

MENTORING AS THE KEY TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN A VUCA WORLD

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Background. Humanity has long been in a SPOD model of the world — stable, predictable, simple and certain. Now we have moved to a different system — the VUCA world. As the world with its system is changing, so are the requirements for school-leavers. Companies no longer just need employees with a highly specialized skill set but with skills and knowledge that they are constantly improving and gaining from related fields. The importance of soft skills in the modern environment has become apparent.

Aim. Develop the concept of mentoring and explore its impact on students' competitive advantage in a VUCA world.

Methods. The concept of mentoring has been worked out to improve the competitive abilities of school leavers. According to it, a mentor should be assigned to each student during the last 2 years of schooling. The duties include monitoring their progress, developing soft skills, helping to solve difficult cases and choose materials, and encouraging them to reach new heights. The proposed mentoring concept was tested. A focus group of 14 school students from the 10th-grade Lyceum of Samara State Technical University was formed and 8 students from our university became mentors for them. The experiment lasted 6 months. One of the general assessment points was the K.D. Ushinsky Russian Psychological and Pedagogical Olympiad for Schoolchildren. Throughout the preparation, the mentors provided all the necessary assistance. Also, all 14 mentees took part in a six-question survey that was carried out to assess their progress and satisfaction with their mentors.

Results. Mentoring has led to important achievements of mentees: 4 of them managed to reach the regional stage of the Olympiad, 2 of them successfully passed it and participated in the final, where one mentee became a prize winner. Moving on to the survey, in the first 4 questions the mentees rated the indicators on a ten-point scale. The average score for intensity was 7.3, for productivity 8.1 and psychological and information support scores were 7.8 and 6.4 respectively. To assess motivation and potential for accumulation of achievements, they were offered a choice of 5 answers. No one's values changed negatively, although one mentee decided that these figures remained at the same level. The other 13 votes were distributed between the options "Strongly increased" and "Increased" in the count of 8 and 5 respectively. The last question was a free-form question. Mentees were asked to share opinions on the soft skills they had developed while working with mentors. Thus, effective communication proved to be the most popular skill, followed by public speaking, time management and adaptability, while willingness to learn and critical thinking rounded out the ranking.

Conclusions. Working with mentors has a positive impact on mentees' competitive advantage, as evidenced by their answers in the survey and the positive results of the Olympiad. Mentoring also increases the level of achievement, emotional intelligence, motivation, desire for development and creativity. Indeed, mentoring can be considered the most appropriate technology to train students to increase their competitive advantage in a VUCA world.

Keywords: pedagogics; mentoring; competitive advantage; soft skills; VUCA world.

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