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## **Mentoring in Teacher Education – towards innovative school development**

### *Abstract*

*Mentoring usually is regarded as the task of an experienced teacher to introduce a young teacher or teacher student in his/her teaching practice. There are different models of how to perform this task effectively. We look at the mentoring relationship from different perspectives: not only the potential benefit to the young teacher but also the professional development of the experienced teacher has to be taken into account. Mentoring could empower the continuous and lifelong development of teachers. The learning partnership of the two persons embodies a considerable advantage to promote a single school's culture as well as the personal and professional growth. The study gives an overview on research results concerning mentoring in schools. Some selected models of shaping the learning partnership by means of inservice work are presented. We are in the beginning stage of an international exchange of practical experiences and theories about the professional art of mentoring.*

### **1. Introduction**

In the Greek mythology "Mentor" is the name of Ulysses' friend. He was asked to take care of Telemachos, Ulysses' son, during his wanderings. The goddess Pallas Athene used to transform herself into the shape of Mentor to help Telemachos in times of troubles. The protection of gods is imposed on him by a mentor.

This picture of "protection by gods" delivered by a mentor is a kind of dream about omnipotential guidance and help by a constant companion. Sometimes a mentor feels this kind of responsibility towards the mentee. Sometimes the mentee expects miracles from the mentor. The mentee does not show this openly, but it is a hidden expectation causing many troubles in the relationship.

Our knowledge on current models and programmes on mentoring in teacher education is based on

- our own experience in different settings of teacher inservice education,
- some provisional case studies on mentoring from Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, and Slovenia, presented in a 2001 conference in Ribe/ DK and
- reviewing literature about mentoring.

Our attention is directed to the relationship of the mentor and the mentee, looking at the processes and activities taking place in this special relationship. To describe the mutual shaping of professional reflection in process is an important prerequisite before in-service training can be set up for support. We are convinced that accumulated knowledge of modelling the relationship will lead to better inservice programmes on mentoring at different levels of the professional development of teachers. The training of mentors "should receive as much attention as those of the newly qualified teachers" (Williams/ Prestage 2002).

## 2. Models of mentoring

### 2.1 Settings

Mentoring happens in teacher education in different settings serving different purposes. Traditionally the mentor is an elder experienced school teacher who takes care for a young, unexperienced teacher or a student teacher in order to help him/her learn how to teach. The relationship between the two is a matter of pre-service teacher education or induction. Most research on mentors has been conducted in this field.

But there are some changes in the meaning of mentoring according to the different institutional and programmatic arrangements. The large amount of definitions what mentoring is about has to do with the different institutional, social and cultural context in which it takes place.

Perhaps mapping the settings will help to distinguish.

| <b>Mentor</b>               | <b>Mentee</b>             | <b>Situation</b>  | <b>Main Purpose</b>  |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|
| Student teacher             | Slow pupil                | Reading and writing classroom   | To notice children in a broader context of needs and help them to gain self confidence |
| Experienced student (tutor) | Novice student            | Introduction in the teacher education faculty                                   | Become an active student   |
| School teacher              | Student teacher           | <i>Pre-service</i> short term practicum or one-year practicum                   | Learn how to teach from a model-teacher  |
| Experienced school teacher  | Novice teacher            | Beginning at school: <i>induction phase</i>                                     | Develop basic teaching competencies  |
| Teacher of subject matter   | Teacher of subject matter | <i>In-service</i> : school-based / internal cooperative partnership; team model | Reflection, problem solving, curriculum development                                    |

|                                    |         |   |  |
|------------------------------------|---------|---|--|
| Expert teacher (coach, supervisor) | Teacher | <i>In-service: external partnership</i> | Improve and extent teaching competencies                               |
| Headteacher                        | Teacher | <i>In-service: external partnership</i> | Staff development, develop leadership qualifications; career promotion |

Maynard & Furlong (1994, reported in Zanting 1998) identified three basic models of mentoring: the apprenticeship model, the competency model, and the reflective model. They claimed that these three models should be successively applied in teacher education.

Although the mentoring scenarios differ in context, situation and purpose, they have some features in common:

Mentoring takes place in a personal one-to-one relationship.

A protected (social) room for learning is provided to serve psycho-social functions.

A confidential, inspiring, and trusting relationship is a basic prerequisite for learning.

The benefit is not only on the mentee's side but also on the mentor's and the institution as well.

*Mentoring (in teacher education) is a strategy of individual and institutional support, realised in a learning-partnership of two persons and aiming at professional development (of school teachers).*

## **2.2 Roles and tasks of a mentor: teachers as learners**

Gordon Shea (1992) describes mentoring as “a developmental, caring, sharing, and helping relationship where one person invests time, know-how, and effort in enhancing another person’s growth, knowledge, and skills, and responds to critical needs in the life of that person in ways that prepare the individual for greater productivity or achievement in the future.” This definition broadens the scope of mentoring. It makes obvious that to “learn to teach” is a very reductive description of the purpose. The professional activities of an experienced teacher include a skilled teaching practice, education, counselling, assessing as well as interactions with colleagues and further development (innovation) of competencies. If mentoring is one of the most effective ways of learning from practical experience (Fried 1997), as has been reported in series of studies, there is no argument of reducing this efficacy to the pre-service or induction phase in teacher education. There is some evidence that mentoring is a promising strategy of continuous professional learning.

The notion of a “caring and sharing” relationship is criticised.

Tomlinson (1995, reported in Zanting 1998) identified two major roles of the mentor:

(1) the effective coach, challenging and stimulating students’ motivation and commitment,

(2) the effective facilitator, supporting teaching skills, including counselling. Martin (1996, see Zanting 1998) stated that students need both: support and challenge. He found that mentor teachers do not take over the task of evaluating and assessing students' teaching performance, because this role is in constant conflict with the supporting role. As Edwards (1998) found out in a study with 80 student teachers, "mentors were carefully launching the students into classroom practices so that they might sail through the teaching session avoiding the most obvious obstacles" (p.51). Edwards' explanation refers to the ambiguity in the role of mentors if they care and guide student's teaching and challenge these students. Another explanation is that of a double loyalty: the mentor feels primarily responsible to the pupils' learning, so that the teacher student has to avoid some of the most severe mistakes.

We feel that this attitude is due to the fact of a short term experiential situation for student teachers. Teacher students in a classroom can be viewed as a certain irregularity in pupils learning processes, more or less a game, not a severe occasion. There might be a difference in the attitude of a mentor mentoring the induction of a school teacher.

Another role ambiguity is lying in the situation when a mentor is fully responsible for the qualification procedure during one year of appointment as probationary teacher to reach standards for full registration (the Scottish case). The mentor will have to challenge the young teacher, observe and assess his/her performance and write an evaluation report. This role might cause conflicts with the support role and disturb the confidential relationship in a protective surrounding. Sometimes the roles of support and control are kept by different persons (the German case).

Mentors themselves have diverse perceptions of their roles. Elliott & Calderhead (1994) mention the roles of guide and leader, of a good friend, of a listener, of someone enabling somebody in classroom management, or as an organiser of experience to the novice teacher. Others stress the function of counselling, coaching, supporting, supervising, taking and giving feed-back, problem-solving, networking. The basic experience of a co-operative relationship with a colleague is not very often mentioned, although this can be an important contribution to better the climate within the staff.

The mentor's role changes when mentoring has a meaning to his/her own career development. Mostly teachers notice a certain acceptance and respect of their work if they are designated by the head-teacher to become a mentor. They gain honour and have to work more. Some of them feel that they get more professionally out of the mentoring business. As Turner (1993, 39) reports (quoting Andrews 1987), mentors would benefit from their role as providers of probationer induction within schools in certain aspects:

- They gain constructive feedback on their own teaching while modelling different instructional methodologies.
- They experience peer supervision while providing regular observation and feedback to the mentee.
- They gain curriculum management expertise while working jointly on the introduction of curriculum materials.

- They take part in a critical reflection of teaching while engaging in classroom research.
- They gain experience in educational consultancy while acting as a consultant.

What a mentor can really gain out of the learning partnership is depending on clear aims of mentoring, the opportunity to reflect on the roles by formal training, and an active mentee.

The responsibility for an effective mentoring relationship is not only up to the mentor, but to the mentee as well. The mentee should trust the mentor, play an active role, should be interested in experimental work, should be able to talk about strengths and weaknesses. He/she should not become mentally dependent on the mentor, not concurrent, and able to end the relationship after the contracted time.

### **2.3 Mentoring as “explication of practical knowledge”**

In recent research an increasing attention is put on the intentional and metacognitive learning of teachers. The students’ or novice teachers learning from practical experience guided by a mentor cannot be restricted to learning *how* to teach, e.g. the teaching techniques or instructional methodologies, but it should also include the rationale behind actions, i.e. learning *why* a certain teaching behaviour is appropriate in a certain situation.

Research on teachers’ knowledge in expert-novice-comparisons (e.g. Bromme 1992) give evidence to the fact that experienced teachers rely on very complex access to different theories which they are able to combine in certain situations. When making their teaching decisions they do not derive advice from scientific knowledge, but refer to their experience from different cases, checking the similarities with this challenging situation. This kind of knowledge is often called “tacit knowledge” or applied „practical“ knowledge, differing from scientific or academic knowledge. Practical knowledge can be explicated to a certain degree by thinking aloud.

Zanting et al (1998) focus on the „explication of practical knowledge“ by the mentor to promote students’ learning from the teaching experience. “Explicating their knowledge of learning and teaching is an essential part of the mentor teacher’s role” (p.15).

The tools by which the practical knowledge can be explicated are similar to research instruments: interview and observation, inquiry, critical analysis and reflection.

### **2.4 Mentoring as “joint work”**

Effective mentoring is reported (Little 1990 in Feiman-Nemser 1998) from “joint work” of the mentor and the mentee. For instance in curriculum planning, classroom management, working with parents, reporting to parents, or project work the mentee and the mentor participate as fellow learners. The “novices’ learning results from doing and talking about the work together” (p.68).

Donald Schön’s theory about teacher as “reflective practitioner” can formally be established in the mentoring relationship: The mentor and the mentee practice reflection on action when they share experience from a joint work-project. Co-planning,

co-teaching, observation, joint inquiry and critical conversation are the appropriate tools in this joint-work relationship, bringing about benefits for the two of them. Learning happens “through the active participation in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991 reported in Edwards 1998, p.54).

## **2.5 Mentoring as dialogue practice**

The relational character of knowledge and learning and the importance of the negotiation of meanings is a point of view that helps to extend the notion of teachers as learners to the mentors themselves (Edwards 1998, 55). If mentoring no longer simply means the identification of general principles of teaching to be applied by the student-mentee, there is a fundamental flaw in conceiving the negotiated character of meaning and the concerned character of learning activity for the people involved. Participating in the classroom is a necessary but insufficient source of students’ learning (Edwards 1998); the social nature of individuals learning and the wider context of learning in a community have to be emphasised strongly if we want to know how learning may be supported.

The current view of schools as learning organisations (Dalin & Rolff 1993) encourages teachers’ collaboration and the development of a communicative culture within the single school. Situated cognition and metacognitive approaches to classroom activities are basic prerequisites to teachers working as professionals. The mentor-mentee-relationship could become a model of co-operative teaching-learning partnership in the community of practice, involving educational research and teacher education as well in a communicative network.

## **3. How to set up a learning partnership – Models of mentoring in practice**

### **3.1 Training of mentors**

The list of personal traits and competencies of an ideal mentor is long, and it is quite unclear whether these traits can be promoted by means of formal training. In addition the amount of time that can economically be invested in the training of mentors is an important issue. Mostly the teacher training institutions are suggested to carry out the training. Some personal qualities of good mentors have to be valued by the head-teacher who is responsible for the designation:

- Mentors should be congenial and interested in others.
- Mentors should have a good reputation and should be considered successful teachers by the principal.
- Mentors and mentees should be paired with similar personalities (Turner 1993, 39).

The choice of pairs is a very critical issue. In career-development mentoring-projects the mentor gives a written biography of his professional development by which the mentee can choose his mentor, and vice versa.

The framing of the mentor-project differs: sometimes mentors are offered an introduction conference, sometimes workshops, supervision, and special training. Standards of mentoring have not yet been developed. The notion of reflective thinking, critical peer, and communicative skills will be salient features.

The following examples may serve as descriptions of different mentoring projects.

### **3.2 External partnership: Coaching in In-service education [Lydia van Andel]**

In the Netherlands the Educational Service Institute Midden Holland en Rijnstreek at Bodegraven provides In-service support for primary and secondary schools. One of the support offers is to give coaching to teachers who have problems with their professional development. From the school's point of view they cannot be helped any more by internal mentors of the school itself. The learning partnership between the teacher and the coach is based on acceptance of the external coach as a competent person to provide for special help, sometimes as a last chance for the teacher to succeed in his/her work. The in-service institute Midden Holland en Rijnstreek developed a 'code' for coaching with guidelines for transparency and privacy for the teacher that is referred to in a contract.

We describe the steps that have to be taken when a request for coaching reaches the institute.

#### **1. Composing the Action plan**

In the first appointment between the school leader, the teacher, and the external coach there is decision making on goals that have to be achieved during the period of coaching.

The goals are formulated by the school [what the teacher 'has' to learn] and by the teacher [what the teacher 'wants' to learn]. Then the group decides on coaching activities: personal coaching sessions and/or classroom observation with or without the use of video and the use of guided visits in other classrooms for learning from models.

The coach makes sure that the teacher is willing enough to be reflective and is really considering change of behaviour. This is a crucial condition to successful coaching.

In this first meeting attention is paid to the personal matching of the teacher with the coach: the 'click' of basic personal trust must be established between the two.

#### **2. The coaching period**

The coaching starts after consensus is written in the action plan by the coach.

In the case of classroom visits *without video* the coach is present in the classroom for 60 to 90 minutes. Then the coach organises for about 60 minutes a reflective dialogue and feedback with the teacher. An agreement on learning points and new behaviour to be tried out by the teacher is established.

The coach afterwards writes a report with strong points and development [weak] points and sends it to the teacher. When the teacher has agreed with the text the school leader gets a copy.

In the case of classroom observation *with video* [parents have to be informed and to consent] the coach makes a videotape in the classroom for 40 to 60 minutes and analyses the tape on weak and strong points.

The teacher comes to the in-service institute afterward, and together with the coach he or she looks at the selected sequences to find out special learning points. Agreement on new behaviour to be tried out will be negotiated. The coach writes a report and the teacher writes a reflection paper. From both reports a copy can be given to the school leader.

These activities take place in the period of coaching for 6 to 12 times, as long as it is agreed in the action plan or is necessary.

Starting point of the teacher-coach interaction always is what the teacher is capable of. Positive feedback [which a teacher under these circumstances almost never gets any more ] is given as much as is possible.

When personal coaching also is agreed on in the action plan: these sessions take one hour and a half and have their own contents, i.g. the teachers convictions and role taking in life and profession. Here the coaching gets a deeper character of counselling. The reflections written by the teacher remain in the privacy of the coach and the teacher.

### **3. Evaluation of the coaching**

In-between-evaluation takes place once halfway during the coaching period with all people involved. The question is to continue or not to continue. Is the coaching worthwhile, does the teacher think that there is enough to be learnt from this coach, does the coach have the impression that the teacher improves reflection and teaching skills?

At the end the teacher writes a final evaluation report about his or her development during the coaching, helped by some questions given by the coach.

The coach writes also a report about the development of the teacher according to the agreed aims of the action plan completed with recommendations for the future. The final dialogue takes place: Have the goals been reached? What did the teacher learn? What recommendations are useful? The school leader decides on the future steps for the professional development of the teacher to be taken.

By means of this personal external coaching many teachers could improve their teaching behaviour and could prevent chronic illness or early retiring.

### **3.3 Reflection in Tandems**

Together with a group of German language teachers in Canada Esther Enns has developed a special in-service project for German language teachers who work rather isolated in their schools miles away from a colleague of another school. To come together in an in-service course meant to overcome extremely long distances and to invest a lot of money in travelling. The effects of distant coursework on the individual teacher's teaching practice had not been noticeable.

The model of choosing a partner (in a reasonable distant school) for continuous reflection and learning has successfully been applied on different subjects in a Swiss teacher in-service institution (Enns 1991; 1999).

The Tandem-Model consists of four stages which are accompanied by the in-service agency:

**(1) Preparation and selection of a partner**

The selection of a partner is a very delicate procedure; similar interests and teaching situations but also personal sympathy and trust have to be negotiated until the tandem-partnership can be contracted.

**(2) Contracting**

The partners decide themselves, what they are interested to look at and improve. They negotiate the amount of mutual classroom visits, the focus of classroom observation, they agree on the time for discussion immediately after the observation.

**(3) Tandem in work**

The inservice agency gives a set of attitudes and an opportunity to train those in principle and very carefully. For instance REH are the principles of interaction between the partners: respect, empathy and honesty.

They promote a narrative approach to reflection on classroom teaching. The narrative approach is regarded as the most practical way of negotiating mutual understanding, especially if the implicit conceptions of teaching differ – as they usually do.

**(4) Evaluation of learning outcomes within the tandem**, usually after half a year of tandem work, redefining of the contract if necessary.

**(5) Evaluation of results within the group of tandems.**

The tandem-model is based on equal partners who have to find out what they can learn from each other by means of mutual classroom observation and feedbacking procedures. A narrative approach is preferred. Although working in a tandem can be contracted in a private way in any case, the integration in formal in-service coursework is a very important factor of efficacy.

### **3.4 Student-Pupil Project**

An interesting effort towards improvement of teacher pre-service education launched by the university for primary teachers is the “Student-Pupil-Project” (Garlichs 2000) at the university of Kassel/ Germany.

24 students can decide to accompany a single pupil from a primary school classroom during a year. The pupils have been named by the classroom teacher as children who need help, but not a clinical therapy. The students chose “their” pupil in a carefully designed procedure, including the advice of the classroom teacher, the parents, the pupil itself, and the university teacher.

The accompanying relationship is an opportunity to make experiences with a child’s life situation, which is not restricted to classroom learning, but gives an insight into a biographical and social context of a child’s strained situation.

The students have to meet monthly in a peer group to supervise the process. In addition they are offered personal clinical supervision, lectures and workshops in special problems of childhood, case-studies, social development etc. Most of them work out their case in exam papers.

The continuous and responsible interaction with a special child gives the role of a mentor or tutor to the student and the role of a mentee to the selected child. The student has to design and shape the relationship according to the needs of the child. Very often the child experiences for the first time in his/her life a reliant relationship. The student experiences the personal relationship to a child far away from the teacher-learner situation in a classroom (see Garlich 2000).

#### **4. Final remarks and further perspectives**

These are only short stories on the "art" of mentoring. To study different models of mentoring practice will lead us to an accomplished map of issues about how mentoring could be promoted and improved in in-service course work. We have started a joint project on research and development of mentoring in several European countries. Case studies on different models of mentoring, guidelines for mentoring practices and the development of an international training course for mentors will be some of the intended products of the project.

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