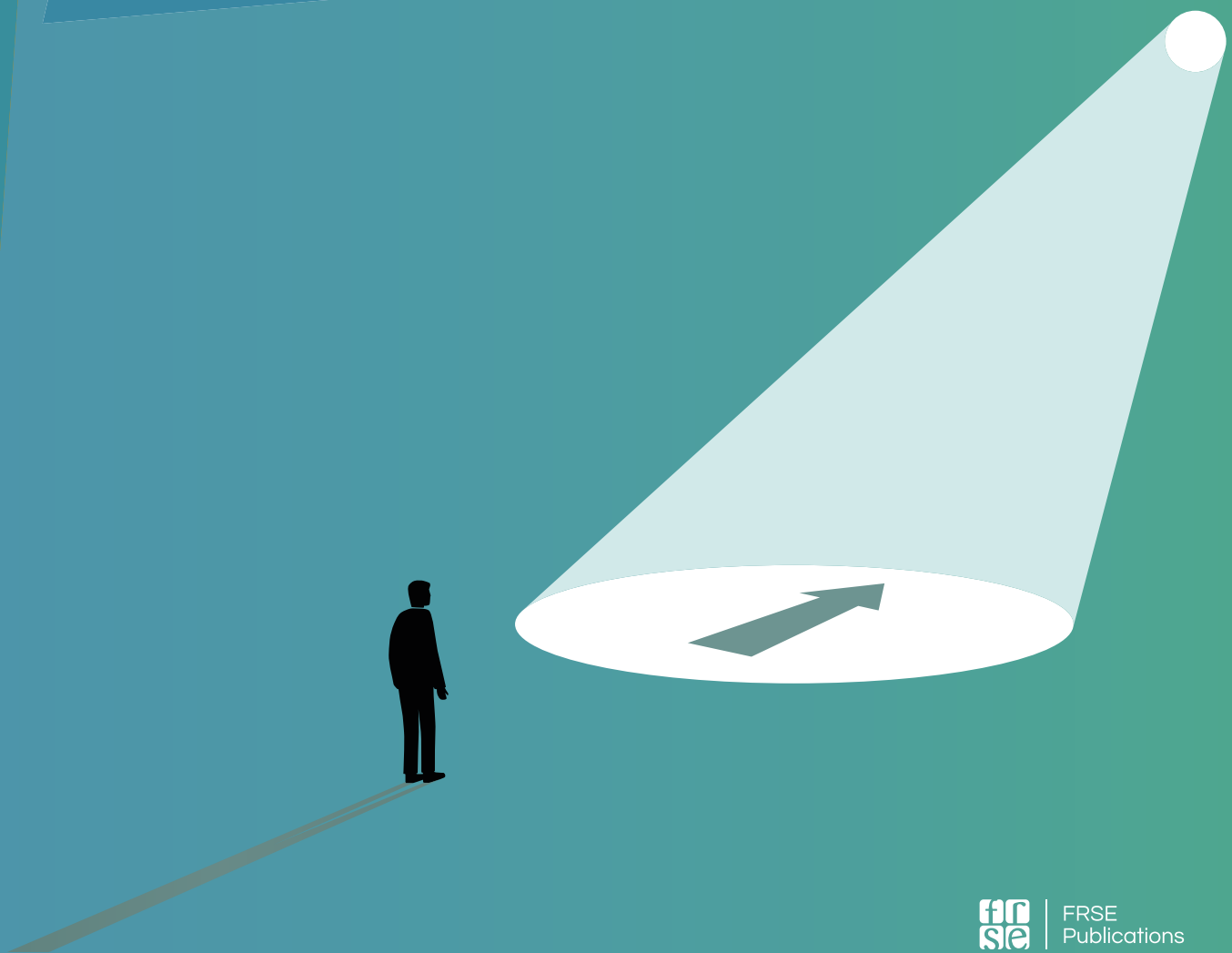
# Mentoring and tutoring 2.0

## Relationship, development and technology in vocational education



FRSE Publications

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**Mentoring and tutoring 2.0.** Relationship, development and technology in vocational education


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# Introduction

Education – and vocational education in particular – is facing challenges that it has never faced before. Technological transformation, globalisation, increasing automation, and the unpredictability of the labour market mean that substantive knowledge, while still important, is no longer enough to ensure young people's success and sense of security. It seems the most important skills are those that enable one to function in a world of constant change: creativity, problem-solving and relationship-building skills, critical thinking, the ability to cooperate and adapt, and mental resilience.

Research by the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that almost half of the skills required in the labour market will change over the next few years. At the same time, the mental and existential crisis of the younger generation – exacerbated by the pandemic, information overload, and pressure to succeed – means that equipping learners with technical knowledge and hard skills alone is far from sufficient.

Education in the 21st century should be **relationship-based**. It should not only convey content, but also accompany learners in discovering who they are, help them build their identity and develop confidence in their own abilities, as well as prepare them to enter the working world consciously.

## The growing role of relationship-based approaches in education and counselling

The remedy for current changes is mentoring, tutoring and coaching. These are forms of support based on trust, genuine presence, and partnership-based dialogue. Their value does not stem from the extra hour of classes, but from the fact that they put learners and students at the heart of the process – as the subject, not the object of education.

As part of mentoring, young people are given the opportunity to learn through their relationship with a more experienced person who not only passes on knowledge, but above all inspires and supports their development. Tutoring, in turn, provides space for individual reflection, discovering strengths, and developing independence in learning, while coaching teaches agency, setting goals, and finding own solutions – also in the educational context.

All these approaches have one thing in common: **people are more important than programmes**. This is precisely why they become so relevant in times when school

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is often reduced to exam results, rankings, and statistical tables. Real-life experience shows that young people who feel noticed and listened to learn faster, more deeply, and with greater commitment.

## The synergy of mentoring, tutoring, coaching, and technology

We no longer live in a world of analogue education. After the pandemic, it is clear that technology has become a natural environment for young people to live and work in. Online platforms, communication tools, and now artificial intelligence are increasingly finding their way into schools, universities, and educational institutions.

Therefore, it is not a question of choosing between people and technology. The future of education lies in the **wise combination of both dimensions** – what is deeply human with what is digital. Mentoring and tutoring 2.0 are processes that preserve the core of relationships but use modern tools to increase accessibility, personalisation and effectiveness of support.

However, digital maturity is a prerequisite for success – both for mentors and mentees. Without it, technology can weaken relationships, replace reflection with automation, and introduce privacy-related risks. With it, however, it becomes a true ally of future education.

## Why this publication?

We would like to present a collection of texts that demonstrate, in various ways, how mentoring, tutoring, and coaching can become strategic tools for human development and a response to the challenges of the modern labour market and education system. The authors – experts and practitioners – share both definitions and theoretical frameworks, as well as practical examples from Polish and foreign schools, universities and institutions.

The publication is not merely a compendium of knowledge. We hope it will inspire a change in the way we think about education – from the logic of "covering the material" to the logic of **meeting and accompanying**. It also invites reflection on how to build a system that empowers young people, helps them discover their own capabilities, and at the same time teaches them responsibility and agency.

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*Mentoring and Tutoring 2.0. Relationship, Development, and Technology in Vocational Education* is an invitation to a joint discussion about the future of education. We believe that schools and universities can be places where young people not only acquire competencies, but also build their identity and sense of purpose. That a teacher, mentor or tutor does not have to be a perfect expert, but rather a **sufficient guide** – present, authentic and ready to accompany the journey.

We believe that only education based on relationships and wise use of technology will prepare future generations for life and work in a world of uncertainty. This publication is intended to be a step in that direction – a source of reflection, inspiration and practical guidance for those who want to teach differently: with heart and courage.

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*and a National Team of Experts for Vocational Education and Training*

## National Europass and Euroguidance Centre, and a National Team of Experts for Vocational Education and Training (EVET)

**Europass** is an information and service network implemented by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion under Decision 646/2018 of the European Parliament and of the Council. The Polish National Europass and Euroguidance Centre, together with 40 national centres in 38 other countries, implements and promotes the digital presence of citizens online, providing tools for job search and education in Europe. The service features an online profile, a digital CV, a cover letter editor, digital certificates for education, a library of achievements, a digital competence test, Europass Mobility for the recognition of competencies acquired during educational trips, and supplements to higher education diplomas and vocational school diplomas, as well as a new element of synergy with the EURES European Employment Database. In line with the European Skills Agenda, these tools introduce new skills to the market and increase the transparency of qualifications, supporting the flexibility and learning and professional mobility of employees and learners of all ages. For more information, visit: twoj-europass.org.pl and: europass.europa.eu/select-language?destination=/node/1.

**Euroguidance** is the European Commission's service and information network that supports the development of career guidance, strengthens the competencies of guidance practitioners and promotes learning mobility. The activities of the network are targeted to public administration, business representatives, educational institutions, non-governmental organisations and individuals, supporting the development of modern counselling services across Europe. For more information, visit: euroguidance.org.pl/strona-glowna and euroguidance.eu.

**Experts in Vocational Education and Training (EVET)** have been working at the Foundation for the Development of the Education System since 2021. The team brings together educators, examiners, officials, researchers and scientists closely linked to various fields of vocational training at secondary and higher levels. The team works to improve the quality of VET by supporting the development of cooperation between sectoral vocational schools, technical secondary schools, and employers. The experts provide substantive advice to Erasmus+ beneficiaries and to entities active in the Polish VET system. In cooperation with the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme and the European Solidarity Corps, they develop informational materials that can be downloaded free of charge from the website: www.ekspercivet.org.pl.

# Mentoring, tutoring, coaching – why, for whom, and in what form? Introduction to relationship-based work in education

Contemporary education is facing the necessity of change. It is becoming increasingly clear that the transmission model, based on a one-way transfer of knowledge, fails to fully meet the needs of young people. In a world that is changing faster than ever before, learners and students need more than just information; they need guidance, understanding and space to grow.

## Education as a relationship – not just a transfer of knowledge

According to the report "Szkoła ponowoczesna. Raport o stanie edukacji" [Postmodern School: Report on the State of Education] (Centre for Citizen Education, 2023), young people increasingly expect schools to provide space for dialogue, emotional development and an individual approach – rather than just preparing them for exams. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the report "Dzieci i młodzież w komercyjnym świecie" [Children and Young People in the Commercial World] (Komuda and Fejfer, 2023) – young people need individual career guidance, available from the middle years of primary school onwards, as key support in planning their educational and occupational paths.

Strengthening soft skills – such as social skills, intrinsic motivation and self-reflection – is now becoming as crucial as imparting theoretical knowledge. This is particularly important in the post-pandemic context, which has exacerbated the mental health crisis among young people. In the face of a changing labour market and increasing emotional challenges, education should go further, offering not only content, but above all support and guidance (Zdunek, 2024).

This is why mentoring, tutoring and coaching are becoming increasingly important today. The role of teachers and lecturers is is undergoing a gradual evolution – from that of an expert addressing a group to that of a guide, partner and facilitator of the learning process. Education becomes a relationship based on trust, reflection and joint discovery of directions for development.

Students spend most of their time at school – five days a week, for nearly 12 years – during a period that is particularly important for their emotional and social development. This means that teachers are often the first to notice signs of emerging mental health issues.

School is not merely a place for transferring knowledge, but also a space where young people grow up and receive support. Teachers, who accompany them on a daily basis, play the role not only of educational guides, but also of attentive observers and supportive adults. Therefore, education should be seen not only as a process of learning, but also as a system of emotional, social and professional support.

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## Definitions and differences: what are mentoring, tutoring and coaching?

Teachers, in their roles as mentors, tutors and coaches, not only impart knowledge, but also support students in building self-awareness and the ability to reflect on their own development, as well as in making informed decisions.

In terms of coaching, a teacher helps students discover their strengths, asks questions that provoke self-reflection, and supports them in formulating their own goals. Tutoring focuses on ongoing assistance with learning and skill development, while mentoring – which involves a longer-term relationship and sharing experience – teaches young people how to cope with life and professional challenges.

By combining these roles, education becomes a holistic process: children and young people gain not only knowledge, but also tools for personal development and orientation in a dynamically changing world, as well as emotional support. Early recognition of mental health issues and providing adequate support through coaching, tutoring and mentoring can significantly impact their mental health, self-confidence and future educational and professional success.

## Mentoring

Mentoring involves building a long-term, trust-based relationship, with the mentor helping the mentee with their personal, educational or professional development. This relationship is based on partnership, with the mentor acting as a guide, sharing their experiences and advice, and inspiring the mentee to seek their own solutions (Stanković, 2022).

The relationship may last for months or even years. This makes it possible to gain a deep understanding of the mentee's needs and effectively tailor the support provided. A mentor does not act as a teacher or coach, but rather as a guide and counsellor who accompanies the mentee on the development journey.

According to the definition of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC): “Mentoring is a learning relationship, involving the sharing of skills, knowledge, and expertise between a mentor and mentee through developmental conversations, experience sharing, and role modelling. The relationship may cover a wide variety of contexts and is an inclusive two-way partnership for mutual learning that values differences”.

### What are the benefits of mentoring?

The mentoring process starts with establishing the goals and expectations of both parties. On this basis, the mentor and mentee plan regular meetings, which may be individual and be held over a longer period of time. At such meetings, the mentor supports the mentee in reflecting on their development path, helps them analyse challenges and make informed decisions. Between the meetings, the mentee works independently on achieving the agreed goals, while the mentor provides consultation and support.

The mentoring relationship is flexible and tailored to mentees' needs, enabling development in various areas – from learning through career to soft skills.

Mentoring allows mentees to feel noticed and supported, thus increasing their self-confidence and motivation. Through their experience, mentors help mentees better understand their potential and unlock new paths of development.

Mentoring leads to self-awareness, responsibility and decision-making skills, and helps to build lasting social and emotional competencies. Through mentoring, mentees gain clarity of purpose and greater agency in achieving their goals (Bennewicz and Prelewicz, 2019).

### Mentoring in education

Although mentoring is traditionally associated with business and professional development, its principles also work well in school education. By adopting the perspective of a mentor, teachers do not focus solely on transferring subject knowledge. They become guides and companions to students on the journey to discover

their strengths, reflecting on their development, and preparing for further stages of life, both academic and professional.

A mentor-teacher can:

- → create space for dialogue – encourage students to talk about their interests, fears and aspirations, listening carefully and without making judgments;
- → help identify talents and potential – emphasise the student's individual strengths, help them see their progress and appreciate their achievements;
- → support in setting realistic goals – instead of imposing ready-made solutions, accompany students in formulating their own plans and development steps;
- → model attitudes and values – show through their own behaviour and decisions, how to deal with challenges, how to act ethically, and how to cooperate with others;
- → facilitate the connection between school knowledge and everyday life and future careers – e.g. by pointing out how certain skills can be used in the labour market;
- → build trust and a sense of security, allowing students to freely share their doubts and experiment with different paths of development.

Taking on the role of a mentor does not mean giving up the role of a teacher. Rather, it extends that role to include partnership that supports students in independently finding meaning in learning, building self-confidenceand developing the skills necessary in a rapidly changing world.

## Tutoring

Tutoring is educational support usually provided individually or in small groups. It focuses primarily on the cognitive and personal development of a student. Reflection and conversation that are aimed at increasing the learner's independence play an important role in a tutor's work. Tutoring helps develop critical thinking and effective learning skills, which improve learning outcomes and build students' self-confidence (Czekierda, Fingas and Szala, 2018).

According to the AGH University of Krakow's Centre for e-Learning and Innovative Teaching, tutoring is a teaching method based on an individual relationship between the instructor – the tutor – and the learner, or tutee. Tutoring is personalised, which means that both the subject matter and the working methods are tailored to the unique needs, abilities and talents of the individual tutee.

### What are the benefits of tutoring?

A tutor, based on discussions with their tutee, develops a schedule of meetings (tutorials) designed to help the tutee achieve important goals. In between meetings, the tutee works independently on the assigned tasks. Tutorials are held on a regular basis throughout the semester and include a detailed discussion of progress, guidance, and a review of any difficulties.

The objectives of tutoring may be developmental, supporting the personal development of the tutee, or academic, focusing on the acquisition of specific skills and knowledge. It is a unique experience that benefits both the tutor and the tutee.

It can be used to acquire specialist knowledge, inspire and help one to better understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Tutoring allows learning goals to be attained more effectively, as the pace of learning and the methods used are tailored to the individual preferences and abilities of the learner.

### Tutoring in education

Although tutoring originates from academic tradition, it can also be successfully applied in schools. A teacher who takes on the role of a tutor not only transfers knowledge, but above all supports the student in independently discovering the purpose of learning and building responsibility for their own development.

In school practice, tutoring may involve:

- → individualisation of the learning process – adapting the pace and form of work to the student's abilities, interests and learning style;

- development-oriented conversations – regular meetings at which the student shares their reflections, and the teacher helps them draw conclusions and plan next steps;
- building student's self-awareness – encouraging them to reflect on what they find difficult,
- what gives them satisfaction, and what talents are worth developing;
- combining knowledge with practice – showing how school content translates into real life, studies or future professional careers;
- shaping learning skills – demonstrating work methods, learning organisation and critical analysis of information.

Tutoring in teaching does not require extra hours or separate curricula – it can be woven into the everyday educational process. The approach is key: listening carefully, asking questions instead of giving ready-made answers and treating the student as a partner in the learning process. Thereby, school becomes not only a place for imparting knowledge, but also a space for conscious development, where students learn to understand themselves, set goals and take responsibility for their own path (Sarnat-Ciastko, 2015).

## Coaching

Coaching focuses on achieving specific goals and measurable results. It is a short-term relationship focused on efficient tools and methods of working with clients, who are seen as experts on their own lives and development. A coach does not advise or present ready-made solutions, but helps the client discover their own capabilities and potential so that they can work out the best solutions for themselves.

Coaching is increasingly used in education, but often in a simplified form, tailored to the needs of learners and students.

According to the European Mentoring and Coaching Council, coaching is a process, which:

- motivates clients to fully unlock their capabilities – both in their personal and professional lives;
- supports them in discovering and testing new ways of developing skills, making decisions and improving their quality of life;
- is based on partnership and cooperation in full confidentiality;
- puts the client in the role of an expert in terms of content and decision-making, while the coach and mentor act as specialists in managing and leading the process.

In coaching, the person receiving support is considered an expert on their own life, while the coach acts as a guide who helps them unlock and utilise their intrinsic capabilities. The coaching relationship focuses on the here and now and on the future, and its goal is to achieve measurable outcomes in the short or medium term.

### What are the benefits of coaching?

The coaching process starts with defining a specific goal that the client wishes to work on. The coach and the client agree on a schedule of meetings, which are usually individual and short-term. During a session, the coach asks questions that help the client increase self-awareness, overcome limitations and find their own answers (Bennewicz, 2018). In between sessions, the client carries out agreed actions, and the coach supports them in monitoring progress and staying motivated. Coaching is highly flexible and tailored to individual needs, focusing on developing specific competencies, skills or solving current issues.

Coaching helps clients clarify their goals and discover effective strategies to achieve them. This increases their self-awareness and sense of agency, as well as their responsibility for the choices they make.

This process is particularly helpful in situations that require quick action, important decisions, changing habits, or preparing for specific challenges, such as job searching or interviews. Coaching develops stress

management and self-management skills, and also strengthens motivation to take action.

### Coaching in education

Coaching in teaching can be an effective tool for supporting students in achieving short-term goals, both educational and personal.

In school practice, coaching can be implemented through:

- setting goals – jointly determining what a student wants to work on (e.g. improving grades in one subject, better organisation of learning, preparing for an exam);
- breaking down a goal into smaller steps – students learn to plan and monitor progress;
- asking coaching questions – instead of providing ready-made solutions, the teacher helps students to come up with the answers themselves ("What do you already know about this?", "What steps can you take right away?", "What will help you stay motivated?");
- strengthening responsibility – students learn that they are responsible for their decisions and actions, and that the teacher is there to support them, not to control them;
- building inner motivation – working to ensure that students see the meaning in their actions and are able to stay committed.

Through coaching, teachers help students better cope with current challenges: from organising their learning habits and overcoming stress to preparing for job interviews or presentations. This approach makes students more aware of their strengths, teaches them to solve problems on their own, and gradually put greater responsibility on them for their own growth.

## The transformative role of relationships in mentoring, tutoring and coaching

The key element of mentoring, tutoring and coaching is the relationship between the person being supported and the guide.

This relationship goes beyond the transfer of knowledge and skills – it is primarily a process where a person is truly seen and heard. The feeling of being noticed and appreciated for one's unique traits creates a foundation to build on.

In such relationships, a participant is not merely a passive recipient of information, but an active participant in the entire process. It is their experiences, questions and reflections that are the focus of attention, promoting profound change and personal growth. Thereby, support not only facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, but also becomes a catalyst for positive change in the way people think about themselves and their capabilities.

Engaging in such a relationship brings numerous psychological benefits. One of the most important is greater self-esteem – participants learn to appreciate their skills and see themselves as competent and valuable individuals. Their sense of agency also increases, i.e. the awareness that they are capable of making decisions and influencing their own lives.

In addition, mentoring, tutoring and coaching relationships build a sense of emotional security, which is extremely important, especially for young people undergoing intense changes and facing educational challenges. A sense of support and understanding helps to cope with the stress and uncertainty that often accompany the process of learning and development.

Unlike traditional forms of teaching, where the teacher is the main authority and source of knowledge, relationship-based methods place learners and students at the heart of the process. It is them who define their goals, pace of work and directions for development, while the mentor, tutor or coach acts as a guide and facilitator in this process.

This dynamic helps develop self-awareness and the ability to self-reflect, as the learner considers their strengths, areas for improvement, values and aspirations. This translates into a more conscious approach to learning and to professional and personal life.

One of the important benefits of using relationship-based forms of support is increased motivation to learn? The traditional education system is often affected by the pressure to achieve good grades and outcomes, which leads to superficial memorisation of material and causes stress. Mentoring, tutoring and coaching help to move away from this pattern to learning that stems from an inner need for development, curiosity and commitment. This change in motivation promotes deeper learning, creativity and openness to new experiences. Learners or students begin to learn not for external rewards, but for their own growth and satisfaction, which has a beneficial effect on the quality and persistence of learning outcomes.

Mentoring, tutoring and coaching relationships bring about long-term benefits that extend far beyond the period of cooperation itself. Above all, they contribute to better and more informed career decisions, as participants have greater clarity about their goals and career paths.

Furthermore, greater involvement in the learning process and improved self-awareness make learners and students derive greater satisfaction from learning and achieve their goals more effectively. Another significant benefit is the development of soft skills, such as communication, empathy, teamwork and stress management, which are highly valued in today's job market and are crucial in personal life.

## Risks and simplifications – what to avoid?

Mentoring, coaching and tutoring are extremely valuable forms of developmental support, but (like any tool) they also carry certain risks, which will be briefly discussed in relation to each of these methods.

Mentoring, as a relationship based on trust and partnership, requires not only knowledge and experience from the mentor, but also a high level of ethical awareness and the ability to self-reflect. The danger lies in an authoritarian approach, where the mentor assumes the role of an expert who “knows better” and imposes their own solutions. This attitude may destroy trust and hinder the mentee's development. The lack of clear cooperation and contract rules leads to misunderstandings about roles and expectations, and can be a source of conflict and disappointment. It is therefore crucial to establish a clear framework for cooperation that will safeguard the rights of both parties and promote transparency and respect.

One of the greatest risks associated with coaching is its use by individuals who do not possess the appropriate qualifications, knowledge and experience. Although coaching may seem a simple and appealing method of support, it requires solid preparation in psychology, communication and methodology of working with clients. Unfortunately, in practice, coaching often boils down to repeating catchy words and clichés without a deeper understanding and application of appropriate techniques. A superficial approach to clients not only fails to produce real results, but can also lead to frustration and discouragement. Worse still, a lack of competence increases the risk of manipulation when the coach attempts to impose their own solutions or interpretations instead of supporting the client in discovering their own capabilities.

Effective tutoring should differ from traditional lessons primarily in form and approach. Therefore, situations should be avoided where this process is treated as a routine lesson with a rigid agenda and no room for addressing the individual needs of the student. This practice prevents tutoring from reaching its full potential, which should be to tailor the learning process to a specific student and build their autonomy. The lack of space for dialogue and self-reflection limits the effectiveness of support and may discourage further development.

## For whom, when, and in what form?

### Mentoring

Mentoring is particularly recommended when working with older secondary school pupils and students who are facing important life, educational or career decisions. At this stage of development, young people often need support in understanding their goals, values and opportunities that will enable them to shape their future consciously.

The mentoring relationship is usually individualised, which allows for a deep understanding of the mentee's needs and expectations. The long-term nature of this cooperation allows for building trust and creating a safe space for development, which promotes the achievement of lasting outcomes. Mentoring can cover areas related not only to education or career, but also to personal development and social skills.

### Tutoring

Tutoring is primarily aimed at secondary school students and younger university students who need support in developing reflection on their own learning process, self-awareness and responsibility for their education. Tutoring works best where an individual approach and adaptation of methods to the unique needs of the learner or student are important.

Tutoring can be delivered in a structured and periodic way, for example through thematic cycles or modules focused on specific issues, such as learning and time management techniques or interpersonal skills. Working individually or in small groups helps to build relationships and encourages participants to get involved.

### Coaching

Coaching is most suitable for people who have clear goals and are prepared to work intensively to achieve them. It is usually used by older pupils and students, but also by adults at various stages of their careers who need support in specific situations.

In education, coaching plays a complementary role alongside mentoring and career counselling. It works well when preparing for job interviews, choosing a specialisation or field of study, as well as developing presentation and interpersonal skills, to name a few. Coaching leads students to make decisions with greater confidence and prepare themselves better for important challenges. Its short-term, results-oriented nature makes it an effective method in situations requiring rapid support and specific tools.

Development discussions are a key tool in the work of a mentor, tutor, teacher or counsellor. They do not serve to impart knowledge, but to support another person in understanding themselves, making decisions and taking action.

At this point, it is worth noting the publication “Metody i narzędzia w bilansie kompetencji – podejście praktyczne” [Methods and Tools in Competence Assessment – A Practical Approach], which presents exercises and tools to facilitate such discussions (Korycka-Fortuna, 2025).

The materials provided in this publication assist in diagnosing competencies, reflecting on one's own skills, and planning development, enabling conscious and effective support in the process of learning and strengthening the mentee's potential.

## Relationship-based education as an investment in the future

Schools and universities are not just institutions that transfer knowledge or prepare students for examinations. These are primarily spaces where young people grow as fully-fledged, conscious individuals. Education is a process much broader than teaching itself. It includes shaping identity, building social skills, and developing self-esteem and agency.

In this context, mentoring, tutoring and coaching become key tools for supporting students on their journey to adulthood. Through relationships based on trust,

openness and partnership, students better understand themselves and their goals, but also to deal more effectively with educational and life challenges. These forms of support facilitate their transition from passive recipients of knowledge to active creators of their own career paths.

However, for mentoring, tutoring and coaching to fulfil their roles, they need to be professionalised and systematically embedded in educational structures. Today, it is worth taking care of developing the competencies of people providing these forms of support, applying clear standards of operation and ensuring them a permanent place in schools and universities. Only in this way will relationship-based education become a real investment in the future of next generations, enabling the development of competent, aware and responsible citizens.

The relationship between a client and a mentor or tutor can be a catalyst for change, strengthening reflection, agency, motivation, and the ability to make independent educational and occupational decisions.

An important element of this relationship is the shift away from the traditional knowledge transfer model towards partnership-based dialogue, an individual approach and trust building.

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# Tutoring and mentoring in educational institutions

The world full of information, education, especially vocational education, cannot be limited to merely conveying content. Its role is to stimulate curiosity, demonstrate the usefulness of knowledge and inspire action and independent thinking. In order to develop, people need more than just instructions – they need space where their potential will be noticed, as well as inspiration, the courage to think and opportunities to act. Therefore, it is not the teacher's "talking some sense into someone", but the flame kindled in a relationship that is the symbol of education in the future. This perspective is brought to schools by contemporary approaches: coaching, tutoring and mentoring, which are increasingly used in educational practice.

## The meaning of education in a world of excess

The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.
Plutarch

In technical and vocational schools, where students prepare for the realities of the labour market, tutoring and mentoring are becoming practical strategies for supporting cognitive activity and a sense of agency. Both of these methods are in line with the eighth priority guideline of the state's education policy for the 2025/2026 school year, which promotes formative assessment and methods that stimulate student development.

Coaching, tutoring and mentoring meet these needs because they:

- focus on individual teacher-student relationships;
- develop reflection, planning and decision-making skills;
- help discover strengths, passions and paths for development;
- combine feedback, self-evaluation and goal setting.

These are not merely teaching strategies – they are presence strategies that strengthen the student's agency and real influence on their own learning process.

### Educational matrix – a compass for teachers

Contemporary education is not only about imparting knowledge, but above all about responding to the diverse needs of students, their learning styles, values and life goals. A teacher who wants to be a guide, mentor, tutor or counsellor must be familiar with the available development supporting methods. An educational matrix proves helpful here – a tool for organising various pedagogical approaches and presenting their applications in practice.

The matrix presents five key attitudes towards the educational process, and at the same time five different ways of supporting students: teaching, coaching, counselling, mentoring and educational tutoring. It was originally created thanks to the work of Maciej Bennewicz and Anna Prelewicz (*Mentoring: Złote zasady* [Mentoring: The Golden Rules], Helion, 2019),

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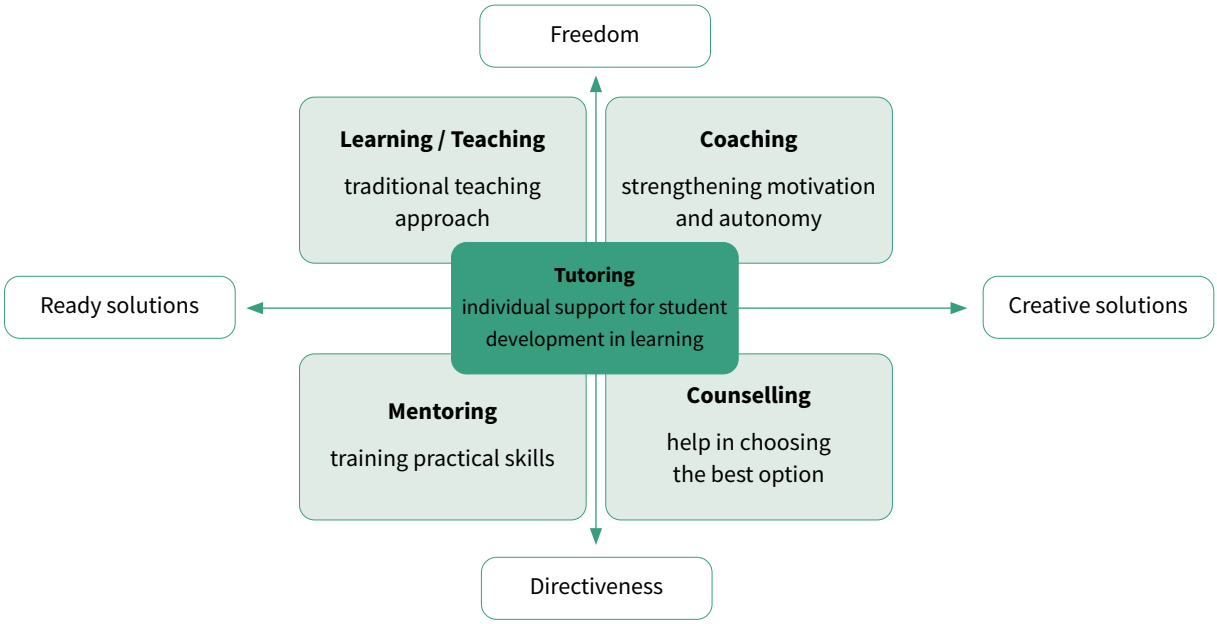
**Figure 1. Educational matrix**




*Own elaboration based on: M. Bennewicz, A. Prelewicz, Mentoring: Złote zasady [Mentoring: Golden Rules], Helion 2019.*

and in this study it has been modified and expanded to include tutoring as a separate, hybrid approach. Its design is based on two axes:

- **vertical** axis moves from freedom (understood as methodological freedom, exploration and opportunities to experiment) to directiveness, i.e. teaching based on established procedures, requirements and educational standards;
- **horizontal** axis leads from ready-made solutions (such as core curricula, legal regulations or operating schemes) to creative solutions based on discovery, creative approach and the generation of new strategies by students and teachers.

The intersection of these two axes creates quadrants representing different approaches to education and student support: teaching – understood as a traditional teaching approach; coaching – focused on strengthening motivation and autonomy; counselling – focused on helping students choose the most appropriate path; and mentoring – based on practical skills training.

Between them, educational tutoring emerges as a hybrid method that combines elements of different approaches, offering students personalised support, space for reflection, and development through project work and independent learning.

The matrix can serve as a guide to various ways of supporting students and a source of methodological inspiration. It advises teachers on when to use coaching, tutoring, mentoring or counselling, and also provides a starting point for reflection on their own role and competencies. It facilitates tailoring the approach to the specific situation of the student – regardless of whether they need to acquire knowledge, develop social skills, or prepare for professional challenges. Importantly, the matrix does not impose a single path, but shows that different methods may complement each other and coexist, creating a coherent, dynamic educational ecosystem.

With this tool teachers not only receive a map organising the available options, but above all a kind of compass

**Table 1. Educational methods – characteristics and examples of application**

| | Teaching | Coaching | Counselling | Mentoring | Tutoring |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Approach** | **freedom + ready solutions** | **freedom + creativity** | **directiveness + creativity** | **directiveness + ready solutions** | **individualisation + learning process** |
| **Characteristics** | traditional teaching: the teacher imparts knowledge, the student absorbs it | process suporting Independence of the student, discovery of motivation and values | help in choosing best options, counsellor shows possibilities | training of skills by established standards mentor supports practical development | learning support tailored to the student's learning style, difficulties and pace of development |
| **Examples** | typical lessons, lectures, training sessions, tests | work on goals, motivation, values | choice of profession, direction of development | vocational training, implementation of procedures, feedback in action | project-based method, working on school issues |

*Source: author's own elaboration.*

allowing them to find their way around the complex landscape of student learning needs and set the direction for their actions in an informed way. Somewhat like surveying – to get to your destination, you first have to look around carefully.

### Personal perspective

In writing this paper, I wanted to share my professional experience, which goes beyond theory and procedures.

Coaching, mentoring and tutoring are not merely working methods that I have been subtly and intuitively using in my classes for years, but above all, a way of looking at students: with attentiveness, respect and, most importantly, with faith in their potential.

I would like them to come to me not only for help, but above all for EMPOWERMENT.

I treat these working methods, especially tutoring, as a joint trip to the mountains. My husband is a mountain guide, so I know very well what it means to carefully accompany another person on their way to the top. It is not I who choose the goal, but the student who points the way. My role is to help them unfold the map, spot the paths, understand the terrain and assess what might be needed along the way. As a result, instead of chaos, there is a clear way for development; instead of pressure, there is a sense of agency and individual pace; and instead of loneliness – genuine presence and support on the way towards the goal.

I also think that in order to inspire and support others in change, one has to start with themselves first. I remember how in 2010, completely intuitively and without any systematic patterns, I started the "Lesson with an Expert" series. These were meetings where I invited specialists from various technical fields to the school so that students could see what real professional work looks like, understand the importance of skills, and feel that their education makes sense.

I believed then – and I still believe – that without meeting other people, there can be no real education. It is conversation, presence, inspiration and networking that create the conditions for development.

## Relationship as a force for change – coaching, mentoring, and tutoring in the transformation of vocational education

***[Q]uestions raised in this report are suggestive. They are designed to inspire reflection and inform strategic thinking on how global trends might transform education and how education can shape a better future.***

OECD, Trends Shaping Education 2025

In a world undergoing rapid social, technological and environmental change, vocational schools can no longer limit themselves to merely imparting knowledge. Today, we need institutions that support the development of practical skills and competencies, accompanying young people in shaping their educational and professional paths. Close cooperation between schools and the labour market means that their role in the transformation of the education system is becoming particularly important.

In response to these challenges, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) points out the need to empower students to develop agency and active participation in the world.

*The Future of Education and Skills 2030* report states: "Future-ready students need to exercise agency, in their own education and throughout life. Agency implies a sense of responsibility to participate in the world and, in so doing, to influence people, events and circumstances for the better".

This approach is particularly important in vocational education, where young people face real challenges of the labour market.

The *OECD Trends Shaping Education 2025* report shows that traditional teaching methods are giving way to methods based on competencies, project-based work and flexible forms of learning. It is key to tailor the content and pace of learning to the individual needs of the student, as this promotes greater engagement and a sense of agency. It is precisely this approach that makes vocational education effective and friendly.

There is increasing talk of the need to personalise teaching. The OECD emphasises the importance of modern education systems which (using data) are able to accurately identify students' needs and adapt the forms of support. In this context, mentoring and tutoring play a special role.

These are not only working methods, but also ways of building relationships, supporting reflection and developing responsibility in the school community.

Noteworthy is also the development of skills such as critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills. Both the *OECD Skills Outlook 2023* and the *Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 (ZSU 2030)* – a national plan for the development of skills tailored to the challenges of the labour market – indicate that the future of the labour market will require not only technical knowledge, but above all adaptive and communication skills and a readiness to commit to lifelong learning.

*The Integrated Skills Strategy (ZSU 2030)* highlights many key skills for the coming decades: digital competencies (including working with data and artificial intelligence), mathematical and scientific abilities, environmental awareness, and social skills necessary for cooperation in international, diverse teams.

Tutoring supports the adaptation of the educational path to the student's abilities and learning style, while mentoring facilitates the practical application of the acquired knowledge.

In the context of these changes, career guidance is becoming increasingly important and should be permanently integrated into everyday school practice. It allows students to discover their talents and set goals, while coaching promotes reflective development planning and helps them make informed career decisions.

It is impossible to overlook the importance of international programmes such as Erasmus+, which support both professional and intercultural mentoring. They allow students and teachers to gain experience in various countries and develop language, social and communication skills – so important today in remote work and international teams.

All this leads to one conclusion: vocational education needs openness, flexibility and commitment. Coaching, mentoring and tutoring are not just buzzwords, but concrete ways to build a modern school that meets the needs of students and the demands of the modern world. Until recently, secondary schools rarely had special educators, psychologists and career counsellors. Today, their role is gradually growing. This proves that change is possible and begins with specific decisions, local initiatives and the courage to introduce new solutions, even on the scale of a single school.

## Mentoring or the transfer of practical knowledge

Mentoring is not a new educational concept. On the contrary, it is a way of learning that has been present in culture for centuries. The word "mentor" itself carries a history that has its roots in Greek mythology.

Odysseus, setting off for Troy, entrusted Mentor with the care of his home, his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus. When Telemachus set out to search for his father, the goddess Athena took the form of Mentor and accompanied him on his journey.

Since then, mythology has perpetuated the image of a guardian whom we trust and to whom we entrust important tasks, matters and our most precious values.

In the Middle Ages, a master craftsman guided an apprentice through the successive stages of learning the trade. Over the centuries, this model proved that the path to professional expertise does not lead solely through theory, but through interaction with someone who knows the realities of the job. Today, this tradition is still alive, especially in vocational schools, as a natural response to the need for learning through experience.

These days, mentoring is understood as a relationship between someone more experienced and a person entering the professional world. It is not random counselling, but a well-thought-out process. A mentor does not lecture on theory, but shows how something works in practice. They inspire, point out directions for development and accompany the mentee in building autonomy. The *mentee* learns not only the profession, but also the right approach, responsibility and proper communication.

Not all mentoring has to be professional from the start. Sometimes it happens informally – someone shows someone else something, gives advice, encourages them to do something. But professional mentoring is more than just a friendly gesture: it is a planned process focused on developing skills. It can last a few hours, days, weeks, or sometimes even years. The most important thing is that it is informed and leads to real change.

Mentoring is also about space – "the arena", where the game for competencies and experience takes place. This function can be fulfilled by a school, company or enterprise. The mentor knows the rules of the game – they know what works well and what needs to be adjusted. The *mentee* needs the conditions to train, ask questions and make mistakes. It is in this atmosphere where knowledge is transferred, which is lively, practical and embedded in a specific context.

### Erasmus+ as a space for inter-cultural and professional mentoring

Mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ have been supporting young people in gaining professional experience for years. Technical school students go on professional internships to foreign companies and institutions. There, they not only learn a profession, but also get to know the real working conditions, organisational culture and communication style. Those who have participated in such projects emphasise that this is not a simulation, but an authentic experience that

stays with them for a long time. Students realise that practising a profession (e.g. surveyor) does not differ significantly between Poland and other countries.

This makes them feel that European education is accessible. Importantly, they are not alone there. In every company, there is a facilitator – an employee, supervisor or mentor. They do not need to have a title, but their role is specific: they explain the rules and processes, and help the students adapt.

Mentoring takes on an inter-cultural dimension here. In addition to the profession, students learn collaboration, industry language and openness to diversity. Before leaving, they prepare themselves linguistically and culturally.

Upon their return, they receive certificates, but above all, they gain self-confidence and experience in an international team. Erasmus+ is not just a project. It is an environment where vocational education really happens.

### Mentoring at vocational technical schools – everyday life that shapes attitudes

In Polish vocational technical schools, four-week internships, typically conducted in the third and fourth grades, are many students' first exposure to the real working environment. Young people learn not only how to perform industry-specific tasks but also the work style and responsibility.

Many employers and designated employees become mentors – explaining, supporting and showing how they work. They do this naturally, without a mentoring structure, but the effect is real. Students gains knowledge about the profession from people who do it every day. They observe their work, participate in it and ask questions. They learn not only specific activities, but also attitudes: assertiveness or ways of resolving conflicts. Here, mentoring is not solely about transferring knowledge, but about its practical application and practicing competencies that prove effective in action.

It is precisely this kind of informal mentoring, embedded in a specific place, that can be just as valuable as its formalised versions.

### Teacher mentoring – professional development through relationships

Mentoring has also appeared in the professional path of teachers. As of September 2022, the role of internship supervisor was taken over by the mentor of a beginning teacher.

“The change in nomenclature is associated with a redefinition of the role – from controlling and evaluating to supporting and developing” (Wysocka, 2022).

A mentor is an experienced teacher (appointed or certified) who assists a person starting work in the profession. Not only do they share their knowledge and experience, but they also inspire and help build professional confidence.

This mentoring model is used in many European Union countries, such as Germany, Sweden, France and Spain, where a culture of cooperation and continuous professional development for teachers is the foundation of the education system. In Poland, this approach is still developing, but its potential is evident.

Mentoring based on conversation, reflection and joint goal setting does not end after the internship. It is an ongoing process, as teachers learn throughout their lives. And a school that supports them in their development becomes a place of education not only for students, but for the entire community.

Mentoring is not a method – it is an interpersonal relationship. A mentor is an experienced person who can listen, accompany and leave room for mistakes and attempts. It is this relationship that makes mentoring effective – regardless of whether it takes place in a vocational technical school, during an internship abroad, or in the teachers' room. Joint discovery and development remain the essence.

Martin Buber emphasised that a man only becomes themselves through another man. This thought captures the meaning of mentoring – it begins where one person helps another to grow.

### Occupational tutoring – from idea to real change in education

Tutoring, or more broadly, individual collaboration between a tutor and a student, is present in education wherever mediocrity is not accepted and ambitious goals are to be achieved. Embedded in the context of personalised education, it is a method that treats a person holistically – not only through educational or professional achievements. Although the word tutoring originates from elite universities, it is becoming increasingly common in secondary schools.
It is becoming not so much a new tool, but a way of thinking about education and building relationships.

There are two approaches to tutoring:

- **scientific** – for students who know their goals and want to develop their skills in a specific direction;
- **developmental** – for those who are discovering their interests and feel the need for change and personal development.

Although they differ in terms of application, both approaches are based on an integral view of the student and a master-student relationship based on trust and cooperation.

Who is a tutor? This is a person with knowledge and experience in their field. They do not need to be an outstanding expert in the traditional sense – it is important that they understand the industry context, are able to inspire, ask questions, listen and support. A tutor does not limit themselves to imparting knowledge, but teaches how to think and select what is important. They share their tools of the trade, becoming a guide on the path to development. They are a companion, not a leader. In this context, it is worth recalling the figure of Socrates, the father of critical thinking, who did not give ready-made answers but provoked reflection.

Although tutoring is not formally included in the structure of the system or in the core curriculum in Polish secondary schools, it does exist in practice. It is present owing to the passion and commitment of teachers who see students as individuals, not just as "educational units". This is most evident in vocational education: in project-based work, case studies, teamwork, and independent search for solutions. It is in such moments that a tutor can be most helpful.

One of the elements of *Reforma26. Kompas Jutra* [Reform26. Compass of Tomorrow], a government programme for the modernisation of Polish education, is a greater emphasis on project-based work, supportive assessment and development of soft skills. All of this fits perfectly with the philosophy of tutoring. Students work towards their own goals, and vocational teachers act as guides rather than examiners.

In line with the reform's objectives, assessment ceases to be a verdict or a sentence. Instead of categorising students, it supports them. Instead of saying "pass" or "fail", it invites conversation about progress, engagement and areas for development. It becomes a source of feedback that builds motivation and expands knowledge.

In this context, tutoring proves to be a natural learning environment. It helps integrate professional development with the development of personality, independence, responsibility and reflective thinking.

It is worth remembering that tutoring in vocational education is not just about projects or case studies.
It is also an extremely effective way of preparing students for competitions, industry contests and other challenges that require not only knowledge, but also character, determination and conscious action.

In such situations, the tutor's task is to provide individual support to the student: helping them plan, improve their skills, build self-awareness and develop strategies.

Good examples include **WorldSkills** and **EuroSkills** – prestigious vocational competitions where young people demonstrate their practical skills at the highest level. Tutoring plays a key role in such preparations: it helps to forge talent into real skills, build an action plan and teach teamwork. The tutor not only provides substantive support, but is simply there to help.

### Good practices – professional tutoring in action

The example of School Complex No. 1 in Ełk shows that professional tutoring can function effectively, even without formal recognition in the education system.

In 2017–2018, teacher-tutors provided individual support to 126 students, organising regular tutorials and weekly meetings. The innovation was developmental tutoring, focused on discovering students' potential and building their self-awareness.

The effects of this action were visible both in the behaviour of students and in the school culture. Young people became more independent, responsible and open to cooperation. They gained the ability to plan and make decisions. Teachers developed their interpersonal skills and deepened their professional reflection. The entire school community gained space for dialogue, building relationships based on trust and cooperation. This example proves that real change in education can start with the involvement of individuals who believe in the potential of relationship-based learning.

### Academic tutoring – a development strategy in higher education

One of the most consistent and consciously implemented tutoring programmes in Poland is the initiative by the AGH University of Kraków. The academic tutoring programme there is a model of effective use of this method in the teaching and development space of higher education.

Tutoring classes at AGH are primarily aimed at talented and ambitious students, for whom individual meetings with a tutor provide an opportunity for in-depth reflection, development of soft skills and exploration of their own interests.

A unique feature of the programme is the absence of traditional assessment. Instead of points or grades, participation is confirmed by a certificate and an entry in the diploma supplement, which emphasises the value of the process rather than just its outcome. Another important part of the programme is the training system for academic tutors. Those who wish to perform this function must complete a specialised training course, "School of Academic Tutors", comprising 64 hours of classes, practical tasks and workshops developing communication and teaching skills. The status of a tutor is granted by decision of the Vice-Rector for Education, which demonstrates the institutional recognition of the importance of tutoring in the context of the quality of the educational process.

Vocational tutoring does not require any formal framework to be effective. Its strength lies in relationships, curiosity and genuine interest in people. A well-conducted tutoring process supports students not only in acquiring professional skills, but also in developing their thinking, collaboration, decision-making and self-awareness.

Although tutoring has its roots in academic circles and elite universities, today it is available in any school that has the courage to focus on relationship-based education. It is enough to create space – not so much for new methods, but for a new quality of contact. Where the teacher becomes a guide and the student an active participant in their own development path, education that truly transforms is born.

## Conclusion: Investing in people – relationship-based education

From my own experience, I know that the path to using tutoring, coaching and mentoring is not always simple. I am going through it myself and, as a methodological consultant in the field of vocational education, I encounter the concerns of teachers who want to use

these methods but feel that they require professional psychological preparation or training in this area. Of course, it happens that tutoring conversations touch on emotional areas close to therapy. However, I would like to emphasise that the tools we use in education as tutors, mentors or coaches are not therapeutic tools. A therapist works by referring to the client's past – we refer to their future, aspirations and strengths. We use positive psychology tools that are based on a vision of development, not diagnosis. One does not need to be a psychologist to use these methods.

The key is substantive preparation, ethics and the ability to build relationships. It is also important to use positive messages, i.e. to give genuine feedback that empowers and appreciates.

It is remarkable that as educators we can support our students' talents and strengths. The greatest progress is not made in “areas for development”, but where the student is already strong. This is confirmed by Gallup's theory of talents – Donald O. Clifton's concept based on research by the Gallup Institute, according to which the greatest development occurs by strengthening existing aptitudes (Clifton and Harter, 2019).

I believe that a professional process of educating tutors in secondary schools will finally become a reality. Many teachers have a natural aptitude for such work; all that is needed is to give them the tools, create a common methodology and provide space for development. Through the training of teaching staff, the vision of tutoring, coaching and mentoring could be standardised, and every participant in the programme would know how to work and where to start.

Having analysed the arguments presented in this publication, both regarding the methods and the benefits for students, parents, schools and society, I am convinced that these approaches are worth implementing. There is no better investment than investing in people. Innovation in education begins with relationships, and relationships begin with presence and the courage to be with other people.

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# Relationship as a driver of student development – mentoring, tutoring, and coaching in practice

Before we dive deeper into specific strategies and practices, it is worth pausing for a second to imagine three teachers representing different but complementary approaches. Recall those who have inspired you in some way, who have left a mark on your memory. Perhaps not because they gave you the most facts, but because they were there for you at an important moment. One of them may have encouraged you, another may have asked a question that stayed with you for a long time, and yet another may have shown you that you are capable of more than you previously thought.

## For those who teach or want to teach with their hearts

Such memories show that teachers can be present in many ways — as mentors, tutors, or coaches — and each of these ways has its own value. Teachers can take on different roles in their work — they can be guides, attentive listeners, or companions in discovery. These are different dimensions of the relationship with students that foster their development. Although mentoring, tutoring, and coaching differ in their assumptions and methods, they complement each other, creating a more complete picture of education based on support, dialogue and trust.

- **Mentor:** an experienced practitioner who shares their knowledge and experience. It is someone who says, “I've been there. I know what it's like. I can tell you how I dealt with it.” Their strength lies not only in their knowledge, but also in their willingness to share it. The student listens, learns, and trusts. Mentoring is based on building a master-student relationship in which the mentor shares their experience to support the *mentee's* development (Rhodes, DuBois, 2021). Think about how you can use your experience to help students in difficult situations.
- **Tutor:** a patient guide who, instead of giving ready-made answers, asks thought-provoking questions: “How would you do it?”, “Why is it important to you?”, “What else can you try?”. A tutor is present but does not impose themselves. They believe that the student will find their own direction. Tutoring focuses on developing the student's independence and critical thinking skills through targeted questions and support in the learning process. It is crucial to develop the ability to ask questions that stimulate the student to reflect (Whitmore, 2009). Try to ask questions that will open students' eyes to new possibilities.
- **Coach:** stands to the side. It is someone who does not need to know the details of the profession, industry, or school subject. They know that they are not an expert. It is the student who is the expert. A coach is just a mirror in which the young person can see themselves and “hear” their own needs, goals, limitations and capabilities. They say, “I don't know, but I can be with you as you search”. Coaching focuses on discovering the student's potential by supporting them in defining their goals and finding their own solutions (Connor, Pokora, 2007). Think about how you can help your student discover their strengths.

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**Table 1. Differences between a teacher, tutor, coach, mentor**

| | Mentor | Tutor | Coach | Teacher |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge** (substantive) | + | + | – | + |
| **Knowledge** (about the student) | + | + | – | – |
| **Ignorance** (help in achieving goals) | – | – | + | – |
| **Speaking** (sharing knowledge, inspiring) | + | – | – | + |
| **Questions** (not questioning, but listening to answers) | – | + | + | – |

*Source: based on: A. Sarnat-Ciasto, Tutoring, coaching i mentoring w polskiej szkole? Między chaosem a autentyczną potrzebą [The Tutoring, Coaching and Mentoring in Polish School? Between chaos and a genuine need]. "Podstawy Edukacji. Między Porządkiem a Chaosem" 2015, no. 8, pp. 141–152*

None of these attitudes can be considered better or worse than the others. Each of them may be necessary, depending on the stage of the student's development and the nature of the relationship.

What they have in common is attentiveness to other people, confidence in their potential and willingness to be not only a teacher, but also a human being alongside other human beings.

The key is to flexibly adapt to the student's needs and the situational context. The table below helps to understand the differences between a teacher, a tutor, a coach and a mentor.

There is no single piece of advice as to which method to choose – this story does not have a single protagonist. It has many, and each teacher can transition seamlessly between roles.

They are mentors when students need guidance. Tutors, when there is a need to stimulate thinking. Coaches, when young people learn to trust themselves in order to strengthen their self-confidence. It is important for a teacher to be able to adapt their approach depending on the needs, but also on their own limits.

This chapter is precisely about that: how to be in a relationship that fosters growth. How to provide effective support without having expert knowledge in a given area. How to ask questions that last longer than answers.

The goal is to understand how to build relationships that foster student development, regardless of the role the teacher chooses.

## Introduction to action

Let us imagine a teacher who enters the classroom every morning and, for a moment, does not open the register, does not look at the textbook, does not glance at the clock. Instead, they smile and ask, "How are you today?". This is not a test or a formality, but an invitation. An invitation to be together, to be honestly present. These few minutes are not about the material, but about the person. For many students, it is the only time of the week when someone focuses solely on them. It is a moment when they can hear, "You are important to me". A moment that, at first, can even feel uncomfortable. Practices like a "welcome circle" are effective ways to build relationships and a sense of community in the classroom (Jennings, 2019). Can you create such a space in your classroom?

Such practices have been an integral part of the education system in Finland and Norway for years. There, teachers ask pupils every day what they bring with them to class – what emotions, experiences and moods.

In Poland, more and more schools are beginning to implement similar solutions, such as a "minute of mindfulness" at the beginning of classes or elements of Nonviolent Communication (*NVC*) developed by Marshall Rosenberg.

The effects are clear: less tension, greater focus, more peace of mind. Learners are increasingly trying to name their feelings, emotions and needs. The scale of this is still small, as is the awareness of the need for change among teachers. However, these activities fit perfectly into the idea of holistic education, which takes into account not only the intellectual, but also the emotional and social development of students (Glazer, 2020).

It is worth considering how you can use these techniques to help students better cope with stress while also awakening their inner need for self-development – see before you teach. Listen before you speak. Because a relationship is the beginning of everything. Building relationships should be seen as an integral part of the educational process.

## Mentoring without certification

Does one really need a certificate to be close to students, listen to them, ask them questions, and support their development? No. The most important "document" is a genuine presence in the classroom and a willingness to talk. Soft skills, such as empathy, listening and communication are crucial for building relationships and supporting student development (Jones et al., 2019). Authenticity and care are more important than formal qualifications. It is not a diploma, but your attitude that demonstrates the quality of your work!

Mentoring, tutoring, and coaching do not begin with receiving a diploma. They begin when you sit down next to a student and truly listen.

They do not begin in a course, but when you help a young person find meaning in what they are learning. Coaching is not a title; it is the courage to ask, instead of giving ready-made answers, such questions as "What do you think about this?", "How would you do it?".

It is the teacher's attitude that makes students see them as a guide. Diplomas can add value, but they do not give meaning to their work. What makes a teacher a mentor, tutor, or coach is authenticity, commitment, and daily practice. The key is honesty in the relationship and a willingness to truly support the student on their journey.

## Development of soft skills and raising student motivation

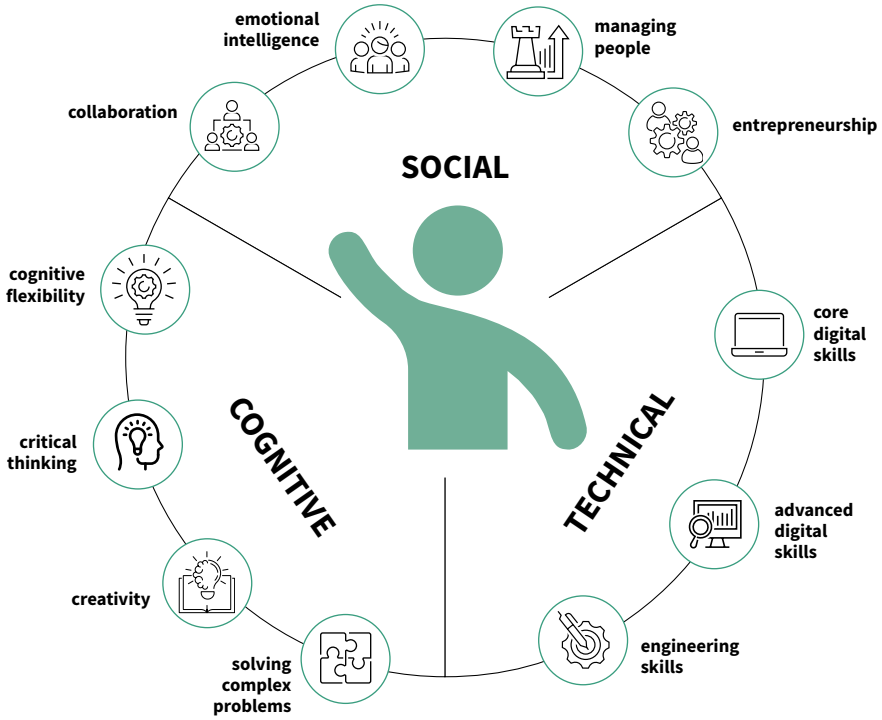
School is not merely a place for transferring knowledge. It's also a space where young people learn cooperation, communication, emotional management and perseverance in pursuing goals. Soft skills, such as empathy, assertiveness, listening skills and teamwork are becoming as important as specialised knowledge and professional qualifications.

Therefore, developing them should be a natural part of the learning process. Think about which of these skills you would particularly like to develop in your students. It is worth remembering that soft skills form the foundation of the skills of the future – those that will allow young people to navigate a rapidly changing world.

## Support instead of control – how a good mentor/tutor/coach acts

In the traditional school model, the teacher acts as a guardian: they assess, control and hold students accountable. Mentoring, tutoring and coaching offer something else – companionship. A good mentor does not

**Table 2. Competencies of the future**




*Source: Competencies of the Future report www.delab.uw.edu.pl/projekty/kompetencje-przyszlosci.*

ask "Have you done your homework?", but "What helped or hindered you in your work?". Instead of controlling, they work with students to find ways to proceed.

However, it is worth remembering that such a change does not happen overnight. Students who have been under a regime of control for years may initially react with distrust. If the teacher suddenly starts asking questions, they may think: "This must be a hidden evaluation". They may respond curtly to avoid any risk. The key is to build trust and communicate transparently.

Therefore, a good mentor consistently demonstrates that their goal is not to evaluate, but to support. Consistency is important – the same principles repeatedly reflected in practice. Over time, students begin to understand that this attitude is authentic. This brings about trust.

It is a turning point: initial resistance gives way to curiosity, and then to activity. Students start asking questions, inviting conversation and sharing their thoughts. What initially seemed artificial becomes a natural part of class life. Consistency and authenticity in actions are key.

## Where to look for inspiration?

It is worth developing oneself, obviously. But development does not necessarily mean piles of paperwork. It is better to take advantage of practical training courses and workshop offered by organisations that have been working for Polish education for years.

Institutions, organisations and networks supporting education:

- → Szkoła Ucząca Się (SUS);
- → Fundacja Edukacja dla Demokracji (Education for Democracy Foundation);

- Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej (Centre for Citizen Education);
- Fundacja Szkoła z Klasą (School with Class Foundation);
- Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji (Centre for Education Development);
- Fundacja Edukacji Przyszłości (Future Education Foundation);
- Teach for Poland;
- Local Teacher Training Centres;
- PROMENTOR – School of Education Mentors for Teachers and Headteachers;
- Centrum Dobrego Wychowania (Good Education Centre);
- Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji (Foundation for the Development of the Education System);
- Fundacja Instytut Edukacji Pozytywnej (Positive Education Institute).

It is important that vocational development is practical and tailored to individual needs and the specific nature of work. Discussions with other teachers, sharing experiences, and resources available on the internet, especially in industry groups and educational communities, can be a valuable source of inspiration.

## Practical exercises and techniques

You can use the following suggestions in your work; treat them as inspiration. Choose what really suits you.

### The welcome circle (i.e. turn-taking)

**Instructions**

Start the day with a short turn-taking exercise where each student can share their thoughts and feelings.

**Purpose**

Building an atmosphere of safety and openness.

### A minute of mindfulness

**Instructions**

Introduce a short meditation or breathing exercise at the beginning of the lesson.

**Purpose**

Calmness, focus and increased attentiveness.

### Relationship map

**Instructions**

Ask students (or teachers) to draw a map of their class. Have them write names of people:

- they talk to most often,
- they only know by sight,
- they try to avoid.

This exercise is intended for individual reflection. At the end, you can ask students to put their anonymous thoughts into a "golden thoughts jar".

**Variant**

Instead of a map, you can use metaphorical cards. Students arrange them like train cars – in each car they write down the people they "invite to sit next to them" and explain why.

**Purpose**

Understanding that learning and development take place as part of relationships, not in isolation.

### "What is in the box?"

**Materials**

- box with a lid
- a small mirror glued or inserted into the bottom

**Instructions**

1. Show students the box and say, "There is something very special inside. Each of you will take a look inside, but you cannot say directly what you saw."
2. Students take turns coming up and looking into the box, where they see their reflection.
3. Upon returning to their seats, students:
   - describe what they saw without revealing that it was them, e.g. "It's someone who can help others".
   - write down their thoughts anonymously on a piece of paper (to be read out later).

**Variant**

**"Warm words"** – other students describe who was in the box, saying only positive things about that person.

**Reflection after the exercise – questions for students**

- How did you feel when you saw yourself in the box?
- Was it difficult to describe yourself without saying it directly?
- What new did you notice about yourself?

**Purpose**
Developing self-awareness, self-esteem, attentiveness and the ability to describe oneself and others in a positive way.

### Goal map Instructions

Each student creates a map with educational and personal goals (here and now). They can create something like a "dream map" from old newspapers.
**Stages**

1. What do I want to achieve this semester?
2. What supports me and what hinders me?
3. Who can I talk to when I'm stuck?
4. What will be my first small step?

**Mentor version**
Work individually with the student as a companion, supporting their activities.
**Purpose**
Increasing self-awareness and planning skills, as well as strengthening motivation.

**Summary – questions for the educator**
Each of the exercises described is aimed at developing student capabilities – their self-awareness, relationships and planning skills.

However, it is equally important to stop for a moment and look at your role in this process. It depends on your attitude, attentiveness and willingness to build relationships whether these actions will have a lasting effect. Therefore, it is worth asking yourself a few questions:

- → Do I really see the student – not just their behaviour, but what causes it?
- → Do I create a safe space where students can be themselves?
- → Can I give up control in favour of trust?
- → Do I want to build a relationship and am I open enough to take the first step?

Try incorporating these exercises into your daily routine and observe how they affect the atmosphere in the classroom.

### What is truly important?

- → **Peer learning**: Give students space to learn from one another. It is not only about acquiring knowledge, but also about developing responsibility and cooperation. In the past, young people naturally developed these skills in their backyards or on the playing field – today, they need a place at school to do so.
- → **School mediation:** Allow students to resolve conflicts on their own through dialogue. Mediation teaches conversation, critical thinking and responsibility for the choices we make.
- → **Self-reflection:** Encourage young people to ask themselves: "What did I learn today?", "What does this mean for me?", "How can I use this in the future?". Regular reflection strengthens the sense of purpose and agency in the learning process.
- → **The practice of gratitude:** Help students recognise their achievements. Instead of focusing only on mistakes, learn to notice small successes and value them. This builds self-confidence and a positive attitude.
- → **Combining learning with life:** Show that learning does not end with tests – it is a preparation for future professional and social roles. This allows students to see the point of learning and to translate theory into practice.

It is these elements that make a teacher a mentor, tutor and coach – even if they do not have any certificates to prove it. The key is a holistic approach to education that takes into account development in all areas of life.

### Attentiveness instead of instructions

In Norwegian vocational schools, teachers simply observe students in silence for several minutes, without any assessment. And then they ask: "What did you get out of the fact that I could be with you without interrupting?". It is not a technique, it is an invitation to talk. Consider how you can give students space to be themselves without grading.

In Leszno (Wielkopolska Region), students keep "mood diaries". They write a few sentences about what

is difficult, joyful and moving. The teacher gets back to it, yet not with a red pen, but with a question: "How do you feel about this?". The key is empathy and the ability to listen to students.

Attentiveness is a way of being. It's a choice: to truly be with another person, instead of constantly correcting them. The key is acceptance and non-judgemental attitude towards students.

### Models of working with students – GROW and REGROW

Every good conversation starts with a question. Not with a ready-made advice, but with the curiosity of another person. This is precisely what the GROW and REGROW models are based on, i.e. simple yet very effective ways of taking that originate from coaching.

In the school setting, they are useful not only for coaches, but also for mentors (who share their experience) and tutors (who support through questions and instructions). They help organise students' thinking about goals, situations, possibilities and next steps.

Coaching shows that strength lies not in ready-made solutions, but in questions that provoke thought and trigger independent search for answers.

This process is supported by the **GROW model**, which can be seen as a guide.

- → **Goal** – Where do you want to go?
- → **Reality** – Where are you now?
- → **Options** – What can you do?
- → **Will** – What will you start with?

Imagine a student who avoids vocational training. Instead of lecturing, the teacher asks questions:

- → What would you like to change?
- → What is the most difficult for you?
- → What possibilities do you see?
- → What will you start with this week?

It's a simple conversation, but it gives the student something extremely important – a sense of agency. The key is to support them in finding solutions on their own.

The **REGROW model**, an extension of the classic GROW, is also increasingly used in practice. It adds two preliminary steps that make the process more reflective:

- → **Review** – What have you done already? What were the results?
- → **Evaluate** – What worked and what didn't? What conclusions can be drawn from this?

Only then do you move on to the next steps of GROW (*Goal – Reality – Options – Will*). The result? REGROW not only allows you to set new goals, but also to learn from experience and build awareness of long-term development.

Research conducted in the Netherlands and the Nordic countries confirms that coaching based on the REGROW model has a positive impact on emotional well-being of vocational school students (Kaper, van Graafeiland, Vogelaar, 2024).

In turn, the *Insights: The role of coaching in vocational education* (Brown, 2013) report emphasises that coaching supports the development of professional skills, boosts motivation and fosters learning in practice. Moreover, students participating in coaching processes are less likely to drop out of school, are more motivated and feel better prepared for professional challenges.

### Working with resistance, emotions and the need for autonomy

A student in a vocational school often balances between the desire to cooperate and the need to demonstrate that they are able to make their own decisions. Sometimes they say "no", put off the task, react with anger, or retreat into silence. In a teacher's everyday experience, it's easy to think: "They don't want to learn". However, resistance does not mean unwillingness. It is a language through which the student communicates their needs. The key is to understand the reasons and respond appropriately to their emotions. Resistance says: "I want to be noticed", "I want to have an impact", "I need more time". If we treat

it not as a wall but as a signpost, we will stop looking at the student solely through the prism of behaviour. Anger, sadness, frustration or indifference are not the problem. These are emotions that carry information. Anger is a sign that something is important to me. Sadness – that I have lost something. Fear – that I need support and security. Conversation begins where the teacher has the courage to notice and name these emotions. Adolescence is a time of building identity. The student says "no" not because they are against the teacher, but because they want to be "with themselves". The key is to support the student in the process of building identity and self-acceptance.

That is why it is worth looking for ways to give them a choice, even if it's just a small thing: "Do you want to do this exercise today or tomorrow?", "Would you rather try it alone or in a pair?". These are small gestures that rebuild a sense of influence. The key is to give students the opportunity to control and influence their lives.

Understanding emotions and needs is one thing. The second – equally important – is understanding yourself as a teacher. Because the relationship starts with you.

### You are good enough, or the (non-)perfect teacher

A teacher does not have to be perfect. A teacher does not have to be a hero. The most important thing is that they are real, present, good enough. The strength of a teacher is authenticity and being present in the student's life. Remember that your imperfection is an opportunity to show young people that each of us is only human.

Many myths have grown up around teachers – about their endless patience, perfect preparation, impeccable behaviour, knowledge and empathy in all circumstances.

It is an unattainable ideal that easily frustrates and takes away the joy of work. The key is accepting your own limitations and being ready to grow – not to be perfect, but to be yourself. Remember that your authenticity and openness to learning are a true inspiration for students.

Being good enough means something else: being aware of your own limitations and having the courage to give what is most important – attention, respect, acceptance. You can say "I don't know" and check it with the student. You can apologise for your mistake. You can admit you also have difficulties. This is exactly what creates a bond.

The key is to build relationships based on trust and mutual respect.

Why is this so important? Because a student, seeing a teacher who is not perfect, learns that you do not have to be perfect to deserve respect and trust.

Don't wait for a formal document that will give you the right to support young people. You are already doing it. Every day. When you ask. When you listen. When you stay a little longer. A certificate? It is just something extra. Your questions, your words and your faith in your student – this stays with them for years.

A relationship at school is not a luxury. It is a foundation. Without it, knowledge falls apart and skills lose their meaning. School can be the place where a student first hears: "You can make mistakes", "You don't have to be the best", "You are important just the way you are".

You do not need a new curriculum or digital platform for this. It takes courage to stop before you open the textbook. It takes openness to ask a question before you give a grade. It takes heart to stay when others have already left.

Because it is heart and passion that change school. That's what makes students become more than just "future specialists". They become people who can see others. Because they've been seen themselves.

The most important thing? Trust. Respect. Acceptance. The rest are just extras.

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# Digital dimension of relationships: technologies in mentoring and tutoring

Contemporary education, including vocational education, increasingly operates in a hybrid space – combining direct and digital relationships. Technological transformation is not only changing the way we learn and teach, but also redefining the relationships that form the foundation of effective mentoring and tutoring. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the implementation of digital tools in educational institutions. In Poland, this process has been described in detail in the *Digital Transformation of Education Policy. Diagnosis* (Ministry of National Education, 2024), which emphasises that technologies should serve not only as a medium for transferring knowledge, but also as a catalyst for building educational relationships.

## Between the world of people and the world of screens

In the context of mentoring and tutoring – forms based on dialogue, individual approach and support for growth – the question is: does technology strengthen these relationships, or does it simplify and dehumanise them? Contemporary mentoring and tutoring activities can no longer function in isolation from digital tools, which have become an indispensable part of vocational education. Digital transformation is changing not only the way we learn and teach, but also the very nature of the relationship between mentors and mentees. The increasingly widespread use of mentoring platforms, messengers, artificial intelligence (AI) tools and tutoring management systems proves that technology can not only streamline the organisation of activities, but also support their quality, provided it is used in an informed and reflective way.

As shown in the *Future of Jobs Report 2025* (World Economic Forum, 2025), the key competencies of the future are not only technical skills, but above all the ability to collaborate, self-reflect, be creative and think critically. Therefore, mentoring and tutoring – as methods supporting personal and professional development – are gaining new significance, and technology is becoming a tool that can either strengthen or weaken their essential purpose.

In this chapter, I examine four dimensions of the digitisation of mentoring and tutoring relationships:

- technological tools that support these processes;
- the role of digital competencies among mentors and students;
- the potential and risks associated with technology;
- and the principles of smart ethical integration of digital tools into human-to-human relationships.

The purpose of this analysis is not only to show the latest trends, but also to invite teachers, counsellors and vocational education leaders to reflect on the role technology should play in supporting young people in their development today and in the perspective of 2030.

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## Technological tools in support of mentoring

Mentoring and tutoring – based on trust, individualisation, and supporting development – do not have to be limited to one-on-one meetings. Digital technologies, when properly integrated with relationship-oriented intent, can expand opportunities for contact, personalisation and analysis of student development, as well as assist in the mentoring process. The introduction of tools such as mentoring platforms, messaging apps, and artificial intelligence-based systems is redefining how trust is built, information is exchanged, and progress is monitored. Let us therefore take a look at the digital dimension of relationships in mentoring and tutoring, analysing the tools, competencies, risks, and principles of smart integration of technology into developmental relationships.

### Mentoring and learning platforms (LMS with tutoring functions)

**Moodle**
The most popular *open source* platforms used by high schools and universities. It includes modules for reflection, formative assessment, and organising mentoring relationships.
**Access:** free
**Popularity:** very high
**Implementation from a teacher/counsellor perspective:** No separate permits required, if implemented by a school/university. Training is required in the use of courses and tools such as the e-gradebook, calendar and *feedback*. It is worth agreeing with administrators on how to archive student/*mentee* data.

**Google Workspace for Education / Google Classroom**
Used in many schools and universities. Enable tutoring in the form of digital classrooms with individual feedback.
**Access:** free for schools upon registering with the Google learning programme **Popularity:** very high
**Implementation from a teacher/counsellor perspective:** School administrator's consent required to set up a class/course. The GDPR policy must be followed. (Google is compliant with the Edu version). No additional permission is required for individual contacts, but it is advisable to establish internal rules for this type of interaction with students.

**Microsoft Teams for Education**
Allows for the creation of private mentoring channels, sharing of materials, and scheduling of meetings in the calendar. Commonly used in technical and vocational secondary schools.
**Access:** free under Office 365 A1 for schools
**Popularity:** high
**Implementation from a teacher/counsellor perspective:** School registration for Office 365 Education required. Teachers may create mentoring teams without additional permissions if the tool is approved by the IT administrator. It is good practice to inform students about privacy policies and contact hours.

**EDUmentor (Erasmus+ projects / Polska)** Designed for mentoring in vocational schools. Allows to keep track of students' development, especially in terms of soft skills.
**Access:** free as part of EU projects; demo versions available
**Popularity:** moderate, growing in the vocational education sector
**Implementation from a teacher/counsellor perspective:** May require approval from the school administration (if not implemented as part of a project). No need to have advanced technical skills to operate the system – the interface is tailored to the needs of vocational training teachers. Student data is stored in accordance with the GDPR policy in EU projects.

### Messengers and micro-platforms supporting relationships

**Microsoft Teams and Google Chat / Google Meet** Used to maintain contact, organise one-to-one meetings and conduct group mentoring.
**Access:** free as part of a school's official account
**Popularity:** very high
**Implementation from a teacher/counsellor perspective:** No separate consent is required

if communication is via a school account. It is advisable to establish clear rules for contact with students (e.g. not after 6 pm, no contact via private accounts). Administrator's consent is required to create private chats in some schools.

**Padlet**

An excellent tool for documenting reflections and mentoring work. Can be used without installation.
**Access:** free version (limited number of boards);
**Popularity:** growing among teachers of humanities
**Implementation from a teacher/counsellor perspective:** No consent is required, but it is worth informing students that the tool stores data on foreign servers. In case of underage students, it is best to use group accounts or with parental consent.

**Mentimeter**

Enables quick collection of real-time feedback, e.g. after a mentoring session.
**Access:** free version with limitations; paid Pro version
**Popularity:** medium
**Implementation from a teacher/counsellor perspective:** No consent required, does not collect personal data in anonymous surveys. Good to use at the beginning and end of a mentoring cycle.

**WhatsApp/Messenger (Meta)**

Used in Erasmus+ projects, student tutoring and informal contacts.
**Access:** free
**Popularity:** very high
**Implementation from a teacher/counsellor perspective:** Written consent from the student and/or parent is required for the use of a private communication channel. Schools are increasingly discouraging the use of private messaging apps, preferring integrated solutions (e.g. Teams, Google).

### Artificial intelligence (AI) in mentoring

**ChatGPT (OpenAI) – tutoring mode**

Used by teachers to support student reflection, goal planning, and material preparation.
**Access:** free and paid versions (approx. USD 25/month)
**Popularity:** growing
**Implementation from a teacher/counsellor perspective:** Teachers may use ChatGPT to prepare for lessons without having to obtain consent. When working with students, it is advisable to determine in advance what data will be entered (avoid personal data). Training in the ethical use of AI in education is recommended.

**Microsoft Copilot / Google Gemini**

Integrated with office suites in education. They help automate mentoring planning (e.g. meeting agendas, materials).
**Access:** part of the paid versions of Office 365 or Google Workspace
**Popularity:** limited (growing in universities)
**Implementation from a teacher/counsellor perspective:** Requires access to the EDU Premium package. The university or school should define the rules for using AI (internal policy). When working with students, avoid generating personal data or assessment documents automatically.

Technology in mentoring does not replace relationships – but it can genuinely support them if it is purposefully and thoughtfully integrated into the process of accompanying students. The future of tutoring and mentoring is not a choice between humans and machines, but a conscious combination of what is empathetic and analogue with what is smart and digital. Technology can effectively support mentoring and tutoring in schools and universities, provided that:

- → the tool is chosen in an informed way, in line with the purpose of mentoring, not just technical convenience;
- → the digital skills of mentors and counsellors are developed, particularly in the field of ethics, AI and privacy;
- → relationships take precedence over tools: technology should serve to deepen contact, not automate it.

## The role of digital competencies among mentors and students

In the era of technology-supported education, digital competencies are no longer an add-on; they have become the basis for effective learning, teaching and building mentoring relationships. In the context of mentoring and tutoring, the ability to use digital tools is not just about technical proficiency. It is primarily a reflective, critical and ethical approach to technology in the process of supporting another person's development.

### Digital competencies of a mentor – the new face of professionalism

Contemporary mentors, particularly those working in secondary schools and universities, need a set of skills that go beyond subject-matter knowledge and conversational skills. According to the *Digital Competence Framework for Educators* (DigCompEdu), an effective digital educator should:

- → select tools relevant to the purpose of mentoring;
- → manage the digital learning environment (platforms, applications, instant messengers);
- → support students in safe and responsible use of technology;
- → shape students' reflection on how technology affects their development process.

In Poland, more and more teacher and counsellor training programmes include a “digital” component, but there is still a lack of training focused strictly on digital mentoring. Systemic and local measures are needed to help mentors not only learn the tools, but also gain digital maturity, i.e. the ability to use technology in a way that supports student autonomy.

### Student as a digital citizen – the role of mentors in developing responsibility

Although young people are often seen as “digital natives”, their skills are usually superficial: they know how to use social media, but have difficulty assessing the credibility of information, managing privacy or engaging in constructive online dialogue. A mentor/tutor can, and indeed should, act as a guide in the digital world, supporting the student in:

- → consciously managing their online presence (digital reputation);
- → using technology for personal and educational growth (e.g. e-portfolio, reflection tools, online courses);
- → developing a critical distance from algorithms and content (e.g. discussions about AI and media);
- → recognising emotions and boundaries in digital communication (cyber ethics, cyber hygiene).

### AI-literacy and future competencies – new challenges for both sides of the relationship

The growing presence of artificial intelligence in education introduces a new category of skills: AI-literacy, i.e. the ability to understand, evaluate and responsibly use artificial intelligence tools. This applies both to mentors and students.

Mentors' AI-literacy means, among other things:

- → the ability to work with AI as a digital assistant (e.g. ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot);
- → the awareness of the limitations and errors of algorithms;
- → the ability to explain to students how AI works and how to use it wisely.

Students' AI-literacy involves:

- → distinguishing between generated and verified information;
- → learning with AI without becoming dependent on it;
- → ethical use of content (avoiding plagiarism, self-reflection).

Schools and universities should actively shape AI competence, as these will form the basis for young people's participation in the labour market and the information society.

### Mentoring as a space for developing digital competence – examples

In a well-run mentoring programme, digital skills can be developed naturally through shared use of platforms, reflection on digital working styles, and analysis of real-life online cases.

Today, digital competencies of mentors and students is not only about the ability to use tools, but also an expression of educational and social maturity. They determine the quality of the mentoring relationship in a technology-saturated environment. At a time when technology is entering the most sensitive areas of education – such as personal development, motivation and emotional support – digital competencies are becoming the key to smart, ethical and effective support for young people.

## When technology helps and when it harms – a critical analysis

Modern education, especially in the field of mentoring and tutoring, can no longer function without technology. Digital tools support teachers, mentors and counsellors, but at the same time they bring about challenges that cannot be ignored. Technology can be a catalyst for development, but when used carelessly, it promotes alienation, simplifies relationships and infringes on privacy. Therefore, the key question is: When does technology support the mentoring relationship, and when does it undermine it?

### Technology as a support for relationships – conditions for effective use

Technology supports the mentoring process when:

- → it is selected in line with the purpose of the relationship, e.g. Teams for meetings, Padlet for reflection, Moodle for planning and monitoring progress;
- → it is used intentionally and transparently – both parties know why and how they are using a given tool;
- → it facilitates accessibility and continuity of contact when students and mentors are in different locations;
- → it enables personalisation – through progress analysis, individual materials and adjustment of the pace of work;
- → it does not replace conversation, but supports it – tools are a starting point for a meeting, not a substitute for it.

Positive example: A secondary school teacher provides vocational tutoring to students via Microsoft Teams, sharing action plans, learning resources, and holding weekly online conversations. This allows them to support the student's progress on an ongoing basis, even outside the physical classroom.

### Technology as a threat – red flags

Technology is harmful when:

- → it becomes an end in itself rather than a means to deepen relationships.
- → it simplifies the mentoring process to a checklist or report, eliminating space for reflection and dialogue;
- → it hinders access for students with limited skills or equipment, exacerbating digital exclusion;
- → it creates a feeling of constant control – e.g. by excessively monitoring students' online activity;
- → it violates privacy or ethical boundaries – e.g. by failing to establish clear rules for contact outside working hours, using private communication channels without consent.

Negative example: A teacher provides students with a self-assessment form in an AI application without explaining how the algorithm works. Students do not know what happens to their data, and feedback is generated automatically, without context or conversation. Trust and commitment are declining.

### Ethical perspective: the limits of technology in human-to-human relationships

The mentoring relationship is based on trust, empathy and presence. These are values that are difficult to fully replicate technologically. Therefore, mentors and advisors should follow these principles:

- → select tools consciously – not every tool is suitable for every student and situation;
- → communicate the rules for using technology – clarity regarding contact hours, data processing, use of AI;
- → respect boundaries – both your own and those of the student (time, form, medium of contact);

**Table 1. Critical points of technology in mentoring and tutoring**

| Area | Benefits | Risks |
|---|---|---|
| **availability and flexibility** | possibility of contact outside of school, facilitating mentoring in small towns | expecting constant availability of a mentor, blurred work boundaries |
| **automation** | faster preparation of materials and action plans | de-individualisation, process mechanisation |
| **progress analysis** | better tracking of student progress (e.g. digital portfolio) | pressure to grade, reducing students to "data" |
| **anonymity and online feedback** | greater openness of the student (e.g. in surveys) | no responsibility for one's words, superficial communication |
| **AI and content generators** | inspiration, assistance in reflection and self-reflection | risk of plagiarism, lack of authenticity, shallow thinking |

*Source: own elaboration*

- → invite reflection – including on how technology affects the way we learn, communicate and see ourselves.

In practice, this means, for example, ruling out apps that collect data without control or replace conversation with predefined patterns. It also means being open to talking to students about how they feel about online contact, what works for them and what discourages them.

### Smart integration, or a balance between the analogue and the digital

It's not about choosing between technology and relationships. It's about the quality of their coexistence. Well-designed hybrid mentoring can combine:

- → face-to-face meetings with online reflection;
- → interactions with self-assessment tools;
- → personal contact with digital support (e.g. planning, AI hints).

This balance requires digital maturity – both on the part of the mentor and the student. It is the ability to use tools not to do something faster, but to accompany another person's development and growth more deeply, more consciously and with greater attentiveness.

## Principles of smart integration of digital tools with relationships

In recent years, technology has entered the world of mentoring and tutoring, offering hope for increased accessibility, flexibility and personalisation. However, every new promise comes with a question about emotional, cognitive and relational costs. It is worth analysing the impact of digital tools on the mentoring relationship – from the perspective of both opportunities and threats. This reflection is particularly important for the educational environment, which often succumbs to technological trends without a deeper analysis of their impact on educational and developmental processes.

So what determines whether technology will be a support or a hindrance? It is not so much the tools themselves that matter, but rather how they are implemented, and user awareness. It is worth remembering basic rules such as:

- → intentionality – each tool should be selected for a specific relational purpose, not the other way around;
- → clarity of boundaries – mentors should establish rules of availability (e.g. contact hours) to protect offline time;
- → combining online and offline – the most effective mentoring relationships combine both dimensions (*blended mentoring*);
- → reflectiveness and attentiveness – both the mentor and students should understand how technology affects their emotions, thinking and relationships.

Technology in mentoring and tutoring may be like a good assistant – discreet, supportive and adapted to the rhythm of the relationship. However, in order for it to truly serve the development process, its implementation must be informed and include ethical

and pedagogical principles. We are thinking less and less about whether to use digital tools, and more about how to integrate them into the quality of contact between mentor and students.

### Goal before the tool

A common mistake in digital mentoring is starting with the tool rather than the goal. Its selection should be based on answers to specific questions:

- Which aspect of the relationship do we want to strengthen? (reflection, continuity of contact, personalisation?)
- What does a given student need?
- Will the tool facilitate or hinder the achievement of our mentoring goal?

**Good practices:** Instead of giving a general instruction to "prepare a presentation", the mentor suggests making a competency map in Padlet, as the goal is deep self-reflection, not a graphic form.

### Minimum tools, maximum meaning

Mentoring and tutoring are all about simplicity and consistency. Mixing too many applications can lead to confusion among students and burnout among mentors. Choosing two or three key tools that all participants in the process are familiar with and understand is a basic prerequisite for effectiveness.

### Technology does not replace presence, but supports it

Smart integration of technology means that a tool does not replace relationships, but complements them. Online meetings, chats, reflection diaries – all of this only makes sense if it serves to build trust, attentiveness and dialogue.

**Ethical principle:** When technology draws the student away from the mentor or reduces contact to the exchange of tasks, it should rather be limited or changed.

### Communication rules and boundaries

In digital mentoring, it is important to establish clear rules:

- when and how we communicate;
- which messages we respond to immediately, and which ones after the meeting;
- which channels serve tasks and which serve relationships.

### Privacy, consent, data security

Mentoring is based on trust. When using digital tools, mentors should ensure that students: understand where and how their data is stored (e-portfolio, chats, diaries), consciously agree to participate in digital tools, know what is public and what is private. When it comes to GDPR and ethical principles, it is worth adopting the following rule: only as much data as is really necessary, and only where the student has influence.

### Technology evaluation by participants

Smart integration means being constantly ready to reflect on technology. Having completed a mentoring cycle, it is worth considering:

- which tools were actually helpful and which were redundant;
- whether the digital format fostered the relationship or weakened it;
- whether students felt empowered or overwhelmed. A short survey or a wrap-up interview can be a mine of information when planning next steps.

## Conclusion

Technology in education, although increasingly advanced, should not overshadow what is most important: the quality of the relationship between the mentor and mentee. In a world dominated by algorithms and automation, presence, attentiveness and empathetic communication are becoming increasingly valuable competencies. Digital tools can support educational development, facilitate contact, personalise processes and analyse progress, but they cannot replace genuine human interaction.

Contemporary tutoring and mentoring must operate at the intersection of two worlds: the humanities and

technology. The key challenge, therefore, is not to choose between them, but to skilfully combine the digital with the deeply human. As recent reports indicate (WEF, 2025; Lenovo Education, 2025), the future of education belongs to models that strengthen the role of the teacher, mentor and tutor as a guide – also in the digital world.

Responsible and ethical use of technology requires developing digital skills by counsellors, teachers and students, but also building a learning culture where technology serves relationships rather than repressing them. This task is not only technical, but above all educational and social.

From the perspective of secondary and vocational education, this means that it is necessary to:

- → invest in training for mentors and tutors in the use of digital tools;
- → create safe spaces for relationship-based online and offline work;
- → implement AI and learning platforms, taking into account values such as trust, empathy and subjectivity.

In an era of rapid change, uncertainty and information overload, education needs both access to data and the presence of adults who can accompany young people, demonstrating sensitivity and competence. If technology supports them in this, it will become a real ally in future learning.

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- Google Classroom: edu.google.com
- Google Meet: meet.google.com
- Mentimeter: www.mentimeter.com
- Microsoft Copilot: copilot.microsoft.com
- Microsoft Teams: www.microsoft.com/pl-pl/microsoft-teams
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- Padlet: padlet.com
- WhatsApp: www.whatsapp.com

# Vocational mentoring in practice – how to support learners and students in entering the labour market

**Natalia Kłubko**
[biographical note on p. 9]

Contemporary labour market is characterised by high dynamics, increasing automation, globalisation of economic processes, and ever-growing demands for flexibility and readiness for continuous development. According to the *Future of Jobs Report 2023* (World Economic Forum, 2023), over the next five years, approx. 23% of jobs and 40–44% of current skills will undergo significant changes as a result of automation, development of artificial intelligence (AI) and technological advancement. It is also estimated that the average person will change jobs 5 to 7 times in their working life.

## Young people facing an uncertain labour market

For young people, this means having to live in an environment where:

- the boundaries between professions are becoming increasingly fluid;
- there is a growing demand for soft skills, creativity and adaptability;
- employment is increasingly project-based or hybrid in nature.

In the coming years, many professions will transform or disappear altogether, and the labour market will become more competitive, diverse and unpredictable.

This uncertainty makes the ability to learn quickly, be flexible and develop new competencies crucial. Today's graduates may start their careers in professions that will look completely different in a decade, which is why a readiness to continuously improve is becoming a fundamental characteristic of future employees.

A job of tomorrow requires not only specialist knowledge, but also the ability to solve problems creatively, collaborate and adapt to changes.

Young people should therefore be able to effectively demonstrate their achievements and *transferable skills*, i.e. those that can be applied in various professional and project-oriented settings. Many of them, however, do not recognise the full extent of their potential or the skills they develop, often informally, in the course of their studies, extracurricular activities or academic pursuits. A lack of formal confirmation of professional experience does not necessarily mean a disadvantage on the labour market – skills that are particularly valued by employers are developed through everyday activities.

Organising class or student events helps develop project management and teamwork skills, volunteering strengthens empathy and social responsibility, and blogging, running a social media channel or participating in competitions teaches regularity, creativity and effective communication.

The role of teachers and mentors is to support young people in translating these kinds of experiences into the language of labour market requirements and to make them aware that the way to a professional portfolio begins much earlier than the moment they sign their first employment contract.

### Future skills and the role of mentoring in preparing for the labour market

According to the *Future of Jobs Report 2023*, in the coming years, it will be crucial to raise (*upskilling*) and change (*reskilling*) skills (World Economic Forum, 2023). Some professions will transform, while others will disappear in their current form.

At the same time, new areas of employment will emerge, particularly in the fields of AI engineering, sustainable development and data analytics in specialised sectors of the economy.

On the other hand, the *New Vision for Education: Fostering Social and Emotional Learning through Technology 2016* (World Economic Forum, 2016) emphasises that educational and professional success no longer depends solely on substantive knowledge. Social skills, adaptability and a proactive attitude towards change are equally important. The authors of the report identify ten key skills students should develop in order to meet the demands of today's labour market: critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, communication, collaboration, initiative, persistence, adaptability, leadership, and social and cultural awareness.

In the context of vocational education, it is particularly important to develop social and emotional skills necessary to function effectively in a dynamic work environment.

Skills such as teamwork, interpersonal communication, leadership and conflict resolution are increasingly indicated by employers as key factors for professional success. Including them alongside subject teaching significantly increases students' readiness to take on professional challenges.

Therefore, teachers and mentors should strive to create a learning environment fostering simultaneous development of hard, social and emotional skills. In this context, educational technologies can play an important role by enabling personalised teaching, interactivity and the hands-on application of acquired knowledge.

In summary, contemporary vocational education should encompass the holistic development of students, combining vocational training with the development of social, emotional and cognitive skills. This approach effectively prepares young people for work in a world where adaptation, collaboration and lifelong learning become the foundation for professional success.

## Challenges faced by young people in the labour market

Entering a dynamic and unpredictable job market creates a strong sense of disorientation among young people. The lack of clear and stable career paths means that many of them do not know how to make the right career choice. Added to this are the pressure to succeed and high social expectations. Confrontation with reality, which rarely meets these expectations right away, can lead to frustration, reduced motivation and a sense of failure.

### Mentoring as a response to challenges

In such circumstances, young people need support to help them:

- identify their achievements and skills;
- realise their existing potential;
- translate their experiences from learning and extracurricular activities into the language of market requirements;
- present themselves in the context of different industries and positions;
- learn how to cope with a career change.

In conditions of constant change, competent self-presentation is key. At the same time, young people often fail to realise that experiences such as volunteering, participating in educational projects, being active in student organisations or creating their own digital projects develop skills that are highly valued by employers.

The role of a mentor is to support young people in discovering and properly naming their experiences, translating them into transferable skills, and building self-confidence in a professional context.

Vocational mentoring thus becomes not only a teaching method, but also a strategic tool for preparing for the labour market – it offers a space for safe discussion about doubts, practising self-presentation skills, developing critical thinking and shaping a proactive attitude that allows young people to take their first steps in the professional world with courage and awareness.

The role of teachers and mentors is to support learners and students in building a flexible professional identity, strengthening personal capabilities and developing adaptive skills, which form the foundation for an effective, structured career path for the future.

## Mentoring as a tool for identifying capabilities and boosting the self--confidence of learners and students – a practical guide for teachers

Mentoring is an effective tool for supporting the professional development of young people. Their role goes beyond imparting knowledge about the labour market – it consists primarily of accompanying in the process of discovering their own capabilities, values and motivations. This enables young people to better understand themselves, define their goals, and build a sense of agency and self-confidence.

Awareness of one's skills and interests is the foundation of informed career planning. Participation in the mentoring process encourages such reflection: it allows learners and students to get to know themselves better in a professional context, and thus build a coherent, authentic and satisfying career.

### The importance of making young people aware of their own achievements

Entering the labour market is a significant challenge for learners and students, often accompanied by uncertainty and lowered self-esteem.

One of the most important factors influencing success in professional life is awareness of one's skills, experience and strengths. Many young people do not recognise their own potential, which makes it difficult for them to express their value in the context of employers' expectations.

Teachers and mentors accompany their students in the process of identifying and describing their previous experiences, which can become real assets when planning their careers.

The mentoring process, based on collaboration and dialogue, helps young people consciously shape their careers. It helps them discover and organise the skills they have acquired, and shows them how to effectively translate these into their CV and interviews.

The mentoring model proposed below comprises the following stages: from reflection on previous experiences, through developing self-presentation skills, to building a professional presence in the digital environment.

Each of these stages aims not only to deepen self-awareness, but also to prepare young people to communicate their skills to potential employers in a coherent, convincing and authentic way. Consequently, mentoring is not only a form of support, but also an effective tool for developing self-confidence, improving soft skills and building a professional image (which is key in today's labour market).

### Mentoring model

***Stage 1: Achievement identification and mapping***

The teacher/mentor encourages the learner or student to regularly write down their own experiences and achievements, organised into the areas listed below. The mentor asks the mentee to briefly describe the situation, actions and results achieved for each experience. In this natural way, they introduce students to thinking about transferable skills and prepare them for later self-presentation.

**Area 1. Learning and knowledge (formal and informal):**

- → completed schools, studies, faculties, specialisations;

- academic, sports, artistic and foundation scholarships;
- classroom courses and training (school and university-based, industry-oriented);
- online courses (Coursera, FutureLearn, Udemy, LinkedIn Learning, etc.);
- webinars, thematic workshops, boot camps;
- certificates and qualifications: linguistic (e.g. FCE, DELE, DSH), computer (ECDL), industry (SEP, HR and payroll, SCRUM, Google, AI);
- participation in competitions and olympiads (scientific, linguistic, mathematical, subject-specific);
- learning performance awards (grade point average, distinctions, university admission);
- membership in student research groups, academic clubs, societies.

**Transferable skills:**

- independence in learning;
- discipline and time management;
- ability to acquire and transfer knowledge;
- lifelong learning .

**Area 2: Experience and personal development**
**At school/university:**

- holding a function of: chairperson, class representative, student council member, project team leader;
- membership in organisations: student council, debating club, research club, societies, thematic organisations;
- participation in university projects: final projects, student grants, PBL (Project-Based Learning);
- scientific and industry conferences – participation, co-organisation, presentation of papers, publications;
- event organisation: open days, job fairs, science festivals, debates, symposiums.

**Outside school/university:**

- work placements and internships (including unpaid ones);
- casual, seasonal, holiday work (catering, sales, customer service);
- participation in mentoring programmes and NGO projects;
- volunteering (school, parish, municipal,
- in foundations, as part of one-off campaigns);
- remote volunteering (e.g. translations, social media, IT support);
- international projects (e.g. Erasmus+, Youth Exchange, EYP, AIESEC);
- creating online content: e.g. a blog, YouTube channel, expert profile on websites such as Instagram and LinkedIn;
- own initiatives: fund-raising events, social campaigns, student micro-enterprises.

**Transferable skills:**

- interpersonal communication;
- project management;
- teamwork;
- initiative and entrepreneurship;
- social responsibility;
- adaptability and flexibility;
- time and resource management.

**Area 3. Sports, artistic and digital activities**
**Sports:**

- participation in inter-school, municipal and regional competitions;
- playing in a sports team (e.g. at school, club);
- organisation of sporting events (e.g. tournaments, charity runs);
- individual training at a competitive or amateur level.

**Art:**

- participation in exhibitions, art competitions, concerts;
- creating own artistic projects (portfolio, illustrations, handicrafts);
- participation in art workshops (photography, dance, theatre, animation);
- extracurricular activities: music schools, cultural centres.

**Digital technologies and media:**

- developing mobile or desktop apps;
- developing websites and blogs;
- knowledge of programming languages (e.g. Python, JavaScript, SQL);
- participation in hackathons
- and technology competitions;
- creating digital content (podcasts, films, animations, infographics);
- ability to use graphics programmes (e.g. Canva, GIMP, Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator);
- video editing, working with AI (e.g. Midjourney, ChatGPT for creative purposes).

**Transferable skills:**

- creativity;
- strategic thinking;
- problem solving;
- project-based work;
- ability to learn new digital tools;
- innovativeness.

Table 1 lists examples of school, student and extracurricular activities with the corresponding skills valued on the labour market. It can help learners and students become aware of their potential and present it in their resumes and and at job interviews.

Regular note-taking of one's experiences and achievements allows learners and students to see how many skills they have acquired in various areas of life, both at school and elsewhere. This is the first step towards informed building of a professional image and preparation for a job interview. The information gathered forms the basis for the next stages of self-improvement: formulating short descriptions of experiences based on the STAR and CAR models, and then tailoring application documents – CV, cover letter and digital image – to employers' expectations.

The STAR model, developed by the National Careers Service (2024), helps to present experience in a logical way by describing a situation, task, actions taken and results. In turn, its variant, the CAR model, focuses on the challenge, action and effect, allowing for a concise presentation of the candidate's real impact on the outcome of a given situation (Pell, 2024).

The awareness of one's own skills and experience builds confidence in young people and allows them to approach their vocational development in a structured and strategic manner. With this stage, mentoring becomes a tool not only for reflection, but also for planning the next steps in one's career.

***Step 2: Presenting transferable skills at a job interview***

Job interviews, especially for people without extensive professional experience, often focus on questions about specific situations from academic life, volunteer work or project-based work. Recruiters then use what are known as behavioural questions, which allow them to assess how a candidate behaved in specific circumstances in the past, as this is a good indicator of how they may behave in the future.

The STAR model (*Situation – Task – Action – Result*) helps to present a track record in a structured and logical way so that it is:

- **specific** – avoids generalities and demonstrates real experience;
- **clear** – clearly separates the background from actions and effects;
- **measurable** – highlights the effects with numbers, percentage values or other indicators;
- **candidate-centred** – emphasises personal contribution and responsibility.

Simply stating that you “completed a course” or “were a member of a research club” is not enough. Recruiters are interested in the outcome of this – what skills have you actually used and in what situation. The second model that is also useful in talking about oneself effectively is called CAR (*Challenge – Action – Result*).

With the chosen method, young candidates can present their transferable skills (e.g. teamwork, creativity, problem solving) in a convincing and memorable way. As a result, even experience gained through studies, volunteering or extracurricular projects can sound professional and attractive to any employer.

### Examples of skills descriptions using the STAR model

**Situation (S)**
While studying management, I became a member of a project team as part of the "Project Management" course. Our task was to develop a marketing strategy for a local family business that wished to improve its online image.

**Task (T)**
My individual task was to conduct a competitive analysis and propose solutions for social media activities that would raise brand recognition.

**Action (A)**
I analysed the profiles of 10 competing businesses, identified the most effective types of posts, prepared a publication schedule and a set of ready-made graphic materials. Additionally, I proposed implementing an ad campaign on Facebook with a budget of PLN 500.

**Result (R)**
Upon implementing the strategy by this company, the number of followers increased by 45% within two months, and the owner noted a 20% increase in the number of inquiries. The project was awarded the highest rating in the group, and our solutions were implemented in full.

Such a description demonstrates:

- **hard skills** – market analysis, campaign planning, working with tools (social media);
- **soft skills** – teamwork, client communication, time management;
- **measurable effect** – concrete indicators (growth in followers, requests for quotations).

### Examples of describing competencies using the CAR method

**Challenge (C)**
I worked in the catering industry during the summer holidays – peak hours were highly stressful, and responsibilities changed constantly.

**Action (A)**
I quickly learnt new procedures, supported colleagues during difficult moments, and reacted flexibly to unexpected situations.

**Result (R)**
After a few weeks, I was entrusted with training new staff, which confirmed my adaptability and ability to cope in a dynamic environment.

In summary, every experience – even seasonal work, volunteering, or participation in extra-curricular activities – can be described using the language of transferable skills. Recruiters often value soft skills more than a simple list of job titles, which is why it is worth presenting them in a structured manner.

The STAR and CAR models described above are helpful in this regard. By applying them, a pupil or student can clearly demonstrate what they were doing, what actions they took, which competencies they used, and what result they achieved. Presenting experiences in this way makes them tangible and compelling for the recruiter – they are no longer merely a dry list of activities, but proof of proactivity, responsibility, and practical skills.

As a result, the competencies presented gain credibility and are easy to assess, and even individuals without extensive professional experience stand out as candidates who are aware of their strengths and well-prepared to enter the labour market.

***Stage 3: Effective preparation for entering the labour market***

Entering the labour market can be a challenge, especially for those just finishing school or university. Even if they lack professional experience, they can effectively prepare for applications, interviews, and building a professional image. The key is conscious planning and utilising what they can already do – in terms of both skills and non-professional experiences.

**Table 1. Examples of activities and corresponding skills in the labour market**

| Type of activity | Example | Skills developed | How to describe it in a resume / at an interview |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Educational projects** | participation in olympiads, interdisciplinary projects, scientific research | critical thinking, data analysis, planning, self-reliance | "I carried out a research project analysing X, which allowed me to develop my analytical and data handling skills" |
| **Volunteer work** | assistance in a foundation, organisation of charity events | empathy, communication, work organisation, mental resilience | "I was a coordinator of volunteers during an event attended by 300 people" |
| **Student/school organisations** | student council, research club, discussion clubs | cooperation, leadership, negotiations, project management | "As the chairperson of a research club, I led a team of 15 people during the organisation of an industry conference" |
| **Digital projects** | developing websites, apps, multimedia materials | creativity, digital skills, problem solving | "I developed a website for a local entrepreneur from scratch" |
| **Occasional job** | sales, customer service, seasonal work | stress resistance, customer service, punctuality, work ethic | "During a seasonal job at a catering outlet, I served over 500 customers per day" |
| **Industry competitions** | hackathons, start-up competitions, debating tournaments | creativity, quick learning, teamwork under pressure | "We created a prototype of the application within 48 hours. We ranked 2nd in a hackathon" |
| **Online activity** | blogging, running a social media channel, podcast | communication skills, content creation, digital marketing | "I run a blog on education, with a monthly reach of 5000 readers" |
| **Courses and Certificates** | language certificates, technical training (e.g. Google, Microsoft) | lifelong learning, technical skills, self-organisation | "I have completed the certified Google Data Analytics course" |

*Source: own elaboration*

**Analysing the advertisement – reading between the lines**

Job advertisements contain more information than might appear at first glance. Beyond technical requirements, they increasingly convey a message regarding the expected attitude, work style, or company values.

The ability to read these signals allows one not only to better tailor the CV but also to prepare for the interview in a way that demonstrates one is a good fit for the specific organisational culture.

A practical way to prepare for the recruitment process is to analyse selected job advertisements for mandatory and additional requirements.

It is also worth noting recurring keywords – these are precisely what should later be reflected in the content of the CV and cover letter.

**Tailoring the CV and cover letter**

Studies show that recruiters devote a mere few seconds to the initial review of a CV. In 2018, TheLadders conducted a study using *eye-tracking* technology, which

revealed that the average time spent by recruiters on an initial assessment of a CV is only 7.4 seconds (PR Newswire, 2018). What is more, tailoring your CV is important not only for recruiters, but also for *Applicant Tracking Systems* (ATS), which often select candidates based on such things as keywords. That is why it is so important for the document to attract attention immediately and be consistent with the content of the job listing. To this end, it is worth using a "matching matrix", in which the requirements from the listing are entered on one side and the skills and experience on the other. This makes it easy to see how to turn your previous experience into specific achievements that can be presented in your resume. It is also worth preparing a few short stories using the STAR model presented earlier, describing teamwork, problem-solving or overcoming difficulties. Such examples can later be used both in your resume and during the job interview.

**The candidate's digital image**

Today, your online image is just as important as traditional application documents. Recruiters are increasingly checking candidates' profiles on social media, so it is worth ensuring that your online image is consistent and professional.

Research from 2023 indicates that approximately 62% of recruiters declare that they check candidates' profiles on social media, with LinkedIn being the most commonly used platform for this purpose (65.3%), followed by Facebook (59.2%) and Instagram (49.0%) (Jaska and Grzelak, 2023).

This is why it is essential to consciously shape your online presence. Removing content that may be perceived negatively and creating a polished professional profile – for example, on LinkedIn – can significantly increase a candidate's credibility. It is also a good idea to prepare a digital portfolio, e.g. in Europass format, which clearly presents your skills and achievements. Such actions can have a significant impact on success in the recruitment process.

**Exercise for mentors:**

**How to prepare students for entering the labour market?**

As a teacher and mentor, you can effectively prepare your students for their first job by accompanying them through every stage of the process. The key is practical action – "tailoring your resume" or "taking care of your LinkedIn profile" is simply not enough. Turn the tips into specific tasks and carry them out together with your students: write resumes and cover letters, improve LinkedIn profiles, analyse job offers in terms of the required skills, and practise job interviews. This approach allows young candidates to gain experience and confidence in a safe environment before taking up employment. .

**Step 1: Analysis of the job listing**

- → Ask pupils/students to select two or three job listings that interest them.
- → Together, identify the mandatory and additional requirements.
- → Write down keywords – show students how to use them in a resume and during the interview.

**Step 2: Tailoring the resume and cover letter**

- → Start creating a "matching matrix": write down the requirements from the job listing on one side and the student's experience and skills (volunteering, school projects) on the other.
- → Help the mentees order their resumes according to the requirements listed in the job listing, and work together to choose the appropriate vocabulary.
- → Suggest preparing three short stories using the STAR model that demonstrate key competencies, such as teamwork, communication or problem solving.

**Step 3: Digital image**

- → Review your students' social media profiles together with them – discuss which content could negatively affect their image as a job candidate.

- → Advise your mentee to create (if they do not already have one) or complete their LinkedIn profile, ensuring they include a professional photograph, a description of their education, as well as information about projects, and volunteer experience.
- → Encourage them to create a simple digital portfolio: this could be a webpage created in Canva, a short self-presentation video, a presentation of projects, or a profile in the Europass system.

Preparing young people to enter the labour market is a process that requires both reflection on their own experiences and practical training. By guiding students through the subsequent steps – from analysing job listings to tailoring application documents to building a professional online image – mentors provide them with more than just guidance. It gives students practical experience, which will make them feel more confident when sending out their resumes or talking to recruiters, and enable them to make more informed decisions.

The role of the teacher or mentor is to create space for practice, experimentation and feedback, which will help translate the skills and potential of their students into language that is understandable to the labour market. This will help students understand that entering the job market is not a leap into the unknown, but a process that you can thoroughly prepare for, step by step.

### Checklist for mentors: How to support young people entering the job market?

**Step 1: Identify achievements and experiences**

- → Encourage the students to write down all their experiences (school, extracurricular, voluntary, hobbies).
- → Organise them into three areas: sport/arts/technology, social activities/volunteering, educational/professional projects.
- → Highlight the value of even minor actions – they may reveal transferable skills.

**Step 2: Describing achievements using the language of competencies (STAR or CAR methods)**

- → Teach the pupil/student to describe their actions according to the STAR or CAR model.
- → Practise together the creation of at least three stories that can be used during a job interview – covering:
  - teamwork,
  - problem-solving,
  - overcoming difficulties.
- → Ensure that the stories are concise, specific, and fact-based.

**Step 3: Effective preparation for entering the labour market**

- → Analysing job advertisements – teach pupils/students to distinguish between mandatory and additional requirements and to list recurring keywords.
- → Tailoring the CV and cover letter – demonstrate how to create a “matching matrix”, i.e., a comparison of the requirements from the advertisement against the competencies and experience possessed.
- → Understanding Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) – explain that these are programmes that automatically analyse and screen application documents based on keywords. Help select the appropriate phrases to ensure the CV is correctly read by such a system. Digital image – review social media profiles together, remove unprofessional content, and ensure a consistent, professional online presence. Assist in setting up or updating a LinkedIn profile.
- → Communication with the recruiter – practise a short self-presentation and answers to the most frequently asked interview questions. Prepare the pupil or student to conduct courteous email correspondence and to send a thank-you note after the interview.

## Summary

Introducing young people to the world of careers is a process that begins long before the first CV is sent. This chapter has discussed the key stages that can serve as the foundation for a teacher's mentoring practice.

The first step is the identification of achievements and experiences – including those from outside school that may initially appear insignificant. Volunteering, sports activities, or participation in digital projects form a base of transferable skills that can be showcased in a professional context.

The subsequent stage involves utilising the STAR and CAR modules, which help structure these experiences and present them in a manner that is clear and compelling for recruiters. Narratives about teamwork, overcoming difficulties, or solving problems become proof of tangible skills.

Equally vital for entering the labour market is the development of practical tools, such as a CV, a cover letter, and a professional digital image. Analysing job advertisements, tailoring documents to requirements (including the consideration of ATS systems), and maintaining a consistent online presence are indispensable elements of an effective application today. These are not theoretical concepts, but concrete exercises worth carrying out together with students.

The role of the teacher-mentor, therefore, consists not merely of imparting knowledge regarding career planning, but primarily of creating a space for practice and reflection. Such an approach equips young people with tools and builds their self-confidence. Above all, however, it demonstrates that the path to the first job is a process in which every stage matters – from documenting achievements and articulating experiences to creating a digital profile and engaging in the interview with a recruiter.

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# Case studies and good practices

The case studies and good practices presented here show how different educational institutions implement mentoring and tutoring programmes, adapting them to their own needs and contexts. The examples come from both universities and secondary schools, which demonstrates the wide range of applications for these methods. Each of the cases described illustrates a different way of implementing the idea of development based on relationships, trust and an individual approach to participants. The common denominator of all initiatives is the belief that adequate support for development is based on dialogue, reflection and a partnership between mentor and *mentee* or tutor and student.

## Case study 1: Mentoring programme using the Mentiway app – SWPS University

### Context

SWPS University has launched a mentoring programme for active students seeking support with career planning and the development of personal and professional skills. The goal was to build lasting mentor-*mentee* relationships with experienced experts and lecturers who serve as guides, supporting students in making decisions and consciously shaping their development paths.

### Process

To implement the programme effectively and quickly, the university used the Mentiway app, a tool dedicated to internal mentoring. The platform enabled automatic matching of mentors and *mentees* based on their profiles, needs, and development goals, which significantly accelerated the recruitment and pairing process. This relieved the HR department and programme leaders of many organisational tasks and shortened the time needed to launch the initiative.

Mentiway has also streamlined the management of the entire process – from scheduling meetings and sharing development materials to monitoring progress and evaluating the results of the collaboration. The app became a central space where participants could document their experiences, exchange information, and keep in touch with mentors. The organisers, on the other hand, had the opportunity to monitor participants' engagement in real time, analyse programme effectiveness indicators, and respond to the needs for its further development.

### Effect

By using the Mentiway app, the university has created a coherent and organised system that supports student development. The platform ensured transparency of activities, effective management of the mentoring process, and easy access to resources.

Participants had the opportunity to reflect on their cooperation and personal development, while the organisers gained comprehensive insight into the programme's progress and results.

The programme enabled students to learn about the reality of working in their chosen industry, establish valuable professional contacts, develop personally, and examine their career goals and aspirations. It also boosted their self-confidence, professional awareness and ability to make informed decisions about their careers in the labour market.

### Web

For more about the mentoring programme at SWPS University, visit:

- mentiway.com/katalog-programow-mentoringowych/?prog=42-uniwersytet-swps

(prepared by Natalia Kłubko)

## Case study 2: Academic tutoring with Mentiway – Lodz University of Technology

### Context

Tutoring, or individual work with a tutor, is a method of supporting academic

and personal development that is becoming increasingly important in the academic community. In the 2024/2025 academic year, the Lodz University of Technology, in cooperation with Mentiway, launched a pilot tutoring programme involving several dozen students and tutors from various faculties of the university. The goal of the project was to provide students with comprehensive support both academically and in developing motivation, soft skills, and the ability to organise their own learning process.

### Process

The programme was supported by the Mentiway app, which served as the central tool for tutoring management. It facilitated the tutor–student match by using their profiles and development goals, enabled the planning and organisation of meetings, and allowed for systematic monitoring of participants' progress. This ensured a structured, transparent, and flexible programme that fostered effective cooperation between tutors and students.

### Effect

The collected data confirmed the high effectiveness of the pilot programme. Students most often pointed to an increase in motivation and commitment to learning (81.82%), obtaining useful tools for independent work (72.73%) and a sense of support from tutors (63.64%). The development of communication and interpersonal skills was mentioned just as often (63.64%).

In evaluation discussions, participants highlighted the importance of tutoring in preventing students from dropping out, coping with stress, building self-confidence and planning their future careers.

The pilot programme proved very promising – as many as 100% of participants rated the programme positively, with an average satisfaction rating of 9.2/10. Based on the results, the Lodz University of Technology decided to expand the programme from October 2025, again in cooperation with Mentiway.

### Web

For more about the tutoring programme at the Lodz University of Technology, visit:

- mentiway.com/
- tutoring-na-uczelni-wyzszej-jak-wspiera

(prepared by Natalia Kłubko)

## Case study 3: "Dama i Dżentelmen Śniadeckiego" [Śniadecki's Gentlewoman and Gentleman] – Jędrzej Śniadecki School Complex No. 1 in Ełk

### Context

The programme was created in response to the demands of local employers, who pointed out that young people lack not only technical skills but also self-presentation skills, image awareness and social skills. This grassroots initiative was launched by teachers who, having previously participated in tutoring training courses, wanted to change the model of education, moving away from pressure, rankings and competition in favour of relationships and the development of soft skills. The programme involved students, teachers and parents, and cooperation with career counsellors and external experts enabled interdisciplinary activities (self-presentation, communication, image).

### Process

Despite their considerable experience, the teachers underwent additional training in image, dress and visual communication. The programme followed a cascade model: participants from the first edition became mentors (teachers) for new participants. The recruitment process required candidates to prepare a self-presentation, encouraging them to reflect on their potential at the application stage.

The programme included:

- inaugural meetings;
- lessons in good manners, rhetoric, voice projection, career counselling and ballroom dancing;
- exercises related to interpersonal communication, body language, and choice of clothing (including tying ties, choosing colours).

Work with students was based on three teaching styles, in accordance with Maria Kozielska's approach (2009):

- **authoritative**, when the teacher decided on the content, tasks and organisation of activities;
- **therapeutic**, focused on the student as a person – their potential, needs and emotions;
- **empowering**, encouraging critical thinking, reflection, independence and the pursuit of one's own conclusions.

The key was to combine these styles so that the programme would support both the growth of skills and the building of student identity, as well as prepare them for professional life.

### Effect

The project brought about noticeable changes in the students' attitudes: they became more open, more aware of their strengths, and more willing to take action and cooperate. Teachers enhanced their interpersonal skills and professional self-awareness.

A culture of dialogue and shared responsibility has developed within the school community. Participants of the first edition returned as mentors. The school plans to continue the programme. It has been confirmed that tutoring can be effective even without formal systemic support, provided that teachers are committed and work together with the market and experts.

The model in which students become mentors for others strengthens their sense of agency and builds a culture of shared responsibility. The programme demonstrates that school can be a place that thrives on relationships rather than just competition. Polite behaviour, self-presentation skills and communication are not mere additions to education, but its very foundation. These skills help young people find their place in professional and social life. That is why a school that develops these skills is a place where pupils can truly prepare for life.

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**Web**

For more about the programme, visit:

→ www.zs1.elk.pl/dama-i-dzentelmen-sniadeckiego/ii-edycja/dama-i-dzentelmen-sniadeckiego-ii-edycja?

(prepared by Katarzyna Ćwiąkała)

## Case study 4: Tutoring and coaching – individual student development path at INFOTECH schools in Białystok

**Context**

INFOTECH schools have implemented tutoring not as a form of private lessons, but as support for particularly gifted students. The aim was to create a space for meetings between students and teachers – *tutees* and tutors – where young people could freely talk about their successes, difficulties and motivations.

The programme was designed to foster relationships between students and teachers in an atmosphere of trust and partnership, without grades or pressure.

**Process**

Tutoring took the form of individual meetings between the student and the teacher – the *tutee* and the tutor – during which they could freely discuss successes, difficulties and motivations. The tutor listened, asked questions and inspired. As a result, students developed both technical and interpersonal skills: programmers learned to present their projects, and art enthusiasts learned to combine creativity with technology.

The second pillar of support at INFOTECH was coaching led by Paulina Wolfram, based on positive psychology and the *Appreciative Inquiry* method, which emphasises human assets and strengths. The coaching covered both students and teachers: students worked on beliefs that limited their development ("I can't do it", "this is not for me"), defined goals and steps to achieve them; teachers developed educational and leadership skills, learned to support young people's talents and build a school culture based on relationships and trust. Coaching was treated as triggering a "snowball effect of human potential" – once potential is set in motion, change continues to develop.

**Effect**

At INFOTECH, tutoring and coaching have merged into a coherent support system. Tutoring provided students with space for individual conversations, relationships, and discovering passions, while coaching helped overcome limitations and consciously shape the future of both students and teachers. As a result, the school has become a place where students not only gain knowledge, but also learn about life, responsibility, and the courage to pursue their dreams.

**Web**

For more about meetings with tutoring elements at INFOTECH schools, visit

- liceum.infotech.edu.pl/tutoring

(prepared by Marlena Pujsza-Kunikowska)

## Case study 5: Tutoring – Information Technology School Complex in Słupsk

**Context**

The Information Technology School Complex in Słupsk offered students more than just a standard set of subjects – it enabled them to develop personally, learn about themselves, and consciously plan their own path. Here, tutoring is not just another lesson, but a meeting between two people: the tutor and the student, where authenticity is key – a conversation in which the student has space to speak about their passions and plans, but also doubts and difficulties. A tutor – a more experienced guide – does not provide ready-made solutions, but asks questions, inspires, supports, and helps students discover their strengths. Together with the mentee, they formulate the most important goals – a process that resembles a developmental journey rather than traditional teaching.

### Process

It all starts with voluntariness. It is the student who decides whether they want to try it and chooses the tutor who, in their opinion, will guide them best. At the beginning, they fill out the "About Me" form and set goals together with their tutor. These are not maths or history grades, but questions about the future: Who do I want to be? How do I want to develop? What are my strengths and what do I want to improve about myself?

This is followed by a series of meetings – usually once a week, lasting 45 minutes. Each has its own rhythm: conversation, tasks, reflection. Students are sometimes given assignments between meetings to check, prepare, or think about something. The results are discussed at the next meeting. The entire process is confidential and based on trust. Everyone – students, tutors, and parents – knows that it is not about grades or rankings, but about personal development.

### Effect

The school has a Tutor Team consisting of teachers who act as guides and partners in the development of young people. It is headed by the facility's director, Monika Stępnik, who coordinates activities and supports tutors in their work. Each of them looks after one or two students per semester, which enables an individual approach and building a relationship based on trust.

Tutoring changes the way students view both themselves and learning. They discover their talents, learn planning, responsibility, and consistency in action. They gain self-confidence and a sense of agency. The skills they develop – self-awareness, openness, and the ability to reflect – stay with them for a long time.

This is a wonderful example of how school can be a place that develops not only knowledge but also social skills. Thanks to individual relationships, students gain mentors who help them find their own path. Tutoring at the Słupsk IT School is not just another programme or experiment, but a philosophy – the belief that every young person has potential that is worth bringing out. And the best way to do that is through a simple, authentic, person-to-person meeting.

### Web

For more information about tutoring at the Information Technology School Complex in Słupsk, visit its "Tutoring Corner" section at

- zsi.slupsk.pl/kacik_tutoringu

The tutoring presentation can also be downloaded from the school's website:

- zsi.slupsk.pl/files/tutoring_prezentacja.pdf

(prepared by Marlena Pujsza-Kunikowska)

## Case study 6: University online mentoring – career support for students through online consultations – Kozminski University in Warsaw

### Context

Kozminski University has launched an innovative online mentoring programme. Students are given the opportunity to consult online with experienced mentors in various professional fields – from choosing a career path to finding their first job. The sessions are held via a special university platform, integrated with such software as MS Teams, which ensures convenience and flexibility of use.

### Process

Mentors support students at key moments in their development: they help them set professional goals, plan their career paths, understand market trends, and prepare for their first recruitment processes. Each student may sign up for a maximum of three consultations per month, conducted via an online platform (there is no requirement to work with a single mentor on a permanent basis).

The student indicates their field of study and the topic of the consultation, and the mentor contacts them by email or MS Teams to confirm the date of the meeting

and send a link to the session. After the meeting, students are asked to evaluate the quality of the consultation, which enables ongoing assessment of the programme and development of mentoring skills.

**Effect**

The online mentoring programme has brought tangible benefits to students. They have built greater awareness of their strengths, become more familiar with the requirements of the labour market, and gained confidence in career planning and participation in recruitment processes. The flexible online format allows the programme to reach a wide range of participants – students are more likely to seek support when they can do so in a way that suits them.

The opportunity to work with mentors representing various industries and experiences broadens *mentees'* perspectives while developing their creativity and openness to different career paths. The diversity of mentors from areas such as HR, finance, marketing and law allows students to benefit from the experience of practitioners from all over Poland – from start-ups to large enterprises.

The assessment system after each consultation is a key part of the programme – it makes it possible to monitor quality, develops a culture of feedback, and supports the improvement of mentoring skills. Regular sessions with mentors strengthen students' sense of agency and mental resilience, helping them to consciously manage their own professional development.

Online mentoring consultations have become an effective and flexible tool for supporting young people at key moments in their development. The combination of modern technology and the personal commitment of mentors has created a space where students can safely discover their strengths, broaden their horizons and make bold decisions about their future. The programme shows that even in the digital world, the presence of another person remains the most important thing – it builds trust and inspires action.

**Web**

For more about online mentoring at Kozminski University, visit:

→ www.kozminski.edu.pl/pl/konsultacje-e-mentoringowe

(prepared by Anna Mady)

# Mentoring 2030: between algorithm and presence. Education in the shadow of uncertainty

**Sylwia Korycka-Fortuna**
[biographical note on p. 4]

**Julia Rozbicka**
[biographical note on p. 5]

The year 2030 marks a symbolic horizon towards which education – both formal and informal – is moving at a rapid pace. Automation, artificial intelligence, climate change, and the social and mental crises of the younger generation are confronting teachers, mentors, and tutors with questions to which there are no simple answers.

Will there still be room for relationships in a world of algorithms that can analyse data faster than humans? Do young people, immersed in digital reality, even need a teacher as a guide? Or perhaps, ironically, they need it now more than ever?

This part of the publication does not provide ready-made solutions. It is an invitation to reflect on the future of relationship-based education and an attempt to imagine mentoring and tutoring in the perspective of the coming decade.

## In an era of AI and emotional intelligence

Artificial intelligence can already personalise educational content, suggest learning methods, and even act as a virtual tutor. Its advantages are obvious: accessibility, scalability, responsiveness. However, the question we must ask ourselves is as follows: Can AI replace the experience of being seen and understood?

Mentoring and tutoring are not just about transferring knowledge. Their essence is relationship – dialogue that builds trust, self-esteem and identity in young people. No algorithm can provide that.

Therefore, the vision for education in 2030 should not be limited to a choice between technology and people. It is more about creative synergy – AI that supports but does not replace humans.

While algorithms can suggest materials or monitor progress, it is the mentors and tutors who give education meaning, direction, and depth.

## The impact of artificial intelligence on young people's sense of psychological security

Young people are growing up in a world where technology is an ever-present part of daily life. Artificial intelligence is affecting their education, relationships and ways of coping with loneliness. It gives a sense of accessibility, does not judge and does not expect anything in return – which makes it a safe place of emotional refuge for many teenagers. Artificial intelligence can not only explain the task, but also ask about your mood and provide verbal support. This kind of experience can be particularly important during adolescence, when young people are looking for a space free from pressure and comparisons. Still, it is becoming increasingly clear that the real question

is not about the usefulness of AI itself, but how it shapes the skills young people need to live in a community – from empathy and cooperation to the ability to seek support.

## Technology that gives you a sense of influence

Many young people are convinced that AI makes it easier to tackle certain tasks or challenges. When they receive ready-made advice, they feel that they are in control of the situation and are competent. However, this impression is often superficial – a true sense of agency arises not from a ready-made answer, but from one's own efforts and overcoming difficulties.

The Deloitte *Gen Z and Millennial Survey* (2025) shows that 57% of Gen Zers use AI in their daily work, and 30% do so regularly. This is a sign that technology genuinely enhances competencies – it supports learning, data analysis and teamwork. However, in its *Skills Outlook* (2023) report, the OECD reminds us that mental resilience does not come solely from ready-made answers, but from experiencing uncertainty, trial and error, and the consequences of one's own choices. If AI too often solves problems for us, agency may become nothing more than an illusion.

## A relationship or just an imitation of one?

Another cornerstone of emotional wellbeing is a sense of connection. It makes young people feel part of a group and experience emotional security. AI can imitate a relationship – it responds in a personalised manner, uses empathetic phrases, and remembers previous conversations. It is no surprise that, as shown in the *Me, Myself & AI* report (Internet Matters, 2025), 35% of young people use chatbots specifically to alleviate feelings of loneliness.

Nevertheless, WHO data from a 2024 report called *From Loneliness to Social Connection* remind us that as many as one in five teenagers in Europe experience loneliness, even though they spend most of their day online. A digital presence does not always translate into a genuine feeling of being seen and understood. As research shows (Andries and Robertson, 2023), children were able to regard voice assistants as beings capable of feelings and deserving of respect. This clearly illustrates the natural human tendency to attribute human characteristics to technologies and to engage with them in ways that increasingly resemble real conversation. This is precisely why young people can succumb to the illusion of bonding so easily – a relationship that gives them a momentary sense of security but does not develop empathy or cooperation skills. Such one-sided relationships can lead to emotional dependence, because AI always has time for a conversation and always responds in a supportive manner (Pinto, 2024).

## Why do we trust algorithms?

Young people are eager to entrust their questions and emotions to artificial intelligence, and not only because it is always available.

In this context, psychological mechanisms play a significant role – namely heuristics, i.e. simplified rules of thinking that facilitate decision-making. When using AI, two of these are particularly evident: availability and representativeness.

The availability heuristic makes something seem more true if it is easy to recall. If a student remembers that AI has already solved their problems correctly several times, they will easily assume that subsequent answers must also be correct.

In turn, the representativeness heuristic works when something fits a familiar pattern. AI responses sound fluent, logical, and professional, which is why young people tend to regard them as expert opinions.

Yet, heuristics are not the only reason why we are so eager to trust algorithms. The need for cognitive closure – the natural desire to quickly end a state of uncertainty – also plays a vital role.

AI meets this need perfectly: it provides an immediate and clear answer, thereby reducing the discomfort that usually accompanies searching for information on a pressing question or issue. In the short term, this enhances the sense of security and agency. However, in the long term, it may hinder social development, as it rarely encourages patiently searching for answers to difficult questions, critical thinking and confronting one's own opinions with those of others.

## The balance between supporting and being

Artificial intelligence can be extremely helpful in learning and development. AI-based systems can tailor materials to the student, monitor their progress, and support the learning process. This really increases the sense of influence and control. Still, the report *AI Competency Frameworks for Students and Teachers* (UNESCO, 2024) emphasises that technology will never replace the presence of a human being – a teacher, tutor or mentor – who can interpret emotions, set boundaries and accompany students in their development.

It is no coincidence that, according to Deloitte research (2025), as many as 86% of Gen Zers believe that soft skills, time management and industry knowledge are key to their future. These are skills that AI is unable to learn or replicate. Young people claim that a leader's key role today is not control, but support: providing guidance, inspiration and motivation. The task of adults is therefore to wisely combine technology with presence – so that artificial intelligence supports rather than replaces relationships.

Artificial intelligence provides tools for learning, helps combat loneliness, and facilitates problem-solving. At the same time, it cannot replace the experience of real presence – conversations with a person who responds to emotions with emotions, sets boundaries and teaches empathy. That is why it is so crucial that technology does not trap young people in the illusion of quick answers and instant solutions, but rather supports them in developing patience, critical thinking and the ability to build relationships. Ultimately, the quality of education and emotional security in 2030 will not be determined by algorithms, but by the values we place at the centre: connection, community and dialogue.

## Relationships as the foundation of resilience

In a world of crises, young people need not only knowledge, but also support. Research shows that mental resilience develops in relationships – where we are seen, heard and believed in.

From this perspective, mentoring becomes more than just educational support. It is a space for building resilience. A mentor who accepts mistakes and allows failures while simultaneously supporting the search for solutions becomes a “safe foundation” for young people. It is this foundation that allows us to experiment, take on challenges and face the uncertainties of the world.

Examples from vocational schools in Europe show that wherever tutoring programmes with elements of emotional support have been introduced, the dropout rate has fallen and satisfaction with learning has increased. It is not because the curriculum has become easier, but because the students feel noticed.

## Competencies of tomorrow and the role of a mentor

By 2030, employers will primarily expect graduates to possess meta-competencies: learning skills, adaptability, critical thinking, creativity, and cooperation. These are not skills that can be learned from a textbook. They arise from relationships and experiences.

Therefore, the mentor of the future will be more like a “resilience and agency coach” than a traditional lecturer. A mentor does not provide ready-made answers, but teaches such things as:

- → How to ask questions?
- → How to deal with uncertainty?

→ How to build your own identity in a changing world?

This shift in educational emphasis – from knowledge to relationships and from content to process – will enable the preparation not only of specialists, but also of people capable of living in a world full of challenges.

## Three scenarios for education in 2030

**Scenario 1: Education dominated by algorithms**
Schools and universities largely transfer the learning process to AI platforms. Mentors turn into technology operators, and young people lose contact with adult guides. Result: High technological competencies, but low psychological resilience and a sense of loneliness.

**Scenario 2: Synergy between humans and technology**
Technology supports the process, but the mentor and tutor are at the centre. Live meetings, conversations and relationships are complemented by digital tools. AI becomes an assistant, not a substitute. This is the most desirable and realistic scenario.

**Scenario 3: Community education**
Schools and universities return to their roots – they are places for meetings, community and building relationships. Knowledge is mainly shared online, while offline space is used for conversation, reflection, and collaboration. Mentors are the custodians of the community and relationships.

The scenario we choose will depend not on technology, but rather on social decisions and the values we place at the heart of education.

## Voices of Experts – Personal Reflections

**Anna Mady**

The future of mentoring lies in the development of a hybrid model that combines face--to-face meetings with online work. Digital tools, mentoring platforms, and messaging apps have become commonplace, yet their true purpose is to support relationships, not to replace conversation. The major challenge of the coming decade will be striking a balance between the availability of technology and the need for authentic contact and a sense of community.

The changing labour market demands not only specialised knowledge from the mentee but also highly developed soft skills – cooperation, critical thinking, creativity, and mental resilience. Consequently, mentoring is increasingly becoming a space for cultivating social and emotional competencies. Young people expect not only advice from mentors but also partnership, inspiration, and support in building their own professional identity.

Technological advancement opens up new possibilities in this regard. Working online makes it possible to connect students and mentors across school, city, and national boundaries. This creates a space for international programmes, the exchange of experiences, and diverse perspectives. At the same time, challenges arise – such as digital exclusion and unequal access to resources. Therefore, the role of the mentor is also evolving. In addition to substantive knowledge, digital, intercultural, and communication competencies, as well as experience in group work, are becoming increasingly important.

Artificial intelligence already supports developmental processes – by organising information, personalising materials, and analysing the mentee's progress. It can suggest questions for self-reflection or assist in defining goals, thereby freeing up space for the mentor to focus on what matters most in their role: authentic contact. At the same time, no technology can replace a relationship based on trust, empathy, and attentiveness. AI may simulate dialogue, but it will not read emotions, build a sense of safety, or serve as a role model. Paradoxically, then, the more perfect the tools become, the more valuable human presence becomes. Key to this will be the conscious and ethical implementation of technology, ensuring it remains a support, rather than a substitute, for relationships.

In a world of uncertainty, education should prepare us for life amidst change, not for a single, predetermined scenario. It is becoming increasingly important to teach "learning to learn", critical thinking, cooperation, and reflection on one's own development. Curricular content must go beyond the transmission of knowledge – it must teach mental resilience, empathy, and responsibility. A good example is a task my daughter was given in the third grade of primary school: together with her friends, she prepared a presentation about the Vistula River. The teacher did not impose sources or tools – the girls chose the software themselves, gathered information, organised meetings, and worked together. In this way, they learned not only cooperation and data verification

but also independence and the joy of discovery. This demonstrates that the best learning takes place through action and relationship.

Mentoring bolsters the sense of agency because it provides space to discover strengths, make mistakes, and learn from experience. Regular support, appreciation, and constructive feedback help the mentee gain faith in their own capabilities and internal stability. My observations show that individuals who feel heard and supported make bolder decisions, are more willing to initiate actions, and are able to transform difficulties into development. In this way, mentoring becomes not only a tool for acquiring competencies but also a source of internal strength and mental resilience.

Regardless of technological progress, the essence of mentoring remains human – mindfulness, empathy, and the capacity to build relationships that inspire and help discover one's own strength.

**Katarzyna Ćwiąkała**
In the coming years, mentoring will become closely intertwined with the dynamics of the labour market and technological development, as well as the need for wise human companionship. The Master – an experienced, competent expert – will remain indispensable, though their role will become more conscious, reflective, and partnership--oriented. It is not merely a matter of teaching a trade, but of accompanying the individual in discovering themselves, their own needs, and the meaning of work. What will count is learning by doing, experimentation, and drawing conclusions from mistakes. In this light, job crafting – the conscious reshaping of work to align with one's values and operating style – gains significance. The mentor, therefore, supports not only the development of competencies but also the construction of a professional identity.

Speech recognition technologies, behavioural analysis, and personalised learning will facilitate the tailoring of the process to individual needs; algorithms will assist in analysing progress, planning study, and even simulating professional environments. However, they will not replace a relationship based on trust, intuition, and emotions. Precisely for this reason, as tools develop, the mentor's tasks are becoming even more "human": conversation, reflection, presence, and the building of bonds.

In the face of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, the VUCA reality, vocational education must prepare students to cope with unpredictability. The answer is the VUCA Prime concept, which prioritises vision, understanding, clarity, and agility. These are competencies that teach strategic thinking, understanding context, selecting information, and flexible reactions (Sobotka, 2020).

In this context, the understanding of key future competencies is also changing. Until recently, the priority was the STEM model (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), which emphasised the development of technical and analytical skills. Today, the SMAC model (Social, Mobile, Analytical, Cloud/Digital) is gaining increasing

importance, highlighting the value of social, digital, and reflective competencies. This is a signal that the future of education requires combining the world of technology with the ability to cooperate, communicate, and think critically.

Following this shift, the idea of additive learning – the concept of lifelong learning – is also developing. This represents a departure from the linear model – first school, then work – in favour of the continuous improvement of skills in response to the changing needs of the market and technology. In this approach, the learner becomes a co-creator of their development, and the teacher becomes a mentor supporting reflection and decision-making. Education ceases to be mass-produced and standardised, and instead transforms into a personal journey – in the words of Galileo: "You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself".

The master–apprentice relationship possesses a real power to change. In a world of comparisons and fear of judgement, the mentor's presence can be a turning point – a "here and now" in which someone does not say, "Do as I do", but listens and helps to discover potential. It is then that a conviction is born in the mentee: "I have influence, I can act, I am important". I have witnessed this during international internships – a shift from shyness to initiative, achieved not through grades, but through trust and a sense of safety. Resilience is shaped not by avoiding difficulties, but by navigating through them. One simple question: "What can you do in this situation?" triggers agency-oriented thinking. As Albert Bandura reminds us, self-efficacy is born of experience, not theory.

When the mentee perceives results, their self-belief, motivation, and responsibility for their own path grow. "Whatever you can do... begin it", wrote Johann Wolfgang Goethe. And Jacek Walkiewicz adds: "It is a sin not to participate in one's own life" (Walkiewicz, 2013). Mentoring invites courage and action; it does not require all the answers, but it requires presence and faith in the human being.

**Marlena Pujsza-Kunikowska**

Over the next five to ten years, mentoring support will become more widely accessible, extending beyond corporations into schools, NGOs, and universities. Reality is dictated by demand: securing an appointment with a psychologist is currently more difficult than obtaining a concert ticket, and people are in need of conversation and companionship through change. Mentoring and coaching do not replace therapy but serve a "frontline" function: they help define goals, navigate professional crises, and sustain motivation. The most acute deficits today are in soft skills – communication, cooperation, conflict resolution. The digital world teaches neither patience in conversation nor empathetic listening; this is precisely where mentors intervene with that which is most human.

By 2030, I anticipate standardisation and professionalisation – more training, certificates, and ethical codes – as well as an increase in group formats: support circles, masterminds, and development networks. Cross-sector bridges will also be essential:

business can learn from NGOs, NGOs from education, and education from start-ups. On the one hand, opportunities will arise: greater availability and better matching of mentor–mentee pairs; on the other, so will the challenges: labour shortages, the risk of role confusion, and the necessity of maintaining constant quality.

Technology is becoming an ally in the preparation and conduct of the mentoring process. Before the first meeting, it helps the mentee to define expectations more precisely, suggests questions, organises materials, and outlines a roadmap. Consequently, the conversation with the mentor has greater depth from the outset and focuses on what is truly significant. AI establishes the structure and rhythm, but it is the human who contributes meaning: presence, authenticity, and experience.

The education of tomorrow is one of resilience, relationships, and independent thinking. Resilience, the ability to regain balance after a crisis, is born of the acceptance of mistakes, flexibility, and mindfulness. We require empathy, active listening, non-violent communication, cooperation, and critical thinking. Lifelong learning requires projects grounded in real-world problems, self-assessment, reflection, portfolios, and rigorous engagement with sources. As a community, the school should provide meaning and a sense of belonging – in accordance with the four pillars of UNESCO: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be.

I know the power of mentoring from experience. In 2006, at the FRDL Youth Academy of Local Leaders, I arrived at the meetings full of apprehension. My mentor did not offer ready-made solutions; she listened, asked questions, and offered presence and kindness. A year later, I was coordinating international programmes in Poznań, and in 2009 I founded a foundation that operates to this day. I have witnessed similar transformations in others: a young leader asking “Am I good enough?” who, a year later, was leading a thriving rural housewives’ circle; a teacher who moved away from the textbook, organised an exchange, and became a mentor himself. Most often, a mentee does not repeat “The mentor told me...”, but rather “The mentor believed in me”. The greatest gift is faith in another human being at a moment when they do not yet believe in themselves. This is where the strength of mentoring lies: in mindfulness and the readiness to be human for another human being.

**Natalia Kłubko**

I believe the future of mentoring will be shaped by parallel processes: dynamic digitalisation and the growing need for authentic, deep relationships. The traditional face-to-face model is giving way to hybrid forms that combine online sessions with occasional in-person interactions. Supported by mentoring management applications, this approach enhances accessibility and inclusivity, enabling young people to draw upon the experience of experts from anywhere in the world. The greatest challenge lies in striking a balance between the efficiency and accessibility offered by digitalisation and the preservation of the depth and quality of bonds that constitute the essence of mentoring.

Artificial intelligence can certainly provide significant support to the mentoring process by facilitating organisational aspects, analysing the mentee's needs, proposing personalised development materials, and monitoring progress. Its potential is set to grow, allowing for more precise personalisation of development paths and the identification of skills gaps. However, I do not believe that AI will ever fully replace the foundation of mentoring: a relationship built on trust, empathy, and authentic human encounter. In the face of increasing digitalisation, the mentor's role will focus even more on building relationships, providing emotional support, strengthening mental resilience, and accompanying the mentee through moments of uncertainty.

Mentoring builds internal strength and a sense of agency in the mentee, creating a space for attentive listening, acceptance, and partnership. The mentor does not provide ready-made solutions but acts as a companion in the search for answers, encouraging independent decision-making. The most transformative aspect is arriving at solutions independently, which generates a sense of agency and an awareness of one's real influence on outcomes. A safe atmosphere, grounded in trust and constructive feedback, allows for experimentation and treats failure as a natural part of development. Through this, the mentee learns that their attempts are valuable and that every step builds competence, mental resilience, and self-worth.

In summary, I believe that while technology can support the mentoring process, it will not replace the authentic presence of another human being: attentive listening, empathy, and emotional support. In mentoring, the most valuable asset is the ability to serve as a signpost for the mentee, accompanying them in discovering their own potential and bolstering self-confidence on their path to development.

### Mentoring as the Art of Presence

The future of education is not written in algorithmic code. It will not be determined by a choice between humans and technology, but rather by the quality of their interaction. It depends on our decisions whether schools and universities become merely a collection of metrics, or remain spaces for meetings, conversation, and relationships.

By 2030, it will be crucial to turn declarations into practice – establishing clear ethical standards, developing social and emotional competencies, and wisely designing mentoring processes. Artificial intelligence may increase accessibility and streamline the organisation of these processes, but emotional safety and genuine effectiveness will be determined by values embodied in everyday life: in organisational policies, educational programmes, work rituals, and methods of measuring effects – including relational ones.

Technology should remain the infrastructure, not the objective. Its task is to support agency, equality of access, and reflectiveness, not to replace the human being. The centre of education – regardless of the era or tools – should always remain where its source lies: in human bonds, community, and dialogue.

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# Relationship-based education as a civilisational choice

In recent decades, education has too often been viewed through the lens of results, efficiency, and comparable indicators. However, the most vital response to contemporary challenges is neither the faster transfer of knowledge nor more detailed rankings, but rather the restoration of relationships in schools and universities. It is within relationships that trust, a sense of safety, motivation, and the courage to take intellectual risks are born.

Mentoring and tutoring remind us that personal development is not linear – moving simply from topic to topic – but occurs through encounters, conversations, mistakes, and trials. In an era when the labour market changes faster than educational curricula, accompanying young people in their self-discovery becomes the foundation of education.

## Recommendations for Practice and Educational Policy

Based on the experiences and analyses contained in this publication, we formulate the following key recommendations:

1. **Integrate mentoring and tutoring into institutional culture** – not as add-on projects, but as a permanent element of the culture and curricula of schools and universities.
2. **Build competencies among adults** – every teacher, educator, tutor, or mentor requires support, training, and supervision to avoid oversimplification and burnout.
3. **Combine technology with relationship-building** – utilise digital tools, but never at the expense of presence and authentic contact.
4. **Prioritise mental wellbeing** – relationship-based education must go hand in hand with caring for the mental health of both young people and adults.
5. **Treat social and emotional competencies as equal to subject knowledge** – it is these skills that will determine the quality of future professional and personal life.

## Open Questions for Further Debate

This publication does not close the discussion. On the contrary, it is intended as an invitation to dialogue. We would like each of the following questions to serve as a starting point for further reflection:

- In a world of uncertainty, how can we build an education that provides young people with a sense of purpose and agency?
- How can we ensure that technology acts as an ally, rather than a rival, in the learning process?
- How should future teachers and counsellors be trained so that their most important tool is not instruction, but attentive presence?
- Can schools and universities serve as places of community in times of social atomisation and digital loneliness?
- How can the effectiveness of relationship-based education be evaluated when its deepest fruits – trust, self-worth, courage – elude statistical metrics?

## Concluding Remarks

Mentoring and tutoring are not merely didactic methods; they represent a philosophy of how we view another human being. We believe that the future of education depends on whether we decide to treat relationships as an add-on to the curriculum, or as its heart.

If education is to prepare us for life in a world of uncertainty, it must be an education of presence, dialogue, and courage. This is precisely the direction that emerges from the reflections contained in this publication.

With this thought in mind, we invite you to continue the conversation in schools, universities, public institutions, and during expert debates – as Education 2030 will not happen by itself. It is we who will decide whether it will be an algorithm or a presence.

**Mentoring and Tutoring 2.0. Relationship, development and technology in vocational education** is a publication that shows how the role of schools and those who support the education process is being redefined in the face of dynamic technological and social changes. The authors – practitioners and experts – emphasise that the education of the future goes far beyond the traditional transfer of knowledge. The book illustrates how mentoring, tutoring and coaching are becoming essential forms of developmental support, strengthening the resilience, autonomy and sense of agency of learners. At the same time, it presents responsible ways of integrating digital tools with relational practices to ensure that technology supports educational processes. It is an inspiring guide for teachers, educators and all those involved in shaping contemporary education. The publication encourages reflection on how to support participants in development processes in discovering their own resources, building their identity and preparing for life and work in a world of uncertainty. It is a call for change towards education based on people, relationships and the responsible use of technology.

**Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE)** operates since 1993. It is the Polish National Agency of the Erasmus+ Programme and the European Solidarity Corps for 2021–2027, also implementing projects of the European Funds for Social Development (FERS). The Foundation is responsible for other European educational and informative initiatives in Poland, such as eTwinning, Eurodesk, Eurydice, Europass, Euroguidance, EVET and EPALE. It supports cooperation with countries in the East via the Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund, the Polish-Ukrainian Council of Youth Exchange, SALTO-EECA Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre.

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