



Press Release

Offering the best possible support to young teachers

Studies conducted by the Universities of Tübingen and Freiburg examine the professional development of beginning teachers

Dr. Karl Guido Rijkhoek
Director

Antje Karbe
Press Officer

Phone +49 7071 29-76788
+49 7071 29-76789

Fax +49 7071 29-5566
karl.rijkhoek@uni-tuebingen.de
antje.karbe@uni-tuebingen.de

www.uni-tuebingen.de/aktuell

Tübingen, May 8, 2018

The fact that teachers play a decisive role in educational systems is hardly debatable. However, what exactly are the factors which make teachers successful? Finding possible answers to this question was the objective of researchers at the Universities of Tübingen and Freiburg. In one study they examined the significance of general pedagogical/psychological knowledge for later professional success of beginning teachers. In another study they investigated how the knowledge about efficient classroom management – an aspect of pedagogical/psychological knowledge which is often viewed as particularly challenging by young teachers – as well as emotional exhaustion develop throughout the practical induction phase that every beginning teacher in Germany has to pass. The results were published in the *Zeitschrift für Bildungsforschung* and in *Contemporary Educational Psychology*.

Previous empirical research identifies several aspects of the professional competence of teachers which influence how successful a teacher is in his or her profession. Other than domain-specific and didactical knowledge, general pedagogical/psychological knowledge and the ability to successfully manage one's personal resources and thus avoid a "burning out" are viewed as important aspects of teachers' professional competence. However, there are few empirical studies which systematically examine the importance of pedagogical/psychological knowledge for professional success or the development of the various aspects of professional competence. Based on two longitudinal studies, the scientists from Tübingen and Freiburg thus investigated those aspects. Their results can be used as a starting point for recommendations about how young teachers can be supported in mastering the often complex challenges they face in their profession.

The first study examined the relationship between general pedagogical/psychological knowledge and the professional success of beginning teachers. 181 teacher candidates were assessed at the beginning of the first or second year of their induction phase. They filled out questionnaires and watched short videos about classroom situations. Afterwards, they

answered questions about efficient classroom management in the videos. Two years later, they were questioned again. Also, the beginning teachers' grade in the second state examination was recorded. In addition, data from their 8,000 students was collected. They were asked to rate their teacher with regard to statements such as "Our math teacher often seems exhausted" or "Our teacher always uses good examples in his or her lessons."

The results indicate that young teachers' pedagogical/psychological knowledge at the beginning of their induction phase is related to their grade in the second state examination – the higher their knowledge, the better their grade. It is however not related to beginning teacher's identification with their profession. Student ratings showed that teachers with a high pedagogical/psychological knowledge are perceived as less exhausted. Also, they appear to be particularly successful at giving good explanations. "This suggests that a teacher's explanatory abilities are not merely grounded in his or her domain-specific knowledge, but also contain a cross-disciplinary component," says Verena Gindele, first author of the study. Which aspects of general pedagogical/psychological knowledge are in particular related to giving good explanations should be investigated in further studies.

The second study was conducted with 750 teacher candidates who were assessed twice during their induction phase. The researchers were particularly interested in how the knowledge about efficient classroom management and the emotional exhaustion of young teachers develops throughout the induction phase.

Results show that the knowledge about effective classroom management develops over the entire course of the induction phase. Those beginning teachers who displayed a particular willingness to reflect on their experiences in the classroom showed the highest rise in classroom management knowledge. The emotional exhaustion of young teachers increases at the beginning of their induction phase, but then returns to its original level in the second year. The higher the teaching load, the higher the rise in emotional exhaustion. At the same time, teacher candidates with a more constructivist-oriented mentor were better able to cope with the challenges and felt less exhausted during the induction phase. "Our results indicate which aspects of teacher training and which personal qualities support beginning teachers in their development," says Tamar Voss, first author of the study. "Especially with regard to the high rates of early dropout in the teaching profession it seems to be important to promote young teacher's willingness to reflect on their practical experiences, to implement a modest teaching load, and to achieve a high quality of mentoring."

"Based on our findings one might make the cautious recommendation to promote pedagogical/psychological knowledge much more systematically during teacher training," comments Ulrich Trautwein, director of the Hector Research Institute of Education Sciences and Psychology in Tübingen. "However, further research is necessary for that. In Germany, this recommendation is already mirrored in several reform activities, since aspects of education sciences seem to be gradually finding their way into teacher training programs."

Original publications:

- Gindele, V., & Voss, T. (2017). Pädagogisch-psychologisches Wissen: Zusammenhänge mit Indikatoren des beruflichen Erfolgs angehender Lehrkräfte. *Zeitschrift für Bildungsforschung*, 7(3), 255-272. doi:10.1007/s35834-017-0192-5

- Voss, T., Wagner, W., Klusmann, U., Trautwein, U., & Kunter, M. (2017). Changes in beginning teachers' classroom management knowledge and emotional exhaustion during the induction phase. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 51, 170-184. doi: 10.1016/j.cedpsych.2017.08.002

Contact details:

University of Freiburg:

- Prof. Dr. Thamar Voss, Phone +49 761 203-96886, thamar.voss[at]ezw.uni-freiburg.de

University of Tübingen, Hector Research Institute of Education Sciences and Psychology:

- Prof. Dr. Ulrich Trautwein, Phone +49 7071 29-73931, ulrich.trautwein[at]uni-tuebingen.de
- Verena Gindele, verena.gindele@uni-tuebingen.de