TUTORED PRAXIS-SHOCK: TEACHER CANDIDATES' OPINION ON THE MENTAL EFFECTS OF SCHOOL MENTORING

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Abstract

Teacher training is a key element of the quality of the education system. Staying in the teaching career is determined by many factors, however, overcoming the so-called praxis-shock means the first step for beginner teachers. For teacher students, mentoring during practical training is the main support, that is why it is important to know how the triadic relationship between the school mentor, the teacher and the university works. In our heuristic research, interactions between mentors, students and university actors, as elements of the mentoring process were examined (Sternberg, 2016, Ben-Harush & Orland-Barak, 2019) .

During our research (2021-2022) we asked mentors working in Hungarian teacher training and student teachers who had just completed their coherent teacher training practice. Research was carried out with mixed methods, qualitative (scientific literature exploration, focus group interview in 4x8 groups) and quantitative (self-developed questionnaire based on the results of focus group interviews with 280 mentors and 351 students.

In the triadic relationship, the teacher candidate and his developmental process are in the focus. In our lecture we present a segment of the results of teacher candidates: how their professional development and self -efficacy are influenced by the activities of mentor, the organizational support of the school and the communication with the university.

The results show that teacher candidates are fundamentally uncertain in assessing the impact of school as a supportive environment (teacher colleagues, leaders), they are rather linked to the person of the mentor. It is surprising that almost exclusively the intensity of the personal relationship with the mentor influences self-efficiency and professional development.

The results are important primarily for mentors and schools, because it seems that it depends on them to what extent they can prepare candidates for the mental difficulties of the future career in a kind of "tutored reality shock".

Keywords: Tutored praxis shock, triadic relationship, self-efficiency, teacher training practice, career change.

1. Introduction

Staying in the teaching career is determined by many factors, however, overcoming the so -called praxis-shock means the first step for beginner teachers (Posny 2012; Ambrosetti, 2013). For teacher students, mentoring during the practical training is the main support (Williams, 2013; Landau Wright, 2015), that is why it is important to know how the triadic relationship between the school mentor, the teacher and the university works. In our heuristic research, interactions between mentors, students and university actors, the most important elements of the mentoring process as well as the influence of the school's organizational context were examined (Sternberg, 2016; Ben-Harush & Orland-Barak, 2019).

In addition to the most thorough theoretical preparation, the complex teacher role can be truly learned in a specific school context and through practical experience organized during teacher training. Numerous studies prove that these trainings also play an important role in forming teacher's habit and in reducing career leaving (Moir & Glass, 2001; Eby, Allen, Evans, & Dubois, 2008; Teacher Induction and Mentoring Brief, 2015). Reducing the so called praxis shock seems to be one of the most crucial prerequisites for supporting students and beginner teachers to enter and remain in their career, which can be achieved mainly through the professional support of the pre-service period of the training and later on by the professional support provided by mentoring.

Becoming a teacher is a process in which it is important that the three phases, the pre-service, induction and the in-service phase should be built on each other and form an integral unity in course of a professional continuum (Knight, Turner & Dekkers 2013).

However, in this professional continuum considered as a lifelong professional development, the initial phase of the career (induction) is particularly important (Major, 2011). The first phase includes basic teacher education, where prospective teachers acquire basic skills competences. The second stage is characterized by the first independent steps of the beginner teacher, the first years of facing reality, that is what it really means to teach at a school.

Lortie describes the socialization process of novice teachers as a Robinson Crusoe effect. He also interprets the situation of the beginner teacher as being pushed into an extreme "sink or swim" situation when encountering reality. In these circumstances, the novice teacher, in the absence of professional communication, may interpret their initial failure as a lack of professional competence and weakness (Lortie, 1966, 1975). The terms of reality shock (Veenman, 1984) and transition shock (Corcoran, 1981) are also used to describe the impact on novice teachers. Reality shock refers to the personal emotional and professional uncertainty of starting the career, which comes from the contradictions between idealistic career formations and reality. Various researches indicate the lack of recognition, isolation, uncertain contact with colleagues and students, and professional idealism as parts of reality shock. (Hargreaves, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Paul et al. 2001; Ballantyne, 2007; Kelly, 2008; Hourigan & Sheib, 2009; Servage & Beck, 2012; MacLeod & Walter, 2014).

In the first one or two years of teaching, the beginner teacher focuses on trying to bridge the gap between mastering the art of teaching (i.e. the knowledge gained during the teacher training program) and the daily experience gained at school. While trying to develop and integrate their own teacher identity within a given school culture, trying to solve daily teaching tasks (making lesson plans, dealing with classroom organization, keeping discipline, etc.), most of them are confronted with the fact that they do not yet have such a wide repertoire of skills as their more experienced colleagues. This gradually leads to frustration, isolation and finally practice shock (Stokking, Leenders, de Jong, & van Tartwijk, 2003; Chaplain, 2008; Miulescu, 2020)

Aarts, Kools, & Schildwacht (2020) created a synthesizing model of the difficulties of starting a teaching career. In this model, the individual, the students, the teaching-learning process, the school management and colleagues, the school organization, and the parents and society are the contexts in which novice teachers' problems can be interpreted. The development of reality shock is necessary to prevent as much as possible during teacher training, which can be solved by the practice orientation of the training. Practice orientation partly means early practical training (Gelfuso & Denis, 2014) and partly means an intensive school field training (Lawn-Furlong, 2009; Murray, 2016). During the practical training, the participants cooperate in a triadic relationship: the student, the school mentor and the university mentor (supervisor). The cooperation of the three actors determines the extent to which reality shock can be prevented or at least how prospective teachers can be prepared to handle it already during teacher training practice.

2. The context and methodology of the research

Our research began in 2021 and has examined the impact system of the mentoring process. We have carried out a mixed method research, in accordance with the method of triangulation, the tools of literature processing, qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (self-developed student and mentoring questionnaires) were used. The sample was selected by expert sampling from the basic population of graduate students as well as the mentors of school practices, following the research ethics rules of the University of Debrecen. The student questionnaire consisted of 7 panels and 163 items, the average Cronbach's-alpha was 0.83 and the data processing was done with SPSS 29. The student sample consists of 351 students who are doing their complex school practice take place in the last year of the training. They spend their complex school practice in the final year of the training. 78.3 % of the sample are women (representative).

3. Data analysis and discussions

One of the most severe public education problems in Hungary is the lack of teacher, it is especially true for beginner teachers, which is mainly due to low salary and low social prestige. Barely one-third of the students surveyed are confident that they want to work as a teacher.

Table 1. Are you planning to change your career?

		Gender		Total (N / %)
		Female (n / %)	Male (n / %)	
Are you planning to change your career?	Yes	126 / 46,5 %	43 / 56,6 %	**169 / 48,7 %**
	No	102 / 37,6 %	19 / 25,0 %	**121 / 34,9 %**
	Not sure	43 /15,9 %	14 / 18,4 %	**57 / 16,4 %**

Source: own database, 2022

The data show that, although the correlation is not significant, the tendency is worrying, and one of the most important tasks of teacher training is to help teacher candidates enter and remain in teaching career. The retaining power of the profession is not dependent on the quality of training, but training content, especially practical training, can do a lot to make students more prepared for the challenges of the career. One method of this is the tutored practice mentioned in the title, the bottom line of which is that students gain their first experiences reality in a controlled, "incubated" environment with the help of a mentor. During the practice the university's expectations have to be fulfilled, but basically the practice place as an organization, mentor teachers and other members of the teaching staff are the sources of experience.

Therefore, in the questionnaire, we also asked about communication and cooperation with the mentor and other colleagues. The data show that mentors are particularly intense during practice, communicating with most candidates every day (19 %), or several times a day

(50 %), but 30 % only talk to their mentor a few times a week.

The contents of the consultations with mentors move on a wide scale mentors (Table 2.)

Table 2. Topics of the communication between school mentor and student teacher (3 grade scale 1: few times per week... 3: many times every day N: 351).

	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
scientific content of teaching	2,78	,02728	,50818
communication with learners	2,73	,02749	,51499
methodological ideas and solutions	2,66	,03156	,59120
we have discussion about each lesson held	2,41	,03578	,67033
learner-related tasks	2,36	,03640	,68195
extracurricular activities	2,25	,03386	,63082
we have discussion about each lesson plan	2,02	,04241	,78992
we mainly discuss deficiencies	1,98	,03859	,72295
we only agree on the basic principles regarding lessons	1,97	,04505	,83927
my actual emotional state of condition	1,93	,04284	,79801
cooperation with colleagues	1,83	,03810	,70977
keeping contact and communication with parents	1,74	,03618	,67391

Source: own database, 2022

The topic of consultations with the mentor (in what area the candidate receives direct support) does not affect teacher candidates' intention to leave their career. However, two factors correlate with the intention of leaving the profession, one is the frequency of communication (Pearson Corr.: -0,248, Sig.: 0.006), and the other is whether the mentor regularly evaluates the candidate's work (Pearson Corr.: -0,251, Sig.: 0.005). The judgement the school and the management's support is favorable, but the actual cooperative activities are at the end of the frequency rank. Two of these are worth mentioning: 1. involving the candidate in extracurricular activities, 2. visiting the candidate's lessons (by management or non -mentor teachers). Both, and only these two influence the candidate's intention to leave the career (1. Pearson Corr.: -0,221, sig. <0.001; 2. Pearson Corr.: -0,264, Sig. 0.002).

Only one element of the university relationship has an impact on the intention of leaving the career is: if the student feels he gets maximum help from the university (Pearson Corr.: -0.192, Sig. <0.001). However, knowing university expectations and administrative tasks has a positive effect on students' confidence. Confidence is an eight-element aggregate indicator based on research data (including steadiness related to teacher activities, criticism, openness, self-reflectivity and longer-term goals). The results show that the intention to leave the career correlates with this confidence indicator (Pearson corr.: -0,226, sig. <0.001). The intention to leave the profession is also correlated with two other aggregate indicators mostly: one is a career commitment indicator (enthusiasm, acquiring the love of

disciples, emotional burden of teacher work, perception of difficulty in teacher work), which shows a moderately strong correlation (Pearson Corr.: -0,499 . <0.001). Another aggregate indicator is the career prestige indicator (career opportunities, benefits, prestige, administrative tasks), with a moderate correlation as well. (Pearson Corr.: -0,429, sig. <0.001).

4. Conclusions

The data show that the intention to leave the career also depends on factors that can be changed during teacher training exercises, so mentors and school as a whole can help with the by decreasing the initial praxis shock and mainly by supporting emotional and mental characteristics. Many elements of career commitment are a deeply rooted personality trait, but the presentation of coping techniques with difficulties can help a lot. At the same time, the intention to leave the profession also depends on several factors which the university or school practice have no impact on, only the public education system and the education policy interventions may change it. Career prestige in Hungary is a critical indicator that can fundamentally shake the earlier operation of the public education system. Further processing of our data may point out even deeper relationship, which may transform not only the tutoring system of practical training, but also the internal contents of the training (personalized development of socio-emotional competences).

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