MENTORING BEGAN WITH THE ODYSSEY: FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ULYSSES

"The 2020-20121 WCD programme will be completed with a mentoring procedure looking at how the management teams put the substantive elements of their training into practice in their schools And, they will be doing so with the support and guidance of their mentors, initiating a transfer of knowledge and learning based on experience and cooperation". European Foundation for Society and Education

1. CONCEPT AND RATIONALISATION [1]

1.1. Some definitions

According to the Odyssey, before he set sail for Troy, Ulysses entrusted his friend Mentor with the duties of caring for his house, his family and his possessions, as well as acting as tutor to his son Telemachus, helping him and advising him in his decisions in life. Ulysses dreamed of his son becoming a wise and prudent king of Ithaca.

This character also appears in Fénelon's Adventures of Telemachus (1699). In classical literature, the figure of Mentor is linked with a guide who will assist another person with less experience: In short, Mentor is the guide par excellence, the master who has been entrusted with the training of a young person from whom arduous responsibilities will one day be demanded" (Grisaleña and Campo, 2007, p.2).

In the second phase of the pilot course designed for WCD managers, we have introduced a system that we refer to as *mentoring*, although it also contains elements of support in other guises. Without going into too lengthy a discourse on terminology, the system that we are proposing basically adopts some features of *mentoring,* as reflected in the definitions referred to below, however, without disregarding certain elements of *coaching* and *consulting* (assessment).

In order to outline and explain our definition of **WCD mentoring,** we will begin by examining a number of different definitions, indicating the most significant features (marked in bold type) of our programme of management support.

We begin by describing our perception of monitoring as a **process of personal learning**. Eby, Allen, Evans, and DuBois (2008) define this as an **interpersonal relationship oriented towards development,** between a more experienced individual or mentor, and a less experienced individual, or protégé, who from hereon we shall refer to as the 'mentee'.

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[1] Mireia Tintoré. Concept and basis for WCD mentoring WCD Project
Ed. Mercedes Esteban. Fundación Europea Sociedad y Educación.2020.

The *European Mentoring and Coaching Council* defines mentoring as the "**assistance** that one person can give to another **in helping them transition significantly in terms of knowledge, work or ideas"**.

In turn, Inostroza de Celis (2008) defines mentoring as: "a **collaborative process** (an interaction, a conversation, a reflective analysis) designed to produce a change in the way we are, and how we act in practice, taking as a template the **skills and competences** that each (mentor and mentee) needs to demonstrate" (p. 33).

Mentoring, according to Soler Anglés (2005), is a **process** through which a **person with more experience** [in our case, the mentor] teaches, advises, guides and **helps in the personal and professional development of others** [in our case, the management teams who are being mentored], investing time, energy and knowledge" (p. 102).

Mentoring is also a term that is synonymous with support or accompaniment. It is this last word that Serafín Antúnez (2006) employs in his comments, and it helps to illustrate the concept of mentoring: "**To accompany someone is to be by their side**, not to pull from one end of a rope or project, so that the others coming up behind are in effect carrying out someone else's ideas and decisions, as this would be commensurate with dragging or pulling. and nor does it entail the opposite, pushing them and then seeing how they do it" (Antúnez, 2006).

The analysis of these definitions, and the most frequently repeated terms that they use, highlight the fact that mentoring is a collaborative process of assistance and accompaniment or support for bringing about changes in the personal and professional development of individuals and by extension, their organisations.

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WCD mentoring is a process of personalised support that aims to assist school directors in developing new skills and competences, along with a specific management style in order to ensure that the principles of integral education guide and direct the whole educational community.

Although possibly, different forms of accompaniment have always been available, the use of mentoring programmes as a formal process for assessing school managers, began in the latter years of the last century (Hayes, 2020, p. 98), and as such, it is a relatively new training method.

1.2. Mentoring, *coaching* and *consulting*. The role of the facilitator or mentor

As mentioned, WCD mentoring also has some elements of coaching (Aas& Flückiger, 2016; Archer & Yates 2017; Goff, Guthrie, Goldring, & Bickman, 2014; Lackritz, Cseh & Wise 2019; López-Yáñez, Sánchez-Moreno, Altopiedi, & Oliva-Rodríguez 2018; Wise & Avendaño, 2013) and advisory services or consulting *(*Eleyan & Eleyan, 2011; Irby, 2018 and 2020; Irby, Boswell, Jeong, & Pugliese, 2018).

Coaching and mentoring share the same mission of enhancing the personal and professional development of those participating in the process, but their "trainers" have different profiles. The coach does not need to be an expert, or have an in depth knowledge of their coachee's field of work- in our case the field of education- in order to help coachees maximise their potential.

The mentor needs to be an expert in the field. This is what gives force to the support they provide. "The mentor should be a **reference** for their mentee, with an **exemplary professional trajectory and the ability to transfer human values** " (Soler Anglés, 2005).

In recent years, **group coaching** has become popular, and it differs in that not only do participants receive feedback from specialist training, but also from their fellow participants (Oliva and López Yañez, 2019, 56). This component is also present in our mentoring programme.

Another concept related to mentoring is assessment. Antúnez (2006) sees assessment as an **external support service in schools** and in that regard it resembles WCD mentoring, as although it is true that they usually employ internal mentors, in our case, **the WCD mentors will be external experts who, although they are not linked to the organisation, will have knowledge and experience in education management. Their task will be to support and accompany school leaders, acting as catalysts, and working alongside the management team, while not replacing them.**

Antúnez (2006) defines the task of assessment in school education as: "a **sustained process of acknowledged assistance and support** through actions designed to improve professional practice [in our case, the directors]" (2006:58).

The same author clearly defines the specific goals pursued: "The task of assessment should emphasise the aspects of **guidance** and reasoned **advice**" (p.59). For the mentoring that we propose, the guidance function concentrates on helping the management teams to observe **everything that goes on and everything that is done in the school, viewed through the lens of "WCD"**, that is, with the idea of developing leadership that pursues whole child development. And it also focuses on helping **managers to achieve the purpose and objectives that the group itself has proposed.**

The reasoned advice can be resumed as offering **"pertinent and considered alternatives so that those who are being helped can decide on their own the paths that they wish to take"** (2006:59).

Nieto Cano considers that assessment in education is, "**a helping process** based on professional interaction aimed at resolving organisational problems" (2001: 148). This author refers to Rodríguez' ideas (1996), which considers assessment to be "those tasks involving professionals of equal status with the aim of **resolving problems arising in professional practice**. One of the participants, the person with the specific problem, asks for help in solving their dilemma and the other is in a position to correspond to that request, **offering a number of resources in an endeavour to help in seeking a solution."** 2001) 148).

For Nieto Cano (2001), educational assessment establishes three different models: a) **intervention model**, in which the assessor assumes the principal role and acts as problem solver; b) **facilitation model**, in which the person being assessed has the prominent role; and c) *collaboration model*, in which both the assessor and the assessed reach an agreement on decisions made, and share responsibility in this regard.

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In the WCD mentoring model, we assume the roles of **facilitation and collaboration**. In the first case, the assessor's role involves finding a way of helping the person being assessed so that they can diagnose their own particular problem and seek a solution. The collaborative model is more concerned with taking an approach of interdependence and convergence of both viewpoints, in terms of defining problems, and the design and implementation of possible solutions for mutual learning.

Our project, supported by the contributions of the authors cited, considers mentoring as a process that encompasses mentoring, as well as coaching and assessment. And it goes even further. On one hand, the mentor has to act as an **expert** in leadership for integral education and on the other, they act as **trainer and catalyst for talent** or coach, stimulating and encouraging management teams and facilitating their integral development. They also act as **counsellor** and adviser, when asked for advice on resolving issues or making decisions in the management context. The mentor is the figure providing support, who helps teams achieve their goals and cover initial expectations in an atmosphere of trust, respect and commitment. Their role should be both "demanding and supportive", Aas & Blom, 2018).

Chilean teachers Rincón Gallardo et al. (2019) explain the role of mentors in this way, referring to them as "**critical friends**":

"The concept "critical friend" describes the function of an external agent, whose perspective is valued by the group or organisation; their mission is to provide an external perspective on the work procedures in an organisation (Huerta, 2014).

The critical friend pursues the following aims which will particularly pertinent to **WCD mentoring:**

a. creating a relationship of learning among equals, based on constructive respect and trust:;
b. compiling the appropriate information to ascertain what is happening and why;
c. carrying out a critical analysis and reflection and
d. as a result deducing the implications and lines of activity required to make improvements (Escudero, 2009).

A fundamental role of the critical friend is to **ask pertinent and challenging questions** which will enhance a degree of reflection and lead to changes in the way that management teams act (Rincón Gallardo et al., 2019) in our case, always with the emphasis on integral education.
These powerful questions, according to Wise and Avendaño (2013), will encourage change of a second order (innovation). The mentor does not ask the *hows* (a question that asks for action: how can we improve the institution?) but the *whys* (question that asks for reflection and analysis of the problems: Why isn't the institution the best?) Another type of reflective question might be: "when you achieve your goal, what will it mean to you?" (rather than if you achieve it....) or what will be the impact of doing this?

The support of critical friends entails encouraging reflective dialogue among the participants with questions that, apart from other intentions, also aim to a) assist participants in identifying

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contradictions between their discourse (what they said) and their practice (what they did); b) focusing attention of critical comments on the discourses and practices of participants, not on the persons who originated them ((…); y, e) constantly recalling and remaining aware of the goals that give meaning to school leadership and professional collaboration (Rincón Gallardo et al., 2019, p. 256).

2. MENTORS AND MENTEES IN THE WCD PROGRAMME

"So saying he sat down, a and among them rose Mentor who was a comrade of noble Ulysses. To him on departing with his ships, Ulysses had given all his house in charge, that it should obey the old man and that he should keep all things safe.

The Odyssey book 2 line 224

Following the above approximation to a basic critical review of literature on mentoring, we can summarise the role of **mentor and mentees in the WCD progamme** as follows:

The mentor: someone who is familiar with and well versed in the WCD programme, the context in which the school is being run, and in particular those who work there, especially the management team; although the mentor is an expert, they do not impose, they prepare each session, support, guide, and advise in a reasoned way, offering alternatives and various options, they encourage, offer their knowledge and experience, provide and seek other knowledge or assistance as needed, posing "powerful and "critical" questions, they do not determine what the mentees need to resolve, and raising their sights, they offer constructive feedback, they feel responsible for them and for their school, they act as a catalyst, that is, they provoke reactions, rather than apply changes or make decisions, they provide a balance between demanding and assisting.

The mentored teams: they have an in depth knowledge of the WCD programme and they undertake to implement it through their improvement plans, they come to the sessions prepared, they ask for advice, and act freely, deciding on what they consider to be the most appropriate and convenient for their school, they are sincere, adopting a positive attitude in the face of problems and difficulties, they acknowledge the processes and results deriving from implementation of the programme, and they do not delegate responsibility to the mentor.

Requisite conditions: a frank and honest climate of trust, transparency, confidentiality, optimism, respect and compromise, are important to ensure that goals are achieved.

The methodology: With prejudice to any other kind of mentoring (telephone calls, emails etc.) LEI mentoring is mostly concentrated on assessment meetings between the mentor and the mentored teams. In those meetings, critical questions will be asked, addressing the whys and wherefores of the cause of things, in order to ensure that participants reflect on the programme and to help them focus on their managerial task, based on the principles of whole child development.

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As in chemistry, catalysts increase the speed of a reaction, WCD mentors accompany the rate of change of this process, helping to discover the location of reactants capable of guiding improvement plans. And doing this with the impetus of a leadership that distributes, reflects, listens and appreciates the conversation with the educational community." European Foundation for Society and Education 2020.

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