

The skilled mentor

Mentor teachers' use and acquisition of supervisory skills

In schools all over the world experienced teachers are involved in the mentoring of student and beginning teachers. Most of these mentor teachers do this work alongside their main task as a teacher of pupils. There is no single approach to mentoring that will work in the same way for every student or beginning teacher. The ability of mentor teachers to regularly vary their mentoring approaches and to choose appropriate supervisory skills continually and actively during mentoring dialogues is crucial for the learning of student teachers.

To support mentor teachers in their important work, teacher education institutes, often in cooperation with schools, provide training programmes aiming at broadening mentor teachers' repertoires of supervisory skills. For Frank Crasborn and Paul Hennissen their extensive experience as teacher educators and trainers of mentor teachers was the inspiration to set up a research project that sparked off 8 studies.

Based on observations of 104 authentic mentoring dialogues and 120 stimulated-recall interviews with mentor teachers and student teachers, behavioural and cognitive aspects of mentor teachers' use and acquisition of supervisory skills were investigated. As a whole, the research project resulted in:

- An improved conceptual order in terminology used to describe supervisory behaviour
- A fine-grained portrayal of crucial supervisory skills in mentoring dialogues
- Disclosure of cognitions accompanying mentor teachers' use of supervisory skills
- Clarification of the initial stage in acquiring new supervisory skills
- Instruments for reflection on mentor teachers' supervisory behaviour
- Guidelines for improving training programmes for mentor teachers.

The studies constituting the research project reported in this book have also been published separately in international academic journals. For one of these publications, the authors were awarded the *2009 Award for Distinguished Research in Teacher Education* by the *American Association of Teacher Educators (ATE)*.