Part 1: The dilemma

Read through Part 1 of this story.

During the professional task on inclusive education in school, the student-teacher examines the school's vision. They then collect pupil data from the school data management system, on the basis of which they visualize the educational needs of each child in a group. Using this complete group overview, the student-teacher will draw up and carry out a group plan for teaching a lesson. For this, the student-teacher may use existing group plans made by the classroom teacher. The assessment task for the program consists of a presentation in which the student-teacher justifies how they organize and conduct inclusive education.

A dilemma for me, as the institute-based teacher educator (IBTE), is that not every school provides optimal learning opportunities for student-teachers to work on this task. The student-teacher therefore can't perform all professional activities properly. The biggest problem occurs during the collection of the pupil data. Not every mentor wants to give the student-teacher access to the pupil tracking system. The student-teacher can't meet the requirements set by the university for the group overview and the group plan. The gap between the university curriculum and the access and support provided by the workplace is too big. This dilemma occurred several times last school year and this school year.

Advice

- What would you advise the IBTE to do?
- Read Part 2
- Compare your plan of action to what actually happened. What are the similarities?
- What are the differences?

Part 2: The solution

From my role as coordinator of the professional task, I initially chose to inform the schools better during the preparatory meeting and in the periodic mailing. In the training for mentors, there was also specific attention given to guiding/coaching a student-teacher in working on the professional assignment. In my role, I've also raised this dilemma during the regular consultation with the school-based teacher educators (SBTEs) in this group of schools. The SBTE must ensure that the student-teacher gets all the necessary learning opportunities in the workplace/school. And last, but not least, I informed the IBTE who visits the student-teachers in the schools. After all, they are the link between the university and the school.

The better provision of information has led to the problem occurring less often. Nevertheless, there was still one school during this period that didn't allow two students to access the necessary data. I advised these student-teachers to contact the IBTE, who immediately checked with the SBTE and mentors about how the student-teachers could access the required data. They pointed out that the data were being used by the student-teachers with care, and were being anonymized. Ultimately, in this specific case, the choice was made to give the student-teachers limited access to the pupil monitoring system and the test results. This meant that the student-teachers had to work at the school on the group overview and the group plans, so that the data stayed within the school.

Affordance

The affordance (or invitational quality) of the school is facilitated through seeing student teachers as colleagues, opening up all teaching activities for student teachers and having a clear policy for initial teacher education.

Four types of activities are available for student teachers at school:

- Activities with or for pupils e.g. planning, teaching and assessment
- Activities at school level e.g. communicating with parents, colleagues and other professionals
- Accessibility and use of school based resources e.g. pupil files, school data, intranet and staff library
- Activities aimed at teacher professional development e.g. staff professional learning opportunities and feedback talks with the mentor

The affordance of partner schools may be based on the individual decisions of mentors instead of on shared views regarding the training of student teachers. Individual mentors, even within schools, can differ considerably in which activities they expect from student teachers, which activities they allowed them to do and which activities were not available

(Van Velzen and Timmermans, 2014:58-59, excerpted/adapted).

Q In what ways do your ensure that activities that are provided in school are related to the learning needs of the individual student teachers?

Van Velzen, C. & Timmermans, M. 2014. What can we learn from the shift towards a more school-centred model in the Netherlands? In: Jones, K. & White, E. (eds.) Developing outstanding practice in school-based teacher education. St Albans: Critical Publishing. pp. 56-63