

EDUCATING PROFESSIONAL MENTORS-TO-BE FOR NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS (NQTs)

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Most induction programs for NQTs consist of mentoring. How should programs aimed at professionalising the status of mentors-to-be for NQTs be designed? What should the role of assessment be in such courses? These issues will be addressed in an evaluative study questioning the value of the course requirements in a program aimed at educating professional mentors-to-be at the University of Stavanger (UiS). Both content and process are analyzed through a study of conversations between mentors-to-be and NQTs. The former are assessed according to criteria developed by the students and their tutors together.

The competence of professional mentors should be threefold: skills in mentoring, the ability to comment on mentoring and the ability to comment on the different topics that arise in the conversations. Consciousness about saying, thinking and doing can thus be established as an important part of mentors-to-be competence. Getting the balance right between supportive and challenging activities is discussed in literature (*Handal and Lauvås, 1999; Yosko and Feinman-Nemser, 2008*), and this is conceptualized in the program through framing and reframing. Framing and reframing have been dealt with theoretically (*Hanssen and Østrem, 2010*), and also practised as training within the program. But what really takes place in authentic mentoring conversations between mentors-to-be and the NQTs? If we accept that the course requirements in the program are mediating tools (*Vygotsky, 1996; Wertsch, 1991*) in the development of professional mentors, their value and relevance are questioned. The research is based on written and oral speech in eighteen mentoring conversations in which nine mentors-to-be performed the task of mentoring. Random selections of cases were used. Field notes from the conversations were analyzed along with choreographies and learning logs that they were to write after the mentoring conversations. We used *Miles and Huberman's* distinction between „within case” and „cross case” (1994) when we analyzed our material. The questions guiding the analyses were: What topics are present in the choreographies and conversations and how are the topics addressed by the mentors-to-be throughout the conversations? To what extent are mentors-to-be able to comment on their own contribution in the conversations through the learning logs?

Dependent on the topics developing, the conversations took different forms at different stages in the process. All learning logs comment on the choreographies, they refer to assessment given and they all give evidence of their own learning processes. There are reasons to assume that the course requirements in the education have influenced the ways mentoring is conducted and how mentors-to-be comment on their own mentoring. Nonetheless, getting the balance right between support and challenge still seems to be problematical.