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An Analysis of Conditions that Promote Successful Practical Mentoring Processes in Teacher Education

ABSTRACT: This article discusses the importance of teacher mentoring in schools. It presents mentoring programs which are implemented in Austria in cooperation with universities and teacher training colleges. The study investigates three phenomena: learning in the internship with accompaniment, collaboration, and professionalism. It evaluates interviews with mentors and applies grounded theory as its research methodology, which shows the consequence in the form of six school practical mentoring functions in the mentoring process. Conditions with a positive impact on the mentoring process are derived from these mentoring functions. The article aims to contribute to the current discussion about mentoring in teacher education. The discussed research project is a qualitative-based survey on interviews with mentors (n=12) and mentees (n=12) and an evaluation with Grounded Theory.

KEYWORDS: mentoring, teacher education, best practice; mentoring curriculum, mentoring research

School mentoring is a pivotal aspect of teacher training, the school, and the formal education system. It takes place in school settings between a student teacher and a teacher. In Austria school, practical mentoring is structurally anchored in so-called pedagogical-practical studies in the curricula of teacher education and later in the induction phase. The article deals with the mentoring schools offer mentees for gaining practical teaching experience in the classroom and as an opportunity to complete the curricular parts of the school in the social environment of schools. Committed and specifically trained teachers act as mentors who accompany and support the professionalization process of mentees. In doing so, two individuals with different life and educational experiences meet and work together. The mentors generally have several years of professional teaching experience. Thus, they have a repertoire of pedagogical action patterns, have had various learning opportunities (Richter, 2011; Cramer, 2012, p. 34), and are able to answer pedagogical questions based on professional knowledge and experience. The mentor has gained experience and skills in teaching over the course of his professional career. The mentee has even less experience – but maybe ideas for implementation. Viewed critically, the mentor should always remain a student. With regard to school mentoring, the mentee (student teacher or protégé) usually has previous educational experience. This leads to the formation of ideas, expectations, and attitudes (Kraler, 2009) and entails a positive influence on the mentoring process. Reflecting these previous experiences is necessary to promote professional development (Haas, 2021, p. 82).

Historiographic perspectives show a teacher-expert model in the mentoring process. This is based on the master's own apprenticeship. The mentor provides support to the mentee based on their professional expertise. The aim of the mentor and mentee is to walk a common path and acquire skills and experience (Figure 1; Garvey, 2000, p. 9).
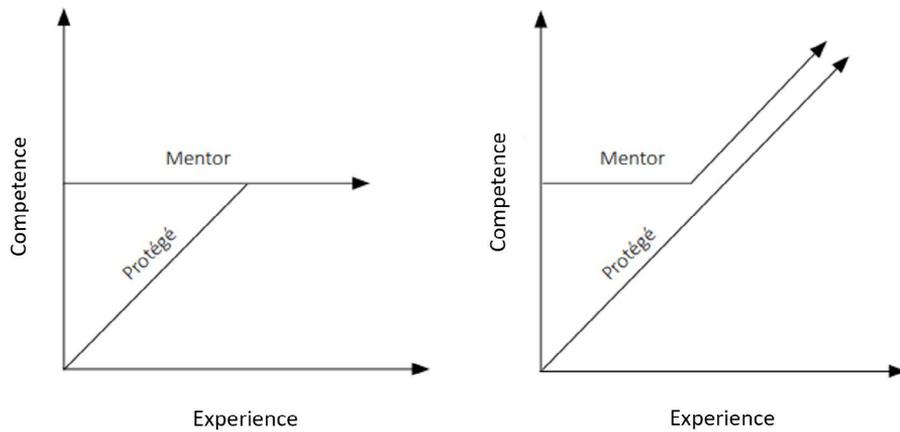
Figure 1. Competence-Experience Model in the mentoring process
(Garvey, 2000, p. 9)

Garvey (2000) shows in his figure that the currently prevalent concept of the mentoring process is a gradual approach of the mentee to the mentor in which professional interaction results in the parallel development and an increase in teaching competence. This perspective leads to various definitions of mentoring, one of which is the following:

> School practical mentoring processes ideally go hand in hand with a learning and development culture that is not geared towards master craftsman apprenticeships and workshop learning (historiographical and systematic access), but towards a personified, value-based, strengths and resource-oriented support process for those mentees who think, act and sentient and for profession-oriented mentors (personalized access). The focus is on working together in the internships within the framework of the school system and teacher training (systemic access), the ringing in and implementation of topic-related changes based on reflexive experience and taking a positive prospective look. (cf. Haas, 2021, p. 138)

This definition sees mentoring as a win-win situation for mentees and mentors. They enter a co-evolutionary relationship of professional learning. Oettler (2009) speaks of a win-win-win situation because the systems involved also profit from it: the school, the colleges of education, the universities, and formal education (Oettler, 2009, p. 82).

MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOL INTERNSHIP IN AUSTRIA

Experienced and specially trained teachers accompany mentees during their education. The accompaniment mode has changed in recent years – depending on the teacher training. The reorganization and redesign of teacher training also require a reorganization and redesign of additional education for teachers who want to work as mentors in the form of mentoring programs (Haas, 2021; Kraler et al., 2021). In Austria, mentors complete a shorter program to the extent of 30 ECTS credits or an intensive program of 90 ECTS credits (Masters' degree) at the colleges of education for two or six semesters, respectively. Each college of education has developed its own curriculum. There are currently no defined quality standards in the mentoring programs in Austria. The education of the mentors aims to provide support during practical school mentoring and during the induction phase.

The program presented here relates to a teacher education program designed by experts from the University of Innsbruck and Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule Edith Stein (KPH Edith Stein). The mentoring curriculum, amounting to 30 ECTS credits, is divided into two phases (15 + 15 ECTS credits). In the first phase, mentors deal with their own learning biography and develop a personal opinion about student-friendly and development-oriented aspects. The focus is on raising awareness of personal action strategies, concepts, subjective theories, and values. Research findings on mentoring underline the content of the program (Roßnagl, 2017). One important task profile, in terms of professionalization, consists of the acquisition of knowledge on the research-based training of new teacher training, the instruction on research-based learning, and dealing with reflexive action. In the second phase, the focus is on deepening theory and practice in terms of coaching, counselling, supervision, mentoring, and mediation, as well as counselling on didactic issues (planning, implementation, reflection, and evaluation of situations in teaching and education). Aims include an expansion of the professional self-image and the conscious use of a resource-oriented, development-promoting, personalized, value-free, and meaning-free room of experience.

The second example is a program resulting in a Master's degree from a college of education from eastern part of Austria. It is mentioned here because it shows differences in content to the minimized program and documents the variety of programs. This intense program, spanning six semesters with 90 ECTS credits, appeals to teachers in an employment relationship who have at least five years of professional experience. The content is focused on the following subject areas: professional understanding (10 ECTS credits), accompanying and advising (20 ECTS credits), communication and interaction (10 ECTS credits), teaching and learning (10 ECTS credits), organizational and personnel development (5 ECTS credits), research methods and research practice (10 ECTS credits), and a Master's module (25 ECTS credits). According to Marzano (2011), he concept is thus based on the domains of the knowledge and skill (Curriculum Mentoring 90 ECTS 2016, p. 5). The aim is to increase

the mentor's professional skills needed for the support process within the mentoring framework. The first programs will be subjected to an evaluation process and revised.

According to research findings (Hobson et al., 2009; Rogers, 2009; Nolle, 2012; Dreer, 2018; Hofmann, 2019), Haas (2021) proposed the following conditions or quality criteria in the sense of a framework curriculum for the formation of mentoring qualification programs: "Developing a curriculum with a reflective, proactive, research and transformation-led, systemic-integrative, intra- and interpersonal, profession-specific approach." (p. 237). In the further development of mentoring programs, standards could be developed based on this approach.

In the following, research findings on school practical mentoring are examined and discussed.

RESEARCH ON SCHOOL PRACTICAL MENTORING

Research results show that it is primarily not the duration of internships that is crucial, but the quality of the learning processes (Gröschner et al., 2015) and the learning outcomes (Dieck et al., 2010; Müller, 2010). The success and benefits of internships are strongly linked to the questions of how the theory-based part of reflection is prepared or what is required of mentees in the accompanying courses (Hascher, 2012; Arnold et al., 2014). Thus, the accompaniment in the internships and the professional preparation and follow-up in the school and university sections are of particular value (Dehne et al., 2018, p. 109). The quality of mentoring is of great importance (Abel et al., 2008; Hascher et al., 2012; Wilson, 2011). What are the research insights into school practical mentoring? The theoretical foundations of mentoring concepts are mainly used in methods of personal development, psychology, and educational research. Research on practical mentoring in schools currently relates to five subject areas: (1) mode of action in internships (König et al., 2018; Hobson et al., 2009), (2) process accompanying formats between mentors and mentees (Reintjes et al., 2018; Schüssler et al., 2017), (3) generating success in mentoring (Hobson et al., 2009), (4) motivations of mentors (Weyland et al., 2011), and (5) attitudes of mentors (Haas, 2021, p. 72). Based on research results on the effectiveness of mentoring (1), the strengthening of self-confidence (Hobson et al., 2009), the development of self-concept (König et al., 2018, p. 44), and socialization in the school field (Crisp, 2010) are emphasized as being positive for mentees, while mentors receive a re-energization (Hobson et al., 2007) for their professionalism. The research on effectiveness is mostly individual case descriptions from the mentees' point of view, with conclusions on a generalization. The empirical verifiability of the effectiveness of mentors during the school internships constitutes a research desideratum (Haas, 2021, p. 65). If the research results of mentoring processes (2) are analysed, then they will be in connection with relationships and the course of conversations (Cherian, 2007; Schubarth et al., 2012). For Hobsen et al. (2009), the following four factors foster conditions that generate success (3): contextual support in mentoring, mentor selection and matching process, mentoring strategies, and training in mentoring (p.

211f.). Research on the motivations of mentors (4) and attitudes of mentors (5) (Haas, 2021, p. 72) reilluminates the mentor's perspective on the process.

In summary, there are two main lines of research for school practical mentoring: effectiveness based on case descriptions and improvement of the mentoring process. Both are expandable. International researchers, like the ECER (European Conference on Educational Research) team, set the goal of researching mentoring.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The present research is a qualitative-based survey on interviews with mentors (n=12) and mentees (n=12) and an evaluation with Grounded Theory. The aim was to empirically identify and reconstruct the central achievement conditions of school practical mentoring processes in teacher education. Based on studies, the following three research questions are dealt with by means of a qualitative study based on existing findings (Abel et al., 2008; Hascher et al., 2010; Wilson, 2011): (1) Which conditions of success can be reconstructed or identified in the mentoring process? (2) Which conditions for success can be reconstructed or identified from the mentor's point of view? (3) Which conditions for success can be reconstructed or identified from the perspective of the mentees? Teachers who act as mentors and mentees who have gained significant experience in the support process during the internship are called in as experts. The statements from the interviews were transcribed and coded with the aid of a computer. Grounded Theory was chosen as the research approach, and different coding methods (open coding, axial coding, selective coding) and operational options were used in the process (Strauss et al., 1996).

In the following, the research results are presented and discussed. The description focuses on the phenomena and consequences of the schools' practical mentoring process.

Phenomena as the result of the study

In the heuristic analysis model (Heiser, 2018, p. 231) of the Grounded Theory, the phenomenon is at the centre of the coding or core paradigm. The codes, concepts, sub-categories, and/or categories refer to the event or state that is expressed with the phenomenon. Consequences can also be derived from the data. For Strauss et al. (1996), the consequences are actions that are established on the basis of the phenomenon or the setting of measures that later become a condition (Strauss et al., 1996, p. 85).

There are two phenomena after the coding process in the core paradigms. According to the student interviews, the phenomenon is *"learning in the internships with accompaniment."* According to the teacher interviews, the phenomenon is *"collaboration."* The findings of the interview study (n = 24) show that mentors want to collaborate with the mentees while accompanying the school internships. For mentees, the focus is on the possibility of experiential learning with accompaniment.

If one analyses these two phenomena further and brings them into connection, then the phenomenon of professional development arises on the meta-core paradigm. For a successful school practical mentoring process, contextual, internship- and person-specific, as well as relationship-oriented conditions must be taken into account.
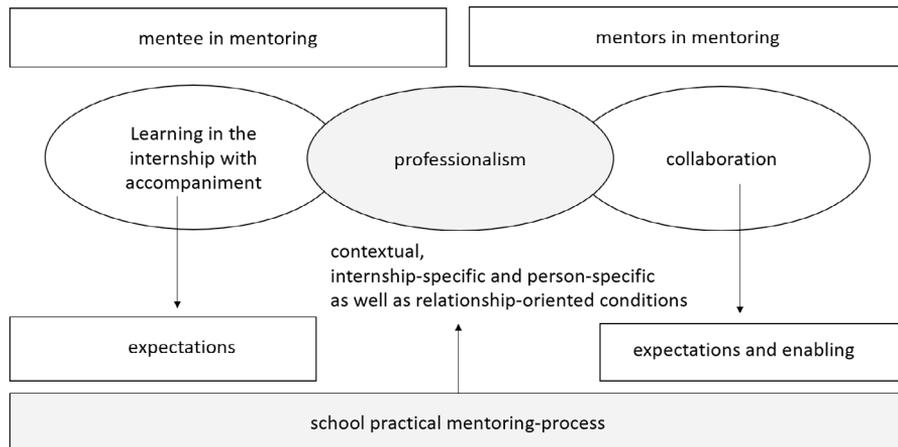

Figure 2. Phenomena in the school practical mentoring process (Haas, 2021, p. 234)

During the time of supervision, mentees enter into a phase of expectation. Mentees expect a trusting relationship, appreciative cooperation, and professional behaviour from the mentors and demand constructive feedback. During the internship, mentees want to be able to act independently and authentically, to be able to implement new perspectives so that developments are accelerated. Mentees want to be able to address theoretical concepts and models. Mentors have expectations and an attitude of enabling when exercising their function in the mentoring process. Different motives form the basis. Priority is given to the need to get to know new challenges, to discover mentoring as a new field of activity, to improve oneself in the profession, to accompany mentees in their training, to know about the new teacher education, to represent the field of school and to reflect on student behaviour. The central result of the study is that those involved in the dyadic relationship want to build up or enter into a profession-specific learning and development process with the aim of furthering their own professionalism. School practical mentoring supports and promotes this intention.

School practical mentoring functions as a result of the study

As consequences (actions, conditions) of a successful process, six school practical mentoring functions could be categorically reconstructed in the present study: professional competence functions via the availability of a role model, psychosocial and

personal-emotional aspects, requirements on the mentoring role, profession-specific functions, mentoring-specific functions, role functions.
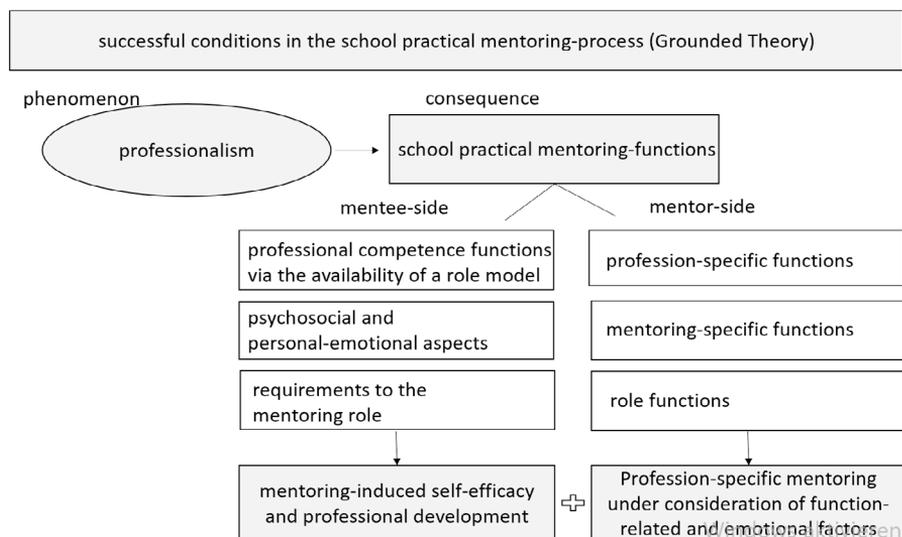

Figure 3. Six school practical mentoring functions as a consequence in Grounded Theory (Haas, 2021, p. 218)

The school practical mentoring functions of the student side (professional competence functions via the availability of a role model, psychosocial and personal-emotional aspects, requirements on the mentoring role) address conditions for success such as internship as a professional learning field, profession-specific self-efficacy, communication and interaction, mentoring mission, mentoring understanding and mentoring organization, mentoring professionalism, individual psychosocial experiences and competence development during the internship. The categories again indicate expectations within the mentoring process. The mentees show that tasks in mentoring must be worked on for the benefit of the mentees, that the affective-emotional aspects are taken into account, and that the professional field of school is made available as a learning and development space. For mentees, the school practical mentoring functions aim for mentoring-induced self-efficacy and professional development.

The school practical mentoring functions of the mentor side (profession-specific functions, mentoring-specific functions, role functions) describe categories such as professional cooperation and integration, understanding of the identification process leading to the teaching profession, subject-related exchange, mentoring mission, mentoring identity, mentor self-concept, psychosocial moment(s) and psychosocial exchange as successful conditions. Mentors use the mentoring process to develop their own profession as a teacher, work together with institutions and mentees, and thus work in a new field of activity. It is also important for the mentors that they

consider the emotional state of the mentees. Mentors understand their activity as professional-specific mentoring under consideration of function-related and emotional factors.

The challenge of practical school mentoring processes is that common, mentor-side and mentee-side desires and aspects are discussed. Expectations should be formulated and communicated right at the beginning of the process.

CONCLUSION

The data of the present qualitative-reconstructive study on the conditions for the success of school practical mentoring processes are based on a survey of mentors and mentees with well-founded experience in the field of mentoring in teacher education. The study specifically dealt with the question of which conditions of success can be reconstructed or identified in the mentoring process. Statements from mentors and mentees indicate that mentoring process is all about professional development for those involved. Mentors want to professionalize further and are looking for cooperation with mentees and the education institution (university, college of teacher education). They open their field of action and impact to mentees, give them freedom in the design of school settings, and contribute to promoting learning and development. Mentees want to learn during their internship and need support on the way to professionalization. The meeting of mentor and mentee and the school practical mentoring process are shaped by expectations on both sides. Expectations must be clarified and discussed at the beginning of the process and during the process. Ultimately, mentoring is a win-win situation and, in the words of Socrates, shows: "Mentoring is about sharing wisdom – a two-way street that benefits both."

The results of the study outline topics for the modelling of mentoring programs. In this way, they underline the importance of expectations. In the discussion and debate, references will also be made to topics such as basic attitudes, values, and management style. Above all, the mentoring functions at school show that mentors have to deal with the task, requirements, and, in particular, the functions: profession-specific functions, mentoring-specific functions, and role functions. Mentoring programs should also deal with this, and mentors should be given instruments for assessing moods and dealing with challenges. However, the mentee's demand primarily relates to the opportunity to develop and learn. The following questions are, therefore, the focus of mentoring programs: How can mentors support someone who wants to learn? What is learning? Which competences are important for a mentee? How can a mentee develop? What experiences should a mentee have during the internship so that they can learn? What do I have to consider as a mentor? How can a mentor take the emotional aspects into account and respond to expectations? Essentially, it is about dealing with self-reflective analytical and development-related aspects. On the mentee's part, consideration of psychosocial and emotional aspects in the mentoring process is requested. The mentee is also assigned a role in the mentoring process that they must become aware of. It is important to clarify them at the beginning of

the process and highlight the expectations. As a mentee, what do I expect from the internship? What do I expect from my mentor? What can contribute to a successful process? These self-critical questions can help the mentee to get started in the process. Ultimately, both parties are responsible for the success of the mentoring process.

In the near future, research on school-based mentoring could deal with specificities such as a person, domain, or school type specificity. Questions about this form a desideratum. It remains to be seen how concepts for school-based mentoring will develop further.

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Analiza warunków sprzyjających powodzeniu praktycznych procesów mentoringowych w edukacji nauczycieli

ABSTRAKT: W artykule omówiono znaczenie mentoringu nauczycieli w szkołach oraz przedstawiono programy mentorskie, które są realizowane w Austrii we współpracy z uniwersytetami i kolegiami nauczycielskimi. Przedmiotem badania są trzy zjawiska: uczenie się w ramach stażu z asystą, współpraca i profesjonalizm. W artykule przeanalizowano wywiady z mentorami oraz zastosowaną teorię ugruntowaną jako metodologię badawczą. W konsekwencji, uzyskano rezultaty w postaci sześciu praktycznych funkcji mentorskich w procesie mentoringu a warunki mające pozytywny wpływ na proces mentoringu są wyprowadzane właśnie z tych funkcji. Artykuł ma na celu wniesienie wkładu do aktualnej dyskusji na temat mentoringu w kształceniu nauczycieli. Omawiany projekt badawczy jest badaniem jakościowym opartym na wywiadach z mentorami (n=12) i podopiecznymi (n=12) oraz ewaluacji z wykorzystaniem teorii ugruntowanej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: mentoring, kształcenie nauczycieli, najlepsze praktyki, program mentoringu, badania nad mentoringiem