

Teacher Training in Austria with special consideration of Mentoring in the induction phase

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Abstract

Teacher training courses are currently being restructured not only in Austria but throughout Europe. This involves a qualitative and a quantitative expansion of practical school studies. In Austria, in addition to practical school experience during training, an induction phase is to take place after completion of studies, in which young teachers are accompanied by a mentor.

Mentoring in the induction phase as support for career entry offers many opportunities, but also requires careful implementation. This article points out possible challenges and theoretical approaches.

Keywords: Teacher Training, Mentoring, Induction phase, Career Entry.

Педагогическая подготовка в Австрии: роль наставничества в процессе профессиональной адаптации

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Аннотация

Сегодня программы педагогического образования подвергаются реструктуризации по всей Европе. Данный процесс подразумевает как качественное, так и количественное изменение круга исследований. В практико-ориентированных школах Австрии процесс педагогической подготовки подразумевает, помимо получения опыта, еще и профессиональную адаптацию (вхождение в профессию), которая осуществляется после окончания основного обучения в сопровождении наставника. Наставничество на этапе профессиональной адаптации подразумевает оказание разносторонней поддержки, открывает много возможностей, но вместе с тем требует хорошо продуманной реализации. Данная статья освещает теоретические подходы к проблеме наставничества и возможные трудности в ее решении.

Ключевые слова: Педагогическое образование, наставничество, вхождение в профессию, начало карьеры.

Introduction

The teacher training programmes in Austria have been reformed fundamentally in recent years, as the Austrian Federal Government has placed the professionalization and attractiveness of the profession of teacher at the centre of a national reform which began in 2009. The reform was implemented in the academic year 2015/16. Teacher training is no longer based on school types but on age cohorts, teachers at primary level and teachers at secondary level. It is carried out by teacher training colleges and universities.

The new competence-based teacher training is embedded in an overall vocational biographical concept and aims to guarantee high-quality academic training with scientifically theory and practice. It follows the recommendations of national and international education experts to prepare young teachers for their work at schools (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, 2018).

In Austria, teacher training is seen as a continuum of professionalization consisting of three phases and following this principle: No teacher training institution can provide the «finished» teacher, therefore being a teacher is a permanent learning and development task.

This professional continuum is divided into

- a) phase 1: Training with a duration of 4-6 years in which the scientific basics of the teaching profession are taught,
- b) phase 2: Career entry with a duration of 1-2 years in which vocational and practical teaching competences are developed and practised,
- c) phase 3: continuous education and training during professional practice – covering the entire professional life. (Behr, F. 2017).

The University of Teacher Education in Lower Austria is responsible for this entire professional continuum and offers training, support for career entry and further education for teachers.

The teacher training courses in Austria are divided into a Bachelor's and a Master's programme. The Master's programme is not optional, every student has to complete it in order to get a permanent job at a school.

Teacher training for Primary school teachers

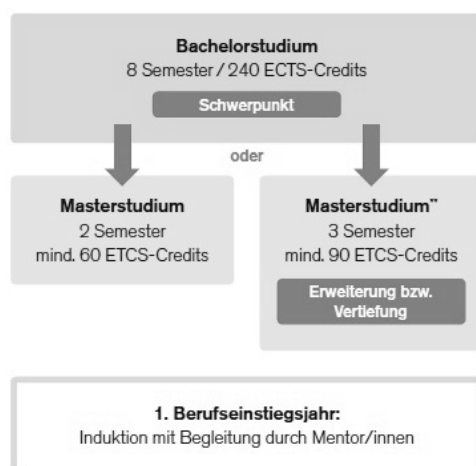


Figure 1: Structure of Teacher Training for primary school teachers
(from <https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/pbneu/struktur/struktur.html>)

The Bachelor's programme for primary school teachers lasts at least eight semesters and comprises 240 ECTS-APs. In the primary level in Austria one teacher teaches all subjects of the pupils with the exception of religion, ie, German, English, mathematics, science and culture, music, visual education, craft, sports. This means that during this education students have to be trained in all these subjects.

The Master's programme comprises 60 ECTS-AP and lasts at least two semesters; or if a student wishes to specialise in the field of Inclusion, comprises 90 ECTS-AP for a minimum study duration of 3 semesters.

The course of study also includes training in the field of "General Educational Basics, such as Psychology, Educational Science, Sociology and others," "Primary Level Pedagogy and Didactics," a focus which students may choose by themselves, and Pedagogical-Practical Studies.

The pedagogical-practical studies start already in the 1st semester of the training with the change of perspective from the student's role to the teacher's role. In each semester, students work directly in the professional field, accompanied by mentors, in order to acquire the basis for their work as a young teacher at the end of the training. The special emphasis in this area of education is on the one hand the orientation towards the children at school and on the other hand the reflection of their own teaching activity. The orientation towards the children means that their learning and the effectiveness of the teaching must be taken into consideration. The performance of the students is important, but not central. Reflection is the basis for the further development of a teacher. The aim of teacher training is therefore the development of a "professional habitus", the linking of reflection on the own teaching with existing knowledge (Leonhard, T. 2017).

Teacher training for Secondary school teachers

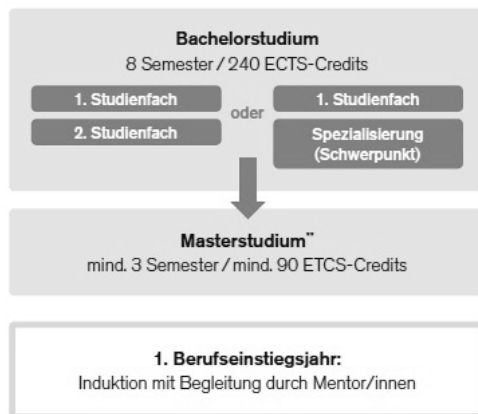


Figure 2: Structure of Teacher training for secondary school teachers
(from <https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/pbneu/struktur/struktur.html>)

The Bachelor's programme for secondary schoolteachers can be completed within a minimum study time of eight semesters and comprises 240 ECTS-APs. At the secondary level, teachers teach separately according to their subjects and they therefore choose two subjects – for example, German, mathematics, Spanish, history, geography, etc. A special feature of this course is the choice of the specialisation "Inclusion" as a substitute for a subject. Teachers will be enabled to work with children with special needs.

The Master's programme for secondary schoolteachers comprises 120 ECTS-AP and can be completed within a minimum of four semesters. This means that in the secondary

level the Master's programme is twice as long as in the primary level in order to be well prepared for the lessons of older pupils and to be able to lead them to the Matura, the school leaving examination at the age of 18 or 19.

Induction phase – Career entry

Behr writes that no institution can provide a "finished" teacher and continues that being a teacher is a permanent learning and development task (Behr, 2017, p. 25). The first phase of training is followed by career entry – second phase – and this is followed by continuous further training – third phase – which spans their entire working life (Behr, 2017). With the introduction of the New Pedagogical Training in Austria and especially the so-called induction phase – the first year of service – more attention is paid to this second phase described by Behr, in which the young teacher is at the centre. This is referred to as a continuum of professionalization, as additional work experience is required in order to build up competence. Teacher training releases competent young professionals who need to further develop their basic professional qualifications in dealing with everyday pedagogical life and through further and advanced training (KMK, 2008).

Career entry represents a decisive, biographical phase that is coherent with the accomplishment of new tasks and brings with it many experiences and formative events. Through person-specific patterns of perception, competences and assessment tendencies, this is regarded as a decisive factor for the further professional future (Herrmann & Hertrampf, 2000a, p. 54 *et seq.*).

A new service law for teachers in Austria came into force on the 1st of September 2015. Initially this was optional, but will be compulsory for all new contractual teachers starting from the school year 2019/20. In the first phase of their professional activity, teachers accepted into this employment relationship must complete a twelve-month induction phase. They will be accompanied by a mentor. In the induction phase, the contractual teacher is obliged to cooperate with a mentor. The function of the mentor was defined and described in §39 of the Federal Law Gazette, issued on 27.12.2013. This comes into force on the 1st September 2019 (Federal Law 2013 Part 1, No. 211, p.7).

Theoretical foundation

Different conditions that are decisive for the development of human beings have been identified in research. The most popular of these are the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (2000) and the motivation theory of Maslow (1943). From these, Dreer (2016) derives four basic needs of young teachers, which are to be taken into account when starting a career:

1. the need for an introduction to everyday school life,
2. for integration into the teaching and student body,
3. a need for self-testing and
4. for self-realization as a teacher (2018, p. 10-18).

A mentor can be very responsive to these needs. When these central needs are met in the school work context, the joy of teaching, general performance, commitment and well-being, a higher willingness to make an effort and many other positive effects become apparent (Betoret et al. 2015; Gahzi et al. 2013).

Even though the role of the mentor can be assumed to be defined by the Federal Law Gazette, it is individually and situationally variable. This requires a needs-orientated support for young teachers. Trained mentors can make a considerable contribution to this. Studies by Oosterheert and Vermunt already make it clear how important it is to meet the stated needs for a good start in professional life (2001, pp. 133-156). More effective and more satisfied are those junior teachers who

1. are full members of a college,
2. make a particular effort to ensure that pupils learn and have a good relationship with them,
3. are highly self-regulating individuals, and
4. strive to continuously develop their learning and understanding of learning processes with the help of all available sources.

The tasks of mentors

Teacher training courses are currently being restructured throughout Europe and also in Austria. This also involves a qualitative and quantitative expansion of practical school studies. In Austria, in addition to practical school experience during training, an induction phase takes place after training in which young teachers are accompanied by a mentor. In Austria the term mentor is a very positively affected. However, it is not only mentors who should provide support, but also the school management and the staff at the respective location offer support and may – as described in historical mentoring as preceptors (Bergmeier, 2019) – accompany young teachers.

The contract teacher in the induction phase (first year of service) is obliged to cooperate with a mentor. This mentor is formally a new function in the Austrian school system (Dammerer, 2019) with specific contractual obligations to the teacher in the induction phase (39a (3) of the Federal Law):

- (1) to advise on the planning and organisation of teaching,
- (2) to analyse and reflect with them on their activities in teaching and education,
- (3) to guide them to the extent necessary
- (4) and to support them in their professional development.

The mentor shall ensure that the contractual teacher's lessons are taught during the induction phase to the extent necessary. The mentor must draw up a development profile of the contract teacher in the induction phase and to provide an expert opinion on the success of the use of the induction phase at the latest three months before the end of the induction phase.

The University of Teacher Education in Lower Austria offers numerous university courses in which mentors can even be trained up to Master's level if they are interested. Ziegler offers this established and practical definition of mentoring:

“Mentoring is a relatively stable dyadic relationship between an experienced mentor and his/her less experienced mentee. It is characterised by mutual trust and goodwill, its aim being to promote learning and development and the progress of the mentee” (2009, p. 11).

Based on this understanding, mentors are trained at the University College of teacher education in Lower Austria. The contents of the university courses consist of the following elements (University College of teacher education in Lower Austria, 2019):

- Professional understanding and role of mentors
- Teaching and learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Accompaniment and advice
- Didactics and Science
- Organizational and personnel development
- Research methods and research practice

Three different approaches to mentoring (Dammerer, 2018)

When researching forms of mentoring, an elaboration by Wang & Odell (2007) often appears. This describes three different models of mentoring within the framework

of a literature analysis (Fischer, 2008). This tripartite division is also found in Ittl & Raufelder (2012), although they describe it as phases. The approaches are not subject to a chronological order.

One phase is seen as an "apprenticeship approach" in which the focus is on imparting methodological suggestions, procedures and techniques of class leadership and teaching practice. In this model, the mentor predominantly assumes the role of a technical supporter and instructor.

The "humanistic approach", on the other hand, is characterised by the fact that the mentor predominantly assumes the role of a counsellor or coach. The mentor functions as a role model and gives feedback.

In the third phase, the "critical-constructive approach", the focus is on developing an autonomous and professional approach to teaching and promoting reflection skills. The mentor assumes the role of a partner or motivator who has in mind the comprehensive professional development of the teacher.

4.2 Five key features of mentoring

Mentoring is often used synonymously with tutoring or coaching. While we do not make a detailed comparison here, there are five relevant mentoring characteristics described by Eby, Rhodes and Allen (2007):

1. Mentoring is a unique relationship between two individuals.
2. Mentoring is always a relationship designed to generate knowledge in some way.
3. Mentoring is always a process.
4. A mentoring relationship is always asymmetric, but this does not mean that it is not reciprocal.
5. Mentoring partnerships are dynamic relationships.

Teacher competence and supervision in a mentoring relationship

Lanker (2012) sets out a competence model for teachers in which he refers to Schocker von Ditfurth (2002) and presents four essential competences of teachers. At the top is technical competence, followed by didactic/methodological competence, then organisational competence in teaching with the whole based on personal competence. This self-competence is in turn subdivided into conversation competence, relationship competence and social competence. (Figure 3).

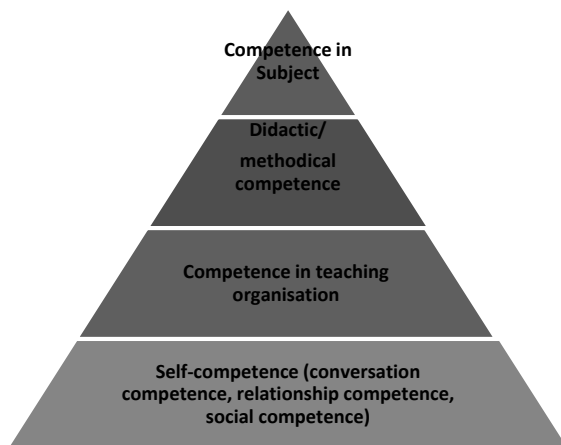


Figure 3: Competences of teachers according to Lanker (2012)

Kuhl and Hofmann (2004) explain that competences learnt during their studies can be very effective in practical action if they are supported by good personal competences, and address the fact that mentoring is predominantly carried out at the level of personal competence. Every colleague in the teaching staff should also be able to provide support in acquiring specialist competence.

Conclusion: on what does the success of a mentoring programme depend?

Whether mentoring is successful in the induction phase of pedagogical education, it cannot be said to be 'new' in the Austrian context. The very heterogeneous Austrian school landscape represents a challenge for the implementation of the conditions mentioned in the Federal Law. A further challenge is the coordination of all persons involved in this implementation process, both in terms of content and school organisation. Nevertheless, we should return to the question posed at the beginning of this article. Ziegler (2009) mentions four references to this question:

1. Mentors need appropriate training and education.
2. On the part of the school organisation, special care must be taken when compiling the mentoring pairs.
3. An appropriate duration for a mentoring programme shall be observed.
4. Measures shall be taken to promote the quality of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee.

All four of these Ziegler conditions seem to be taken into account in previous considerations.

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