Review article

REFLECTIVE AND MENTORING PRACTICE – CONDITIONED SEGMENTS OF TEACHING

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Abstract. *Upon completing their initial education, teachers acquire mostly theoretical knowledge and learn how to teach. Whether a teacher will be good and professional depends on the way he works, on whether he continuously improves his knowledge and his competences. Mentoring practice and a reflective approach to professional work are two important segments of a teacher's work with a reciprocal impact on his experience, knowledge and teacher development. The aim of this paper is to highlight the importance of mentoring and reflective practice for teacher education and advancement. In order to achieve this goal, we first define the concept of mentoring and its significance for teacher work; we highlight the types of mentoring; we emphasize the benefits of reflective practice in teaching and finally identify common features of teacher mentoring and reflective practice. The conclusion is that these two segments of teaching - mentoring and reflective practice – are the two skills that experienced, but also future teachers should have.*

Key words: *mentoring, teaching, competences, factors, reflective practice*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is complex and diverse, as it includes working with students, working with learning material, and didactic-methodological organization of lessons. Each of these teacher activities, in addition to the evident effects on students and society as a whole, has a great impact and significance for the professional identity of teachers. Professional development of a teacher, his scope and quality, can best be analyzed by looking at the teacher himself, his personality, professional qualities. In fact, the key to his professional development lies in the teacher himself.

Mentoring and reflective practice are teaching methods, two of the many activities that one teacher can realize and use, and which on the other hand show and say a lot

about the teacher's personality. Mentoring requires diligence, openness, accessibility and approachability of teachers towards students, but also the will and motivation to selflessly spend their time, invest their knowledge and share experience with less experienced than themselves. Reflective practice as another prominent way of working is a reflection of the teacher's professionalism and it can be recognized only in a teacher who has exceptional self-awareness, self-responsibility and self-initiative.

Although choosing mentoring as a teacher professional development method is not new (Mac Callum, 2007), our pedagogical climate is not abundant in research that speaks of the importance of the connection and mutual influence between teacher mentoring and reflective practice. For this reason, we try to emphasize the significant influence of these two segments of teaching from the aspect of teacher self-awareness and professional identity. Although there are very few scientific papers and pedagogical literature which link teacher mentoring and reflective practice, the analysis of relevant literature highlights their characteristics and features and finds a connection between them.

2. MENTORING AS A SEGMENT OF TEACHING

Mentoring practice allows the teacher to acquire knowledge, skills, competencies and professional development (Li, 2018), and it is an opportunity to use theoretical knowledge in practice (Ligadu, 2012). In education, mentoring practice is based on the relationship between teacher and students, where the teacher guides, monitors and directs students in their learning or independent research work. Our education system is designed so that the mentor can fulfill his true role in higher education institutions, faculties while working with students. When it comes to primary schools, a teacher can get the role of a mentor in working with a fellow teacher who is in the initial phase of a professional relationship. The most common situation is that an experienced teacher accepts, for the needs of the school and the teaching group, and trains a younger colleague who has just finished initial education and entered the classroom without experience. In secondary schools, in addition to the above-mentioned situation of introducing an inexperienced colleague into teaching, the teacher can have the role of a mentor in working with students who are in the final years of secondary education and are preparing and taking the final exam.

Mentoring is a professional relationship with a clearly defined goal and intention to achieve some results that is accompanied by effective communication and constant feedback (Stamatović, Percić, Radojević, and Vukajlović, 2016) and whose quality is determined by a more experienced teacher, mentor (Vizek Vidaković, Brajdić, and Matić, 2014). It is a development process (Antić & Pešikan, 2016) that encourages and directs critical reflection based on active listening, asking questions and providing feedback (Vizek Vidaković et al., 2014). We can emphasize that mentoring is an interactive, collaborative process with the intention of achieving certain goals that both the mentor and the student are aware of.

"Better understanding of roles within the organization, learning from experience, increasing self-confidence, facing others and avoiding conflicts of interest, increased managerial knowledge, promoting goal-oriented activities and career guidance are integral elements of a mentoring relationship" (Lagace-Roy & Knackstead, 2007, p. 10). It is evident that all of the above does not only affect the teacher who is in the role of mentor, on the contrary, all the above moments of the mentoring relationship are reflected on both the student and the education institution which the mentorship takes place in.

By researching the relevant literature, we come across modeling and coaching as terms that are related to the mentoring practice of teachers. Hence the need for a brief clarification of these concepts. Modeling as a way of teaching is actually a relationship in which a more experienced person serves as a model. On the other hand, coaching in the context of teaching is a relationship between two people, usually two teachers in which teaching skills, strategies, techniques are developed (Koki, 1997).

A teacher who accepts the role of a mentor has the will and is ready to transfer and share his knowledge (Radić, 2018). Through a counseling approach, he shares experience, gives instructions and directs learning, research work or career (Kuo, 2009). Mentors are expected to be experts in the field, flexible and reflective (Moores, Holley, & Collen, 2018; Russell & Russell, 2011), active listeners, they need to build relationships of trust, encourage and identify goals and current realities (Phillips-Jones, 2003). A good mentor cooperates, does not dictate, does not command, renounces high levels of control, shares constructive feedback, and accepts differences of opinion (Glenn, 2006).

There is no clearly defined or strictly defined mold of a good mentor other than guidelines and recommendations that as a more experienced and educated partner in a mentoring relationship, mentor should be assertive in his interventions (Pollard et all. 2019). The mentor helps the students to "become aware of their own resources, to discover their knowledge and develop research and reflective autonomy" (Stamatović, Percić, Radojević, and Vukajlović, 2016, p. 4). His role is aimed at "improving the protégé's career through engagement that enables him to share instructions, experience and expertise" (Solomon, 2020, p. 5). Based on the work of the guided student, the mentor receives feedback about his/her own skills, which provides him with the opportunity to develop, improve his professional experience and acquire competencies for progress in the field of counseling (Petrovska, Sivevska, & Popeska, 2018), which is crucial for a quality mentoring relationship and performance.

The scientific, research and pedagogical experience of the mentor are his/her crucial qualities (Stamatović et al., 2016). Mentors are expected to help in formulating the topic of research, in formulating research questions, in finding literature and providing support in improving the academic writing ability (Kuo, 2009). Hudson's describes mentor's pedagogical knowledge (Hudson, 2013) as the knowledge required to plan time for mentoring, prepare work strategies, know the content, effectively solve problems, assess and monitor the progress of the guided student. The knowledge and experience of the mentor reduces the possibility of unnecessary overload of the student and the development of inadequate research and professional competencies (Vizek Vidaković et al., 2014, p. 3).

When speaking about the role and qualities of a good mentor, we have decided to discuss the skills and abilities that a teacher who holds the title of mentor should have. Thus, listening skills, knowledge of learning material, building self-confidence (Ackkey & Gall, 1992), and empathy towards the protégé are important. Thus, the skills needed for effective mentoring are also the skills that enable learning, progress and change in the teacher's work (Phillips-Jones, 2003). In higher education, in order to work with students at higher levels of study, the mentor must meet the described conditions, that is, pedagogical and methodological competence (Radić, 2018). Due to its complexity, the competencies required for mentoring practice can be presented in the simplest way:
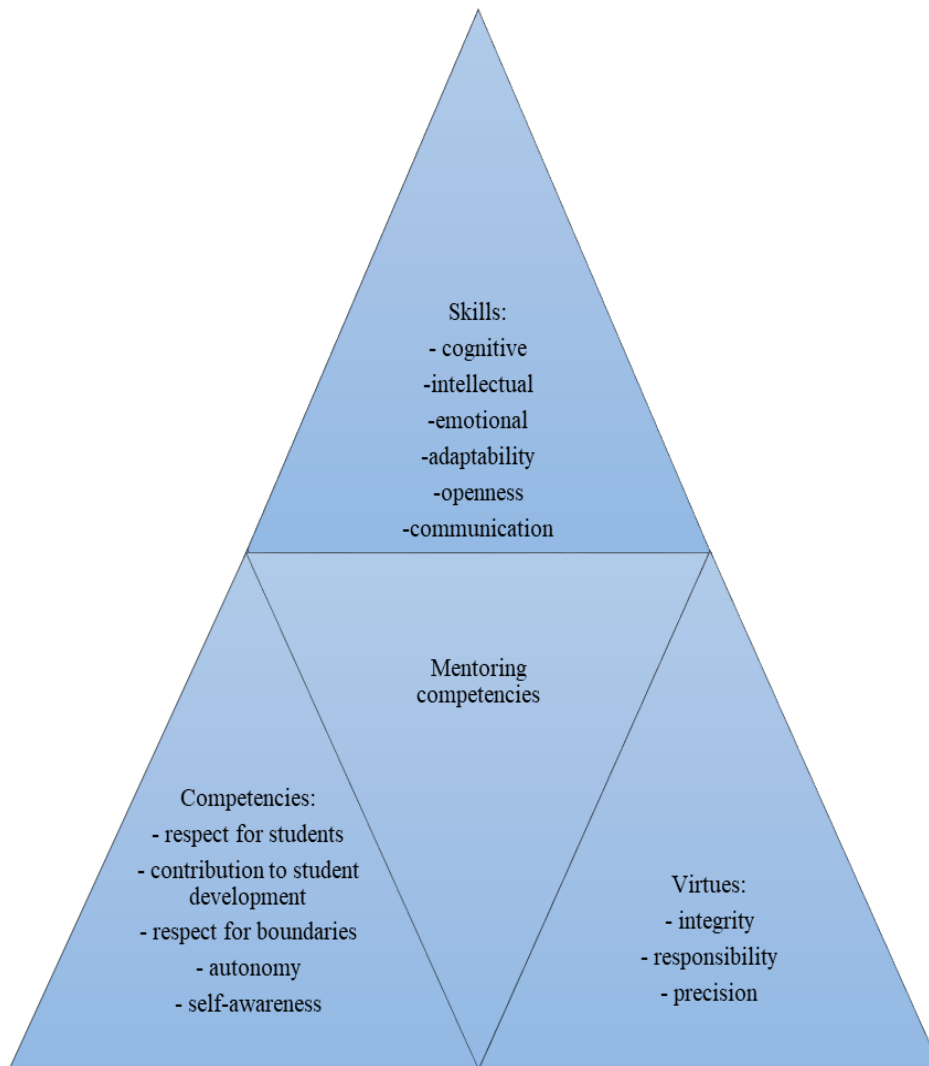
Fig. 1 Mentoring competencies (Adapted based on Johnson, 2003, p. 135)

Mentoring practice, as already mentioned, has multiple effects on the student himself, or the guided party, as well as on the teacher who is in the role of a mentor. There are many benefits that mentoring has for the mentor himself. It is an opportunity to notice the shortcomings and weaknesses in one's own practice, the process of continuous learning and working on oneself. Several authors (Ürün Göker, 2021; Gordon, 2017; Huling & Resta, 2001; Lagace-Roy & Knackstead, 2007; Solomon, 2020; Slavić and Matić, 2016) dealing with this type of teacher-student relationship emphasize the benefits of mentoring for the mentor himself, which allows us to form a list of significant benefits for the teacher which indicates the need for mentoring:

1. Working with students keeps the mentor up to date with new scientific knowledge and maintains a connection with current studies, along with continuous learning and learning material update;
2. Confirms the professional status of a mentor by training new researchers;
3. Assistance to students in establishing academic acquaintances also expands the mentor's circle of associates;
4. A good mentor attracts hardworking and successful students;
5. Personal satisfaction of mentors increases as well as the number of publications;
6. Opportunity to participate in constructive discussions;
7. Sense of personal satisfaction;
8. Exchange of knowledge and experience, both with the guided party and with colleagues, experts from the field of interest;
9. Reflection about personal and professional achievements followed by the development of reflective skills;
10. Understanding the importance of leadership in education
11. Opportunity to inspire and encourage the guided party;
12. Positive impact on younger generations (both students and younger colleagues);
13. Meeting one's own development needs;
14. Improving collaboration and collegiality;
15. Being recognized as a highly regarded teacher by the one who chooses the teacher as a mentor;
16. Long-term gratitude by the mentored student, the opportunity to innovate and improve one's own work and the entire teaching profession;
17. Increases the teacher's sense of efficiency and enables self-evaluation;
18. Development of professional competencies;
19. Improving the managerial skills of teachers;
20. Participation in research projects.

In addition to defining mentoring, emphasizing the qualities of good mentors and the benefits that this segment of professional activity can have for a teacher, it is necessary to point out the factors that encourage and those that hinder mentoring teachers. The authors (Hudson, Skump, & Brooks, 2005; Russell & Russell, 2011) single out the following factors that encourage and help mentoring:

1. Personal traits including teacher's willingness to cooperate, their openness and honesty in working with the student, and to provide professional and emotional support;
2. System requirements set before the mentor by the education system, school or the organization in which they are employed;
3. Pedagogical knowledge or knowledge of the subject, and having didactic and methodological skills;
4. Modeling or planning lessons;
5. Providing feedback to the student, in a timely manner and respecting the results achieved;
6. Teacher's patience;
7. Nurturing the mentoring relationship by the teacher and the guided party, the student.

On the other hand, there are factors that are disruptive for mentoring practice. The entire education system, the curriculum, the readiness of teachers to accept a responsible role as a mentor. Lack of time, lack of closeness to the mentee, lack of knowledge about learning styles, lack of financial satisfaction, and lack of resources (Ackkey & Gall, 1992) can hinder or slow down the teacher, however, the role of the student is very important as well.

3. TYPES OF MENTORING IN THE TEACHING PROCESS

Since there are not many scientific research papers on the topic of teacher mentoring, significant effort has been made to collect and study material in order to be able to single out the type of mentoring that teachers encounter. Hereinafter, we talk about formal, semi-formal and informal mentoring as a general classification, followed by reflective, direct and collaborative mentoring, and finally we describe electronic mentoring, which is considered a modern type of mentoring.

Lagace-Roy & Kneakstead (2007) state that formal mentoring implies that a teacher works with the guided party in order to respond to the needs prescribed by the organization or institution in which the teacher, mentor is employed. This is the most common type of mentoring in a situation where the mentor, who has the necessary competencies, mentors and trains a younger, less experienced colleague or student. Semi-formal mentoring takes place occasionally within a particular organization and is optional to employees. While informal mentoring occurs "accidentally", following a spontaneous agreement between two parties, where the party that needs support and help independently chooses a mentor whose knowledge, experience and abilities he/she believes in and relies on.

Reflexive mentoring was discussed by Kamman and associates (Kamman et al., 2012), stating that this is an increased mentoring efficiency when using one's own resources. The key moment is thinking about thinking, while the long-term goal, in addition to helping the student, is to give the mentor the opportunity to improve his/her skills. Reflexive mentoring provides opportunities for problem-solving and self-improvement by using reflection techniques. This type of mentoring encourages more sophisticated lesson planning and teaching with continuous improvement of one's own practice and helps to develop autonomy in teaching. Direct mentoring requires pedagogical skills from a mentor, relevant experience and knowledge in the field within which he/she teaches. It is considered at a lower level compared to reflective mentoring, and it relies on specific questions and difficulties experienced by the mentored party. Collaborative mentoring, instructional coaching or partnership between a mentor and a student is a relationship in which the mentor initiates a constructive dialogue that encourages reflective thinking on both sides. The mentor does not impose opinions and judgments. The goal of this type of mentoring is to facilitate dialogue and exchange of experience. It implies open, partner communication combining reflective and direct mentoring and takes place in a pleasant, cooperative climate.

The last type of mentoring, electronic mentoring (e-mentoring), no less important than the previously mentioned, is specific for a virtual environment. It involves online interaction in which the mentor has all the characteristics, same as when working face to face with a mentee, less experienced colleague or student (Fong et al., 2012). Therefore, although it takes place under different circumstances, via digital technologies and requires digital competence of both mentors and students, it effectively enables the achievement of previously planned goals. It is the digital competence of teachers that entails the reflexivity of teachers, which is actually the willingness to think and improve teaching. All this is in accordance with the needs of the community, with the interests of students and teachers themselves, which are changing in this time of intensive use of modern technology in teaching and learning.

4. TEACHER REFLECTIVITY

Reflexivity is one of the paradigms of lifelong learning and a component of teachers' professional identity (Maksimović & Osmanović, 2018; Izadinia, 2013). Same as mentoring, reflexivity is a process with multiple meanings. Its benefit is indisputable when it comes to teaching, learning, understanding, but also the professional advancement of teachers. It is based on thinking about experience that leads to new knowledge and discoveries and is the foundation for personal and professional development, combining theory and practice through reflection (Mathew, Mathew, & Peachattu, 2017). "The quality of successful and influential teachers is fundamental" (Frick, Karl, & Beets, 2010, p. 421). The reflective teacher compares the learning and teaching situation with existing experience and knowledge and predicts actions and events in future work (Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005). All this leads to becoming aware of personal weaknesses but also strengths for improving teaching skills (Ürün Göker, 2021), thus it is important for working with students, and also with less experienced colleagues who need support and help.

Reflexivity is the main feature of mentoring (Ligadu, 2012). This means that a good mentor thinks about his activities, in the initial planning phase, during the mentoring phase, and also at the end when he summarizes the results of the effort in working with the mentee. Methods for reflective practicethat are evident in teacher mentoring, adapted from the strategies identified by the authors (Mathew et al., 2017, pp. 126-132) are as follows: keeping a reflective diary, collaborative learning, recording and taking notes, providing feedback, accepting and analyzing feedback from the student and conducting action research. These strategies keep track of the mentoringperformance, monitor the emotions of students, actions and lead to answers and information that take the student to a higher level of understanding.

The authors (Bezinović, Marušić, and Ristić-Dedić, 2012, p. 22) state the domains of the teaching process where a teacher can act reflexively, highlighting the following:

1. Organization and structure of the lesson,
2. Ways of using technology in the classroom,
3. Clarity in presentation,
4. Teaching style,
5. Rhythm and dynamics of teaching,
6. Climate and discipline in the classroom,
7. Interaction with students,
8. Student activity and commitment,
9. Adapting instruction to individual differences of students,
10. Stimulation of higher cognitive functions in students,
11. Metacognitive knowledge and skills,
12. Recognizing student effort and achievement, and
13. Formative assessment.

By analyzing the domains of the teaching process in which the reflexivity comes to the fore, and in which it improves instruction most, we can conclude that teacher can also act reflexively in the mentoring relationship. Teacher's reflexivity in introducing and bringing students to a professional relationship or scientific research implies the teacher's awareness of the importance of clear communication, interaction with the guided party, thinking when accepting and evaluating performance.

5. COMMON FEATURES OF TEACHER MENTORING AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

After the theoretical discussion about the mentoring and reflective practice of teachers, we try to synthesize their common features, which supports how important they are for the teacher's education, activities and personal and professional development. We conclude that these are developmental concepts that deserve a lot of attention and are important for the research of education activities and the teacher's professional advancement.

Reflexivity is an important aspect of mentoring that becomes better through continuous work, self-assessment and teacher self-reflection, where the final and very significant result is encouraged self-reflection in students that the mentors works with (Ligadu, 2012; Pottinger, Dyer, & Acard, 2019). Reflexive approach in mentoring expands the repertoire of teaching strategies, has an encouraging effect on mentors and students in taking the initiative and responsibility for professional development. It deepens their understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning, all with respect for the social, moral and ethical dimensions (Pollard et al., 2019).

As a reciprocal, dynamic and reflective relationship, mentoring involves thinking about success and failure leading to constructive learning and teaching (Ligadu, 2012; Ürün Göker, 2021; Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005). Thus, there are two ways of reflexive behavior in the relationship between mentor and student: reflexive face-to-face relationship between mentor and student, and reflexive writing (diary keeping and writing scientific papers) (Ligadu, 2012, p. 5), all with the aim of facilitating analysis of various professional scenarios (Petrovska, Sivevska, Popeska, & Runcheva, 2018). Teacher mentoring and reflexivity are developmental processes and possible ways for teacher professional advancement (Pollard et al., 2019; Mathew et al., 2017). Therefore, they should be seen as ways to strengthen competencies and the inevitable processes aimed at keeping and empowering good teachers (Petrovska et al., 2018).

The most important common feature of teacher mentoring and reflexivity is the professional development of teachers who have the opportunity to work with less experienced individuals than themselves, this, at the same time, reflecting on their own work, ways of giving feedback and overall impact a teacher has on the student he mentors. Therefore, professional development should: include teachers in the tasks which will provide them with the opportunity to observe and analyze what has been done; be based on research, reflection and experimentation to be led by students; improve teacher collaboration skills and willingness to share knowledge; be the result of the relationship that the teacher has with students; be continuous and intense; to assist the teacher in modeling, teaching, and collaborative problem solving and to respond to and monitor aspects of other social and education-related changes (Darling-Hammond & McLaughin, 1995, pp. 597-604).

6. CONCLUSION

The lack of quantitative studies makes it difficult to research mentoring practice as a segment of teaching, although the positive impact of mentoring for the advancement and improvement of teaching is evident and obvious. A teacher who takes on the role of a mentor fits into the context of lifelong learning, bringing with him many other important competencies needed for teaching. Practice shows that there are teachers who gladly accept the role of a mentor, and are ready to selflessly share their knowledge and guide studentsor younger colleagues to a professional relationship or scientific research. There

are also teachers who are reluctant to resort to mentoring, seeing this part of their job as an additional obligation for which they are not sufficiently financially stimulated and motivated by the institution in which they are employed.

In this regard, we will mention the shortcomings that may hinder teacher mentoring mentioned by Petrovska and her associates (Petrovska et al., 2018). These include the lack of instruments and procedures for progress in mentoring career, lack of financial motivation and poor presentation of mentoring as career advancement. Having in mind these shortcomings recognized within the education system of the Republic of Macedonia, it is interesting to emphasize the importance of mentoring in the education system of Australia. The importance of mentoring practice in this country is particularly emphasized and this segment of teaching is approached with specific care, with an awareness of the impact, benefits and long-term impact it has on the education system (MacCallum, 2007).

Effective mentoring practice implies a reflexive approach to the entire relationship the teacher has with the person he leads, monitors and guides. Reflexivity refers to understanding the importance of reflection and analysis of their work, teachers' ability to objectively analyze the things done and assess the effect they have. Thinking about accomplishments, difficulties or failures allows the teacher to anticipate and plan future work in the right way. A reflective approach to mentoring can take place at the individual level (Collin & Karsenti, 2011), when the teacher independently reflects on the relationship he has with the mentee, the results, and the feelings that accompany the entire mentoring process. On the other hand, there is the possibility of a partner reflective approach, in which the teacher teaches the student about the reflexive approach, and at some point, the mentor and the student can together reflect and evaluate the mentoring relationship and the effect it has.

Since there is a relationship between reflexivity, teacher competencies and teacher personality (Bengtsson, 1995), we can conclude that teacher reflexivity affects the mentoring process. Understanding the reflective and mentoring practice of teachers is important for educators and curriculum creators (Tai & Jain, 2019) but above all for the teacher himself who is already in the role of a mentor or will soon be. Teachers should be taught how to be mentors, at least theoretically (Antić & Pešikan, 2016), which would highlight to teachers the importance of mentoring when it comes to guiding young researchers and the importance of mentoring for professional development and strengthening the professional identity of teachers themselves, all through emphasizing the importance of reflection and self-assessment. At the very beginning of their initial education, teachers should be introduced to and acquainted with knowledge and skills about the two crucial segments of the vocation they are studying for – mentoring and reflective practice. This would avoid conflicting differences between what was learned in school and what happens in practice, that is real life, and it would increase teachers' awareness of the complex impact they have on pupils, students and younger colleagues whom they often serve as role models.

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REFLEKSIVNA I MENTORSKA PRAKSA – USLOVLJENI SEGMENTI NASTAVNIKOVOG RADA

Završetkom inicijalnog obrazovanja nastavnik stiče pretežno teorijska znanja i osposobljava se za nastavni rad. Koliko će nastavnik biti kvalitetan i stručan zavisi od načina rada, od toga da li kontinuirano radi na sebi i usavršava svoje kompetencije. Mentorska praksa i refleksivan pristup profesionalnom angažmanu predstavljaju dva važna segmenta nastavnikovog delovanja sa povratnim uticajem na njegovo iskustvo, znanje i značajem za usavršavanje nastavnika. Cilj rada je ukazivanje na značaj mentorskog rada i refleksivne prakse za obrazovanje i usavršavanje nastavnika. Kako bismo ostvarili navedeni cilj, najpre definišemo pojam mentorstva i njegov značaj za nastavnikov rad; ukazujemo na vrste mentorskog rada; naglašavamo benefite refleksivne prakse nastavnika i na kraju identifikujemo zajednička obeležja mentorske i refleksivne prakse nastavnika. Zaključak je da su dva razmatrana segmenta nastavnikovog rada, mentorstvo i refleksivna praksa, povezane komponente iskusnih ali i budućih nastavnika.

Ključne reči: *mentorstvo, nastavni rad, kompetencije, faktori, refleksivna praksa*