

Perspectives on Mentoring Novice Teachers

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Recent research on the quality of education at school (Hattie, 2003; Kunter et al., 2011) points out the important part teachers play: they are identified as the crucial factor influencing the quality of learning at schools.

The first five years of teaching of the lifelong professional career development of teachers, called the induction period, are very important, both for the individual and for the educational system: The induction period is when teachers learn to adapt to the realities of school and to develop personal strengths on the one hand, while on the other hand, measures must be provided to support them to ensure quality of teaching at schools, giving a new generation of teachers a chance and opportunity to become a source of inspiration for a refreshing improvement of schools.

Nevertheless, little attention was paid to conducting and researching induction programmes for professional development of novice teachers in recent decades (Mc Namara, 1995).

Novice teachers must deal with questions concerning lesson planning, the use of different teaching methods, the assessment of student learning, classroom management and students' individual needs, as well as becoming familiar with roles and attitudes as professionals (Hericks, 2009; Keller-Schneider & Hericks,

2014). Teacher education programs have recently started to develop, shape and research this crucial period (Ashby, P. et al., 2008). How novice teachers cope with the various situations and tasks in the beginning of their professional career, and how they can be best supported has now become a priority number one question internationally of strategies in teacher education and induction programs in collaboration with schools (European Commission, 2010). This issue of *Global Education Review*, "Perspectives on Mentoring Novice Teachers," will hopefully contribute to the growing worldwide body of increasing research about mentoring as a substantial factor of formal and informal induction programmes. The starting position is defined by the undisputed fact that beginning teachers are confronted with specific challenges for which intensive internships for students in teacher education cannot prepare novice teachers so comprehensively that they can successfully cope with challenges without any further support. There are clear indications that accompanying measures in terms of mentoring by experienced, sometimes

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specifically qualified teachers can be seen as most conducive to their professional development (Hobson et al., 2009).

There is “no single model of effective induction policies” (European Commission, 2010, p. 7), and induction programmes do differ due to national educational and cultural contexts and specific goals (Blömeke & Paine, 2009; Greiner, 2010). But in spite of the diversity of those programs from an international point of view, common fundamental elements as design criteria can be identified. The three basic kinds of support - personal, social and professional- are translated into four interlocking systems which means communities to shape ways of support (European Commission, 2010, p. 16-19). Of these mentoring systems, expert systems, peer systems and self-reflection systems our issue of *GER* concentrates on mentoring, which not only plays a crucial role among the support systems, but is considered the most important component (OECD, 2006; Keller-Schneider & Hericks, 2014; Mayr & Neuweg, 2009). According to those dimensions of mentoring determined to meet the school’s demands as well as the individual’s needs, a theoretical framework is required. Among different approaches to mentoring one can clearly see the change from an apprenticeship (instructional) model of mentoring, to a more discursive mentoring model that focuses on self-reflection enriched by dialogues with the mentor, and using more theoretical aspects (Harrison, 2006; Orland-Barak & Klein, 2010). The mentor is a key figure, which self-evidently depends on quality of his/her mentoring, be it high or low (Hofmann & Springer, 2014).

Our issue, “Perspectives on Mentoring Novice Teachers,” brings together four contributions that deal with mentoring in different ways and contributes to the following topics, deepening their understanding and providing some empirical proof by having conducted research on their own:

- Tasks and challenges for novice teachers
- Tasks of mentors and theoretical frameworks for mentoring
- Required competences and attitudes of mentors
- Qualification standards and tools for mentors
- The unique relationship between mentor and novice teacher
- Novice teachers’ perceptions of their competences and support received from mentoring
- Key elements of successful mentoring programmes
- New trends in mentoring

The article by Johannes Brandau, Peter Studencnik and Silvia Kopt-Sixt, “Dimensions and Levels of Mentoring: Empirical Findings of the First German Inventory and Implications for Future Practice,” contributes to current empirical knowledge about dimensions of mentoring by presenting the results of the development of an inventory as a standardized instrument facilitating structured feedback in mentoring. Five dimensions of mentoring styles were identified and empirically explored and validated. The further validation and use of this inventory is highly important for new trends in mentoring as well, i.e., mentoring during lessons, near to classroom connected experience, as well as mentoring in learning communities.

The article by Angela Gastager, Anna Nebel, Viktoria Präauer, Jean-Luc Patry and Barbara Fageth, “Pedagogical Tact in Mentoring of Professional School Internships,” deals with a traditionally important issue in pedagogy, namely TACT as a certain procedural and conditional knowledge, to know when and how to act in critical pedagogical situations which demand intervention and decision-making. The authors investigated five advanced preservice teachers and three mentors by the method of stimulated recall, and pupils by the lesson interruption method to compare whether there might be a substantial difference between the experts’ and novices’ actions according to TACT. The process of learning TACT and becoming a

reflective practitioner is described as bridging the gap between scientific theory, subjective theory and practice.

The article by Isolde Malmberg, “Transitions Between Art and Pedagogy: Mentoring Music Teacher Novices in Austria,” focuses on novice music teachers and presents them as a very special profession for which a specific mentoring concept is required. The qualitative study embedded in the grounded theory framework includes interviews with experts to sharpen the research question, narrative interviews with eleven mentees and four group discussions with three to four mentors. The author characterizes the crucial period of induction by two different spheres of praxis (according to Benner’s theory of praxeology): that of education, and that of art, both of them regarding a professional status, so that the conflict -being a teacher, being an artist, being none of it, being both- develops different problem-solving styles that dominate the induction period as a “status passage.” Music teacher mentees have to be supported by working with this dichotomy as a basic feature due to the different positions possible.

The article by Elisabeth Riebenbauer, Gernot Dreisiebner and Michaela Stock, “Providing feedback, Orientation and Opportunities for Reflection as Key Elements for Successful Mentoring Programs: Reviewing a Program for Future Business Education Teachers,” tries to assess key elements of mentoring including the required competences of mentors, both from a student teacher’s and mentor’s perspective, based on student teachers’ tasks during their advanced semester of student teaching. One hundred and eighty-eight persons, student teachers and their mentors, were questioned via an online survey at the end of the newly implemented mentoring program. Additionally, the novice teachers’ perceptions of their own competences concerning assumed improvement during the programme were investigated. The presentation of the development of additional corresponding mentoring tools, evaluation grid, learning diary

and ePortfolio, based on the theoretical framework of Three-Level-Mentoring (feedback-reflection-orientation) is what makes this article quite interesting.

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MMag. DDr. Ulrike Greiner is the director of the School of Education at the University of Salzburg and has been engaged in teacher education for 25 years. In 2016 she established a doctorate program focusing on teacher competences at her university, together with a faculty of 20 researchers. Currently she is a member of three research groups concerning "Diversity and school," "Epistemological beliefs

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