

Knowledge input in responses to a government inquiry concerning probationary year for new teachers; the role of mentors and headmasters.

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Abstract

In Sweden, with no tradition of mentors participating in formal summative assessment of newly qualified teachers, a Government Inquiry proposes this dual role for mentors. This paper examines how the mentor's and headmaster's role in the assessment and the relations between mentor and mentee are discussed in the 108 responses sent to the Swedish Ministry of Education, as response to this Government Inquiry. Results show that the issue of evaluation is discussed in half of the responses (54 of 108); the headmasters role is mentioned twice as much as the mentors role (in 41 respectively 23 of the 108 responses); and that higher education institutions are most active focusing the mentors. Only 23 of the responses mention the mentor's role in the assessment; none of these responses is positive to the mentor's double role but eleven questions it; and the relationship between the mentor and mentee is discussed in only four responses. This raises question as to what extent new information or perspectives could be expected from responses, especially from a research-based perspective.

Keywords: Beginning teacher, mentor, headmaster, mentee, assessment, Government Inquiry, responses, teacher induction, probationary year.

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1. Introduction

The main route into the teaching professions is some kind of adequate formal training. However, in recent years registration of teachers has become an additional tool for policymakers to make a clearer distinction between qualified and non qualified teachers. The process of becoming fully registered as a teacher is then often connected to a probationary year and induction programs, as is the case for instance in England, Wales, Scotland and New Zealand (cf. Cameron, 2007; Killeavy, 2006). In other countries, as the Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, the issue of who is qualified to teach is regulated by legislation connected to adequate teacher training (Bjerkholt & Hedegaard, 2008).

In Sweden, however, a government inquiry was initiated in May 2008, Teachers' Qualifications and Authorisation, *Registration and stricter qualifying rules*, proposing registration for teachers and a mandatory induction program (Swedish Government Official Reports 2008:52). The proposals of the inquiry are in marked contrast to certain traditional Swedish educational values, e.g. that mentors should not be involved in any formal evaluation of new teachers' competencies, but that their role should be to promote their professional development (Fransson, & Gustafsson, 2008). The relationship between mentors and mentees is often considered a vulnerable one, based on confidence and trust (McNally & Oberski, 2003). Research also shows that new teachers may avoid questioning colleagues in order not to risk losing prestige or being regarded as incompetent (Rust, 1994). In the inquiry, headmasters are proposed to be responsible for the evaluation of new teachers' competencies, and mentors are proposed to participate. This matter has been discussed in some of the 108 responses to the inquiry that were submitted to the Swedish Ministry of Education. *The aim of this article is to analyse to what extent the role of mentors and headmasters in the evaluation of new teachers is discussed in these responses, and in what ways this matter is discussed. The focus is on what kind of knowledge input the responses could give in the processes of governance and regulation.*

2. Mentors and headmasters involved in formal assessment of the mentee

Mentors involved in assessment of mentees

Comparing induction programmes in different countries, or even regions or states within country, shows differences to what extent formal assessment of newly qualified teachers is emphasised, and whether or not the mentors are involved in formal assessment leading to some kind of registration or certification (cf. Britton et al., 2003; Carver and Feiman-Nemser, 2009). One key question is if a mentor should be involved in any kind of summative assessment of his/her mentee, or not? Hobson et al. (2009) claim that the evidence base "whether the assessment and support functions of mentoring should be separated" (p. 213) remains inconclusive, despite numerous studies.

Some research implies that if the same person performs both roles, it is more difficult to create and maintain a relationship based on confidence, mutual trust, and openness that promotes risk-free learning (Gay & Stephenson, 1998; Jones, 2009). Other studies imply that mentors could both support and assess, if a critical friendship has been established (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Yusko & Feiman Nemser, 2008). Yusko and Feiman Nemser (2008)

showed that including the role of assessment did not prevent mentors from forming trustworthy relationships, even though it could be more challenging.

Recent research also indicates that it could even be preferable if the mentor has the double role of assessing and supporting. Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009), who have compared induction policies and their implementation in different states in the USA, found that in settings where mentors did have the responsibility of both supporting and assessing the newly qualified teachers, professional accountability was the strongest. In these settings mentors integrated support and formal assessment and tended to have a “clearer sense of the direction for their mentoring” (p. 317), partly due to explicit standard-based formative assessment tools. In other settings, with just the obligation to support, the “degree of professionalism exercised” (p. 317) was much more up to each mentor, resulting in a variance in performance. It is notable that more state-financial resources seemed to be allocated to the implementation of local systems in states where assessment is one of the mentor’s obligations, which probably influence the efforts devoted to mentoring. This could also be one explanation of these varying results. Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009) also found that the responsibility to assess, and the knowledge of the importance of making accurate assessments, also seemed to create a “collective sense of professional accountability” (p. 317) among mentors. They also claim that teachers supporting and assessing each other, as mentors do with newly qualified teachers, could be regarded as collegial peer review, desirable for teachers’ professional development in a learning community.

As the issue of whether the newly qualified teachers mentor should assess or just support is not clear, and more research is needed (Hobson et al., 2009), the question has to be handled with care. This gives implications for the training of mentors who need to be aware of the risks of an assessment-driven mentoring model (Heilbronn et al., 2002; Jones, 2009).

Headmaster assessing teachers

One task for headmasters is to assess teachers, e.g. if someone should be employed or get wages raised, and in some countries, or states within countries, if a newly qualified teacher ought to become a registered teacher. However, research shows that there are substantial challenges in validity when headmaster assess teachers (Jacob & Lefgren, 2006; Kimball & Milanowski, 2009). For instance, Jacob and Lefgren (2006) have studied headmasters ranking of teachers efficiency. By comparing headmasters ranking of teachers, with their students results on exams they tried to find the teachers achievement, as graded by headmasters and in terms on students’ achievements. They found that headmasters rather easily identified the teachers achieving the top and bottom 10-20 % results, but were less able to do any fine-grading of the performances of the remaining 60-80 % of the teachers making “middle performances”. If the results in Jacob & Lefgrens research is possible to generalize, headmasters ability to identify the high- and low achievable teachers could justify systems of rewarding the high achievable, and let the low achievable have further training or not being approved to become a registered teacher. However, the headmaster did not routine-like assess the teacher in the same way, as they used 5-6 different ratings for the teachers on a 10-scale, but they differed in generosity and degree of variations. The latter implies that the headmasters not did an equivalent assessment. This raises questions of the comparability between the headmasters judgements and equality of how, e.g. newly qualified teachers is assessed by headmasters.

In a similar study as Jacob and Lefgrens, Kimball & Milanowski (2009) shows that there are problems finding valid correlations between headmasters ratings of teachers’ performances

and their students' results. They found "substantial variations across evaluators in strength and direction" (p. 47) of the relationship, and for only a small number of headmasters, 25 of 99, the correlations was .51 or higher. In interviews they tried to analyse if these differences was depending on the headmasters (a) motivation doing the assessment (will); (b) assessments skills and the carefulness in the assessments (skill); or (c) in the local context for the assessment, e.g. open working environment (context). However, no such obvious connection was found, but this doesn't mean that some connections not exist; as it could be a matter of complex interactions of aspects, or a methodological matter. One explanation for the variations of the correlations Kimball and Milanowski (2009) gives is that the headmasters may have relied on intuition or gut-level feelings about teachers, without being aware of it. One factor strengthen this conclusion it that the headmasters seemed to have difficulties to talk about their assessment. To conclude, research (cf. Jacob & Lefgren, 2006; Kimball & Milanowski, 2009) raises questions about headmasters' ability to do equivalent assessment and identify valid aspects.

3. The Swedish context, issues raised in the Inquiry

In Sweden, the main route into the teaching profession and for being recognised as qualified and certificated to teach, is having an exam from a Teacher education program (TEP). Traditionally, there has been no specific probation year or further "tests" to become "fully registered" after exam from TEP, as a system with registration of teachers has not been in use in Sweden. Nether does there exist any national system with mentors for newly qualified teachers.

As Sweden, since the beginning of the 1990s has a rather decentralised way of governing the Swedish school system, a lot of matters, initiatives and decisions' are decentralised to local authorities. As a result of this way of governing, the teachers' unions and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities in 1995 agreed upon newly qualified teachers having the *right* to be supported by a mentor and to be offered a induction programme (ÖLA, 2000). However, the consequences of this agreement varied considerably among Sweden's 290 municipals. For instance in the autumn of 2004, 59 % of the newly qualified teachers had a mentor, but the quality of support varied (Lärarnas Riksförbund, 2005). In 2005 this agreement was not prolonged, but provision was given for further local initiatives.

Initiatives for a national strategy were taken in 2006 by the government with the initiation of a Government Inquiry. In May 2008 the Inquiry delivered the report "Registration and stricter qualifying rules" (SOU 2008:52). The inquiry proposes a national system of registration for teachers based on a probationary year for newly qualified teachers. As the title reveals, a number of issues are focused, such as: (a) stricter qualifying rules, implying that teachers should teach in subjects and grades they actually are trained for; (b) support to newly qualified (e.g. with mentors); (c) a probationary year for teachers and pre-school teachers (with evaluation); (d) registration of teachers and pre-school teachers; (e) a career-system to encourage professional development with possibilities to be acknowledged and registered as especially qualified teachers. In the inquiry, the issues of promotion of new teachers' professional development with mentors, probationary year and career-system are interwoven with the issues of registration. This double role is expressed in terms of introduction and evaluation.

The aim of the probation year is partly to give the new teachers a good start in their working life with an introduction, partly to evaluate their suitability for the teaching profession. (SOU 2008:52, p. 14)

According to the inquiry, newly qualified teachers will have mentors giving “advice and support” (p. 184) during the probationary year, but the mentor is also supposed to participate in the formal assessment of the newly qualified teacher. After the year of probation, the teacher has a possibility to be registered as a teacher. It is suggested that the power to impose or withdraw the registration should be given to The Swedish National Agency for Education. National criteria for the evaluation of the probationary teachers will be made and the headmaster will be formally responsible for the evaluation. The process of evaluation is described in a rather detailed way, especially for the headmasters who “at least twice” (p. 185) should observe the probationary teacher and discuss the teaching. However, in the summary of the Inquiry it is said that “the headmaster together with the mentor shall evaluate the probationary teacher on at least two occasions” (SOU 2008:52, p. 15).

The mentor’s role is discussed in, all together, approximately two of the 311 pages. The main task is proposed to be to “give advice and support” (p.184) but also to be an “example” (p.185) and to participate in the evaluation of the newly qualified teacher.

The mentor shall participate in the assessment of the probationary teacher. This calls for him or her observing the new teachers work. The observations ought to be followed by reflective discussions. (SOU 2008:52, p. 185)

In the inquiry, there is no discussion about the relationship between mentor and mentee or whether this proposed double role will influence the relationship between mentor and mentee, or not.

4. Methods and methodological challenges

The data material

The data analysed consist of the texts of the 108 responses that were sent to the Ministry of Education. The ministry invited or urged 128 organisations, authorities or interest groups to respond to the Inquiry, and out of them 92 responded. To these come the 15 responses submitted by interests groups or individuals on their own initiatives. In total, the responses cover approximately 330A4 pages, with the most extensive ones from one of the teachers unions covering 16.5 pages (5,480 words), and the shortest one with 29 words, saying that the responding committee has no comments on the Inquiry.

The 108 responses has been sorted into seven categories, covering different types of interest groups; independent schools (4), Unions (15), Local authorities (18), Higher Education institutions involved in teacher education (28), public authorities or committees (24), and special interests groups or individuals (18). The last category consists of stakeholders of e.g. ethnic minorities in Sweden, groups focused on quality matters, Swedish disability organisations, and private persons.

Analyses and challenges

A qualitative content analysis has been made by close reading and focusing on individual themes of sense making units (Given, 2008). In special focus have been themes focusing mentors, headmasters, and the process of evaluation. As the texts in the responses vary in levels of distinctiveness in the opinions expressed, from explicit statements to more ambiguous or even contradictory statements, the analysis has sometimes been challenging. When the mentor has explicitly been addressed in the text, it has been less challenging, compared to when the formulations have been more ambiguous, for instance, a headmaster reasoning, or if it has been unclear whether it focus mentors or headmasters role in the assessment. However, the explicit research focus on the *mentor's* role in assessment and on the relationship between mentor and mentee has lead to rather clear data and interpretations of data leading to outcome categories.

Other challenges in the interpretation process has been to consider the use of amplifying expressions and the balance between the space specific issues is given in the responses (cf. Given, 2008). In this, the specific different genres of the responses have emerged. For instance, the political genre where reservations and calls for other formulation are attached have openly shown different opinions about the inquiry's proposals, but in some cases also made it difficult to conclude what is the final official opinion. However, most responses seem to be written rather formally not making it easy to uncover the level of emphasis behind the diplomatic formulations. This could be a result of compromises when a group of persons is involved in compiling the response.

The issue of credibility and dependability is important in qualitative research. During a period of more than six month careful analysis and re-analysis of the responses and categories have been made, and the frequently returning to the basic material of the responses – where categorisations and interpretations has be re-examined and revised – has strengthen the issue of credibility and dependability (cf. Given, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

5. Results

The analysis is structured in three themes of issues related to the evaluations: (a) the principals and mentors role, (b) the principals competence to evaluate, (c) the mentors role and the relation mentor – mentee.

Evaluation of the new teachers

In the proposal (SOU 2008:51) evaluation of new teachers has a central position when comes to the registration of teachers. However, only half of the considerations do focus the evaluation. In 54 of the 108 responses, the evaluations of new teachers is *not* focused at all, as mentioning or discussing the principals or mentors role in evaluation, the legal security of the proposal, or the competence profiles role in the process of evaluation (table 1:R2). In the category *institutions especially relevant for registration* 8 of 9 considerations do *not* focus the evaluation of new teachers, mainly because four of them saying they have nothing to say about the proposal and the other five mainly has the focus on the withdrawal of the registration. The evaluation of new teachers *is* focused in; one third of the considerations within the categories *unions* and *special interests group*; in half of the considerations within the categories *independent schools*, and *public authorities*; and in two third of the considerations within the categories *local authorities* and *higher education institutions*. The

reason why the *higher education institutions* is one of the categories to the greatest extent focus the evaluation is probably because these institutions is responsible for the evaluation and examination of teacher students. That way they have rather good knowledge about the complexity and challenges of evaluation of teachers' competence. The evaluation does directly affect the *local authorities* responsibilities, and that is probably the reason for the focus on the evaluation.

Table 1: Overview of the material and the analysis

Row		Independent schools (4)	Unions (15)	Local authorities (18)	Higher education institutions giving teacher education (29)	Public authority (16)	Intuitions especially relevant for registration (9)	Special interests groups (17)
R1	Approx. pages 337 p.	15 p.	66 p.	81 p.	76 p.	49 p.	12 p.	38 p.
R2	Does <u>not</u> mention evaluation (54 of 108)	1/2 (2 of 4) 3, 4	2/3 (10 of 15) 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 106, 105, 102, 107, 108,	1/3 (6 of 18) 6, 7, 10, 11, 16, 21,	1/3 (9 of 29) 35, 38, 39, 41, 42, 51, 52, 60, 61	1/2 (8 of 16) 64, 65, 66, 70, 71, 74, 76, 77	8/9 (8 of 9) 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86	2/3 (11 of 17) 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98
R3	Mention the principals role in the evaluation (41 of 108)	1/2 (2 of 4) 1, 2	1/3 (5 of 15) 25, 26, 27, 104, 103	2/3 (12 of 18) 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22	1/2 (14 of 29) 33, 34, 36, 40, 44, 45, 48 ¹ , 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59	1/4 (4 of 16) 62, 63, 68, 73	-	1/4 (4 of 17) 32, 92, 99, 100
R4	Mention the mentors role in the evaluation (23 of 108)	1/4 (1 of 4) 1	1/7 (2 of 15) 25, 27	1/9 (2 of 18) 8, 9,	1/2 Nearly half (13 of 29) 33, 34, 43, 44 , 45, 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57 , 59	1/5 (3 of 16) 62, 63, 68	-	1/9 (2 of 17) 92, 100
R5	Discuss the principals competence to evaluate (13 of 108)	1/4 (1 of 4) 1	1/3 (3 of 15) 26, 27, 103	1/9 (2 of 18) 15, 8	1/5 (6 of 29) 36, 40, 48, 54, 58, 59	-	-	1/17 (1 of 17) 99
R6	Mention dilemmas/problems for the principal when evaluate (11 of 108)	-	1/7 (2 of 15) 26, 27	1/5 (6 of 18) 8, 15, 12, 5, 18, 22,	1/9 (3 of 29) 48 , 58, 59	-	-	-
R7	Discuss explicit the relation between mentor and mentee in evaluation (4 of 108)	-	1/15 (1 of 15) 26	-	1/10 (3 of 29) 44, 57, (56),	-	-	1/17 (1 of 17) 100

The principals and the mentors role in the evaluation

In the Inquiry both the mentor and the principal are proposed being involved in the evaluation of the new teachers. The principal is proposed being formally responsible and an explicit example is given for the evaluation, while the mentor will first of all be a support but also participate in the evaluation. In the considerations, the principals role in the evaluation is mentioned in 41 of the 108 considerations (table 1:R3), while the mentors role is mentioned in

¹ Bold numbers imply more qualified or extensive discussions.

23 considerations (table 1:R4). That is, the principals role is mentioned almost double than the mentors role. The reason for this could be that the principals' role is expressed more explicit in the Inquiry than the mentors' role, the latter also being the one giving support while the involvement in the evaluation is expressed more vague.

In the *category institutions especially relevant for registration* neither the principals role nor the mentors role is discussed. The reason for this is probably that this category primarily focus on the withdrawal of the registration, not on the evaluation of new teachers'. Comparing the categories it becomes evident that its particular in the category *local authorities* there is an unbalance, where principals role are mentioned in two third (12 of 18) of the considerations and the mentors in one ninth (2 of 18) of the considerations (table 1: R3). Within the category *higher education institutions* the principals and the mentors role is mentioned almost in the same extent, in half of the considerations.

In the category *unions* the principals and the mentors role is mentioned in one third (5 of 15) respective one seventh (2 of 15) of the considerations; in the category *public authorities* one fourth (3 of 16) respectively one fifth (3 of 16); and in the category *special interest groups* one fourth (4 of 17) respectively one ninths (2 of 17). This data gives an overview of the material and the frequency in what mentors an principals are addressed, but it says little of the qualitative dimension of the responses, as to what extent the issues is elaborated and how the issues is addressed. This will be further elaborated in the forthcoming sections.

The principals role specifically mentioned

As already mentioned the principals' role is specifically mentioned in 41 of the 108 responses (table 1:R3). In the category *local authorities* does two third mention the principal role (12 of 18); half of the considerations within the categories *independent schools* (2 of 4) and *higher education institutions* (14 of 28); one third of the considerations within the category *unions* (5 of 15); and one fourth within the categories *public authorities* (4 of 16) and *special interests groups* (4 of 17). Within the category *institutions especially relevant for registration* neither the principals nor the mentors' role is mentioned.

In most of these responses the principals' role is mentioned in some vague way. However, in three of the seven categorise there are some more extended discussions, mainly connected to mention dilemmas when evaluating (table 1:R6). These 11 responses are to be found in the categories *municipals*, *higher education institutions*, and *unions* and are to be analysed more closely in the coming section (table 1:R6).

Higher education intuitions

Of the 28 *higher education intuitions*, 14 do mention the principals' role in the evaluation of the new teachers (table 1:R3), 11 in some vague way but three do focus some specific dilemmas for the principal in the process of evaluation evaluate (table 1: R6). In the first response, its stressed that "handing over such a crucial decision to a principal or pre-school manager not having any training for the task, not having any frames of references beyond the own colleagues and have to do the evaluation with very big irregularity pretend very risky" (no. 48). The second response (no. 59) questions the prospect doing qualified evaluations if following the proposed model with two observations as foundation for the evaluation. The principals and the mentors qualifications to evaluate the new teachers competence is also questioned as well as the principals opportunities doing a qualified evaluation due to strained working conditions with a high workload and lack of time (59). The third response (no. 58,

Karlstad) discuss for example the assumption that it's difficult not to approve a new teacher who has been a colleague for a year, even if there are causes not to. The principals ability to do a "fair and objective" evaluation if not having a teacher exam or competence in adequate grades or subjects is also discussed.

Local authorities

12 of the 18 responses from *local authorities* do mention the principals' role in evaluation (table 1:R3). Out of these 12 responses, six do focus some specific dilemmas for the principals in the process of evaluation, as workload or lack of time (table 1:R6), and two do specifically focus the principals' competence doing the evaluation (table 1:R5). The first (no. 15) express scepticism if the principal possess better competence than the examiner at the higher education institutions who cooperates with the teacher students supervisor at school. The "obvious risk" the evaluation not will be equivalent or legally secure is highlighted. In the other response (no. 8) the principals's competence is discussed in relations to a specific situation when evaluating new teachers working with multi-functioning handicapped pupils in Special school. Then, the need having knowledge about the "multiplied effect of the pupils' different handicap" is stressed, and beside the mentors is claimed that special expertise ought participate in the evaluation of the new teacher as these pupils need an "exceptionally individualised pedagogic".

The principals competence to evaluate

In the Inquiry it is discussed that if the principals don't have an own teacher exam, an assistant principal shall assist in the evaluation of new teachers, and if not that position exists "an additional experienced, registered teacher shall be co-evaluator (SOU 2008:52, p. 186). The issue of the principals' competence to evaluate the new teachers is discussed in 13 responses (table 1: R5). In focus is e.g. that principals ought to have an own teacher exam, self being registered as teacher, or if they have the competence to do a qualified evaluation. For instance does The Swedish Teachers' Union with emphasis stress that a situation when a principal without background as a teacher should evaluate a new teachers is "totally excluded".

The category discussing the principals competence the most is the category *union* in which one third (3 of 15) of the responses mention this. In falling extent mentioning the principals competence comes: category *independent school* with one fourth (1 of 4) of responses mentioning the issue; in category *higher education institutions* one fifth (6 of 29); in category *local authorities* one ninth (2 of 18), in category *special interest groups* 1/17 (1 of 17); and in category *public authorities and institutions especially relevant for registration* does none of the responses mention the issue. One reason for the later situation is that the responses in these two categories most often focus organisational and juridical issues connected to a withdrawal of the registration. Almost half of the responses focusing the principals competence (6 of 13) are from *higher education institutions*, probably as they are familiar with challenges and dilemmas in evaluations of teacher students.

One of the most explicit responses discussing the principals competence (table 1:R5) is to be found in the category *local authorities*, where one response (no. 8) discuss the principals competence in relations to a specific situation when evaluating new teachers working with multi-functioning handicapped pupils in Special school. Then, the need having knowledge about the "multiplied effect of the pupils' different handicap" is stressed, and it is claimed that beside the mentors special expertise ought participate in the evaluation of the new teacher as

these pupils need an “exceptionally individualised pedagogic”. However, there are also two explicit claims the principals is well suited to do the evaluation, these are found in the categories of *local authorities* (14, 18). One example:

Our opinion is that the principals employed today, with or without background as teachers, is fully qualified to evaluate the new teacher (...) Irrespective of the principal have a teacher training or not, the principal is the one that should evaluate the new teachers competence. Has a person the task as principal, in which e.g. pedagogical leadership and evaluation to set a proper wage, we mean that the principal also can accomplish this task. (Local authority, no. 14)

Notable is that the claimed “qualifications” in the citation above is justified in the name of the *position* as principal, not as a specific competence as principal. Not very surprising does also the Swedish Association of School Principals and Directors of Education, in the category *unions*, (25) say that the “associations’ principals are ready to take this responsibility, but demands that education and supervision should be given supporting the decisions.”

The mentors role and the mentor-mentee-relation

In the Inquiry the mentors are primarily given the role to support the new teachers, but are also proposed to participate in the evaluation of the new teacher. The mentors roll in the evaluation is mentioned in 23 of the considerations (table 1: R4). In the category *higher education institutions* the mentors role in the evaluation is mentioned in nearly half of the considerations (13 of 28); in category *independent schools* in one of four (1 of 4); in category *public authorities* one fifth (3 of 16); in category *unions* in one seventh (2 of 15); and in category *special interest groups* and *local authorities* one ninths, (2 of 17) respectively (2 of 18).

In the categories *independent schools*, *unions*, *public authorities*, and *special interest groups* the mentors role in the evaluation is just shortly mentioned in the 8 responses in these groups, and of theses does three focus the inappropriateness of mentors having to handle the double role of both supporting and evaluating new teaches (62, 92, 100). In the category *local authorities* 2 of the 18 responses do mention the mentors role in the evaluation of the new teachers, both in relation to the proposed national criteria’s for the valuation of new teachers. One comments that these criteria must be so distinct that “the mentor and the principal not come into situations where the possibility to different interpretations obstructs a fair evaluation (8).

As mentioned above 13 of the 28 *higher education intuitions* do in some vague way mention the mentors role in the evaluation of the new teachers (table 1:R4). However, out of these 13 institutions, 7 do focus minor dilemmas for the mentors in the process of evaluation. These comments do vary from vague formulation about a “mentors qualified task” to explicit expressed opinions that mentors not ought to have to evaluate (or examine) new teachers, but just to support and promote professional development. The main dilemma expressed is that the mentors having to handle the double role of both supporting and evaluating new teaches, in 3 of these 7 responses from *higher education institutions*. However just two of them do any kind of extended discussion about this, focusing the relationship between mentor and mentee and express concerns that the new teachers will withhold shortcomings or problems.

The assessment can also affect the new teacher to withhold his/her weaknesses for fear of not being approved, and the challenges new teachers experience are very important to process and reflect on together with an experienced colleague. How does the mentor establish a collegial role while he/she is expected to examine and assess? (no. 57)

An assessment situation always causes the person being assessed to try to avoid showing difficulties that could be seen as weaknesses, while the basis for a successful probationary year is that difficulties are highlighted and processed. The professional introduction is weakened if the aspect of assessments becomes important. (no. 44)

In total five of the 108 considerations do focus the relationship between mentor and mentee (table 1: R7). In literature about mentoring this relationship is often described as a vulnerable and important (cf. Jokinen, et al., 2008).

The consideration that in the most extended way focus the relationship between mentor and mentee, the evaluation of new teachers, dilemmas connected to the evaluation, and in particularly to the mentors role, is found in the category *specially interest group*. This specific response (no. 100) covers 2,5 pages and is made by an Associate Professor and researcher, expert on mentoring at one Swedish university. She claims that the Inquiry shows “lack of knowledge, as the mentor’s role in the evaluation repeatedly is stressed”. She stresses the mentors’ role to challenge the new teachers and to promote the professional development. The mentor’s role as a model, as the Inquiry says, is problematical as it risks conserving the state of art socialising the new teachers to adjust the existing school culture. This is in line with a commonly raised view in research literature that mentoring should contribute to the reforming of schools rather than primarily socialise the new teachers to the existing culture (cf. Wang & Odell, 2007). The fragile and trustfully relationship between mentor and mentee is discussed, and the proposal that the mentor should participate in the evaluation is rejected, motivated that it disturbs the mentors supportive role. In this, the risk for a backlash of the new teachers professional development is also discussed, motivated by a modified relationship.

Evaluation does always mean relations of dependencies and when the most people in a dependent situation wish to give a good and skilled impression, this will probably lead to the loss of important learning situations based on speculations, mistakes and weaknesses.(100)

The process of evaluation is also discussed in this specific response, and as “an assessment usually is subjective”, it is stressed that mentor can do different assessments, bringing “uncertainty over the assessments objectivity”. The argumentation in the response is in major sections made referring to research, but with no explicit references. Of the in total six responses referring to research, this response is one of the most qualified.

6. Discussion

Data from 108 responses on a governmental inquiry (SOU 2008:52) has been analysed in this paper. The analysis has focused on how the mentors’ role in the assessment and especially the relationships between mentor and mentee are discussed in the responses. None of the 108 responses rejects or questions that mentors should support the new teacher. The mentors’ role

in the evaluation is mentioned in 23 responses and more than half of these (13 of 23) are from *higher education institutions*. In this, *higher education institutions* are over-represented as these institutions represents one fourth of the total number of responses given (28 of 108), but half of the 23 responses focusing evaluation (13 of 23); seven of the eleven responses questioning the mentors' participations in the assessment; and two of the four responses that explicitly discuss the mentor's role and the relationship between mentor and mentee. It seems that this category has a specific interest or competence to deal with these issues. The reason for this is probably that these institutions (a) have practical experience as well as (b) a theoretical knowledge of evaluation and assessment and know its complexity, and (c) deliver some mentor training. Notable is that out of the four responses explicitly discussing the relationship between mentor and mentee, it is a private initiative of a teacher educator and researcher expert on mentoring that contributes with the most qualified knowledge of the issue.

As shown, only four responses explicitly discuss the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. The focus in these responses is on the risk, if assessed; new teachers may avoid exposing weaknesses in order not to be regarded as unqualified. *The line of reasoning is: the space for critical thinking and experimenting out of the new teachers' own ideas may be threatened, an adaption to the existing school culture could occur, and this will not promote neither the new teachers professional development nor be an endorsement for school development.*

The analysis shows that the role of mentors in the assessment of their mentees was not discussed to any great extent in the responses. Based on this, questions could be raised to what extent new information, new perspectives or any deeper discussions could be expected to come out of the responses. Perhaps it is not reasonable to have these expectations of responses given, as responses also serves a wider democratic purpose, but this question becomes even more important as the analyses of the responses reveal that only seven responses explicitly refer their argumentation to research findings, of which four in issues relevant for assessment.

One conclusion is that questions must be raised in what way more extensive research-based knowledge is expected to be found in these kinds of responses, especially with regard to how rather complex pedagogical questions connected to evaluation, assessment and research-based knowledge are used in policy-making processes.

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