

Induction from a mentor teacher's perspective: A case study from a Czech primary school

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Introduction

The early years of a teaching career are widely recognised as the most challenging, as novice teachers come to terms with their new roles and responsibilities (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Despite national differences in how this stage unfolds, mentoring remains a key component of teacher induction (Spooner-Lane, 2017). Teacher collaboration is widely recognised as a key element in improving teaching practice and promoting professional development. Situated within this broader framework is the specific role of mentor teachers—experienced educators who support novice teachers during their induction into the profession. While novice teachers in primary education consider induction particularly relevant (Frels et al., 2013), mentoring is not only of benefit to the novice teacher, but also significantly supports the development of the mentor (Hudson, 2013).

Method

This qualitative case study explores the experiences of a mentor teacher at a Czech primary school during the 2024/2025 school year, focusing on her perceptions of collaboration with a novice teacher. Data were collected through three semi-structured interviews and a thematic analysis was used to identify key categories and patterns in the teacher's narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

Preliminary findings from the qualitative content analysis indicate that the collaboration with the novice teacher differed significantly from the mentor teacher's previous experiences. In the past, her mentoring had typically taken place through informal, day-to-day interactions grounded in close, collegial relationships. In this case, however, although the novice teacher had access to support, the mentor perceived a limited willingness to engage in more meaningful collaboration or to make full use of the guidance offered. Consequently, the mentor teacher faced various challenges and emotional strain throughout the school year, including moments of self-doubt regarding her competence in the mentoring role.

Conclusion

The study highlights a mismatch between the mentor teacher's expectations and the level of engagement demonstrated by the novice teacher. While existing research frequently underscores the importance of the quality mentor–novice teacher relationship and trust (Da Rocha, 2014), it also stresses the necessity of key elements such as equality (Mullen & Fallen, 2022), and open dialogue (Asada, 2012). Although the mentor plays a vital role in guiding the induction process, effective mentoring and collaboration ultimately depend on mutual commitment and clear, ongoing communication between both parties to support meaningful professional growth.