



YETI Teacher Pathway Report

Country Report Austria

Mario Vötsch, University College of Teacher Education Tyrol



Contents

Introduction	2
Becoming an in-service teacher.....	3
Reform of the Initial Teacher Training in Austria	3
Induction: introducing to the teaching profession	3
Training phase and induction phase	4
Activities and competences of in-service-teachers	5
Pedagogical, educational and organizational work.....	5
Competences of professionalization.....	7
Further education and training	8
Supporting structures: Mentors and mentees.....	9
Problems & Needs	11
Problem areas	11
Forms of support.....	12
References	13

Introduction

In Austria, new teacher training graduates generally are inducted into the teaching profession by way of a year-long in-service-training which is supported by mentors. This so-called *induction phase* was introduced with the legal framework “Pedagogical Training NEW” and was implemented in September 2019. Thus, it is a rather new system. In the following, the aforementioned reform is briefly introduced, then the process and content of induction are presented as well as its basic fields of action. At the end of this country report, problems and open questions are addressed.

Becoming an in-service teacher

Reform of the Initial Teacher Training in Austria

The induction phase is an important component in the lifelong professionalization of teachers, which consists of three phases: (1) Education & Training, (2) Career entry and (3) Continuing and further education. The induction phase represents the transition from Education & Training to the in-service-training and is crucial for the continuity of the process of professionalization. In Austria, induction was regulated in the concept of “Pedagogical Training NEW”, a federal legal framework passed in 2013 to introduce a new training structure for educators. The new training is intended to increase the quality of teacher training through a stronger competence and professional orientation on the one hand and more scientific foundation on the other.¹ Structurally, the “Pedagogical Training NEW” is adapted to the "Bologna" architecture of study programmes and their specific gradual structure. Accordingly, students now acquire a first academic degree with the Bachelor after eight semesters of standard study time. Compulsory practical components already ensure orientation to concrete requirements of the professional field during the course of study. The Master's programme builds consecutively on the Bachelor's programme and provides for further practical components.

Induction: introducing to the teaching profession

According to the law, the induction phase serves as an in-service-training to the teaching profession and can be carried out before, during or after the Master's programme. In one case, it begins immediately after the Bachelor's degree; in the other case, it takes place in parallel to the Master's degree or after its completion. In terms of working-time, induction begins with the start of service and ends after twelve months. This new regulation was implemented for the first time in the school year 2019/2020. In contrast to the previous teacher training, which provided for a *teaching internship* as a transition to the profession, the new regulation is accompanied by a change in the employment law from September 1, 2019. Accordingly, induction requires an *employment contract*

¹ For more details of the Austrian ITE-system see the Country Report of the PIETE-project https://www.entrepreneurialteachers.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ITE-Framework-Report-Austria-v3_Eng.pdf

instead of a training contract. Young teachers² in the induction phase are therefore no longer in training, but already in-service.

In principle, the legal provisions allow a lot of interpretation for the design of the induction phase. For example, the amount of teaching hours is not regulated. First empirical data show that young teachers (both primary and secondary school) teach an average of 18 hours per week, ranging from 2 to 25 hours (Prenzel *et al.* 2021, 8). Many candidates complete induction at several school locations at the same time. Besides, it is not necessarily guaranteed that they teach only those subjects in which they have been trained. In 2020, there were a total of 1714 candidates for induction in Austria.

Training phase and induction phase

The induction phase is aimed at contract teachers in their first year of service. As mentioned, it extends over a period of 12 months from the start of employment and describes the in-service introduction of the contract teachers to the teaching profession. An exception to the regular induction are students of the part-time teacher training courses at Secondary Level (vocational training). They are already practising teachers even if they have not yet completed their bachelor's or diploma studies. Thus, they start their employment contract already in the *training phase* rather than in the induction phase. In practice, this mainly concerns vocational school teachers who study part-time while teaching their classes at school. After finishing their studies, they just continue teaching as before without the need to pass an additional induction phase. Instead, they have to attend a so-called "introductory week" at the University of Teacher Education (UTE) at the beginning of the training phase, which is comparable in terms of scope and content to the special courses to be attended as part of the induction phase.

² Young teachers are defined as having no more than three years of professional teaching experience. In the following terms like young teachers, beginning teachers or teacher candidates are used interchangeably. See also the general YETI Teacher Pathway Report.

Activities and competences of in-service-teachers

Pedagogical, educational and organizational work

The main tasks of the contract teachers in the induction phase are as follows:

- *Teaching* as required within the scope of employment
- *Observation* of the lessons of other teachers
- Attendance of induction courses at the UTE as part of *further education* (three compulsory and three elective courses amounting to 24 teaching units)

These main tasks are elaborated in more detail in the activities, obligations and duties as defined in the job profile, which addresses dimensions of pedagogical work, educational work and organizational work. The *pedagogical work* includes the core activities of teaching in terms of lesson planning, lesson design and teaching methods. It should always be related to the curricular framework while practicing, reviewing, consolidating and evaluating the pupils' learning. The *educational work* is centred around classroom management in order to facilitate learning processes. Teachers should initiate and moderate interactions processes while promoting democratic values as well as cultivating tolerance and respect. In all these areas, teachers have an important function as a role model (e.g. manners like punctuality and appearance). The *organizational work* demands the ability to connect and cooperate with different stakeholders within and outside school – these may be colleagues and school leaders within school as well as parents and administrative institutions outside school.

1. Pedagogical Work

- **Matching** the curriculum to the respective class situation with realistic and transparent objectives
- **Lesson planning** and preparation; formulation of objectives in terms of competence orientation
- Annual planning
- **Lesson design**: technical and didactic competence, versatility of content, age-appropriate teaching, relevance to current events, cross-curricular aspects, interdisciplinary thinking...
- **Teaching methods**, e.g., group work, partner work, frontal teaching, use of media...
- **Encouraging** the pupils' own activity, promoting the independent acquisition of knowledge and skills
- Practice/repeat/consolidation
- **Review** of written work and exams
- Performance assessment and **evaluation** (in congruence with the lesson design, transparency of criteria, examination behaviour, ...)

2. Educational Work

- Creation and maintenance of an efficient **working atmosphere**
- **Motivational ability**, promotion of learning
- Dealing with **mistakes**
- **Interaction** in class, language and tone
- **Role model** effect (reliability, punctuality, appearance, consistency, resilience...)
- Promotion of **democratic manners** (participation, critical faculties, feedback culture, participation, ...)
- Appreciation for students, sensitivity for their problems
- **Conflict resolution** culture

3. Organizational Work

- Ability to discourse, self-**reflection** and criticism
- Willingness to **cooperate** with other colleagues
- The ability to advise **parents** and pupils on learning and educational issues
- Participation in organizing **school life**; commitment and activity
- Cooperation in working groups/teams/**teamwork** skills

Competences of professionalization

The main tasks and activities of induction can be assessed within different domains of competence, which define criteria for the candidates to fulfil the required knowledge and skills. These competences refer to a concept of professionalization, which has been conceptualized from various scholars and has been implemented in several curricula:

Competences of Professionalization

Professional Awareness

- The candidate shows him/herself to be an expert in teaching and thereby facilitates pupils learning.
- Methodical competences are visible.
- Performance evaluations, surveys and assessments can be handled professionally. Results of performance assessments are used to promote individual strengths and weaknesses of pupils in the learning process.
- Difficult situations can be managed.
- Discussions with parents are conducted professionally.

Collegiality

- The candidate takes on tasks in the team and participates in projects.
- The candidate participates in conferences and seeks exchange with colleagues.

Ability to differentiate

- The heterogeneity of students is taken into account through strategies of differentiation and individualization in teaching.
- Enabling individual and self-organized learning opportunities for pupils.

Personal Mastery

- The candidate is able to fully realize his/her own potential in relation to the tasks of the teaching profession and has opportunities for development.
- Pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills become visible.
- The candidate has several choices in preparing, planning, implementing and evaluating lessons and sees him/herself as initiator of his/her own actions.

Reflection and discourse skills

- The candidate reflects on his/her own teaching in order to derive insights for future action.
- He/she takes advantage of opportunities with colleagues to reflect on everyday school life and to engage in professional discourse.

Further education and training

As mentioned above, during the induction phase the young teachers shall attend special induction courses as part of the in-service training. These courses contain, in general, 24 units, which cover topics like Applied school law, Conflict management, Parental work, Performance assessment, Language education, Classroom Management, Digitalisation in the classroom, Inclusive education and special needs education, School quality and feedback culture, Planning and time management, Specific didactics for each subject.

Supporting structures: Mentors and mentees

In the one-year induction period, the young teachers are supported by mentors. They take an important role in accompanying the candidates (*mentees*) in this first professional phase. The corresponding law defines their responsibility as follows:

"The mentor has to advise the contract teacher in the induction phase in planning and designing lessons, to analyse and reflect with him/her on his/her activities in teaching and education, to guide him/her to the necessary extent and to support him/her in his/her professional development. The mentor shall observe the contract teacher's teaching during the induction phase to the extent necessary. The mentor shall draw up a development profile of the contract teacher during the induction phase and submit an expert opinion on the success of his/her use no later than three months before the end of the induction phase" (Federal Law for the Republic of Austria, 2013, p. 7).

Mentors are assigned by the school management. They must have at least five years of professional experience and prove they have completed a mentoring course (60 ECTS). In 2020, there were 1.121 mentors in Austria – compared to the 1.714 young teachers (Prenzel et al., 2021, p. 23). According to empirical data, young teachers receive an average of 20 minutes of mentoring per week; from the mentors' point of view, it is 50 minutes (ibid, p. 8).

While Mentors provide on-site support, the young teachers have to cooperate with them and orient their activities according to the guidelines. The focus of mentoring is on questions of classroom management and the relationship between students and teachers. Topics, which are addressed rather rarely, are legal aspects, parental work and long-term lesson planning. Mentors mainly advise on pedagogical and educational work (planning and design of lessons as well as analysis and reflection); they provide personal guidance and support for professional development. Their task is to observe the mentees lessons (to the extent necessary) and subsequently to draw up a development profile to document the process. Here, for example, the extent and course of observations (*Hospitationen*) is documented, as are the ongoing formal discussion meetings with the mentee (initial discussion, follow-up discussions, final discussion). At the end of induction, mentors have to prepare a report on the success of the assignment, which addresses the three core dimensions in the activity profile (pedagogical work, educational

work, organizational work). Towards the end of the Induction Phase, at the latest two months before the end, school leaders have to report to the personnel office on the success of the assignment (based on the result of the mentors report and on their own perceptions). The success can be (1) significantly exceeded by special achievements, (2) demonstrated or (3) not demonstrated.

Problems & Needs

Problem areas

Based on a recent representative empirical survey of all young teachers in induction, the following ten problems of the induction phase are defined (Prenzel *et al.*, 2021, p. 10):

- (1) Time resources, time constraints and multiple workloads.
- (2) Inconsistent and insufficient information
- (3) Mentoring or protagonists from other disciplines
- (4) Content and design of the accompanying seminars
- (5) The evaluation-support dilemma
- (6) Organizational and administrative problems
- (7) Role of the school management
- (8) Different schools or types of schools
- (9) Overall workload of the candidates
- (10) Personal fit and relationship level

A major problem is time constraints and an excessive teaching load, which puts young teachers under pressure – both of which also hinder continuous professionalization. Many candidates also complain about too little or too little transparent information in the school, which is why professional work is often made difficult. The accompanying seminars (24 units) are often too far away from teaching practice and serve for little application. On the part of the mentors, a structural dilemma arises from their dual role as supporters on the one hand, who should make it easier for the candidates to enter the profession, and as evaluators on the other, who should judge their professional aptitude and give an assessment. Many problems also arise from administrative hurdles, not least because the Austrian education system is very regimented and bureaucratic. The support of the school management also leaves much to be desired for many candidates. Finally, it also causes difficulties when candidates teach in different types of schools at the same time and have to "switch" between assignments again and again. Finally, another potential problem lies in the relationship of mentor and mentee, who are not well

matched due to different subjects (“mentoring outside the subject”) or else cannot build a good personal relationship.

Forms of support

These recent findings show a differentiated picture of the induction phase, in which many of the everyday challenges of the teaching profession already become manifest. Many of the problems during the induction phase point to the core element of feedback (see Jensen & Reichl, 2011). Again and again, systemic feedback is crucial for effective induction, i.e., feedback that is integrated into organisational structures, work processes and administrative apparatuses, making the induction phase as transparent and effective as possible. Young teachers usually need less professional feedback than social, personal and organisational support. This involves social questions of integration into the teaching staff or personal questions of self-management – such as learning how to combine work-duties and home duties and how to manage teaching-connected duties performed outside the classroom (e.g., correcting tests, preparing classes). Subject didactic questions are also relevant, such as learning how to integrate teaching standards into teaching in order not to treat standards and teaching as completely separate fields. Finally, however, it is also about constituting a professional role and identity that encourages young teachers to find their own individual style – learning a so-called *situational approach* to their own teaching which means, they should learn how to translate the theoretical knowledge acquired at university into classroom practice within given teaching situations. In all these questions, the person of the mentor is an important personal support, but it remains limited in its means and possibilities as long as there is no support from the organisational, administrative and educational policy side. In this context, it is mainly the institutional level such as school management, higher education authorities and the Teacher Training Centres that are addressed. But it is also other colleagues, parents and role models acting in public who have influence on the "success" of induction.

References

- Baer, M., Kocher, M., Wyss, C., Guldemann, T., Larcher, S., & Dörr, G. (2011). Lehrerbildung und Praxiserfahrung im ersten Berufsjahr und ihre Wirkung auf die Unterrichtskompetenzen von Studierenden und jungen Lehrpersonen im Berufseinstieg. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 14: 85-117.
- Dammerer, J. & Schwab, K. (2019). Entwicklungsmodelle von beginnenden Lehrpersonen Eine vergleichende qualitative Untersuchung zum Phasenmodell nach Huberman und Stufenmodell nach Fuller & Brown. *Online Journal for Research and Education* 12 (Oktober), R&E-SOURCE <https://journal.ph-noe.ac.at>
- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research: <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at>
- Greiner, U., Hofmann, F. & Katskaller, M. (2017). Perspectives on mentoring novice teachers. *Global Education Review* 4(4), 1-4.
- Jensen, B. & Reichl, J. (2011). *Better teacher appraisal and feedback: Improving performance*. Grattan Institute, Melbourne.
- Prenzel, M., Huber, M., Müller, C., Höger, B., Reitingner, J., Becker, M., Hoyer, S., Hofer, M., & Lüftenecker, M. (2021). *Der Berufseinstieg in das Lehramt. Eine formative Evaluation der neuen Induktionsphase in Österreich*. Waxmann.
- Schmich, J. & Itzlinger-Bruneforth, U. (2019). Neue Lehrerinnen und Lehrer: Einführung und Mentoring. In: Schmich, J. & Itzlinger-Bruneforth, U. (Hrsg.). TALIS 2018 (Band 1). Rahmenbedingungen des schulischen Lehrens und Lernens aus Sicht von Lehrkräften und Schulleitungen im internationalen Vergleich (pp. 71-83). Graz: Leykam.
- Schneider, K. (2021). *Der Berufseinstieg von Lehrpersonen. Übergang und erste Berufsjahre im Kontext lebenslanger Professionalisierung*. Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt.
- School Board Vorarlberg: <https://www.bildung-vbg.gv.at/jobs-karriere/Induktionsphase.html>
- Snoek M., & Žogla I. (2009) Teacher Education in Europe; Main Characteristics and Developments. In: Swennen, A., & van der Klink, M. (eds). *Becoming a Teacher Educator*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8874-2_2
- Tynjälä, P. & Heikkinen, H. (2011). Beginning teachers' transition from pre-service education to working life. Theoretical perspectives and best practices. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 14: 11-33.