

SLOVENIA

Initial teacher education in teaching context

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I will try to elaborate the questions on **teacher education in teaching context** with some results of first phase of a large project at the **Faculty of Education, Ljubljana University**, (Devjak, T. , ed., 2005) *Partnership Between the Faculty and Educational Institutions*, financed by the European Social Fund and Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia (2004-2005, phase I and 2006-2007, phase II), aims to develop and test models of partnership in all areas of teacher education (3 I: initial, induction and in-service), as well as joint research; it not only includes schools but also other education related institutions.

The project has following objectives in four areas:

- a) To examine and devise a model of work placement as part of undergraduate program for teachers and other educators.
- b) To devise a model of a systematic induction of newly qualified teachers to teaching practice.
- c) To develop a model of continuous professional development.
- d) To examine the model of joint research projects relating to teaching practice and the application of its results back to practice.

In this paper I can present only some major conclusions reached in the first stage of the project focused on the analysis of the current situation (the project is still continuing in the period 2006 to 2007).

- ***The framework and nature of mentoring and coaching student teachers in the context of initial teacher education;***

Partnership within ***mentoring and coaching student teachers in the context of initial teacher education*** is a working relationship, a professional co-existence and also a professional co-operation between the faculties of education (TEI) and schools. The analysis of the current situation (Juriševič, 2005) included 327 mentors and 32 lecturers from the Faculty of Education who have participated in practical teacher training. The mentors assessed the co-operation between the two partners with an average grade of 3.3, while lecturers' grade was 3.8 on the scale from 1 to 5.

Mentors were happy with the instructions but missed more feedback, more opportunity for improvements in their work and clearer criteria for trainee teacher assessment.

They also mentioned unsatisfactory participation of school administration in their work. It has been established (Magajna, 2005) that in some areas mentors and faculty lecturers did not share the same perception of what areas of knowledge were important.

These results will serve as the basis for the future definition of the roles of individual partners and for the development of partnership relations in this area.

- *Partnership agreements between teacher education institutions and schools: the different roles played by each partner;*

Present situation

The formal contracts between schools and the faculty are not existing (yet), as well as formal requirements for being the mentor. The proposal of the contract is under the discussion.

Even though the organisational aspects are very important, setting up a network of partners should not be the end result: it is only the means which should lead to an improved quality of work and improved learning process: the pupil, the trainee teacher should be its beneficiaries.

Partnership of schools and teacher education institutions is in fact a natural process in which schools play the key role on both sides: on one side, they are the trainers while on the other they are the consumers, hence it is clear that they have to (another question is whether they want to) play an important role in the process of teacher education.

Schools have a better insight into the »real school life« - what are the key problems of classroom work and also what are the key weaknesses of the existing situation, which means they can faster and more directly facilitate an improvement in the current situation.

New forms of partnership should ensure the permanent exchange of ideas between partners (as opposed to sporadic projects). Participation of schools in teacher education should not only be limited to the »on site« training creating only more work for teachers yet failing to give them an opportunity for professional improvement and development.

New forms of partnership should provide opportunities for professional development of teachers from practice, for upgrading their qualifications and for widening the scope of opportunities for personal development. Last but not least, teacher education institutions can indirectly benefit also from the ties local schools maintain in their environment with the local community and businesses.

- *Which is the required school teachers' profile to be a mentor and a coach of student teachers in the schools context and how are they prepared to organise effective mentoring and coaching schemes.*

The apprenticeship pattern of education, where a mentor was represented as "an example of teaching" is supposed to be substituted by a so-called reflective pattern, where a mentor appears as "an example of thinking". The mentor-teacher should be the "reflective practitioner" in the best meaning of this expression. She/he should be an experienced teacher (in the future with the second Bologna degree). The results of the project are suggesting some kind of "licence" to become a mentor. Special guidelines are already in the phase of preparation, as well as in-service programme, specially designed for mentors. The idea is that the licence should not be permanent.

- *The relationships between teacher education institutions and schools regarding the professional development of their teachers and the organisational development of schools.*

The Faculty of Education is running many programmes for *professional development of teachers and other educators (in-service)*. As a part of the project, mentioned before, a research study was set up (Polak, Devjak and Cencič, 2005) with the goal to test the

success and efficiency of the current offering, to find out more about the users needs in terms of content and management and to test how willing they were to participate more actively (e.g., case studies from practice). The study included 425 respondents from different schools and institutions (kindergartens, primary schools, high schools, vocational institutions, housing communities, etc.) An analysis of replies confirmed the expectations: participants are interested in more active forms of work (workshops), they wish more practical content, more materials to work with, they prefer day-long and back-to-back programs, advanced seminars, and they wish them to be organised close to their home: school principals are supportive of the teachers' quest to further their education, however, teachers would like to have more days off to pursue this goal. These findings will be used as a basis for organisational changes while a partnership approach will be used as a model for more active participation.

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