

The challenge of providing instructional support in mentoring conversations with mathematics student teachers in field practice

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Research on Norwegian teacher education programs has revealed that student teachers are given few opportunities to learn in and from the context of (field) practice (Hammerness, 2013). This author states that the connection to practice is considered a challenge and that extensive work is still to be done in order to understand more about how student teachers learn in field practice. In a previous study (Mosvold, Bjuland, & Fauskanger, 2017), the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (hereafter CLASS, see Pianta, Hamre, & Mintz, 2012) was used to analyze the classroom interactions in two groups of mathematics student teachers' teaching in field practice (four lessons). The CLASS instrument consists of the following major domains: 1) Emotional Support, 2) Classroom Organization, and 3) Instructional Support ("consistent, process-oriented feedback, focus on higher-order thinking skills, and presentation of new content within a broader, meaningful context", Pianta et al., 2012, p. 4). Findings from this analysis indicated that the domain of Instructional Support received lower score than the other CLASS domains.

With this previous study as a point of departure, the current study approaches the following research question: To what extent do mentor teachers support mathematics student teachers' development of classroom interactions in pre- and post-lesson mentoring sessions in field practice? (Bjuland & Fauskanger, in review). We aim at delving deeper into these mentoring conversations by identifying utterances that focus on subject matter knowledge related to depth of mathematics content understanding. Findings indicate that the mentor teachers focus on general talk about students and classroom management. However, there are few utterances expressed in the mentoring sessions, which support the student teachers' development of classroom interactions related to encouraging student participation or engaging in content-focused discussions with students. This lack of Instructional Support constitutes a challenge. We propose that an adapted version of the CLASS instrument might be used as a promising tool in field practice, both for supporting the planning and observations of lessons but also as a tool for structuring the mentoring conversations.

References

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