

Empirical data – findings and recommendation for toolkit: Student Teacher Well-Being Deepening Understanding and Building Support (Erasmus-project 2020-2023)

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The following findings and recommendation are primarily based on a questionnaire from autumn 2021, distributed to 1610 students at University College Copenhagen, Faculty of Teacher Education. 623 students completed the questionnaire. Furthermore, the findings and recommendation are supplemented by five individual- and focus group interviews with teacher trainees at University College Copenhagen and at the internship schools.

Key pointers - Questionnaire and interview

Challenges during internship periods.

- A little more than 50% of the students find that motivation, self-confidence, seeking help and information and the creation of good working routines has been “occasionally, “sometimes” or “often” a challenge during internship periods.
- Close to 40% of the students find that cooperation, contact and reception at the internship school has been “occasionally”, “sometimes” or “often” a challenge during internship periods.
- Close to 50% of the students find that seeing the purpose of the internship has been “occasionally”, “sometimes” or “often” a challenge during internship periods.
- Between 13-17% of the students find that challenges such as motivation, purpose, balance between internship and studies at the University College, self-confidence and seeking help and information are “not relevant” during internship periods.

Resources during internship periods

- A little more than 60% of the students have “sometimes” or “often” drawn on support from internship teachers and their internship group during internship periods.
- 58% of the students have “not at all” or “a little” drawn on support from UC-teachers during internship periods.

- Close to 30% of the students have “sometimes” or “often” drawn on support from family, from friends outside education or from friends in the field of education.
- 42% of the students have “not at all” or “a little” drawn on support from reading of research and academic literature.

Activities during internship periods

- 78% of the students have “sometimes”, “often” or “constantly” experienced using the internet and online apps as meaningful activities during internship periods.
- A little more than 70% of the students have “sometimes”, “often” or “constantly” experienced using literature based on general didactic context, literature based on subject didactic context and material based on specific teaching resources as meaningful activities during internship periods.
- 61% of the students have “not at all” or “a little” experienced applying KP’s learning platform Itslearning and 77% of the students have “not at all” or “a little” experienced using the UC’s internal internship portal as meaningful activities during internship periods
- 79% of the students have “sometimes”, “often” or “constantly” experienced using face-to-face contact as a meaningful activity during internship periods.

Findings and challenges

In the data material and key pointers, the author has located three challenges for student teachers in internship periods:

1. Challenges in relation to more basic needs like self-confidence, motivation and identifying the purpose. Furthermore, it is a challenge that some of the students do not see such basic needs as relevant during internship periods
2. Difficulties in drawing on support from anyone other than the internship teacher and from anything other than literature based on subject didactic context and (online) material based on specific teaching resources (significantly more than they draw on support from research and academic literature, support from University College teachers and support from others within and outside of their education)
3. Face-to-face contact is perceived as meaningful (significantly more than using obligatory platforms such as the internship-portal, ITS Learning, social media, phones and Zoom-based learning activities).

Furthermore, there are 345 explanatory students’ comments in the questionnaire. These comments are systematized as references in relation to the Erasmus project's 4

common themes: communication, community, professional identity and workload. The author has identified four challenges in these comments:

1. The category “communication” is basically defined from a discussion focusing more on roles and expectations (broad lines and general ideas). Relations, cooperation, process of going into depth is not rated as nearly as relevant in this definition (environments).
2. The category “community” is basically defined from a discussion focusing more on the internship teacher/ internship school and the students’ development as teachers. UC-teachers/ UC-colleges are not rated as nearly as relevant in this definition (and the comments are mainly negative).
3. The category “professional identity” is basically defined from a discussion focusing on students’ development as teachers, purpose, meaning, relations and relevant material/ methods. Mentoring, expectations, cooperation, the internship group, internship teachers and UC teachers are not rated as nearly as relevant in this definition (or are not rated at all).
4. The category “workload” is basically defined from a discussion focusing on the process of the (lack) of depth, (unclear) broad lines and focusing on the (difficulties in) navigating between internships, studies and other exams.

When interviewing teacher trainees at the UC and at the internship school (based on key points and comments from the questionnaire) the authors has furthermore identified three dilemmas:

1. Kindness, attentiveness, curiosity vs. demands, expectations, local culture
2. Personal feelings vs. feelings in a professional context
3. Package deal vs. motivation and desire-driven internship period

Needs and recommendations for toolkit

On the background of the empirical material and a definition of wellbeing rooted in positive psychology and more self-psychological needs (Tinto 2015, Bandura 1977 og 1994, Seligman 1994, Shah & Marks 2004), it is the author's recommendation to develop ***a toolkit that is based on a more (but not only) person-centred mentoring tradition***, a mentoring toolkit that includes more attention to:

1. A mindset that includes feeling safe, being curious, having a desire to try and fail, being driven by energy...
2. A focus on shared community that focuses more on what all parts during internship periods have in common/have as a shared aim.
3. A more identity-related professionalism – related to the act of teaching children and “why I wanted to be a teacher”.
4. A focus on students’ development by focusing on a more desire-driven, problem-oriented formative and experimental learning process.

Literature

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