

M. Raposo-Rivas,  
E. Martinez-Figueira  
Spain

## Mentoring Student Training, what Is Important?

### Abstract

Numerous activities and tasks are performed in the course of the tutorial during student training, but not all have the same importance for the tutor. We approach this answer through a wider investigation (Martinez, 2010) conducted in two phases: an initial qualitative one using an interview as a tool for obtaining information, and a second one more quantitative with an electronic questionnaire. The results show the importance that tutors attribute to “being available for students”, “integration into the center” and “providing contextual knowledge and access to documentation of the institution”.

*Keywords: mentor, mentoring, student training, education, professional profile, professional competence*

### Introduction: Tutoring in student training

The literature reviewed conceptualizes that student training could be defined as an opportunity to implement and transfer the knowledge previously learned during the initial formation to the professional reality. Since this perspective, we can say that it deals with formative situations where there is a deliberation about both, experience in a real context (Gutierrez *et al*, 2009) and learning from experience (Zabalza, 2005).

The educative and pedagogical nature of student training is going to depend on the execution of the tutoring implied, so that “without tutoring, there is no training” (Martinez & Raposo, 2011a, p. 158). As a core element of training (Zabalza & Cid, 2005), tutoring during training implies a formative and guiding activity which leads to the convergence of different agents and it is the opportunity to

make clear for students the link between theory and practice in the classroom, and the practice *in situ*, with the object of connecting the school reality to the working one as well as learning to make decisions about everyday situations by developing a critical mind and self-concept on one's action. Under this premise, student training tutor appears as a key part of the pre-professional practice, giving the methodological and positional scaffolding as well as a frame of experiences and, sometimes, of concepts where students may use their experiences, understand them, analyze them and think about them (Martinez & Raposo, 2011a). How to do it is a matter of styles or models (Martinez y Raposo, 2011b) but, anyway, it is about influencing and communicating their expertise to practising students. As Ehrich, Tennet & Handsford (2002) say, there is "a relationship with the tutoree/protegé in order to help him/her in his/her professional development and promotion" (p. 256).

During training, the tutor plays an important role as the closest and most important person and model, who helps and guides students during their training work. In this way, he/she helps to meditate what they have seen or done, through professional dialogue with students. He/she is also a mediator and evaluator, according to the formula of theory-practice symbiosis, which allows a shared insight into the professional reality. Mediator, because he/she makes the integration of students easier during their practice work in the organization they are learning in and their inclusion in the work system, by protecting them in situations of social intercourse; evaluator, because he/she watches, verifies, gives orientation in order to improve students' activities and, eventually, writes an evaluation report about them (Martinez & Raposo, 2011a, Sánchez & Ruiz, 2012). This multitask nature of the tutor's role (Orland-Barak, 2006) can be summarized as a duty of trying to establish the conditions for the student to question him/herself about the ideas that help him/her to act and make decisions.

The functions performed by the tutor and the activities that they do have been extensively studied and defined (Cid & Ocampo, 2006, 2007; Guerrero & López, 2006; Hill, Lennings & Madgwick, 1992; Jones, 2001; Martinez, 2008, 2010; Martinez & Raposo, 2011a,b; Mertz, 2004; Molina, 2008; Molina et al, 2008; Shea, 1992, Watkins, 1992). But, which of them are most important? What relevance does the tutor attribute to them? The data presented here respond to this and they are part of larger research (Martinez, 2010) summarized below.

## **Methodology of Research**

### **Research General Background, Sample, Instrument and Procedures**

The role played by the tutor of student training is crucial in the pre-professional training of their students, so the research by Martinez (2010) was done to, among other things, establish the implicit model of the tutor at the training centres in three Spanish universities in Galicia-Spain. In this research, Martinez (2010) tried to find out if there is a difference in terms of the areas of action of these professionals: educational, social or organizational (Bisquerra, 1998).

Considering this as a starting point, we present this work in order to try to explore and understand the functions and activities which they should do, that is their idealism.

The investigation was framed within a comparative method, since it was conducted between the descriptive and interpretative-explicative levels, using Creswell's biphasic model (1994) of qualitative and quantitative nature; with methodological triangulation (Morse, 1991), which was where the results of the first phase were a basis for planning the following one.

Table 1 presents the research synthesis. For more information, see Martinez & Raposo (2011a).

**Table 1.** Synthesis of research (elaborated by the authors)

<b>Objectives</b> (having a particular relation with the study which is presented here)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investigating how the development of the tutoring function is foreseen and how the tutoring is actually carried out.</li> <li>- Getting to know the functions which the tutors at the training centres take over during training and evaluating their viability and functional complexity.</li> </ul>
<b>Methodology and methods</b>	Mixed, we followed Creswell's biphasic model (1994): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phase I: qualitative.</li> <li>- Phase II: quantitative.</li> </ul>
<b>Selection of the sample</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phase I: An intentional manner (Bisquerra, 2004) because this allowed us to have a first approach to the object of study taking into account that the subjects have an important geographic scattering.</li> <li>- Phase II: Simple random sampling (Bisquerra, 2004).</li> </ul>
<b>Participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phase I:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The invited sample: 26 mentors.</li> <li>• The accepting sample: 18 mentors (69.23%).</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Phase II:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The invited sample: 120 mentors (the best sampling error, 4%, and a level of trust of 95%).</li> <li>• The accepting sample: 83 mentors (69.16%, with levels of trust of 95% and 90% and the sampling errors obtained are admissible, 6.9% and 5.7% respectively).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	The sample matched the required characteristics from a scientific point of view relating to the number of valid answers (Fink, 1995) concerning adequacy (Kerlinger, 1986) and representation (Fox, 1981).
<b>Instruments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phase I: interview was structured, open, guided, individual and face-to-face.</li> <li>- Phase II: questionnaire was of descriptive and explicative character and had a longitudinal-transverse time dimension.</li> </ul> <p>Note: At the same time, the questionnaire had one common and another specific part, which allowed us to divide the instrument into three modes: educative, organizational and social, according to the specific functions of tutoring in each of the aspects indicated by Bisquerra (1998).</p>
<b>Validity and Reliability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phase I:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validity: content and triangulation (Patton, 1982).</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Phase II:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validity: Delphi technique together, a pilot test on the instrument and the construct validity (Nunnaly, 1987) through an analysis of conglomerates or clusters and a factorial one.</li> <li>• Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha was excellent: the common questionnaire: 0.982; the educative mode: 0.958; the social mode: 0.954; and the organizational mode: 0.995.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Data Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phase I: content analysis.</li> <li>- Phase II: descriptive analysis, correlational and multiple contrast statistics.</li> </ul>
<b>Analysis of Software</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phase I: AQUAD6</li> <li>- Phase II: SPSS 15.0</li> </ul>

## **Results of Research and Discussion**

This section discusses some of the results obtained in the research. We wanted to find out which tasks for tutors were the most important when they were tutoring student training, what relevance was attributed to them, what was the formative task value. For this, the sample evaluated the importance given to the activities and tasks previously identified. In the quantitative phase, all of the 83 tutors involved gave their opinion on a scale of four grades (a lot, quite, little and none). Table 2 shows the measures of central tendency and dispersion, outstanding in the first place, that all of them are to a greater or lesser extent relevant for the participants, since the means were over 2.10.

**Table 2.** Measures of central tendency and dispersion about “It would be important” in mentoring (elaborated by the authors)

Activity	Mean $\bar{x}$	Median	Mode	Standard Error mean	Perc 75	Standard Deviation $\sigma$	Variance
• Being available for the students	2.84	4.00	4	.187	4.00	1.700	2.890
• Providing the students with the knowledge of the context and access to the documents of the institution	2.76	4.00	4	.184	4.00	1.672	2.795
• Integrating the students into our centre	2.82	4.00	4	.187	4.00	1.705	2.906
• Giving information to the students about the services of the training institution	2.63	3.00	4	.184	4.00	1.673	2.798
• Favouring personal analysis and self-evaluation of the students	2.70	3.00	4	.182	4.00	1.658	2.750
• Establishing an open and trustworthy work relationship with the students	2.73	4.00	4	.187	4.00	1.704	2.904
• Checking the activities developed by the training students	2.64	3.00	4	.183	4.00	1.672	2.795
• Taking into account the available resources as well as the difficulties at doing the training work	2.66	3.00	4	.178	4.00	1.625	2.641
• Diminishing continuously the role of guide with the students	2.51	3.00	3	.173	4.00	1.572	2.473
• Helping the students to analyze and evaluate their skills	2.47	3.00	4	.183	4.00	1.670	2.789
• Identifying, with the students, the evaluation criteria related to training	2.18	3.00	3	.165	3.00	1.499	2.247
• Guiding during the preparation of the report about the training work	2.25	3.00	3	.166	3.00	1.513	2.289
• Evaluating the students	2.25	3.00	0	.186	4.00	1.695	2.874
• Taking part in the design and the monitoring of the plan of training work	2.46	3.00	3	.169	4.00	1.541	2.373

Activity	Mean $\bar{x}$	Median	Mode	Standard Error mean	Perc 75	Standard Deviation $\sigma$	Variance
• Cooperating with the supervisor of the coordination for the design of the professional profile	2.36	3.00	3	.169	4.00	1.543	2.380
• Getting the rest of the centre staff involved to enrich the training work of the students	2.61	3.00	3	.167	4.00	1.521	2.313
• Communicating with other tutors	2.30	3.00	3	.150	3.00	1.368	1.872
• Taking up relationships with other centres in order to enrich the training work of the students	2.13	3.00	3	.149	3.00	1.359	1.848

Generally, considering the data, we can see that they grant them a high level of importance to those functions.

Paying attention to the details, the functions which show higher points, despite the big dispersion in their punctuation, are: “Being available for the students” ( $\bar{x} = 2.84$ ;  $\sigma = 1.700$ ); “Integrating the students into our centre” ( $\bar{x} = 2.82$ ;  $\sigma = 1.705$ ); “Providing the students with the knowledge of the context and the access to the documents of the institution” ( $\bar{x} = 2.76$ ;  $\sigma = 1.672$ ); “Establishing an open and trustworthy work relationship with the students” ( $\bar{x} = 2.73$ ;  $\sigma = 1.704$ ).

Opposite, the ones presenting lower means are related to “Taking up relationships with other centres in order to enrich the training work of the students” ( $\bar{x} = 2.13$ ;  $\sigma = 1.359$ ) and “Identifying, with the students, the evaluation criteria related to training” ( $\bar{x} = 2.18$ ;  $\sigma = 2.247$ ).

Taking into account the dependent variables, few meaningful differences were noted in relation to the degree of importance given to the studied activities and tasks. Thus, 22 variables were confirmed out of the analyzed 208, and their meaningful associations were related to the gender of the informants, for how long they had developed tutoring, the field they belonged to, single tutoring during training and formation; since the statistic obtained was under 0.05, the level of trust was established, which was 95% (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Chi-squared <0.05 in the degree of the importance in mentoring (elaborated by the authors)

Activity	Gender	Age	Formation	Field	Experienc center	Experi- encie tutor	Single tutor- ing	Num- ber stu- dents
• Being available for the students	0.132	0.728	0.187	0.179	0.672	0.115	0.510	0.713
• Providing the students with the knowledge of the context and access to the documents of the institution	0.072	0.761	0.482	0.165	0.749	0.584	0.610	0.097
• Integrating the students into our centre	0.232	0.695	0.398	0.160	0.903	0.325	0.432	0.928
• Giving information to the students about the services of the institution of training	0.295	0.552	0.901	0.382	0.988	<b>0.049</b>	0.397	0.990
• Favouing personal analysis and self-evaluation of the students	<b>0.000</b>	0.831	0.854	0.417	0.487	<b>0.049</b>	0.336	0.866
• Establishing an open and trustworthy work relationship with the students	0.223	0.562	0.273	0.161	0.548	0.102	0.649	0.997
• Checking the activities developed by the training students	<b>0.026</b>	0.781	0.406	0.115	0.311	0.158	0.216	0.951
• Taking into account the available resources as well as the difficulties at doing the training work	0.207	0.252	0.673	0.275	0.397	0.394	0.339	0.938
• Diminishing continuously the role of guide with the students	0.147	0.770	0.288	0.138	0.593	0.523	0.538	0.595
• Helping the students to analyze and evaluate their skills	<b>0.002</b>	0.597	0.687	<b>0.026</b>	0.821	0.170	0.173	0.798
• Identifying, with the students, the evaluation criteria related to training	0.353	0.649	0.813	0.232	0.512	0.269	0.652	0.914
• Guiding during the preparation of the report about the training work	<b>0.049</b>	0.599	0.777	<b>0.012</b>	0.317	0.590	0.419	0.862
• Evaluating the students	0.136	0.462	0.374	<b>0.001</b>	0.368	0.085	<b>0.049</b>	0.667

Activity	Gender	Age	Forma- tion	Field	Experiencie center	Experi- encie tutor	Single tutor- ing	Num- ber stu- dents
• Taking part in the design and the monitoring of the plan of training work	0.204	0.886	0.977	0.460	0.824	0.395	0.170	0.742
• Cooperating with the supervisor of the coordination for the design of the professional profile	0.176	0.986	0.235	0.728	0.733	<b>0.015</b>	0.277	0.516
• Getting the rest of the centre staff involved to enrich the training work of the students	<b>0.015</b>	0.691	0,121	<b>0.000</b>	0.271	0.311	<b>0.034</b>	0.365
• Communicating with other tutors	0.062	0.125	0,178	0.327	0.689	0.192	0.324	0.939
• Taking up relationships with other centres in order to enrich the training work of the students	0.319	0.757	0,787	<b>0.049</b>	0.639	0.040	0.766	0.637

We can see how, in this case, neither the age of the tutors, nor the years spent in the centre pursuing their profession, nor the number of students they tutor, seem to have an influence on the importance attributable to the tasks mentioned above.

In the qualitative phase also, the interviewed tutors pointed out these aspects, as shown in the following quotes including reference to completion of the interview to which it belongs and its location in the same:

*Guiding, accompanying (...). For me, the important thing is to know where that person fits, that I can see which is his/her place, (...). This is an important function because otherwise the person gets absolutely blocked. (E7, lines 87–91)*

*(...) In spite of the very little attention I pay to them when they arrive, in the last interview I ask them 'Have you ever needed me and you didn't have me?' And they say: No. No, Every time I needed you, both the tutor and you, you were there.' (...) the data of the institution, on a general level, well that is why they come to me mostly (E6, lines 101–107)*

*(...) That the student had prior information of where he/she comes to and what is done. That would position the field a lot because we waste many sessions at the beginning to*



*prepare, inform and know what is exactly done, what functions he/she has and what is actually done to benefit and take the most of it afterwards. (E17, lines 106–109)*

*(...) If I do tutoring for a while, reducing the time of direct work, (...) so that I had time to plan with the student what he/she is going to do, to plan with him/her and well, so I have time and I'm staying with him/her to solve those doubts, that sometimes, they have to do the written work and have a lot of doubts and we clarify them on the move, having consultation sessions, planning with the student and all of that with so many hours we have for therapy, it's impossible. It would be good to reduce the time for therapy in order to use it for tutoring. (E17, lines 74–79)*

## **Conclusions**

In this article we have focused our interest in highlighting what the tutors of student training of the training education professionals consider important in the process of tutoring. As a preliminary step to the empirical literature on the subject, we set our point of view about it. This has not only allowed the focus of discussion, but set the stage for the discussion that we now carry.

In this paper we could see a unanimous agreement when evaluating the level of importance of the general functions considered a priori characteristic of the tutoring action, whatever the context of work may be. In fact, we do not observe any function which could be valued as little or not important, all of them have been given the highest points.

Coinciding with Martinez (2008), in this study we show the importance of choosing concepts for each discipline that may be relevant for future professionals; that the training context becomes a focus point for analyzing professional problems in order to study the elements that influence training; that a net of centres may be built to take over the commitment of the practical formation of students; that tutors get involved in the formation, not only in a conceptual and cultural way, but also in a methodological and investigative approach. In fact and according to Cid, Perez & Sarmiento (2011), several studies show that the tutors that use appropriate strategies have received specific training (Crasborn et al., 2008, Valencic & Vogrinc, 2007; Williams & Prestage, 2002). Bullough (2005), in research, suggests that this can be achieved through seminars on the practice of mentoring, involving university tutors and training centers (Carroll, 2005, Graham, 1997; Orland, 2001).

Finally, we must refer to the difficulty of creating concepts and operations using the tutoring functions of training and covering a comprehensive and thorough

range which compiles all the variables and possible contexts taking part in such situations (Martínez & Raposo, 2011a). Therefore, we assume a necessary selection and specification of activities and tasks that may make the reader feel that some of them may be considered relevant, are missing. However, the obtained results in this study mean a reference to value the functions of the tutoring action developed during training and the possibility of adding new indicators of study or scientific objectives that may encourage some improvements towards a higher quality of the studied reality.

## References

- Bisquerra, R. (Coord.) (1998). *Modelos de orientación e intervención psicopedagógica*. Barcelona: Praxis.
- Bisquerra, R. (Coord.) (2004). *Metodología de la investigación educativa*. Madrid: La Muralla.
- Bullough, R. (2005). Being and becoming a mentor: school-based teacher educators and teacher educator identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*, 143–155.
- Carroll, D. (2005). Learning through interactive talk: a school-based mentor teacher study group as a context for professional learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*, 457–473.
- Cid, A., & Ocampo, C.I. (2006). Funciones tutoriales en el Practicum correspondiente al actual plan de estudios de Magisterio en la Universidad de Vigo. *Revista de Educación, 340*, 445–472.
- Cid, A., & Ocampo, C.I. (2007). Funciones tutoriales en el Practicum de Psicopedagogía en la Universidad de Vigo: percepción de los estudiantes actuales. *Revista de Educación, 344*, 285–307.
- Cid, A., Pérez, A., & Sarmiento, J.A. (2011). La tutoría en el Practicum. Revisión de la literatura. *Revista de Educación, 354*, 47–70.
- Crasborn, F., Hennisson, P., Brouwer, N., Korthagen, F., & Bergen, T. (2008). Promoting versatility in mentor teachers' use of supervisory skills. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*, 499–514.
- Creswell, J.W. (1994). *Research design qualitative & quantitative approaches*. United States: SAGE Publications.
- Ehrich, L., Tennent, L., & Hansford, B. (2002). A Review of Mentoring in Education: Some Lessons for Nursing. *Contemporary Nurse, 12* (3), 253–264.
- Fink, A. (1995). *How to ask survey questions*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

- Fox, D.J. (1981). *El proceso de investigación en educación*. Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra.
- Graham, P. (1997). Tensions in the mentor teacher-student teacher relationship: creating productive sites for learning within a high school English teacher education program. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 13 (5), 513–527.
- Guerrero, M<sup>a</sup>, & López, M<sup>a</sup>. (2006). El prácticum en la formación de pedagogos ante la convergencia europea. Algunas reflexiones y propuestas de mejora. *Revista de Educación*, 341, 517–552.
- Gutiérrez, L., Correa, J.M., Jiménez, E., & Ibáñez, A. (2009). El modelo reflexivo en la formación de maestros y el pensamiento narrativo: estudio de un caso de innovación educativa en el Practicum de Magisterio. *Revista de Educación*, 350, 493–505.
- Hill, A., Jennings, M., & Madgwick, B. (1992). Initiating a Mentorship Training programme. In: M. Wilkin (Ed.), *Mentorin in Scholls* (116–132). Londres: Kogan Page.
- Jones, M. (2001). Mentors' perceptions of their roles in school-based teacher training in England and Germany. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 27 (1), 65–94.
- Kerlinger, F.N. (1986). *Behavioral research: a conceptual research*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Martinez, M.E. (2008). ¿Qué saben los tutores del Practicum de Psicopedagogía sobre la acción tutorial?. *Revista Educativa de Orientación y Psicopedagogía*, 19 (1), 73–77.
- Martinez, M.E. (2010). *El tutor del Practicum de Psicopedagogía en Galicia*. Tesis Doctoral. CD-ROM. Departamento de Didáctica, Organización Escolar y Métodos de Investigación. Vigo: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad.
- Martinez, M.E., & Raposo, M. (2011a). Funciones generales de la tutoría en el Practicum: entre la realidad y el deseo en el desempeño de la acción tutorial. *Revista de Educación*, 354, 155–181.
- Martinez, M.E., & Raposo, M. (2011b). Modelo tutorial implícito en el Practicum: una aproximación desde la óptica de los tutores, *REDU-Revista de Docencia Universitaria*, Número monográfico dedicado al Practicum y las prácticas en empresas, 9 (2), 97–118, publicado en <http://redaberta.usc.es/redu>
- Mertz, N.T. (2004). What's a Mentor, Anyway? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40 (4), 541–560.
- Molina, E. (2008). Analysis of the system op Practicum in Spanish universities. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 31 (4), 339–366.
- Molina, E., Iranzo, P., López, M., & Molina, A. (2008). Procedimientos de análisis, evaluación y mejora de la formación práctica. *Revista de Educación*, 346, 335–361.

- Morse, J.M. (1991). Approaches to qualitative-quantitative methodological triangulation. *Nursing Research*, 40, 120–123.
- Nunnally, J.C. (1987). *Teoría psicométrica*. México: Trillas.
- Orland-Barak, L. (2001). Reading a mentoring situation: one aspect of learning to mentor. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 75–88.
- Orland-Barak, L. (2006). Lost in translation (perdidos en la traducción): tutores o mentores que aprenden a participar en discursos competitivos de la práctica educativa. *Revista de Educación*, 340, 187–212.
- Patton, M.Q. (1982). *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Sanchez, J., & Ruiz, J. (2012). Peer Assessment in Higher Education. A Case Study. *The New Educational Review*, 27 (1), 247–255.
- Shea, G.F. (1992). *Mentoring*. Londres: Kogan Page.
- Valencic, M., & Vogrinc, J. (2007). A mentor's aid in developing the competences of teacher trainees. *Educational Studies*, 33 (4), 373–384.
- Watkins, C. (1992). An experiment in Mentor Training. In: M. Wilkin (Ed.), *Mentoring in Schools* (97–115). Londres: Kogan Page.
- Williams, A., & Prestage, S. (2002). The induction tutor: mentor, manager or both? *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 1, 35–45.
- Zabalza, M.A., & Cid, A. (2005). Elementos nucleares del Practicum. In: M. Raposo, A. Cid, & M. Sanmamed (Coord.), *El Practicum en el nuevo contexto del espacio europeo de educación superior*. Adenda (5–22). Santiago de Compostela: Imprenta Universitaria.
- Zabalza, M.A. (2005). El aprendizaje experiencial como marco teórico para el Practicum. In: L. Iglesias, M.A. Zabalza, A. Cid, & M. Raposo (Coord.), *El Practicum como compromiso institucional: los planes de prácticas* (19–34). Santiago: Unidixital.