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Title: Mentoring and Induction in the Nordic Countries : Some Introductory Remarks

Year: 2020

Version: Published version

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Please cite the original version:

Olsen, K.-R., Bjerkholt, E. M., & Heikkinen, H. L. T. (2020). Mentoring and Induction in the Nordic Countries : Some Introductory Remarks. In K.-R. Olsen, E. M. Bjerkhot, & H. L. T. Heikkinen (Eds.), *New Teachers in Nordic Countries : Ecologies of Mentoring and Induction* (pp. 11-26). Cappelen Damm. <https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.105.ch0>

Mentoring and Induction in the Nordic Countries – Some Introductory Remarks

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The professional collaboration that forms the basis of this book dates back to the beginning of the 2000s when some of the authors started what was then called *Newly Qualified Teachers in Northern Europe (NQTNE)*. In 2017, the network was expanded to a cross-sectoral network financed via <https://www.nordplusonline.org/Who-can-apply/Nordplus-horizontal> Nordplus Horizontal.¹ In this network called *Newly Qualified Teachers and Induction: A Nordic Cross-Sectorial Network – NTI*, representatives of teacher organizations in the Nordic region were also invited to participate. This book can therefore be understood as a result of a continuation of almost 20 years of Nordic cooperation on research and development work on induction and mentoring.

Some initial results of the studies introduced in this book have been presented and shared with the international research community at

¹ <https://www.nordplusonline.org/eng>

NERA and <https://eera-ecer.de/> ECER² conferences in 2018 and 2019. The network also hosted a <https://www.usn.no/nti/> Teacher Development Summit in Iceland in 2019. In this anthology, we present and discuss significant parts of this material, aiming at stimulating a research-oriented and evidence-based development of induction and mentoring for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in the Nordic countries.

Discussion of some key concepts and principles

When it comes to the Nordic languages, those with Norwegian, Danish or Swedish as their mother tongue will usually easily understand each other. The same does not apply to Finnish, Icelandic and Estonian. For example, in the case of “newly qualified teachers”: in Denmark, they will, for the most part, use the concept *nyuddannede lærere*; in Norway, *nyutdannede lærere*; in Sweden, *nyutbildade lärare*; in Estonia, *äsja kvalifitseeritud õpetajad*; in Finland, *vastavalmistuneet opettajat*; and in Iceland, *nýlega hæfir kennarar*. The common language in our collaboration group has, therefore, been English, and consequently this anthology is also written in English.

In the articles in this book, terms such as “teacher education”, “newly qualified teachers” NQTs, “induction” and “mentoring” will be frequently referred to. We will briefly explain our understanding of these concepts.

Teacher Education

The main model for initial teacher education in the Nordic countries is an integrated three to five year teacher education, where the student teachers’ main focus throughout the whole program is how to become a professional teacher. The knowledge base of the teacher education is complex, cross-disciplinary and consists of ethical values, advanced skills and

² <https://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-ministers>

professional judgment. That is why teacher education takes place both on the university/university college campus and in kindergartens and schools.

There are also alternative routes for becoming teachers in the Nordic countries. The most common model is to build a one-year teacher education program on top of a master's degree in special subjects (mathematics, science, English, etc.). This program is mainly a study of pedagogy and didactics at a university or university college, combined with practice periods where the students get supervision from practice teachers.

Newly qualified teachers – NQTs

One of the main concepts used in this anthology is newly qualified teachers – NQTs. In some of the articles, you will meet concepts like new teachers, first-year teachers, newly graduated teachers, beginning teachers, early-career teachers or novice teachers. There is no common clarification of the differences or similarities between these terms, but there are some nuances between how the different countries define the period of being a newly qualified teacher. Researchers often use the concept newly qualified teachers or beginning teachers for new teachers in their first five years as teachers in schools and kindergartens.

Induction

In the Nordic countries, none of the languages have a single term like “induction” referring to NQTs. In most articles, you will find that the terms induction, induction and mentoring, or just mentoring, frequently are used. In English, induction is a complex concept covering NQTs' learning processes, need for support, vulnerability, special activities and programs. Although most induction programs include mentoring, the authors of this book sometimes use the term “induction and mentoring”, mostly to emphasize the importance of mentoring in induction (Attard-Tonna, Bjerkholt & Holland, 2017; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Langdon, Alexander, Ryde & Baggetta, 2014; Shanks et al., 2020). We refer to the explanation of the term mentoring below.

Feiman-Nemser et al. (1999) claim that the concept induction has to be understood as more than only a program, special activities and

mentoring for NQTs. Induction is also an important phase and learning process in a teaching career. Referring to this, Britton, Paine, Pimm and Raizen (2003), frame the term induction by pointing to four broad categories of meanings: A process for learning; a special phase in teaching; a particular period of time; and a system (Britton et al., 2003, p. 3).

New teachers are new in the profession and at their workplace. They have little experience in teaching and are constantly developing their identity and competence as a teacher. Eraut (2007) states that “professional competence also has a large and important tacit dimension” (2007, p. 404). This tacit dimension plays a significant role in teachers’ professional learning throughout their careers. In many cases, tacit knowledge determines how they react in situations that require advanced skills and knowledge. In the case of NQTs, this holistic professional competence is little developed and must be acquired and learned over time. This has important consequences for how to organize induction programs for NQTs. To some extent, tacit knowledge can be gained by instructing new teachers and encouraging them to imitate their more experienced colleagues’ professional actions, but in many cases this is not sufficient. Therefore, mentoring is an important part of induction programs. Through conversations and reflection with mentors related to experiences and challenges in the profession, both the NQTs and their mentors are given access also to the underlying and often unconscious basis for professional action (Grimen & Molander, 2008; Kessels & Korthagen, 1996).

Britton et al. (2003, p. 2) distinguish between “limited” and “comprehensive” use of the term induction. Limited induction refers to a program consisting of targeted supportive activities for NTQs. The duration of this kind of program varies, but it often lasts from one to two years. Many researchers (Bjerkholt, 2013; Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999) underline that “limited” induction has to be seen as more than “simply the filling in of gaps”, like the lack of teaching experience (Britton et al., 2003, p. 1). According to the Norwegian principles for mentoring NQTs,³ it is also important to recognize their competence and encourage them to

3 <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/0081e41fad994cfdbb4e0364a2eb8f65/veiledning-av-nyutdannede-nytilsatte-larere-i-barnehage-og-skole.pdf>

express and use their resources and expertise in collaboration with their colleagues.

However, if you consider induction as a special phase in teachers' careers, researchers often define this period to be the first five years of work after completing initial teacher education. Britton et al. (2003) name this perspective on induction "comprehensive induction". This indicates that there are many possible goals for induction and induction as a continuum of developing as a professional teacher.

Comprehensive induction includes not only activities and special induction programs for NQTs, but also a wider range of measures to promote the professional learning of new teachers and the NQTs to be included in the profession. It requires attention to teaching as well as the whole responsibility of being a teacher. The activities are not only mentoring programs but facilitate also multiple complementary teaching and learning activities specially focused on NQTs' needs (Attard Tonna et al., 2017; Shanks et al., 2020).

In different countries the concept of induction has also been understood differently, so the concept of induction is understood to mean different practices in different countries. This problem has also been encountered in international Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) research. For example, in the Finnish TALIS questionnaire, the word *perehdyttäminen* is used for "induction". In Swedish, the expression "induction program" has been translated as *introduktionsprogram*, and in Norway as *introduksjonsprogram* (OECD, 2019). However, Finns have a slightly different meaning for the word *perehdyttäminen* than Norwegians and Swedes have for the related concepts *introduktion/introduksjon*. In Finnish, the word *perehdyttäminen* stems from the verb "*perehtyä*", which refers to an in-depth study of the matter, so the word has a deeper meaning than "introduction" or "induction". These kinds of complexity and differences in how to understand the concept induction are a challenge and complicate international comparative research.

Mentoring

In most of the Nordic countries, a word derived from the national language has been introduced to describe mentoring: *vejledning* (Danish),

juhendamine (Estonian), *leiðbeiningar* (Islandic), *veiledning* (Norwegian) and *handledning* (Swedish). Finland seems to be an exception: in Finnish, the most-used concept is *mentorointi*, which is a fairly direct translation of the word mentoring. Most of the concepts used in the Nordic languages translate well into English, but the English concept the researchers prefer to use varies. For example, sometimes the Norwegian word *veiledning* is translated as guidance or counseling, whereas some other authors prefer to use the concepts supervision or coaching (Bjørndal, 2008; Kemmis & Heikkinen, 2012; Skagen, 2014). In Sweden and Norway, you can find the English words mentor/mentoring and coach/coaching used both in everyday language and as titles for a variety of different supporting activities.

Kemmis and Heikkinen (2012) point out that these concepts have different nuances of meaning. Sometimes, mentoring refers to an interaction between a more-experienced and a less-experienced person, for example, a relationship between a novice teacher and a more-experienced teacher. Bozeman and Freeney (cited in Kemmis & Heikkinen, 2012) use the concept mentoring as “a process of the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital and psychosocial support from a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) to a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé)” (Bozeman & Freeney, as cited in Kemmis & Heikkinen, 2012, p. 145).

Many researchers and authors however have pointed to the concepts mentoring, coaching and supervision as “a practice ill-defined, poorly conceptualized and weakly theorized” (Colley, 2003; Skagen, 2014; Attard-Tonna et al., 2017). It is more about which concept the authors prefers to use, rather than different actual concepts (Bjerkholt, 2017; Skagen, 2014). In the international field of research in induction and mentoring NQTs, the most common concept is mentoring.

In the Norwegian framework for national principles on (*veiledning*) mentoring NQTs (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018), the concept “mentoring” is clarified as: “A planned, systematic and structured process conducted individually and in groups.” The term “qualified mentor” is clarified as: “An educated teacher who has formal mentor skills, necessary professional skills and at least three years of experience as a teacher.” A mentor

and mentee relationship is, in the Norwegian tradition of mentoring NQTs, based on a non-hierarchical relationship and a more equal status.

International perspectives

Before we take a closer look at the situation in the Nordic countries, we will briefly refer to some international surveys that document main features regarding induction “in countries it is natural to compare us to”, i.e. the so-called OECD countries.

We primarily focus on two OECD reports published in 2018 and 2019. The first of these is *TALIS 2018: Results. Volume 1. Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*⁴ (OECD, 2018), which contains data collected from upper secondary education in a wide range of countries in and outside Europe. The second report, called *A Flying Start*,⁵ published in April 2019 (OECD, 2019), includes the results of a comprehensive survey of induction and mentoring for NQTs in the OECD countries. It is supported by an interactive website, *Teacher Ready*,⁶ that explains how work on the report was organized and conducted, and describes some of the main principles of the OECD’s recommendations on induction and mentoring for member countries.

The OECD reports are based on three important perspectives that also form the basis of this anthology. First: “No matter how good initial teacher education is, it is not expected to prepare teachers for all the challenges they face during their first regular employment as a teacher” (OECD, 2018, p. 138). Consequently, special measures must be taken to address this particular part of a teacher’s career.

Second, it is stated with reference to Ingersoll and Strong (2011) (see Lisbeth Lunde Fredriksen’s review article in this book) that there is empirical evidence for the claim that support and assistance for beginning teachers have a positive influence on outcomes such as commitment

4 <http://www.oecd.org/education/talis-2018-results-volume-i-1d0bc92a-en.htm>

5 <http://www.oecd.org/education/talis/a-flying-start-cf74e549-en.htm>

6 <http://www.oecdteacherready.org/>

and retention of teachers, classroom teaching practices and student achievement.

Third, according to the OECD, it is important that induction and mentoring must not only be regarded as an isolated measure to support new teachers in a demanding situation and ensure that they continue in the profession, but also as an integral part of a “coherent system of initial teacher preparation that can serve as the foundation for a process of continued development throughout the full duration of a teacher’s career.” In the report (ibid., p. 18) this is illustrated by the following model:

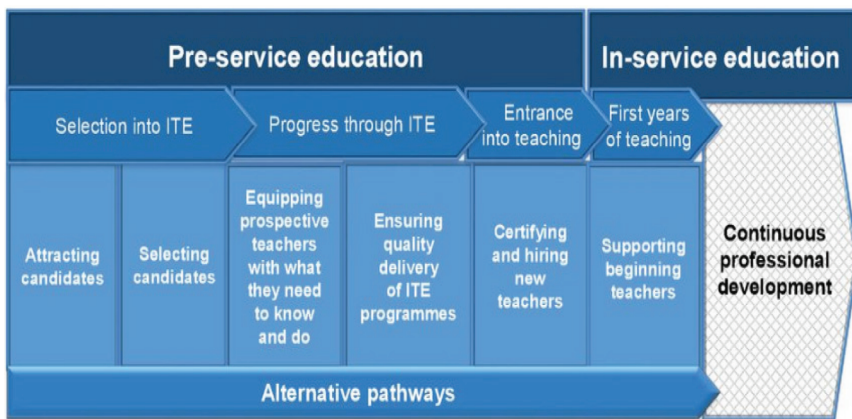


Figure 1.

The model shows the connection between the different phases and the prerequisites that are important to ensure that a nation has teachers with high academic and didactic competence. As can be seen from the model, the measures can be divided into two main phases: *pre-service education* and *in-service education*.

The first phase of pre-service education is about admission quality, in the sense that one must ensure good access to highly-qualified applicants and then select the candidates who have the best potential to become proficient teachers. Finland is the most successful country in the Nordic region in this respect. (See article on Finland in this anthology).

The next step is to ensure that student teachers have a high-quality education of the greatest possible relevance for future work as a teacher. When it comes to the Nordic countries, including Estonia, all except

Denmark have a five-year university or university college education at the master's level as the main model for the education of teachers working in primary and secondary education (Elstad, 2020).

The second phase, in-service education, is comprised of two main types of measures: induction and mentoring for NQTs, which can include a period of two to five years in work after completing basic education, and continuous professional development that includes all teachers in a lifelong career perspective.

The content of the anthology

Accordingly, the OECD emphasizes the importance of a systemic perspective as a basis for identifying key stakeholders and recognizes induction and mentoring as a necessary part of an overall commitment to increased quality and more learning for students in schools. In the article “Understanding Mentoring Within an Ecosystem of Educational and Political Practices” in this book, Hannu L. T. Heikkinen explains an ecosystemic approach to mentoring, which in recent years has been the basis for the Nordic group's symposia and presentations at international conferences and seminars. This way of understanding human activity has its origin in ecosystemic theory and systems-analytic approaches, as we know them from, for example, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1997) and Fritjof Capra (2016). An ecosystemic approach makes it possible to both describe and analyze practices of induction and mentoring inhabiting a given ecological niche and to see this niche within a larger educational policy context. When it comes to this anthology, the editors have left the authors free to choose their own theoretical approach, but some of the ecosystemic concepts are used in some of the articles.

In the article “Support for Newly Qualified Teachers Through Teacher Induction Programs – A Review of Reviews” in this book, Lisbeth Lunde Fredriksen discusses research within the field of induction and mentoring. She refers to the main findings from six review articles that summarize research findings from more than 230 individual studies. Lunde Fredriksen concludes that the current research provides a basis for claiming that systematic and targeted high-quality measures in the form of

mentoring and induction for NQTs have significant positive effects, not only for the new teachers themselves, but also for their students' learning and well-being. Accordingly, the article supports the assumptions and main conclusions reported in the OECD publications mentioned above.

In recent history, there have been many commonalities and close collaborations, both culturally and politically, between the Nordic countries. This applies, not least, to the educational policy field, where free access to high-quality education for all has been a high priority in all of the countries. However, when it comes to induction and mentoring for NQTs, it is difficult to point out commonalities between the Nordic countries, except that none of them currently have a legal binding national program that gives NQTs the right and access to support.

The main part of this book comprises six articles which, in alphabetical order, discuss the historical background for, and the current situation regarding, induction and mentoring in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. We will briefly present some key features regarding the current situation in the Nordic countries. For more detailed information and relevant references, see the articles that present each country.

In the case of Denmark, researchers from VIA University College published the results of a survey in 2017 that documents the extent of induction and mentoring measures aimed at NQTs appointed after January 1, 2013. The results were disappointing in the sense that only 38 % of the NQTs answered "yes" to "having participated in a program in which an experienced teacher was charged with assisting and supporting – mentor/tutor program". Only 17 % of these mentors had formal mentor education.

The situation in Denmark is also characterized by the aftermath of a nationwide labor conflict in spring 2013, which resulted in a lockout that shut all teachers in primary and secondary schools out of work for almost four weeks. Furthermore, there are indications that Denmark may face a considerable teacher shortage in coming years. At present, publicly-appointed committees are in the process of evaluating and assessing the need for changes in Danish teacher education. There are also negotiations between state authorities and teacher organizations regarding salary and working conditions for teachers. In this connection, the need to

strengthen measures aimed at NQTs has been pointed out. This could mean incipient shifts in the political ecosystem of education that might result in new efforts to strengthen induction and mentoring for NQTs in Denmark.

Although Estonia does not formally fall under the term “Nordic countries”, there have been targeted political and cultural processes in the period after 1945 aimed at strengthening relations between the countries on both sides of the Baltic Sea. As early as 2004, the universities of Tartu and Tallinn, in collaboration with schools and authorities, launched a national program of induction and mentoring for NQTs in Estonia. The role of the universities included both mentoring and campus gatherings for the NQTs. An interesting feature of this program was that it was emphasized from the outset that induction had to be seen as part of a holistic approach to develop the entire school as an organization.

In recent years, Estonian teacher education has undergone changes, partly because of facing significant challenges when it comes to educating a sufficient number of teachers. The average age of Estonian teachers is among the highest in the OECD countries, and the dropout rate from the teaching profession is also high (OECD, 2019). As a result, the recruitment to what is referred to in the model above as “alternative pathways” to formally-approved teacher education has increased significantly. This includes, among other things, relatively short vocational courses aimed at giving candidates who have a different career background the opportunity to obtain a formally-approved teacher education. Internationally, these teacher education programs are referred to as Teach First⁷ and Teach for All,⁸ and have branches in a number of countries in Europe, including England, Wales, and Estonia (Tatto & Menter, 2019; Elstad, 2020). It is worth noting that OECD warns against what they refer to as alternative routes into teaching, because “although they might temporarily resolve supply-demand issues, they also carry the risk and diminish the value of teacher education, and can work against sustainable solutions” (OECD,

7 <https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/>

8 <https://teachforall.org/>

2019, p. 12). Estonia is now working on developing induction strategies that can be adapted to different types of teacher education and NQTs.

In many ways, Finland has a special status internationally, both in terms of teacher education and results on international surveys such as PISA,⁹ TIMSS and PIRLS¹⁰ on the level of knowledge of the pupils. Finnish teacher education has been a five-year master's program since 1978. Recruitment and selection strategies related to what is referred to in the above model as "selection into initial teacher education" have been very successful and, unlike other Nordic countries, Finnish teacher education has followed a stable pattern with few fundamental changes in recent decades. This may be one of the reasons why Finland has not developed targeted national mentoring and induction programs for NQTs, although international comparative studies such as TALIS 2018 clearly indicate that there is a need for mentoring.

Finland has, however, had a comprehensive national program for peer-group mentoring (PGM) where experienced teachers and NQTs have worked together and reflected on experiences aimed to promote professional development and learning. This work is based on theoretical principles rooted in theories of professional learning and development that we know of from constructivism and integrative pedagogy.

In recent years, the Finnish PGM model has been challenged, among other things, by competing educational policy focus areas, with an intention to develop Finnish teachers' ICT competence. At the same time, there has been a declining trend in the recruitment of students for initial teacher education, especially in early childhood teacher education. This may trigger a discussion about further needs to develop induction and mentoring programs for NQTs also in Finland (Heikkinen, Utriainen, Markkanen, Pennanen, Taajamo & Tynjälä, 2020).

Like Estonia, Iceland faces a challenging situation when it comes to securing a sufficient number of qualified teachers in the years to come. Failure to recruit to teacher education, relatively high average age, and significant dropout from the teaching profession, were some of the reasons

9 <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/test/>

10 <https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/>

why a group of stakeholders was appointed in 2018 in order to investigate and point out measures that could address this situation. This resulted in the Ministry of Education launching a series of measures in 2019 aimed at securing new teachers with quality mentoring during the first three years after completing basic teacher education. This includes, among other things, state funding of further education for experienced teachers who want to be mentors for NQTs (30 ECTS credits). The Icelandic authorities are now implementing these measures in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders. As in Estonia, work has also been initiated to strengthen the provision of alternative educational pathways into the teaching profession.

In Norway, work began on securing NQTs induction and mentoring as a national project in 2003 and gained the immediate support of teacher education programs at universities and university colleges. In 2009, a letter of intent was signed by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities¹¹ (KS) which aimed to increase the number of NQTs who received mentoring. Formal national and regional collaborative forums were also set up with representatives from employers, teachers' unions, universities and political authorities to coordinate the work. A special feature of the Norwegian model is that the measures include all teacher groups from kindergartens to upper secondary education.

During the period from 2009 to the present, collaboration between the stakeholders has been continued and further developed. A number of evaluations and reports show a gradual increase of the measures locally, resulting in about 65 % of all NQTs in kindergartens and schools receiving induction and mentoring in the first two years after completing teacher education in 2020. About half of the mentors have formal competence equivalent to 15 ECTS credits or more. At present, a comprehensive national survey is being commissioned by state authorities, and the results are expected to be available during 2021. It is announced that this will be the basis for political and professional discourses and decisions on the further work on induction and mentoring in Norway.

11 <https://www.ks.no/om-ks/ks-in-english/>

Sweden is the only Nordic country that has tried out a scheme with a probationary induction year before teachers are formally certified as teachers. With the support of the teacher organizations, this reform was implemented in the fall of 2011 as part of a major competency reform for teachers in Swedish schools. However, the probation element in the induction year program was discontinued in 2014, partly because it had proven demanding to implement both professionally and administratively and it also risked deterring people from entering teacher education programs and later on risking not getting a teacher qualification. Today, the responsibility for taking care of new teachers is formally delegated to the principals of the schools where they work, but this is followed up only to a limited extent. Unlike in Norway, no state funding has been allocated to motivate universities and university colleges to provide mentoring or mentoring education for experienced teachers. A survey conducted by the Swedish Teachers' Union in May 2019 showed that only 5 % of the municipalities “always” offered an induction period to NQTs, while 20 % “never” did. 13 % offered this “often”, 31 % “rarely did” and 31 % offered it “sometimes”. Corresponding figures from the OECD publications referred to above show that Sweden currently has poorer induction and mentoring results than the average of the OECD countries.

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