

Beginning teachers' needs and how they are met in schools

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It is recognized in the literature that beginning teachers need support (OECD, 2005) and mentoring has become the key strategy to achieve this (Jones, 2010). One could, however, ask if the offered support is in accordance with the needs. The school leaders' are responsible to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Printy, Otten, Krantz-Selleck & Usiak, 2008) and consequently to provide new teachers with what they need for doing a good job. However, school leaders have different perceptions of their roles (Kelchtermanns, 2007) and could perceive beginning teachers' needs in different ways. The current study aims to investigate new teachers' and school leaders' views on new teachers' needs for support, as well as how these needs are translated into and experienced in practice.

The literature describes that teachers need social, emotional and educational support during the first years in school. In fact a main reason for leaving the profession are the first teaching experiences, the working conditions and insufficient support (Achinstein, 2006; Rots, Aelterman, Vlerick & Vermeulen, 2007). Consequently it is important to meet beginning teachers' needs in an adequate way.

The study was conducted in Norway where all beginning teachers are supposed to be offered mentoring from the autumn 2010 (White Paper 11, 2008 -2009). It is based on a sample of 9 school leaders and 10 beginning teachers from different upper secondary schools. The informants were asked to describe the new teachers' needs and how they were met in the particular school. The research instrument was semi structured interviews with open ended questions.

The work is still in progress, but some preliminary findings seem to emerge. The new teachers are happy just to get a job, and tend to accept the working conditions they are presented with. The school leaders describe their initial need as a need for information of rules and routines, a view that seems to be shared by the new teachers. Mentoring is seldom organized and is compensated by ad hoc contact with colleagues. Hopefully this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of new teachers needs and how to meet these needs in a way that improves teaching and learning.