

Initial teacher education in teaching context in France

In 2005, the French government passed a new law¹ organising education, in which chapter 5 is devoted to teacher education. The stress is put on an alternate education, combining theory and reflexion in IUFM², and praxis in schools. By the way, the law emphasizes the university level, IUFM being integrated in universities. Each institution has to follow the same framework issued in 2006.

- **Framework and nature of mentoring and coaching student teachers in the context of initial teacher education**

Teacher education is built as a continuum, beginning at the bachelor level and...never ending if we think about lifelong learning.

At the bachelor level, which is requested to prepare one of the teaching concourses - school teachers or middle/high school teachers -, each student might choose one – or more, if possible - period of observation in school to discover school world as a whole, its reality and diversity. It might help the students to confirm their professional choice.

Initial teacher education begins when students have succeeded and lasted 3 years.

The main principle on which the 1st year is built is the one of alternate education.

All year long, student teachers for primary school are in charge of a class belonging to one of the 3 levels of primary school for one day per week. They are coached by the regular teacher of the class. Two other periods, linked with the two other levels they didn't experienced, are planned for 3 weeks each and they are supported by a mentor. Each period is prepared during 2, 3 or 4 days in which the student teacher practises with a mentor in his class.

Student teachers for secondary school are in charge of classes for 6 to 8 hours per week, depending on the subjects they teach. They have the support of a mentor who teaches in the same school. Moreover, they have a period – up to 30 hours – in a different level from the one they teach for which they are coached : after a period of observation, they are in charge of the class and, afterwards, the coach discusses with them and advises them.

After their professional examination, student teachers become school teachers – for primary schools – or middle or high school teachers and are regularly in charge of their own classes. They are supported by a mentor who teaches in the same place.

During the two years following the professional examination, two moments of teacher education are provided to new teachers in the institutions (IUFM), 4 weeks for the first year and 2 weeks for the second year (in French, "formation initiale différée").

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

The praxis-period is part of the initial teacher education and takes part in the professional examination. Networks of schools hosting students exist according to the academic organisation and are linked to teacher education institutions. The basic idea is to reinforce the cooperation between the teacher education institutions – director, teachers - on one hand, schools - headmasters, educational community, school teachers – and inspectors on the other hand, to benefit to the student teachers.

- **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**

Situations are different if primary or secondary schools are concerned.

Primary school teachers have a special examination to become a mentor, which is called CAFIPEMF³. This examination checks the teacher knowledge about education, teaching and the capacity of mentoring.

1. Loi d'orientation et de programme pour l'avenir de l'école du 23 avril 2005 (JO n°96 du 24 avril 2005)
2. IUFM : Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres – higher teacher education institution
3. CAFIPEMF :certificat d'aptitude aux fonctions d'instituteur ou de professeur des écoles maître formateur – certificate which allows a school teacher to become a mentor

When he is appointed, the school teacher partly teaches in front of pupils, receives student teachers in his class as a mentor and is partly associated in the education given in the institution.

To be a mentor in secondary schools, a middle or high school teacher has, first of all, to be in charge of pupils ; then, he has to be appointed by academic authorities, especially inspectors. He is recognised for his abilities and his capacity to share them. The collaboration with his pedagogical inspector could help the new mentor, but, basically, the idea is that one : if he is a good teacher noticed by his hierarchy, he would be a good mentor.

According to the new framework, teachers of school teachers in the institutions are to be part time in classes and part time in the IUFM to insist upon the contact with school reality. IUFM being linked with universities, they are in touch with research and they are encouraged to mix theory and praxis. In the general pattern of teacher education, institutions regularly offer education to mentors to allow them to share experience and to renew praxis.

Moreover, lifelong learning for teachers of school teachers appears in most of institutions policies.

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

The professional development of school teachers depends of academies. Each year, academies plan according to their needs and their policies. Regarding this specific point, teacher education institutions make proposals, but have no decisive position.

Teacher education institutions plays no part in the organisational development of schools : schools depend on ministry for the general pattern, for teachers and for curricula.

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