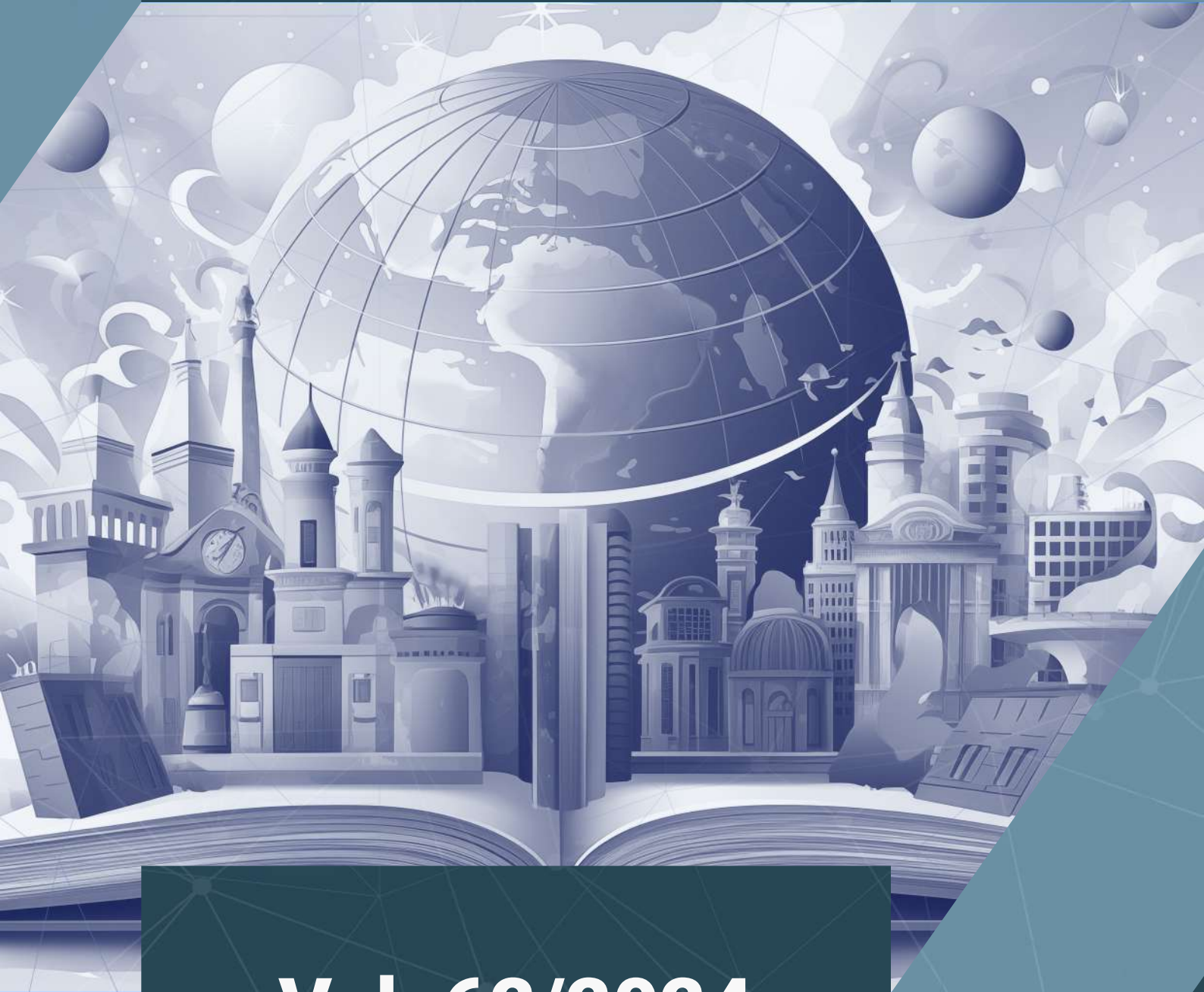




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## **What are the needs of beginning teachers in primary education and how can mentors help them?**

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**Abstract.** Beginning teachers face numerous challenges when entering the profession. Their needs range from classroom management to emotional support, and mentors play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. This article explores the primary needs of novice teachers and how effective mentoring can help them navigate their first years in primary education. Drawing on both international research and Romanian educational practices, this paper highlights the importance of structured, supportive mentorship programs in shaping successful teaching careers.

**Keywords.** Beginning teachers, primary education, mentoring, teacher development, classroom management, Romanian education

### **Introduction**

The transition from teacher training to an independent teaching role can be overwhelming for beginning teachers in primary education. Faced with the realities of classroom dynamics, curriculum demands, and student engagement, they often experience a steep learning curve (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Research suggests that beginning teachers encounter difficulties that are not fully addressed during their initial training (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), leading to high attrition rates (Cerna, 2020). This paper examines the specific needs of novice educators and discusses how mentoring can provide the necessary support to ensure their success and retention in the profession.

### **Literature Review**

The concept of mentoring has evolved significantly in educational research. Feiman-Nemser (2001) emphasizes the importance of creating a continuum of support from teacher preparation to full-time teaching, highlighting the crucial role that mentors play in this process. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that mentoring and induction programs positively affect teacher retention and instructional effectiveness. Moreover, Stoica and Tomescu (2020) focused on the Romanian context, identifying a gap in the emotional support offered to novice teachers.

In Romanian research, Neacșu (2018) discusses the critical role of classroom management in a teacher's success, while Popescu and Bratu (2019) explore mentorship in Romanian primary schools, concluding that it significantly enhances new teachers' instructional strategies. Other studies (e.g., Vlad, 2021) underline that mentorship helps reduce beginning teachers' stress and improves their resilience.

Globally, Hudson (2013) explores the 'growth for both' model, where both mentor and mentee benefit professionally from the mentoring relationship. Hobson et al. (2009) discuss how mentoring reduces isolation and supports professional identity development in new teachers.

This body of research provides a robust foundation for understanding the specific needs of beginning teachers and how structured mentorship can address them.

### **Research Method**

This paper employs a qualitative approach, analyzing a range of research articles, reports, and case studies related to the experiences of beginning teachers in primary education. Secondary data were collected from academic journals, focusing on Romanian and international studies regarding mentorship and teacher development. The analysis includes cross-comparison of findings from both Romanian sources and global perspectives to draw conclusions about the role of mentoring in addressing the needs of novice teachers system. The methodological framework is grounded in thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes in the literature concerning teacher needs, mentorship benefits, and challenges.

### **The Needs of Beginning Teachers in Primary Education**

#### **1. Classroom Management**

One of the most significant challenges for beginning teachers is classroom management. New teachers often struggle to create and maintain a structured, positive learning environment (Veenman, 1984). Romanian educational researcher Ioana Neacșu (2018) emphasizes that beginning teachers in Romania face similar challenges, especially in diverse classrooms where students exhibit a wide range of abilities and behaviors. Effective classroom management strategies are seldom addressed in-depth during teacher training programs, leading to frustration for new educators when faced with disruptive students.

#### **2. Curriculum Planning and Instruction**

Developing and delivering curriculum-aligned instruction is another area where beginning teachers need support. Many novice teachers report feeling overwhelmed by the planning, differentiation, and time management involved in teaching (Cerna, 2020). Research from Guran (2019) indicates that beginning teachers in Romania often feel unprepared for the autonomy expected in curriculum design. This lack of preparedness can lead to inconsistent instructional practices and poor student outcomes.

#### **3. Emotional and Psychological Support**

Teaching is a demanding profession that requires emotional resilience. New teachers frequently experience stress, anxiety, and burnout during their first few years in the profession (Hobson et al., 2009). In Romania, Stoica and Tomescu (2020) observed that emotional well-being is often overlooked in professional development programs for beginning teachers, despite its impact on their overall effectiveness.

### **The Role of Mentors in Supporting Beginning Teachers**

Mentoring is recognized as one of the most effective strategies for supporting the development of beginning teachers. Effective mentoring not only provides practical advice but also offers emotional and professional support to novice educators (Hudson, 2013).

#### **1. Providing Classroom Management Strategies**

Mentors can assist new teachers in developing classroom management techniques tailored to their teaching style and the specific needs of their students. Research by Vlad (2021) highlights that in Romanian schools, experienced teachers who serve as mentors play a critical role in modeling effective behavior management practices, providing new teachers with real-life examples to follow.

#### **2. Curriculum and Instructional Guidance**

Mentors can guide novice teachers through the complexities of curriculum planning and instruction. In their study, Popescu and Bratu (2019) found that structured mentoring programs in Romanian schools helped beginning teachers refine their instructional strategies and improve student engagement. By collaborating with experienced mentors, new teachers gain confidence in their ability to deliver high-quality education.

#### **3. Emotional Support and Professional Growth**

Mentorship extends beyond practical teaching skills; it also includes emotional support. Many novice teachers experience a sense of isolation during their first year, and mentors can help alleviate this by offering encouragement and understanding. As and enhances the emotional resilience of beginning teachers.

### **Conclusion**

Beginning teachers in primary education face a multitude of challenges that can hinder their professional growth and well-being. However, through effective mentorship, these teachers can receive the support they need to overcome obstacles, improve their teaching practices, and thrive in their careers. As demonstrated by both international and Romanian research, the mentorship process is essential in addressing the practical, emotional, and instructional needs of novice educators. Establishing strong mentoring programs will not only benefit new teachers but also contribute to a more stable and effective teaching workforce.

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