

METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATION AND MONITORING TEACHER- MENTOR AND TEACHER-TRAINEE

METODOLOGIJA VREDNOVANJA I PRAČENJA UČITELJA - MENTORA I UČITELJA-PRIPRAVNIKA

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Abstract

In Slovenia new teachers are required to complete a ten-month probationary period in a school. In this period they are supervised by a teacher-mentor, who does not have any detailed documentation on how to supervise the probation teachers. The research we have done investigated how teacher-mentors evaluated their own mentoring experiences. The study involved 160 teachers and 77 headmasters from Slovenian schools. The data received from the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively. We found out that the teacher probationary period is suitable. Teachers are satisfied with their mentorship role, because it is a challenge for them and they can gain new knowledge. A lot of teachers think that they would need an additional qualification and an additional material for their work with the probation teachers. Teacher mentors are not enough qualified for their mentors work, therefore they need support in workshops with examples of good practice and detailed guidelines for their work.

Sažetak

U Sloveniji se od mladih učitelja koji su završili sveučilišni studij i dobili diplomu zahtijeva da odrade svoj 10-mjesečni pripravnički staž u školi. U tom razdoblju njih nadzire učitelj-mentor. Međutim, za učitelja-mentora ne postoji nikakva detaljna dokumentacija o nadzoru učitelja-pripravnika. Svrha ovog istraživanja bila je pokazati kako su učitelji-mentori vrednovali vlastita mentorska iskustva. U ispitivanje je bilo uključeno 160 učitelja i 77 ravnatelja u slovenskim školama. Da bi prikupili podatke koristili smo upitnik. Podaci su analizirani na razini kvantitativne statistike. Utvrdili smo da je trajanje pripravničkog staža odgovarajuće. Učitelji su zadovoljni svojom ulogom mentora jer im je ona izazov i daje im priliku stjecanja novog znanja. Mnogi učitelji misle da bi trebali dodatno usavršavanje kao i dodatni materijal za svoj rad s učiteljima-pripravnicima. Mentori nisu dovoljno kvalificirani za svoj mentorski rad i zato im je potrebna podrška kroz radionice s primjerima dobre prakse te detaljne smjernice za posao koji rade.

1. Introduction

In a time of the renewed study programs in the sense of the Bologna processes is raised the question of what a future expert should learn, study or what a future expert should know for a certain field. Young teachers in the Republic of Slovenia, after completing formal education, get their practical experience in a probation period /1/.

Just as a quality education at the educational institutions is important for future young teachers in reaching educational standards, cooperation with teacher-mentors and an effective organisation of young teachers' practical qualification in schools is vital /2/. Because implementation of practical teacher training in Slovenia is on a very modest scale compared to the required professional skills

and practice in other European countries /3, 4, 5, 6/, we believe that, besides increasing the amount of practical work at the time of study, it is necessary to establish conditions for the probation period for all future teachers. Suitable probation positions for young teachers could be assured by the help of partner cooperation among university institutions and schools through a longer period of time.

In numerous schools, examples of good practice may be found. Young teachers may develop there their professional skills in a positive and stimulative atmosphere alongside of professionally skilled and observant teachers, and receive quality and positive experiences. Unfortunately this is not always the case.

Young teachers who finish their university study and receive degrees are required to complete a

ten-month probation period in a Slovene school /7/. In this period they are supervised by a teacher-mentor in order to guide them toward teaching independently. The teacher-mentors have some resources available to them for the purpose of providing possible lesson extensions that could incorporate the help of the probation teachers during lessons /8, 9, 10/. However, the teacher-mentor does not have any detailed documentation on how to supervise the probation teachers.

2. The purpose and aims of the research

The purpose of this research is to present how teacher-mentors evaluated their own experiences as mentors, and their feelings as to whether or not some changes in the field of supervising probation teachers are necessary. We would also like to present some teacher-mentors' general opinions, their beliefs and practices towards their work as supervisors.

3. Methods

In the research we used a descriptive and causal-non experimental method of pedagogical research.

3.1. Sample

There were 43 kindergartens, 104 primary schools and 43 secondary schools included in the sample. We mediated 181 invitations to headmasters (school directors) to cooperate in the research, and 362 invitations for cooperation to teacher-mentors. 77 headmasters responded to our invitation for cooperation and 160 teacher-mentors. 83% among them were female and 17% male.

The majority of the participants were employed in the primary school (57.9%), 23.1% in the secondary schools and 19.0% in the kindergartens.

3.2. Instruments

A questionnaire was used to collect the data, which was carried out in autumn 2006. The questions included general, personal information, and the complex of questions included open and closed questions about mentorship to probation teachers.

3.3. Processing of statistical data

We processed the data with descriptive statistical methods. We calculated frequencies and percentages. We present the data in tables.

4. Results

Answers on the open questions in the tables are the sensible summary of teachers' answers.

Table 1: To how many probation teachers have you been a teacher-mentor?

Teacher-mentor	n	f%
One	60	25.3
Two	52	22.0
Three	34	14.3
Four or more	91	38.4
Total	237	100.0

38.4% of headmasters and teacher-mentors have been mentors to four or more probation teachers, 25.3% to one, 22.0% to two and 14.3 % to three probation teachers. The target subjects in our research present teachers, who have already been

teacher-mentors to at least one probation teacher and headmasters in kindergartens and primary and secondary schools in the north-eastern part of the Republic of Slovenia.

Table 2: How have you been rewarded for your work as a teacher-mentor to a probation teacher?

Reward	f	f%
Higher personal income (wage)	168	70.9
Acknowledgement of additional "mentor-hour"(1hour per week)	24	10.1
Point(s) for promotion into a school title (e.g. teacher-mentor, teacher-councillor)	20	8.4
In accordance with school legislation	12	5.1
Oral praise for a successful work	7	3.0
Award is a success, a satisfied probation teacher	5	2.1
Payment of an agreement/contract	1	0.4
Total	237	100.0

For teacher-mentors' the most frequently cited reward (70.9%) was personal income (wage – a bonus for successful work). 10.1% were acknowledged by an additional "mentor-hour" per week, 8.4% got point(s) for promotion into a school title for their mentoring work, 5.1% answered in a very general

way, namely that they were awarded in accordance with school legislation. Seven polled cited oral praise by the school administration for successful work; only one teacher-mentor received payment according to school contract.

Table 3: Are you as a teacher-mentor personally satisfied with your role to a probation teacher?

Satisfaction	n	f%
I am satisfied	184	77.6
I am PARTLY satisfied	52	22.0
I am NOT satisfied	1	0.4
Total	237	100.0

77.6% of headmasters and teachers who have been teacher-mentors to probation teachers are satisfied with their role of the mentor to the probation

teachers, 22.0% are partly satisfied, only one is not satisfied.

Table 4: What does this mean to you as a teacher-mentor to a probation teacher: »mentorship is a challenge for a teacher«?

Challenge for a teacher	n	f%
Agree	186	78.5
Partly agree	49	20.7
Not agree	2	0.8
Total	237	100.0

A high percentage (78.5%) of headmasters and teacher-mentors agree with the statement that

being a mentor to a probation teacher represents a challenge for them.

Table 5: What does this mean to you as a teacher-mentor to a probation teacher: »mentorship is an opportunity to gain new, contemporary didactic knowledge«

Opportunity	n	f%
Agree	129	54.4
Partly agree	93	39.3
Not agree	15	6.3
Total	237	100.0

More than half of them (54.4%) agree and 39.3% partly agree that being a teacher-mentor means to

them an opportunity to gain new, contemporary didactic knowledge«.

Table 6: What does this mean to you as a teacher-mentor to a probation teacher: »mentorship is an unnecessary, additional load for a teacher«

Load	n	f%
Agree	8	3.4
Partly agree	43	18.1
Not agree	186	78.5
Total	237	100.0

Only 3.4% of headmasters and teacher-mentors agree with the statement that »mentorship is an unnecessary, additional load for a teacher«.

Table 7: What does this mean to you as a teacher-mentor to a probation teacher: »mentorship is useful only to a probation teacher«

Useful only to a probation teacher	n	f%
Agree	7	3.0
Partly agree	43	18.1
Not agree	187	78.9
Total	237	100.0

Only 3.0% of the teachers believe that mentorship is useful only to a probation teacher.

Table 8: What does this mean to you as a teacher-mentor to a probation teacher: »mentorship is teacher's professional obligation«

Obligation	n	f%
Agree	97	40.9
Partly agree	96	40.5
Not agree	44	18.6
Total	237	100.0

Teachers' beliefs about their professional obligation are equally divided between those who completely agree (40.9%) with the statement that mentorship is teacher's professional obligation, and those who

only partly agree with it (40.5%). 18.6% believe that being a mentor is not teachers professional obligation, but their voluntary activity.

Table 9: Do you use any support material, resources, and documentation for keeping record of your mentorship to a probation teacher or on how to supervise the probation teachers?

Support material, resources	n	f%
Yes	120	50.6
No	117	49.4
Total	237	100.0

Approximately half (50.6%) of teacher-mentors use support material, resources or documentation for keeping record of their mentorship to a probation

teacher or on how to supervise the probation teachers, 49.4% do not use it.

Table 10: If your answer to earlier question »Yes«, describe and specify what does it contain!

Support material, resources	n	f%
Internal instructions (school, kindergarten) on how to perform mentorship.	33	27.5
A book of regulations on how to supervise the probation teachers and material, gained at seminars, work-shops for teacher-mentors.	33	27.5
Teacher-mentors keep a diary of their mentorship with remarks for probation teachers.	24	20.0
A schedule of mentorship to probation teachers (goals and contents, timetable of their obligations).	23	19.2
Contemporary professional literature, current resources, material and information from internet.	6	5.0
I prepare my own material.	1	0.8
Total	120	100.0

Those teacher-mentors who do use support material, resources or documentation on how to supervise the probation teachers mostly use internal instructions from their school or kindergarten on how to perform mentorship (27.5%) and the book of regulations on how to supervise the probation teachers and other material, gained at seminars or work-shops for teacher-mentors (27.5%). 20.0% keep a diary of their mentorship with remarks

for probation teachers, 19.2% use a schedule/ programme of mentorship to probation teachers with determined goals and contents and timetable of mentors' obligations. A small part (5.0%) obtains guidelines for their mentorship in contemporary professional literature, current resources and information from internet. Only 0.8% of teachers prepare their own material.

Table 11: Do you think that teacher-mentors need any obligatory detailed documentation on how to supervise the probation teachers?

Documentation	n	f%
Yes	170	71.7
No	67	28.3
Total	237	100.0

A very high percentage of teacher-mentors (71.7%) believe that they need obligatory detailed

documentation on how to supervise the probation teachers.

Table 12: What is your opinion about current duration of probation period?

Duration	n	f%
Current duration of probation period is suitable.	195	82.3
Current probation period is too long.	11	4.6
Current probation period should be longer.	28	11.8
Other	3	1.3
Total	237	100.0

82.3% agree that current duration of probation period is (timely) suitable, only 4.6% believe that is

should be shorter, 11.8% believe that it should be longer.

Table 13: Do teacher-mentors have sufficient knowledge to supervise probation teachers?

Knowledge	n	f%
Yes, we have sufficient knowledge and do not need any advanced professional, expert training or qualification.	97	40.9
Partly, I believe that we would need additional advanced training or qualification.	135	57.0
No, we would urgently need additional advanced training or qualification.	5	2.1
Total	237	100.0

40.9% believe that teacher-mentors have sufficient knowledge and do not need any advanced professional training or qualification. More than

half of them (57.0%) believe that teacher-mentors have a great deal of knowledge but nevertheless they would need additional advanced training.

Table 14: If teacher-mentors need additional advanced training (question 13a), please describe, what kind of advanced training would you prefer at most!

Advanced qualification	n	f%
Seminars and work-shops for all areas of supervision to probation teachers.	40	29.6
Qualification should include examples of good practice, practical solutions and contemporary techniques and methods.	30	22.2
Include areas from andragogy, contemporary didactics, pedagogy and psychology.	30	22.2
Concrete teacher-mentors' assignments.	8	5.9

Include areas from management, organisation, communicology, and supervision.	7	5.2
Include areas from school legislation.	5	3.7
Exchange experience with other teacher-mentors who have several years of experience with supervision to probation teachers.	5	3.7
Detailed analysis of lessons, evaluation and self-evaluation	2	1.5
The question of probation teachers' autonomy.	2	1.5
Selection of emphasised areas where teacher-mentors should be especially careful, cautious.	2	1.5
Training should be free of charge.	2	1.5
Training in a form of e-education.	2	1.5
Total	135	100.0

Of those who agree that teacher-mentors need additional advanced training, the highest percentage (29.6%), believe that training should include all areas of supervision to probation teachers. 22.2% would like to include into their training examples of good practice, practical solutions and contemporary techniques and methods. The same percentage (22.2%) of teacher-mentors would like to hear knowledge from andragogy, contemporary didactics, pedagogy and psychology. A smaller part of them (5.2%) believe that tutors at training should set out concrete teacher-mentors' assignments and knowledge from management, organisation, communicology and supervision (5.2%), include

areas from school legislation on probation teachers' supervision (3.7%), exchange experience with other teacher-mentors who have several years of experience with supervision to probation teachers (3.7%), activities for detailed analysis of lessons, evaluation and self-evaluation (1.5%), the question of probation teachers' autonomy (1.5%), selection of emphasised areas where teacher-mentors should be especially careful, cautious (1.5%). Two teacher-mentors emphasised that it would be useful to reconsider additional advanced training, at least partly, with the help of re-education; in this way time and place of education would be adjusted.

Table 15: Do teacher-mentors need a teacher's book for their work with probation teachers?

Teacher's book	f	f%
Yes	143	60.3
No	94	39.7
Total	237	100.0

More than half of teacher-mentors (60.3%) agree that they would need teacher's book for their work with probation teachers.

5. Discussion

Our expectations about the satisfaction of teacher-mentors with their role and need after the additional support material for their supervision to probation teachers has been confirmed.

The survey shows that the majorities of teacher-mentors were satisfied with their work and believe

that being a teacher-mentor is a sort of a challenge for them and an opportunity to gain new knowledge. The teacher-mentors are usually reflective experts or "old hands" and they try to do their best work at school, therefore their often-expressed need for common and general instructions how to supervise the probation teachers is understandable.

Our expectation about the need for common guidelines (teacher's book) how to supervise the probation teachers has been realized.

The data that only half of asked teacher-mentors use the already prescribed support material which

includes some school internal instructions, the book of regulations about the probation induction period and an evaluation report of probation teachers and some seminary material is not satisfying, because it shows a disorganised situation. We can only guess if teacher-mentors know the available material badly or, on the other hand, they are not satisfied with it. Many of the teacher-mentors believe that they would need an additional material/teacher's book for their work with probation teachers which should include practical instructions and (evaluation) forms for the whole work with them. The data indicating that more than half of asked teacher-mentors feel that they would need an additional qualification shows the need for additional expert education/training of teacher-mentors. These teacher-mentors would like to attend workshops and observe some good examples of good probation practice. Only a qualified teacher is competent enough to educate young generations, therefore we have developed detailed guidelines for the whole supervision of probation teachers /11, 12/.

6. Conclusion

Current probation teacher regulation in the Republic of Slovenia leaves the amount and quality of aid on how to supervise probation teachers to chance – it is dependant on whether or not the probation teacher gets a good teacher-mentor in school /13/. We believe that this matter of chance must be changed in the sense of determination of teacher-mentors competence and the preparation of their programs for their training. For the guidance, supervision and evaluation of probation teachers' work, unified documentation or support material should be developed, which will unify the teacher-mentors work and make it easier.

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