



Professionalisation in the Third Phase of Teacher Training:

Changing the Learning Culture Through Learning Guidance

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Abstract. This paper outlines a research project on the professionalisation of teachers in the third phase of teacher training in the context of constructivist learning settings, with a particular focus on learning guidance. In view of the increasing importance of Education for Sustainable Development, students should be empowered as ‘change agents’ to implement transformative measures on their own responsibility. Teachers not only teach content, but also actively shape learning processes, which requires a new understanding of their role. Learning guidance is understood as a mode of pedagogical professionalism that goes beyond traditional teaching activities and assumes competencies such as openness to impact, tolerance of ambiguity, and a systemic approach.

The research project takes a qualitative interpretative approach, combining auto-ethnography, ethnographic field observations, and expert interviews. The aim is to analyse learning guidance from three perspectives: the researcher’s auto-ethnographic inner perspective, observed professional practices in the field, and a meta-analytical perspective. This will help to refine the terminology of learning guidance. The study, using the FREI DAY learning format as a test case, shows how teachers delegate responsibility, support self-organised projects, and promote co-creative learning processes. Against this background, the study explores how learning guidance is framed and enacted in the third phase of teacher training, and the professional attitudes and institutional conditions perceived as relevant by teachers in this context. The analysis aims to deepen our understanding of learning guidance as a multidimensional professional practice, which could inform ongoing changes in school learning cultures.

Keywords: learning guidance, teacher training, professionalisation, constructivism, Education for Sustainable Development.

1 Challenges of Professionalisation for Learning Guidance in Education for Sustainable Development in the Third Phase of Teacher Training

Professionalisation in the third phase of teacher training is particularly important for providing learning guidance that promotes Education for Sustainable Development

(ESD) and helps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This is because guiding students through transformative, interdisciplinary learning processes requires teachers to support learners in taking self-directed, reflective and socially responsible action, as well as managing content – both of which are core elements of learning guidance. Therefore, it is essential that teachers develop the necessary competencies, mindsets, and professional roles to enable them to encourage their students to act as ‘change agents’ and translate the ESD principles into practice.

Studies in the field of education show that school education should be adapted more closely to digital and social developments (Eickelmann et al., 2024, p. 6). These developments require not only technical or curricular adjustments, but also educational approaches that address societal transformation, such as ESD. In this context, students are expected to act as “change agents” who can implement transformative measures (UNESCO, 2021, p. 30). One example of such an approach is the FREI DAY learning format from *Schule im Aufbruch [A School On The Move]*, which will be discussed later. Teachers play a central role in this by guiding learning processes rather than simply imparting content (UNESCO, 2021, p. 30; Eickelmann et al., 2024, pp. 34-55). Sliwka and Klopsch (2022) describe this change as a paradigm shift in which teachers further develop their professionalism and actively help shape the school (pp. 9-10).

The transformation of schools requires a new understanding of the role of teachers, increasingly summarised under the term ‘learning guidance’ (Eickelmann et al., 2024; Arnold & Schön, 2019; Perkhofor-Czapek & Potzmann, 2016). This approach is supported by constructivist learning theories, which view learning as an individual process of knowledge creation (Arnold & Schön, 2019, pp. 16-17). Classic professionalisation routines, which primarily focus on standardised knowledge transfer as well as clearly defined learning objectives and competencies, are no longer sufficient; skills such as tolerance of ambiguity, openness to impact, and a systemic attitude are becoming necessary (Arnold & Schön, 2019, pp. 67-68). The term ‘learning guidance skills’ primarily refers to a pedagogical mindset and professional orientation. A key aspect of this approach is openness to impact, since teachers cannot reliably enforce learning outcomes; rather, they must respond to unpredictable learning processes (Arnold & Schön, 2019, p. 68).

From a professional-theoretical perspective, such pedagogical action is based on a combination of explicit knowledge and implicit experiential knowledge. Professional practice cannot therefore be reduced to the application of formalised knowledge alone, but rather relies on situational judgement and experience (Helsper, 2021, pp. 130-131). Against this background, empirical findings suggest that teachers should continuously develop their professional skills, rather than considering it to be a finished product (Combe & Kolbe, 2004, pp. 858-859). Multidimensional competency models, such as the COACTIV model, emphasise this by describing professional competence as an interaction between various areas of knowledge and broader professional attitudes, such as beliefs, motivational orientations, and self-regulation (Kunter et al., 2009, p. 155). Consequently, professionalisation emerges as a dynamic process shaped by experience, reflection and further training, rather than a finite state (Helsper, 2021, pp. 56-59).

In the literature, learning guidance is used as an umbrella term for pedagogical approaches that systematically support individual learning processes. It encompasses

teaching and learning methods that shift the focus from instruction to guiding and supporting learners in their self-directed and reflective learning processes. In this sense, learning guidance is described as a key response to ongoing transformations in the education system because it strengthens interdisciplinary skills, promotes personal responsibility and supports lifelong learning. The term encompasses a wide range of pedagogical measures and professional roles, such as instructor, moderator, diagnostician, learning consultant, reviewer, or coach. These roles are oriented towards promoting subject-specific and interdisciplinary competencies (Perkhofer-Czapek & Potzmann, 2016, p. 96).

However, the concept of learning guidance remains vague and highly context-dependent, which complicates its use as a basis for discussing professionalisation.

Arnold and Schön (2022, pp. 7-10) summarise learning guidance as a mode of pedagogical professionalism that goes beyond the scope of the curriculum and focuses on developing skills and designing and optimising learning processes. However, even though there is agreement on how it fits into constructivist learning theories, it is still not clear what structural, professional, and institutional conditions make learning guidance work. A central area of tension is the dual role of providing guidance to learners and assessing them simultaneously (Perkhofer-Czapek & Potzmann, 2016, p. 96). Particularly in the third phase of teacher training, there is a significant gap in empirical studies on specific competencies, mindsets, and framework conditions that support teachers' professionalisation for learning guidance in ESD.

2 Research Question: Change in Learning Culture Through Learning Guidance?

The research project aims to contribute to the conceptual specification of learning guidance by discussing its significance for professionalisation in the third phase of teacher training. To this end, the project will focus on teachers' experiences of changing roles, the opportunities and challenges they perceive when implementing learning guidance, and their professional self-image.

Main research question: How is learning guidance structured in constructivist learning settings, and what implications does this have for the professionalisation of teachers in the third phase of teacher training?

Underlying research questions:

1. How can learning guidance be theoretically defined and conceptually refined in the context of professional logic?
2. Which learning guidance practices can be identified in constructivist learning settings such as the FREI DAY learning format, and how does this demonstrate the importance of self-regulated learning?
3. What opportunities and challenges do teachers experience in implementing learning guidance, and how does this shape their professional self-understanding?

3 Multimethod Approach: A Qualitative Approach

The qualitative-interpretative research project takes a multimethod approach, combining autoethnography, ethnographic observations in school settings, and expert interviews. These methods are used to examine learning guidance from multiple perspectives: the researcher's own experience; the practical perspective of teachers as learning guides in the field; and a reflective, meta-analytical perspective on the data. Grounded theory will be used to evaluate the data and identify categories that contribute to a substantiated definition of learning guidance. This definition represents one dimension of the research question, alongside contextual and experiential insights from the participants.

4 Expected Results in the Context of relevant Conditions

Teachers' mindsets are increasingly recognised as a key factor in the professionalisation of learning guidance. Openness, reflexivity, and tolerance of ambiguity appear to be particularly important in this process, although these dimensions are still being investigated.

Beyond the individual level, there is much evidence that institutional school conditions supporting constructivist learning theories can foster learning guidance development (Perkhofer-Czapek & Potzmann, 2016, p. 92). Such conditions provide spaces in which teachers can experiment with and reflect on new professional roles.

In terms of professional development, it is evident that there is currently no comprehensive pathway that consistently prepares teachers for learning guidance. Consequently, the third phase of teacher training is gaining particular importance for professional development. In this phase, teachers are less exposed to systemic assessment pressures, which makes continuing education and in-service training particularly relevant.

Conceptually, the term 'learning guidance' can be understood in a narrow or broad sense. In the narrower sense, the focus is on the teacher's mindset, whereas in the broader sense, conceptualisations also include the structural and organisational conditions of the school system.

At the level of professional roles, it becomes apparent that, contrary to previous assumptions in the literature, the role of assessor does not constitute an exclusion criterion for learning guidance. Under certain conditions, assessment and learning guidance are not mutually exclusive, suggesting that professional roles may need to be expanded rather than replaced.

5 Discussion: Implications for Education for Sustainable Development

Ethnographic observations take place at schools that implement the FREI DAY learning format developed by the *Schule im Aufbruch*-education initiative, which incorporates self-regulated learning and is considered a gateway for schools into a new learning culture grounded in key principles of ESD. Within this format, students develop self-selected projects that address real social issues, often linked to specific Sustainable Development Goals. This creates opportunities for teachers to practise learning guidance by supporting students in self-regulated, interdisciplinary work. Therefore, FREI DAY provides a valuable empirical context for examining learning guidance in ESD and its practical connection to these goals. It is assumed that this can only be implemented alongside a change in roles from teacher to learning guide.

6 Prospects for Learning Guidance in Teacher Training

It is to be expected that the professionalisation of teachers towards learning guidance will be a key lever for changing the learning culture in schools. Teachers in the third phase learn to delegate responsibility for learning processes, to support students in self-selected projects, and to encourage co-creative solutions. Formats such as FREI DAY show how learning guidance can be implemented in daily routines and what mindsets and skills are required for this. This makes it clear that those who consistently practise learning guidance are actively shaping the learning culture of tomorrow's schools.

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