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Chapter 6
Teacher Education in Germany— Mentoring in School Internships

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This chapter provides an overview of the current state of research on mentoring in practical teacher training, focussing on the quality of supervision and the relationships between mentor and mentee in practical phases at school. Using the example of the Lehr:werkstatt at Tübingen University's School of Education, it is shown how mentor-mentee interactions can be designed and what ideally distinguishes quality mentoring.

First, the general characteristics and peculiarities of teacher education in Germany are described, with a special focus on the relationship between theoretical studies and practical relevance, and the much-discussed role of school-based practical phases that are integrated into university studies. Subsequently, central research results on the status and effectiveness of such school internships are presented, and the concepts and forms of school-based mentoring are clarified. Particular attention is given to the quality of supervision and relationships in mentoring constellations.

In a research overview, current and central findings from review studies and empirical investigations are linked with each other. This part is concluded with a practical example: the Tübingen Lehr:werkstatt. This is a long-term internship integrated into the bachelor's program in which mentoring interactions play an essential role in developing the student teachers' professional competencies. In the final conclusion, it is critically noted that many mentoring concepts focus exclusively on the prospective teachers' teaching actions, overlooking the fact that professionalization processes can be protracted, non-linear, and characterized by crises and breaks, such that the role of mentoring in improving the quality of teaching can only ever be indirect. It is therefore demanded that mentors in mentoring interactions make multiple references to studies in the subject sciences, subject didactics, and educational sciences. By acting in a way that is both supportive and challenging, they broaden the students' as well as their own perspectives.

1 Introduction

Teacher education in Germany is characterized by the structural and organizational changes of the last 10–15 years, exemplified by the 2004 transition to the bachelor-master structure. On the other hand, the discussion about successful teacher education has always been defined by the question of how science and professional practice should be related. The students' desire for more practice and for the integration of learning opportunities related to the professional field during the course of their studies is reflected, among other things, in a strengthening of modules in educational science and subject didactics, and in the introduction of extended practical phases, e.g., the practical semester (van Buer & Petzold-Rudolph, 2015). Thus, the structural reforms (in overview: KMK, 2014) can be seen as reactions to the so-called "PISA shock" of 2000 / 2001, but can also be addressed as part of the traditional discussion about the so-called "theory-practice-problem".

Therefore, this contribution will not so much present the curricular reforms and structural / organizational features of teacher education in Germany—especially as the framework requirements are, in their details, implemented differently by the individual federal states, owing to the basic federalist structure of the German education system—as discuss a teaching concept of academic teacher education and professional practice, using the example of mentoring in school-based practical phases. For an orienting overview, we will first address questions of teacher education in Germany that concern the relationship between theory and practice.

2 Features of teacher education in Germany

From the perspective of competency theory, the teaching profession is characterized by the networking of different theoretical-formal knowledge areas (e.g., content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, pedagogical / psychological knowledge), which are proceduralized by means of extensive practical experience (Voss et al., 2015). The corresponding learning opportunities, in which declarative knowledge (theory), but also practical knowledge and skills (procedural knowledge or performative knowledge) are acquired, are for the most part institutionally separated in German teacher education (Blömeke, 2009a). This separation of theory and practice is particularly visible in the two-phase training structure that prospective teachers go through: in a first phase (the teacher education program), universities are primarily responsible for imparting theoretical-conceptual knowledge, while in the second phase (the teacher

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traineeship), the study seminars and training schools focus on the acquisition of professional action competences (Blömeke, 2009b).

The background of these learning opportunities, which are separated institutionally, structurally, organizationally, and in terms of content, curriculum and personnel, is the idea that theory and practice have different functions and can be categorically distinguished from one another (Dewe & Radtke, 1991; Stadelmann, 2006), and that high-quality teacher education can therefore only be provided by specialists qualified for it. At universities, this is done by the academic staff of various faculties; at the study seminars and training schools, by vocational field experts. However, the adoption of the two perspectives (theory—practice) by different institutions, as well as their temporal succession in the (initial) education and training process, consolidate a separation that makes it difficult to proceduralize or compile the different knowledge dimensions needed for a holistic education and training of professional competences (knowledge and skills), or even, in some cases, prevents it entirely (Blömeke, 2009b).

The changeover to the bachelor-master structure at universities, the modularization of subject didactics and educational science content, and the integration of longer practical phases into university studies are now exemplary of a process that, since 2004, has been attempting to dovetail practice-related training more closely with sound academic training (Rothland, 2020).

The basic aim of the bachelor's-master's system is the cumulative development of professional skills. While the bachelor's program generally lasts six semesters and is designed as a basic study program in which the central theories, research methods and results of the respective discipline are addressed, the somewhat shorter master's program, which usually takes four semesters to complete, can be regarded as a continuation or in-depth study program in which specific subject-related didactic and pedagogical-psychological issues are negotiated.

However, while the bachelor's degree in teaching is a general professional qualification, only the subsequent master's degree entitles the holder to take up the preparatory service (Referendariat), which is a prerequisite for entering the teaching profession (van Buer & Petzold-Rudolph, 2015). This more competence- and expert-oriented structure, which emphasizes a sound theoretical and practice-oriented training in the respective subject, but also in cross-curricular areas, is also supplemented by the integration of longer periods of practice in this first phase of teacher education. Exemplary for this is the introduction of long-term internships in all federal states, e.g., the practical semester in Baden-Württemberg or the two-semester "Kernpraktikum" ("core internship") in Hamburg (Weyland, 2014). In addition, there are other types

of internships, some of which are already completed by student teachers in the bachelor's program, e.g., the orientation internship at the beginning of their studies or the *Lehr:werkstatt* (Teaching:workshop) at the Tübingen School of Education (see 4). Common to all these practical phases is their ability to fulfil the desire of many student teachers for more practical relevance in the first phase of teacher education. However, empirical findings show that introducing more and longer practical experience does not automatically lead to the development of professional competences, and that it can even have a deprofessionalizing effect (Bonnet & Hericks, 2014). For this reason, the quality, concrete design and support of practical schooling phases have increasingly come into focus (Führer & Cramer, 2020b). For this reason, practical phases in teacher education will be examined below with regard to their benefit for the relationship between theory and practice.

3 Practical school phases in teacher education

School internships that are integrated into the teacher education program of the university have high value, especially among students, but also among practical support staff. They are positively assessed in terms of their usefulness and importance, and are regarded as an important component in the training of professional competences (Gröschner & Häusler, 2014), since teacher education in Germany also includes a practical school component in addition to subject-specific, subject-didactic, and educational science training (Blömeke, 2009a). Particularly for learning and development processes at the interface between university studies (theory teaching) and occupation-related activity (practical experience), school and teaching internships are assigned a central function from a learning theory perspective (Staub, Waldis, Futter & Schatzmann, 2014). This is usually justified by the assumption that school internships can link the theoretical and declarative knowledge acquired at university with concrete practical experience, and to transfer it via the mode of reflection into procedural, action-guiding knowledge and skills (Neuweg, 2011; Kreis, 2012).
Empirically speaking, findings on the effectiveness of school internships and the development of professional competences vary (Hascher, 2012). This is especially because, from the perspective of research methodology, it is a multicomplex project to record all possible factors influencing (un)desired learning processes in teaching internships (Kreis & Staub, 2012). There is, however, a fundamental consensus that a purely quantitative increase in school-work placements (in terms of their respective duration or number in the study program) does not automatically lead to an increase

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in the professional competences of future teachers (Hascher & de Zordo, 2015), and that problematic or deprofessionalizing effects can also be observed (Bach, 2013). Therefore, through the introduction of long-term internships such as the practical semester, the quality of the respective practical phases is moving into the focus of the studies, especially that of university or school support and supervision (Strong & Baron, 2004; Schubarth et al., 2009; Hascher, 2014; Futter, 2017). Of particular interest is the design and quality of the support (mentoring) given to the students by experienced or specially trained teachers (practical support staff and mentors) at the internship schools. For this reason, a rough overview of mentoring in school-based practical phases will be given below.

3.1 Mentoring in practical school phases

Mentoring is an internationally established practice as an accompaniment and support format in school practice phases. It contributes to the professionalization of future teachers in the professional field with the help of experienced practitioners (Clarke, Triggs & Nielsen, 2014). Mentoring can be seen as an instrument with which both practical-pedagogical action and scientific-reflexive thinking can be supported and stimulated, in the sense of a guided and accompanied professionalization process (Reintjes et al., 2018), which goes beyond a simple transfer of (experiential) knowledge. A review of the research literature shows, however, that in addition to different conceptual and terminological ideas, many different realization practices can be identified in mentoring (in overview: Führer & Cramer, 2020a).

Empirical studies on this (e.g., Evertson & Smithey, 2000) show that students who are accompanied by trained mentors exhibit more effective classroom management. Furthermore, they participate in lessons with greater commitment and discipline than students who are not supervised or who are accompanied by mentors not specifically trained (cf. Kreis & Staub, 2012). However, mentoring can also have unfavorable effects, e.g., if the routines of the mentors are taken over by the students without reflection (Hascher, 2012; Wenz & Cramer, 2019), or if traditional practices, e.g., in classroom meetings, lead to no theory-based reflection on teaching phenomena (Führer, 2020).

A high-quality relationship between the student and the mentor is regarded as an essential condition for supervised and accompanied work placements to have professionalizing effects and to promote sustainable learning by the prospective teachers (Besa & Büdcher, 2014; Wenz & Cramer, 2019). However, few studies model the construct relationship theoretically or examine which indicators can be used to describe the quality of the relationship that is considered significant (Wenz & Cramer, 2019; Führer & Cramer, 2020b).

3.2 Guidance quality and relationship quality in mentoring

Clarke, Triggs and Nielsen (2014) deduce from their research overview that, from the students' perspective, mentors make one of the most important contributions to their professional development in the school internship, and that a high-quality relationship is an essential condition for successful learning processes, even if the concrete forms of interaction are different (mentors as feedback providers, role models, reflection triggers, etc.).

Important indicators of high-quality relationship design are trust, appreciation, and emotional and psychological support (Hobson et al., 2009; Orland-Barak, 2016; Wenz & Cramer, 2019). Furthermore, the way in which the mentors perform their tasks in such a setting and the interactive roles they fulfil are central issues: the supervision proves most effective if the practical mentors voluntarily take over the supervision of the students (Hobson et al., 2009) and are interested in their mentees' learning process (Gröschner & Häusler, 2014). This can be a prerequisite for critical feedback to be accepted (Niggli, Gerteis & Gut, 2008) and for the behavior of the mentors to be seen as helpful.

In addition to the supportive behavior of the mentors, the time factor is also of major importance for the perceived quality of care (Borko & Mayfield, 1995), e.g., with regard to the resources spent on preliminary and follow-up meetings (Strong & Baron, 2004; Gröschner & Seidel, 2012; Futter, 2017). However, the mentors' supportive behavior alone does not automatically have professionalizing effects. Rather, challenging learning opportunities must also be initiated and used by students, which can be designed, for example, in classroom pre- and debriefings or in case work (Hobson et al., 2009; Staub & Kreis, 2013). The research available to date suggests that a good balance between support and challenge is particularly conducive to the development of professional skills (e.g., Orland-Barak, 2016; Wenz & Cramer, 2019; Führer & Cramer, 2020b).

In summary, the current research (in overview: Führer & Cramer, 2020a) points to diverse conditions for successful practical support and supervision. Although the literature focuses on specific aspects, there is no overarching theory or framework model for classifying the conceptual and empirical work as a whole.

4 Practical example: the Tübingen Lehr:werkstatt

Within the framework of the *Lehr:werkstatt* at the Tübingen School of Education, a student teacher (*Lehr:werker*) regularly accompanies a teaching mentor (*Lehr:men-*

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tor) in their daily school and teaching routine for an entire school year. During the semester's lecture period, students spend one day a week at their internship school. During the lecture-free period, there are two block phases of two and three weeks' duration, in which students are present at the schools on a daily basis. In an accompanying seminar, for which the university is responsible, students reflect on their practical school experience under guidance and deepen it against the background of educational science and general educational theories and models. In addition, university-organized competence workshops, which are usually realized by subject specialists from science and school practice, offer the mentees and teaching mentors the opportunity to cooperate further as a tandem, and to develop and build on their respective professional competences.

To create favorable framework conditions for successful mentoring that promotes learning from the outset, an online matching tool was developed especially for the *Lehr:werkstatt*, which takes into account not only the subject combination and location wishes, but also the preferences, interests, personality traits and expectations of the students and the teaching staff when putting them together (cf. Benz, 2017).

The realistic insight students gain into the teaching profession and everyday school life during the *Lehr:werkstatt* placement can be used, on the one hand, for an individual review of the study and career choice, but can also, on the other hand, lead to a changed view of the teacher education program's contents and objectives. While a large number of teaching students still complain about their studies' lack of practical relevance to the professional field (already in Plöger & Anhalt, 1999), a long-term internship such as the *Lehr:werkstatt* offers the opportunity to apply in class the theoretical knowledge acquired in seminars (e.g., teaching forms and methods) and also to reflect on the practical experience gained at school in the supplementary *Lehr:werkstatt* seminars and workshops. The teaching experience, the exchange with the mentor and other mentees, as well as the impulses from the university events, can lead to the development of professional competences during the *Lehr:werkstatt* internship, from which the students can benefit both in the further course of their studies and with regard to future practical phases (e.g., the practical semester).

The ability to reflect is of crucial importance for the development and further development, but also the maintenance of professional competences (Combe & Kolbe, 2008; Häcker, 2017). In the context of teacher education, reflexivity is even seen as a "condition for the emergence of pedagogical expertise" (Neuweg, 2011). Thus, reflecting on and talking about one's own and observed teaching activities not only plays a central role in the professionalization of future teachers, but can also support experienced teachers in reviewing their own convictions and routines.

5 Conclusion

Concepts that orient mentoring towards the concrete guidance of the mentors' action patterns, as well as their adoption by the mentees, should always be subjected to critical examination. The development of teaching staff from novice to expert, described in an ideal-typical way by expertise research, must not conceal that professionalization processes, as they can be stimulated in practical phases, are often lengthy, non-linear, and characterized by crises and breaks, leading to a professional biographical process lasting several years. However, the strong focus of many mentoring concepts on the teaching process could distract from the fact that attitudes and beliefs, self-regulatory skills, motivational orientations and domain-specific knowledge are also characteristics of professional (action) competences (Baumert & Kunter, 2006; König, 2018). The role of mentoring in improving the quality of schools and teaching should thus always be indirect, in the sense that it results in (changed) actions by prospective teachers, which in turn has a positive effect on the students' learning (Cramer & Rothland, 2020).

If concepts of mentoring are based on a technological understanding or assume an ideal-typical logic of development from novice to expert, they contradict more complex ideas about the development of professionalism, which are oriented towards the uncertainty in the pedagogical field of action and understand teacher education as a complex, multi-perspective and multi-paradigmatic issue (Heinrich et al., 2019). If mentoring aims to prepare teachers for their complex tasks, it cannot close its eyes to the uncertainty of the teaching reality. This would be ignored if simple answers to complex questions were given and receptive unambiguities were the subject of mentoring. Mentors should therefore be required to establish a variety of references to studies in the subject sciences, subject didactics, and educational sciences. A high-quality relationship design can be conducive to the professionalization of mentees, especially if mentoring can broaden perspectives through support and challenge (Führer & Cramer, 2020a).

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