Leiðsögn kennaranema – stefnur og straumar


Efniord: Leiðsögn kennaranema, kennaramenntun, vettvangsnám, leiðsagnarkennningar
Mentoring preservice teachers – theoretical perspectives

ABSTRACT

In the past three decades many theories about mentoring student teachers and newly qualified teachers have emerged, involving new perspectives on the goals of pedagogical mentoring. The traditional role of mentor teachers has been to instruct, advise and support student teachers in the classroom. Since the 1980s, however, the role of mentors has begun to include support for student teachers’ professional and personal development, and the focus has shifted from adaptation to the job to the student teacher’s learning, through reflections about own actions, knowledge and values. In the new millennium the learning objectives of mentoring have been discussed and reviewed, without rejecting ideas about reflection. The methods and goals of “reflection theories” are criticized for being too cognitive and individualistic; more emphasis should be put on the personal aspect of being a teacher, as well as the social and cultural aspects of teacher learning and mentoring. Many scholars are inspired by situated learning theories and argue that knowledge is always tied to the social and cultural context in which it is learned. According to that perspective, teacher learning means moving towards a new understanding and changed participation in social activities. Definitions of mentoring have been reconsidered; terms such as co-mentoring, collaborative mentoring and peer-mentoring reflect these changes.

The aim of my study is to shed light on different perspectives of the goals of mentoring student teachers, and thereby give insight into the pedagogy of mentoring within the field of teacher education. The first step was to explore recent literature on the mentoring of student teachers, and newly qualified teachers. My conclusion was that four types of learning objectives can be defined, which now seem to be dominant in this literature. They are:

• Reflections on own actions, knowledge and values – towards professionalism; involving collective reflection. Becoming a reflective professional.
• Apprenticeship learning – a gradual movement to new understanding and changed participation in social activities and culture; situated learning – from a novice to a competent teacher – towards becoming a professional “master”.
• The development of personal and social competence – i.e. of resilience, self-efficacy, relational agency, professional identity, etc.
• Broader learning objectives – the development of professional learning communities, learning cultures, reciprocal learning and the professional development of schools.

As the main focus is on the mentoring of student teachers, the article starts with a short overview of the changed context and situations of practicum. Partnership between teacher universities and schools has become a key term in teacher education. In most partnership programs, student teachers are expected to learn through active participation in the whole school community – not only from practice teaching in “the classroom”. Additionally, all the involved partners in the mentoring process, and the
school as an organization, should learn and develop where mentoring is considered to be the most crucial tool. The practicum programs in Iceland have been reconstructed, as in many other European countries, based on ideas about partnership.

Thereafter, each of the four theoretical perspectives is described and discussed, especially the learning objectives of the mentoring process. The theoretical background and main concepts are explained, as well as the characteristics of the mentor’s role and the relations and communication between the participants. The main critiques of these mentoring goals and theoretical perspectives are outlined. The article ends with a summary of these issues, including the main similarities, differences and contradictions between different perspectives on mentoring. My conclusion is that those four perspectives, and their theoretical background, share many characteristics, although more research is needed to determine how they relate to the practice field; i.e. how the most important learning objectives of mentoring are defined by the involved groups and institutions in Iceland.

**Keywords:** Professional mentoring, practicum, teacher education, mentoring goals

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