

When and how do teachers cooperate?

An interview study in the context of school internships in Physical Education Teacher Education



Introduction

An increase of the practical proportion in teacher education also implies stronger emphasis on the relationship and cooperation between students and mentoring teachers. Study results unanimously agree that the teachers take significant influence on the learning process during school internships. In theory, they serve as role models for students, arrange scaffolding and initiate reflection processes and promote independency. However, students experience school internships as incoherent and perceive contradictions between university and schools (especially between theory and practice) (Hascher, 2006). To develop professional competence, theoretical knowledge and practical teaching skills need to be combined (Blömeke, Gustaffsson, Shavelson, 2015).

Methods

13 structured guideline interviews have been conducted with teachers who cooperate as mentors with university scholars in Hamburg, Germany, in the central internship for PE master students (six months duration). In the accompanying seminars, tasks for student-mentor interaction were being developed and carried out. The guideline interviews focused on the mentors' experiences of those tasks but also involved general questions on the expectations, benefits and limitations of their involvement. Qualitative content analysis has been conducted and produced a heuristic category system (Kuckartz, 2014).

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Bundesministerium
für Bildung
und Forschung

The project is funded by the „Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung“ from the German ministry for education and research.

Results

The qualitative data analysis revealed six influences on teachers willingness to cooperate with students and academic staff in school internships: (1) Flexibility of cooperation; (2) Type of Theory used in cooperation; (3) Fit of task in cooperation to subjective beliefs; (4) Preparation for second phase of teacher education; (5) Support; (6) Benefit-burden-balance

Exemplaric description of „Flexibility of cooperation“

Teachers cooperate in a more dedicated and motivated way when there is a high level of flexibility for them to decide *when, where and on what topics* they want to collaborate. They also prefer to be flexible whether to attend students in the preparation, execution or reflection of their lessons.

low **flexibility** high

space
time
content
learning attendance

Interview excerpt:

Teacher: „Well, I got an email that we should cooperate with university students and staff. I got interested and liked the idea to get new insights and also to support students. But then I thought I'd never manage to go to the seminar sessions, you'd have to live round the corner of the university. So the students and I found our own way to cooperate; we met to plan lessons together, talked about learning material and specific student groups ...“

Discussion

The study indicates that academic knowledge needs to be transformed to be productively implemented in student-mentor interaction. Subjective theories of mentors (as opposed to objective theories) are crucial for cooperation, especially with regard to emotional support and the learning process of students. The attitudes whether to co-structure the learning process of the students or rather act passively before and during lessons and focus on post-reflection differ significantly amongst mentors. Mentors positively evaluate working on the tasks with the students, but express the need to be able to handle them flexibly (space, time). The results will be used to modify and dilate tasks.

Literature

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