

Initial teacher education in teaching context.

The Netherlands

Febe Jansen, ENTEP 28/8/2007

1. The framework and nature of mentoring and coaching student teachers in the context of initial teacher education.

For mentoring and coaching student teachers in the context of initial teacher education in The Netherlands the Higher education and research Act gives the following framework:
"Study programmes geared to certain professions in particular always must incorporate practical preparation for professional practise".

For teacher education this means that students during the curriculum have periods of in service training in schools. Normally 25 % of the curriculum is dedicated to these practical preparations. Every school has the obligation to offer students the opportunity to receive this practical preparations and to coach, mentor and assess students during these periods of practical preparation. The initial teacher education institute is responsible for the practical preparations: but school and teacher education institute work closely together in mentoring, instructing and coaching the student. Most of the time, teacher education institutes and schools have made agreements as partners to work together. An example of practical preparation for students you can find in the overview¹ (this is just one example of one institute, because all teacher education institutes are free to organise their own practical preparation for professional practise).

There are, however, much more intensive forms of mentoring and coaching student teachers (see below point 2).

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

Between 2004 en 2006 267 boards of school governors, which were involved at that moment in "training at the school", have been monitored and research was carried out on their projects. They received a modest sum of supplementary funding from the government and were supervised in their projects in organising the training at the school in a proper way. The following research results were produced: 85% of the participating schools and teacher trainer colleges concluded contracts with regard to the tasks and responsibilities which both parties have in training at the school. The agreements mainly concern:

- numbers of students being trained at the school;
- who assesses the students and according to which assessment criteria;
- tuning theory and practice
- training activities.

In most cases the school will mainly train the student (in most of the cases students in their third or fourth year of their study) in didactical and pedagogical competencies. The subject matter is mostly the field of the teacher training programme.

3. 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 tasks of the trainer may comprise:

- Training tasks, like providing for (professional) didactical training, intervision training, developing training modules
- Supervising tasks, like supervising (future) teachers, coaching of colleague supervisors;
- Coordinating tasks, like organising meetings of supervisors, organising meetings of (future) teachers, signalize problems and bottlenecks;
- Tasks, like 'being an intermediary' and adviser, for instance between study programme and school, school management and supervising teachers.

In many cases the trainers at the school (often used terminology is mentor or coach) are trained for these tasks within the teacher-trainer programmes with which the school cooperates.

Furthermore, also VELON (the Dutch organisation of teacher educators) is active in the field of training trainers at the school.

In 2005 the Education Council advised to make supplementary demands (requirements) for trainers at the school. The VELON started in 2006 with a project to develop for this position a professional qualification standard, which is connected (links up) with capability demands for teachers and with the professional qualification standard for teacher trainers.

4. The relationship between teacher education institutions and schools regarding the professional development of their teachers and the organisational development of schools.

At the moment in the daily practice in 37 projects for training schools, research is carried out into the criteria on quality which a training school has to fulfil and on what conditions the training at the workplace can take place in the most optimal way. In 2008 the research will be completed. The target is to incorporate the criteria on quality in legislation in 2009.

The teacher education institutes will remain responsible for the training of teachers. They issue the degree certificate / diploma upon completion of the training. The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (in Dutch NVAO) independently ensures the quality of teacher training, and by doing so also indirectly ensures the quality of school-linked training projects (training at the school). Because the Education Inspectorate ensures the quality of the education at schools, both monitors meet in the area of training at school.

At the moment they together carry out research into the adequate set-up of monitoring of training at school. It is expected that this research will be completed at the beginning of 2008 and that a publication will be issued. In the publication the NVAO and the Inspectorate will write the agreements on how they will organise (and implement) the monitoring of training at schools in the future.

Practical Placement 1 'propedeuse' (SP1) (see 'onderwijsarrangement')

Practical placement aiming at 'orientation' and first practices in teaching. The student formulates teaching questions and on the basis thereof carries out tasks with regard to general aspects of education, the place and position of your own teaching subject and your motivation for the profession of teacher. You also practice simple forms of teaching.

Small groups of first year students during one week in autumn visit a secondary school or a department of a Regional Training Centre (ROC): the 'Blokstage'.

After this, for the remainder of the course duration – during one and a half day per week- they carry out tasks at the school on the basis of the formulated 'learning' questions: the 'Lintstage'.

Study load: 10 credit points: approximately 35 days (including the 'blokstage') at the school.

Practical Placement study year 2 (SP2)

You learn the basic principles of teaching, you learn the necessary aspects of basic education and you learn how to manage (the differences between) students). The tasks are relatively simple. During the periods 3 and 4 on the Thursdays and Fridays you have no obligations at the institute. On these days you can have appointments with the school where you carry out your practical placement.

Study load: 10 credit points: approximately 40 days at the school.

Practical Placement study year 3 (SP3)

You develop further your basic teaching skills and your skills for the profession of teacher. More emphasis will be put on the supervision of students (pupils). The criteria for assessing are focussing on selection in relation to the final 'LIO' practical placement in the fourth study year. You are active in the classrooms where the teaching subject concerned is being taught. You work rather independent. You not only teach, but build up supervision contacts with students / pupils as well.

During the periods 1 and 2 on the Thursdays and Fridays you have no obligations at the institute. On these days you can have appointments with the school where you carry out your practical placement.

Study load: 14 credit points: approximately 50 days at the school.

Practical Placement study year 4 (SP4)

The 'LIO' practical placement (Teacher in Training) in the fourth study year is the final part of the training course, the crown of your work. With "supervision on a distance" you are able to carry out as independent as possible the different tasks of a teacher. You study independently on your own responsibility. During six months you work full-time at a school. During the practical placement you also write your final thesis, base on the education concerned.

Study load: 30 credit points: approximately 105 days at the school (including the work on the final thesis).
