements related to the dimensions of epistemology and interpersonal communication: *identification of knowledge, abilities (T11), continuous improvement of professional abilities (T2), improvement of subject, didactic, social and personal competence (T6); ability to work in a team, communication, cooperation (T2 and T4).*

One participant, talking about self-authorship, presented the association of travel: for her, self-authorship is *like exploration, search and discovery (T5)*. In this journey, the participants tend to rely on themselves – *conducting the search themselves, through their experiential development (T5)*; it is possible to do this with the help of others: specialists, senior assistants, administration, because *each person brings something new to personal self-authorship (T8)*. On the other hand, as participant T5 says, *the trip can be simple, it can be the trip with a guide*; she compares the latter with *exploration*.

The research participants commented on the need for self-authorship quite modestly: *many innovations, modern technologies: [need] to be able to use various angles (T9)*. Thus, the process of self-authorship, in the words of the research participants, could be described as a never-ending journey of knowing and creating oneself as a person and as an employee.

Knowing the Motivation of the Young Pedagogue for Self-Authorship: When Theoretical Knowledge is not Enough

The concept of self-authorship is extended and made concrete by describing the beginning of the young pedagogue's professional activity in a preschool educational institution. Almost all research participants describe the young pedagogue as having a lot of theoretical knowledge, but little practice: *... when we come to the institution, we immediately encounter practice. <...> Because there is no time to remember those theories here, but you need to work immediately ... (T7). This is where the need and opportunities for self-development arise: ... self-development is very important, because I see what I lack, when a young educator comes to an institution, with his great knowledge, I see that I lack this, that, some other professional skills, and then I myself analyze what I need and then in the areas where I see I have gaps where I don't know what to do, for example with the pupils with special needs or gifted pupils, then I dash to create myself, I dash to read, look for material, look for people who would help me ... (T11)*. Here appears the needs and possibilities for self-authorship.

All research participants emphasize the motivation of a young specialist: *it is important to find a motivated young person who wants to do pedagogical work (T6)*. Because *if that young pedagogue doesn't want to, then you can do anything you want (T1), nothing will help. When a young person comes, the older educators quickly understand and immediately feel <...> if he/she is in his/her place (T5)*.

Retrospectively recalling their first year at the educational institution, the pedagogues who took part in the research note that self-authorship helped them *to gain self-confidence, to be able to listen to other people and their opinions, as well as to choose what is necessary and what is not (T12)*. Two levels can be distinguished in the presented answers: *personal level (self-regulation, self-control (T3); ... I learned to dig deeper into myself and personal values (T2)) and professional activities (problem solving, understanding emotions, for example, children's and own (T4))*.

Developing Oneself in the Role of a Mentor by Helping Another

The self-authorship of the mentor (experienced pedagogue) received more consideration from the research participants. The research participants associate their self-care with both personal and professional areas: ... *in the process of self-authorship, you put information and knowledge into yourself, promote self-confidence, develop yourself, improve personal qualities and you can use all this as a mentor (T2); ... professional self-authorship is very important in our work. While being a mentor we can convey or transfer self-authorship skills, to a younger specialist (T12).*

The position of a mentor presupposes an incentive to be active in the professional field: ... *what kind of mentor can he/she be, if he/she is not interested, does not seek innovations, does not look for changes, is stuck only in his/her own narrow activity field <...> It is important to seek to know more, to be eager to share and know how to share the experience, <... > not to be, as they say, omniscient all my life, relying on what was learned several decades ago ... (T6).*

Motivations for self-development do not only arise from the awareness of the need to adapt to the change; the contact with a young person also presupposes them. As the research participants note, *young pedagogues bring to the institution an extraordinary amount of new things, new ideas, new winds (T10), as well as practical things, methodological tools, where I could also use them (T3).* It happens that young colleagues are not omniscient either, so one has to research, search, and discover: ... *you learn very, very, many new things from your young specialists. And this is necessary for my own self-authorship... I realized that I cannot get everything from that young student, that I must be interested myself, look for opportunities, attend seminars, lectures. <...> The young specialist initiates our own development and shows the directions of development (T5).*

A two-folded situation arises: on the one hand, the mentor helps a younger colleague with his/her knowledge and experience, on the other hand, that help becomes an initiative to improve oneself, not to stand still in one place: ... *so that I can not only know things myself, but also convey my knowledge to others or to give a beginner a piece of advice and help to the teacher (T2).* Or as another participant says: ... *during mentoring, you build yourself <...> you help others, and you improve yourself" (T10).* In this way, preschool teachers see the essence of self-authorship in helping others.

Analysis and reflection become the most important instruments in the process of self-authorship. Research participants note that they must constantly analyze their activities... *This helps to get to know the other person better, to direct his/her efforts in the right direction, and also to improve oneself: ... you have to analyze your activities - am I doing the right thing? Am I guiding the person to the right direction? Do I see the personality traits that young specialist lacks (T11); ...we must want to search, to analyze what we see, what we hear, ponder, reflect and improve (T6).*

Mentoring as a Team Growth

Linking self-authorship with mentoring, the research participants highlight mentoring as an informal activity that is common to their institutions and as a group learning from each other.

Informal Help Inspired by Empathy

Mentoring in a preschool educational institution is informal – *there are no programs for the adaptation of young educators or formal procedures of the institution determining the appointment of a mentor. Usually it is an informal request from the head of the institution to help a young teacher: Well, you see how this young girl is doing, help her" (T1).* Or the young colleagues approach each other for the consultations about one or another professional issue (T2). Therefore, the research participants present unanimous opinion that mentoring in their educational institutions takes place in an informal way (T11). *This friendly help, as the participants themselves call it, is inspired by empathy, seeing how a new specialist <...> digs, works somehow ... (T4).* The reverse side of this friendly help is that the research participants become more empathetic by developing themselves: *empathy and interior goodness simply come from self-authorship, from self-development (T2).* According to research participants, *being empathetic makes one a better person and a better mentor (T4).* Thus, self-authorship in this informal help can be expressed as the development (formation) of positive character, which enables a person to be useful to people working in the organization.

Community Professional Development

A sense of community clears out when the participants of the research start to analyse the peculiarities of mentorship in preschool. The participants agree that mentoring should be a team

work effort: *...we should all work as a team, not individually* (T6). As one participant states: *it should be like a circle of mentors and we would have some kind of general plan according to which we could raise, improve, finally, analyze those results, each mentor's sharing of good experience among other mentors would be of high quality* (T5). According to the participants, pedagogues should work together with the administration so that young professionals feel welcomed: *they should be warmly accepted in the school not only when they fall into a certain group, but simply feel invited into the whole teaching staff team* (T4).

Preschools have successful teachers (T6), so according to the participants, *it would be useful for a beginner to work with several senior teachers to see several educational options* (T3). The participants notice that new employees with their fresh ideas also strengthen that sense of community: *sometimes even a novice pedagogue brings more innovation than a senior pedagogue. This is how we become a community, develop and grow professionally together* (T2). It is noticeable that collegial, communal development is valued in the pre-school education institution, and the content of self-authorship is manifested here through the sharing of knowledge and experience.

5. Discussion

This study contributes to the wider research of self-authorship by revealing the peculiarities of self-authorship in the process of mentoring. It reveals the incentives that pedagogues encounter while interacting with young colleagues of preschool teachers. This study also contributes to the understanding of the critical concept of self-authorship in professional contexts, while also suggesting how new domain-specific challenges can become opportunities for incremental, and yet professionally important, growth. The discussion part will contain the answers to the raised research questions.

How are the phenomena of self-development and mentoring perceived at an older age? What kind of interrelationships between these processes do they experience? The analysis revealed that both processes – self-authorship and mentoring – are closely related to each other. We have used a metaphor of a coin with both sides: reverse and obverse to argue that in older age it is understood as inseparable processes. On the one hand, mentoring is the help to another person. When mentors encounter a new colleague, they immediately assess the practical experience (more precisely, the lack of it) and personal motivation for work and development. It becomes the axis of mentoring process and the young colleague's education. On the other hand, as the participants of the research state, by helping others one improves oneself both: personally and professionally. When meeting a new colleague, mentors encounter knowledge (more often) and experience (less often) transferred, as Kemmis et al. (2014) says, from outside the organization. The desire to know professional current affairs (educational trends, modern tools and methods) is perhaps the biggest intention to form one's identity as a mentor, and thus to indulge in the self-authorship.

Another metaphor used in this study is the journey. This metaphor has already the archetypal meaning and is connoted in major educational concepts such as “curriculum“, “methods“ and others. Metaphor of the journey is used by many authors when talking about mentoring and seeing the transformative effect on the personality (Mason, Hickman, 2019; Atkinson, 2018; Spencer, Molina, 2018, etc.). We applied “the journey metaphor“ to describe the process of self-development in later life. As it was said before, according to each case of mentoring, pre-school teachers are reshaping themselves.

What are the characteristics of the interaction between self-development and mentoring? In this research, it has become clear that the research participants understand self-authorship primarily as continuous self-development process. In the literature, self-authorship is also associated with improvement and a lifelong development process (Kolbergytė, Indrašienė, 2013). When self-authorship is understood as continuous improvement, it is identified with the learning process. Thus, the emphasis is placed on the cognitive (or epistemological) dimension. In our study, the cognitive dimension was highlighted clearly, the interpersonal dimension was sufficiently important, and the intrapersonal dimension was the least expressed. Similar results were obtained by Gunersel et al. (2013), who studied how pedagogical training programs can create opportunities for faculty members to exercise their self-authorship to develop as educators. Only they found a connection between all three dimensions in their research: the three foundation dimensions influenced each other and were linked to one another (Gunersel et al., 2013: 40). Meanwhile, research on college students talks about the asynchronous relationship between these three dimensions: although the intrapersonal dimension was the most common leading dimension, the greatest amount of development occurred along the cognitive

dimension and the interpersonal dimension was most likely to show developmental regression (Pizzolato, Olson, 2016: 411). The low attention to the intrapersonal dimension in our study can be explained by the peculiarities of the development of senior age, when both personal and professional identities and value systems have already been formed.

What are the preconditions for the emergence of self-authorship in mentoring process?

The literature mentions formal and informal mentoring, where the former is characterized by a regulated and pre-established structure by the organization. The latter occurs naturally through the relationships and connections that are developed (Inzer, Crawford, 2005). In the pre-school education institutions that we studied, informal mentoring, manifested in empathy and friendly relations with the mentee prevails. The absence of formal mentoring programs allows this process to be formed “from the bottom upwards”, i.e. responding more to the needs and expectations of the process participants themselves. And they, as our research shows, are based on communityship – interaction and the desire to learn from each other. This would be the preconditions of the self-authorship in the mentoring process that our research revealed.

Other authors call these synergistic and mutually beneficial co-mentoring relationships as a collaborative learning community (Kenahan et al., 2016), which reveals such postmodern workplaces features with interdependent ways of working (Kochan, Trimble, 2000), emotional and social sustain in order to cultivate new work skills and behaviors, focused on individual and spiritual well-being, relational transformation, and professional growth (Kenahan et al., 2016).

Referring to the Learning Partnerships Model, it is possible to generalise that „community partnerships support self-authorship via three principles: validating learners’ capacity as knowledge constructors, situating learning in learners’ experience, and defining learning as mutually constructing meaning“ (Meszaros, 2007: 12). Additionally, this finding highlights the importance of interacting with young colleagues who are different in age, social background, and practical experience for the exercise of self-authorship, still in spite of it, the mentee and the preschool educator are a good company for each other on the journey of learning and personal development.

6. Conclusion

Preschool teachers perceive self-authorship as a continuous journey of knowing: the process of developing their personal and mentoring competencies, helping others, as well as the young pedagogue’s motivation to do pedagogical work and to develop at the same time.

Self-authorship is a significant component of the mentoring process, where its content manifests itself in informal support for mentees, and this support presupposes the need for team/community learning, sharing knowledge and experience, which promotes the overall growth of the pedagogic team.

The findings of this study and their reflection have suggested some insights for a more in-depth exploration of the self-authorship of some preschool teachers. A deeper analysis of the relationship between the identity of preschool pedagogues as mentors and self-authorship is needed, as well as the possible explanations of how self-authorship contributes to the formation of the new role of the preschool pedagogue – mentor. In addition, preschool teachers’ inclination to community learning should be explored more deeply, perhaps while comparing it with general patterns of teacher development.

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