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What Is Discussed in Mentoring Dialogues? An Analysis of How Relations of Control Influence the Content in Mentoring

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Abstract: Both international actors, like the OECD, and Norwegian policies for teacher education aim to increase students' academic competence and the collaboration between university and practice. Mentoring dialogues between students and mentors in practice are in the intersection between university and the profession. Thus, this gives the mentors the responsibility to realize these policy intentions. This actualizes what is discussed in mentoring and how the negotiation of control between mentors and students has impact on what policy intentions are recontextualized in mentoring. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate which intentions are realized in mentoring through the use of criteria and the selection of the content to be discussed. The findings indicate that the mentor has strong autonomy, and where what is discussed is focused more on practical issues than considerations about the academic subject. Given these findings, this paper discusses different perspectives on a close collaboration between university and practice.

Introduction

Both international policy documents (cf. OECD, 2019) and Norwegian strategy documents for teacher education (cf. Ministry of Education and Research [MER], 2017) have the express aim of strengthening teachers' academic competence and bolstering the collaboration between university and practice. These intentions can be seen as part of the recent reforms in teacher education, where more attention is being given to creating a research-based teacher education close to practice (cf. Haugen, 2013; MER, 2014). At the same time, also a research-based form of knowledge has been emphasized to improve the quality and effectiveness of the education system (Hammersley, 2002, 2007). However, these intentions have not just recently emerged. Already in 2003 Norway complied with the Bologna Declaration and implemented the Quality Reform in higher education, where the aim was to give students integrated studies to increase their completion rates (White Paper 16 (2001-2002); NOU 2003:25). It has been argued that with this reform more attention has been given to academic skills and subject knowledge¹ in teacher education (Garm-Karlsen, 2004), and more belief has been placed in strengthening the teachers' academic knowledge (Karlsen, 2005). Bearing this in mind, in 2013 Norway introduced an integrated teacher education [ITE] program to support the political intentions of increasing students' academic competence and creating a closer relationship between university and practice.

The ITE program offers the students Master's degree competence in one subject and builds a close relationship between the subjects at the university and in practice (Regulations

¹ [1] The concept 'subject knowledge' refers to the academic knowledge the student acquires within the subjects taught at the university.

on Framework, 2013, §1). One key aspect has been expressed through an emphasis on strong interdependence between the program's four knowledge areas: *Academic Subjects, Pedagogy, Subject Didactics, and Practice*. The academic subject, subject didactics, and pedagogy are taught at the university, and practice is carried out in a school context with a timeframe of 100 days. The content of the practice is related to the university-based subjects, and mentoring dialogues are seen as an essential learning context for nurturing the students' development of professional knowledge and skills (Universities Norway [UHR], 2017). In this way, the mentor² is given the responsibility for realizing the intentions that have been established in the four knowledge areas through the mentoring relationship (UHR, 2017). In this relationship, the mentee is expected to actively participate in planning and evaluating the mentoring (UHR, 2017). This underlines the fact that both the mentor and mentee are seen as active participants in the mentoring and that it is seen as a key learning context that promotes both the intentions established at the teacher education institution and the responsibility to realize them within the professional field.

Globally, in recent decades there has been a *practice turn* in teacher education, where practice has been given greater emphasis (Mattsson et al., 2011; Reid, 2011; Zeichner, 2012). Teacher education is a professional education with collaboration between schools and teacher education institutions, where practice plays a vital role in preparing the students for their professional work (Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015; Mena et al., 2017). In practice, the mentoring dialogue is seen as a key context for assisting mentees' development of knowledge (Lai, 2005), and for this reason there is now greater interest in mentoring as a way to foster the mentees' professional development (Mena et al., 2016). However, mentoring is a complex learning activity (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019) and a holistic process where three dimensions (relational, contextual and developmental) have to be taken into account (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Lai, 2005). The developmental dimension in mentoring targets the functions used to assist the mentees so they can achieve their developmental goals (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Ambrosetti et al., 2017) and thereby form a perspective on the content discussed in mentoring. Consequently, what is discussed in mentoring can be an indication of which knowledge is seen as important and relevant for mentees to learn during their practice (Helgevold et al., 2015). This means that the content that is discussed can reveal pedagogical intentions that are emphasized within the professional field.

As part of international trends, the ITE program was introduced to strengthen the students' academic competence and the relation between the university and practice. Mentoring dialogues between mentors and mentees are seen as an essential realization arena for such intentions. However, when policy is supposed to be recontextualized in practice, there is a complex interpretation process where recontextualizing agents are situated within a professional field that could act in accordance with or resist the policy intentions (Bernstein, 2000). As there is no straightforward way to recontextualize these intentions it is difficult to foresee how they are recontextualized in practice. Therefore, this paper intends to examine the content that is discussed in mentoring dialogues and how it is negotiated between mentor and mentee in order to explore how these intentions in the ITE program are realized in mentoring. Consequently, this paper not only focuses on what type of content is discussed in mentoring but through the theoretical framework of Basil Bernstein it also takes into account the relation between policy and practice. Thus, this paper raises a two-fold research question: (1) *What characterizes the content discussed in mentoring in an integrated teacher education program and how is it negotiated?* (2) *How is the content discussed in relation to the political intentions of improving academic competence and collaboration between university*

² [2] In this paper the concepts mentor and student/mentee are used. "Mentor" here refers to a school-based mentor working at a school and "student/mentee" is a pre-service teacher having their practice in a school context.

and practice? In the following, this paper will describe research on mentoring before presenting the methodological and analytical framework. Then the findings will be presented, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

Research on Mentoring

Research on content in mentoring has pointed out that there is little focus on subject knowledge (Becker et al., 2019; Hobson et al., 2009; Høynes et al., 2019). However, the realization of this fact is not new, as already in 1986 Shulman presented what he called the *missing paradigm problem*, where he questioned the lack of focus on subject knowledge in teachers' competence (Shulman, 1986, 1987). Recent research, both international (Hennissen et al., 2008; Msimango et al., 2020; Strong & Baron, 2004) and domestic studies (Helgevold et al., 2015; Ottesen, 2007; Ohnstad & Munthe, 2010; Sundli, 2007; Østrem, 2016), has confirmed Shulman's claim that mentoring dialogues have been preoccupied with practical issues and instruction. Therefore, some research argues that researchers should look more broadly at the multiple aspects of teachers' professional knowledge (Gess-Newsome et al., 2019; Loughran, 2019) and recently, some research projects have increased their focus on the subject knowledge and content discussed in mentoring (cf. Becker et al., 2019; Høynes et al., 2019). Consequently, research has claimed that mentoring is mostly concerned with practical issues and less concerned with the academic subject, even if there is growing interest in subject knowledge within the field.

Research also points out that mentoring is a holistic process where the relationship between mentor and mentee influences the mentee's professional development (cf. Ambrosetti et al., 2014), and some international research is now focusing on the reciprocal relationship in mentoring and the possibility mentees have to reflect in the dialogue (see Ambrosetti et al., 2017; Kourieos, 2019). In Norway, a reflective model has also gained prominence (Lauvås & Handal, 2014) along with research on how to empower the mentees' reflection in the mentoring process (Føinum, 2019; Lejonberg & Tiplic, 2016; Ulvik & Smith, 2011). Therefore, research has argued that the mentoring relationship between mentor and mentee can foster or limit the students' development in practice (Hobson & Maxwell, 2020; Kourieos, 2019). Consequently, the negotiation between mentor and mentee is also of interest for what is discussed in mentoring.

The Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Bernstein's theory serves as a framework that can relate the policy level to what takes place in a pedagogic practice (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999). He has developed an analysis of how the pedagogic discourse is created in a pedagogic practice and relates these processes to the distribution of power and principles of control (Bernstein, 2001). Bernstein's theory thus provides the language for analyzing how relations of control in a pedagogic practice decide which types of knowledge are legitimized in mentoring and how they are negotiated. His theory is thus found to be an appropriate approach for exploring how relations of control determine which content is discussed in mentoring and how this recontextualizing process is influenced by the mentors and mentees.

Analytical Tools and Framework

Bernstein (2000) introduces the analytical concept *framing*, which is useful for investigating *who* is controlling *what* and the inner logic of a pedagogic practice (p. 12). He states that framing refers to the nature of control over the *selection*, its *sequencing*, its *pacing*, the *criteria*, and the control over *the social base* which makes the transmission possible (Bernstein, 2000, p. 12-13). Where there is *strong framing* (+F) the transmitter controls the communication and with *weak framing* (-F) the acquirer apparently has control (Bernstein, 2000). Bernstein (1990) maintains that control is always present in a pedagogical relation and points out that the acquirer *apparently* has control. Thus, seen in Bernstein’s perspective, the mentor creates space for the mentee to select the content that is to be discussed. Bernstein (2000) points out that framing can be used to analyze different levels through external and internal framing. At the same time, he presents the analytical concept *classification* to explore the relation *between* categories, for instance between agents or discourses (Bernstein, 2000). In this paper, classification is used as an additional tool to describe the content that is discussed and how it is related to the national framework and the mentor-mentee relationship.

Thus, this paper explores the pedagogic discourse in mentoring by focusing on which content is discussed in the dialogues and how the negotiation of control has influence over which content is discussed. Framing is used as an analytical tool for exploring the pedagogic discourse and is explored through *selection* and *criteria*, where selection is part of internal framing and criteria are part of external framing. The sequencing and pacing are not taken into account here as they are not relevant for the research question. For *selection*, a strong framing value (+Fⁱ) refers to when the mentor introduces the theme to be discussed and a weak framing (-Fⁱ) value refers to when the mentee introduces the theme. *Criteria* are operationalized according to whether external criteria or internal criteria guide how the mentors and mentees select the content. Strong framing (+F^e) refers to when the mentor and mentee are given external criteria to decide what to discuss and a weak framing value (-F^e) refers to when the mentor and mentee decide what to discuss according to the internal criteria. The analytical framework is described in Table 1, which is followed by a description of the different categories.

	+F ^{i/e}	-F ^{i/e}
Selection	The mentor introduces a theme, that is categorized in Figure 1, in the dialogue	The mentee introduces a theme, that is categorized in Figure 1, in the dialogue
Criteria	The mentor and/or mentee are given external criteria to decide what to discuss	The mentor and/or mentee decide from internal criteria what to discuss

Table 1 Analytical Framework

Selection is operationalized through the four knowledge areas: *academic subject*, *subject didactics*, *pedagogy*, and *practice* and where subcategories have been developed from the learning outcome descriptors as described in the national guidelines (UHR, 2017, p. 10-17). However, the descriptors are vague, which evokes a process where some choices have to be made. First, there are descriptors that are realized within the university context which are not related to the mentoring context, for instance research projects and written assignments. These descriptors have not been included here due to their lack of relevance to the mentoring context. Second, all the four knowledge areas have learning outcome descriptors that are related to the academic subject and research. These learning outcome descriptors are included in the academic subject and are not taken into account within all the four knowledge areas. Third, all the knowledge areas are intended to be related to each other, which means that

some learning outcome descriptors are repeated in several knowledge areas. One example is classroom management, which is mentioned under both pedagogy and practice. In these situations, the themes are included in both knowledge areas but are, however, separated according to how they are related to the context. This means that theories of classroom management were defined under *pedagogy* and practical issues of how to manage the classroom were defined under *practice*. Thus, this process resulted in these subcategories within the four knowledge areas as shown in Figure 1.

Knowledge area	Sub-categories
The academic subject	The subject's distinctiveness
	The subject's relation to the classroom
The didactic subject	Didactics in relation to the pupil
	Didactics in the classroom
Pedagogy	Pupils and relational competence
	Professional identity
	Society and pedagogic models
Practice	Pupils and contextual knowledge
	Classroom organization/ management
	School and contextual knowledge

Figure 1 The four knowledge areas and their subcategories

Criteria are operationalized through what the mentors and mentees decide is to be discussed in the dialogue. In this decision, *external criteria* can be guidelines given by the school or university, or the learning outcome descriptors stipulated in the national guidelines for the ITE program. *Internal criteria* can be contextual situations or the mentees' development in the school context.

Consequently, in this paper I have developed an analytical framework that contains predefined theoretically-based categories. One critique of Bernstein's theory has been that it is deterministic (cf. Nash, 2006). However, Bernstein uses a dialectical view of discourse, where there is a dynamic relation between subject and structure (Bernstein, 1990). This means that through the predefined categories that I have made, the possibility the mentors and mentees have to actively interact and control the pedagogic discourse is highlighted. In this way, and as I understand it, the developed theoretical framework is also dynamic.

Data Material

The participants were recruited through *strategic selection* (Brottveit, 2018) where mentors and mentees who were engaged at a university that offered an ITE program were asked to participate. The university's structure for the educational program was used to recruit the participants. First, a cover letter was sent to the principals of schools collaborating with the university with a request to contact the mentors and mentees. All schools except one approved and then an e-mail was sent to all the mentors and mentees who were engaged in an ITE program in the spring of 2019. This process led to ten mentoring pairs consisting of nine mentors and twelve mentees as presented in Table 2:

	Gender	Experience	Practicing schools	Named in the text	Ten mentoring pairs
Mentors	2 men 7 women	5-20 years' experience as a mentor	2 lower and 4 upper secondary schools	Labeled with letters (e.g. Mentor A)	A1; B2; C3; D4; D5; E6; F7; G8,9; H10,11
Mentees	2 men 10 women	In their 4th year of studies		Labeled with numbers (e.g. Mentee 1)	

Table 2 Description of the participants

The empirical foundation in this paper is based on comprises audio-recordings of ten mentoring dialogues and interviews with the participants in them. The recorded mentoring dialogues lasted from 10 minutes to 65 continuous minutes. In the audio-recording setting the researcher was a *non-participating observer* (Brottveit, 2018), passively listening and coordinating the recording setting. In addition, a segment concerning how the mentors and mentees responded to three questions from the interviews is included as data material. The data collection process was carried out through a uniform design. The mentoring dialogues and interviews were recorded and transcribed, first into Norwegian and then translated into English. Kvale & Brinkmann (2015) argue that reliability and validity in the transcription process is challenging because of the transition from spoken to written language. Thus, in the transcription, the spoken language was written down as it was pronounced.

Ethical Considerations

The rules and standards described by the NSD³ were followed when collecting the data material. In this process, the ethical perspective has been important throughout all parts of the process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). As a result, the analytical process is richly described. The findings contain examples of how the process has been carried out and present extracts from the dialogues, and this helps to make the analytical process transparent.

Analysis

The analytical process has been carried out separately for framing according to selection and criteria and is thus discussed in two separate steps.

Framing and Its Selection

The category *selection* was analyzed in the recorded mentoring dialogues according to the analytical framework described in Table 1. When a mentor and mentee in a dialogue discussed a theme, it was marked and classified into the subcategories in Figure 1. If a mentor introduced the theme, it was classified as a strong framing value (+Fⁱ), and a weak framing value (-Fⁱ) indicated that the mentee introduced the theme. To exemplify how this analytical process has been carried out, a description of what each subcategory and framing value might contain are presented in Figure 2.

³ [3] Norwegian Centre for Research Data is a national center and archive for research data.

Knowledge area	Sub-categories	Examples; strong and weak framing
The academic subject	<i>The subject's distinctiveness</i> Discussions on the internal grammar and what is important within the subject	+F ⁱ : In B2 when Mentor B started to discuss different English-language dialects -F ⁱ : In G8,9 when Mentee 8 started a discussion on the concepts that are important to understand in social studies
	<i>The subject's relation to the classroom</i> Discussions on how the academic subject is presented and managed in the classroom	+F ⁱ : In F7 when Mentor F asked Mentee 7 questions about how he or she had presented a mathematical concept in the classroom -F ⁱ : In G8,9 when Mentees 8 and 9 wanted a response on how they had modified an activity to suit the subject
The didactic subject	<i>Didactics in relation to the pupil</i> Discussions on how the mentees adapt their tutoring and deconstruct the subject for the pupils	+F ⁱ : In B2 when Mentor B asked Mentee 2 why he or she chose to speak Norwegian in an English lesson -F ⁱ : In D4 when Mentee 4 asked Mentor D how to stimulate talented pupils in mathematics
	<i>Didactics in the classroom</i> Discussions on how the mentees make use of methods and strategies to plan, evaluate, and teach in a class	+F ⁱ : In H10,11 when Mentor H asked Mentees 10 and 11 questions about how to use evaluation to motivate the pupils in French -F ⁱ : In E6 when Mentee 6 wanted to discuss how to use assessment for learning in English
Pedagogy	<i>Pupils and relational competence</i> Discussions on how the mentee could improve classroom discussions and create an inclusive classroom	+F ⁱ : In D4 when Mentor D challenged Mentee 4 to involve the pupils more in the teaching -F ⁱ : In D4 when Mentee 4 reflected on the relation between the feedback he or she gave and the pupils' discussions in mathematics
	<i>Professional identity</i> Discussions on the mentee's development in practice	+F ⁱ : In I12 when Mentor I started reflection on how mentee 12's relational competence had evolved during practice -F ⁱ : In B2 when Mentee 2 commented on how positive feedback fostered his or her development
	<i>Society and pedagogic models</i> Discussions on pedagogic perspectives to teaching, learning, and education	+F ⁱ : In C3 when Mentor C started a discussion on the balance between lecturing the pupils and giving them creative assignments
Practice	<i>Pupils and contextual knowledge</i> Discussions on how the pupils affect each other, the teacher, and the school context, or how pupils behave in the classroom	+F ⁱ : In F7 when Mentor F started reflection on why the pupils dare to raise their hand in the classroom -F ⁱ : In D5 when Mentee 5 asked for advice on how to handle a pupil in the classroom
	<i>Classroom organization/management</i> Discussions on practical issues relating to how to manage and organize the classroom	+F ⁱ : In E6 when Mentor E commented on how mentee 6 ended a lesson -F ⁱ : In H10,11 when Mentee 11 asked for advice on how to carry out a test in a French lesson
	<i>School and contextual knowledge</i> Discussions on how school rules and procedures affect a teachers' job, such as colleagues and the school environment	+F ⁱ : In D4 when Mentor D discussed when and how mentee 4 could include the assistant in his or her teaching -F ⁱ : In C3 when Mentee 3 asked Mentor C when the school in question found it acceptable to give the pupils a penalty mark

Figure 2 Framing within the four knowledge areas

After completing the analytical process, the themes discussed in each subcategory, and their framing value, were counted. A theme was counted as one time no matter how long the theme was discussed. This means that a theme could contain one or several sentences. Within each subcategory and framing value, the themes discussed were counted and then the percentages were calculated.

Framing and Its Criteria

To explore framing and its criteria the interviews were used as the empirical foundation. Three questions from the interview were included: (1) how the content that was discussed was selected, (2) if they had been given any guidelines for what they should discuss and (3) if they utilized the learning outcome descriptors in the national guidelines. How the mentors and mentees responded to these questions was analyzed according to the analytical framework presented in Table 1. If the mentors and mentees answered that they were given guidelines or used the learning outcome descriptors to select the themes, this was classified as a strong external framing value (+F^e). Similarly, if the mentors and mentees used contextual situations to select the themes this was classified as a weak external framing value (-F^e).

Findings

This section describes the findings from the analytical process. The findings from exploring the framing value will be presented separately according to *selection of content* and *use of criteria*.

Selection of Content

This section describes the findings from exploring the framing value for selection according to the four knowledge areas. Figure 3 presents a summary of the *percentages* that have been calculated. In the first line, the four knowledge areas and the distribution between them are depicted by setting percentages. In the next lines, the subcategories are described in percentages and then referred to as either strong or weak framing values. The text that follows describe the form of control over each of the knowledge areas separately.

Knowledge area	Sub-categories	Findings
The academic subject 13%	The subject's distinctiveness	26% (+F ⁱ : 20%; -F ⁱ : 6%)
	The subject's relation to the classroom	74% (+F ⁱ : 48%; -F ⁱ : 26%)
The didactic subject 24%	Didactics in relation to the pupil	20% (+F ⁱ : 14%; -F ⁱ : 6%)
	Didactics in the classroom	80% (+F ⁱ : 59%; -F ⁱ : 21%)
Pedagogy 18%	Pupils and relational competence	25% (+F ⁱ : 21%; -F ⁱ : 4%)
	Professional identity	62% (+F ⁱ : 51%; -F ⁱ : 11%)
	Society and pedagogic models	13% (+F ⁱ : 13%; -F ⁱ : 0%)
Practice 45%	Pupils and contextual knowledge	40% (+F ⁱ : 30%; -F ⁱ : 10%)
	Classroom organization/management	39% (+F ⁱ : 32%; -F ⁱ : 7%)
	School and contextual knowledge	21% (+F ⁱ : 14%; -F ⁱ : 7%)

Figure 3 Findings within the selection of content

The *academic subject* is the knowledge area that is less frequently discussed in the mentoring dialogues (13%). The subcategory, *the subject's relation to the classroom*, is discussed 74% of the time and *the subject's distinctiveness* 26% of the time (Figure 3). Both subcategories have a strong framing value, however, the subcategory *subject's distinctiveness*

has a stronger framing value. The strong framing value is seen because the mentors introduce the themes to be discussed more often, such as subject-specific concepts or specific issues within the subject. This means that these are themes the mentors are more interested in discussing. The strong framing value indicates that the mentor explicitly controls the communication and selects when this subcategory is to be discussed. However, for *subject's relation to the classroom*, there is a weakening in the framing value where the mentee introduces it as a theme 26% of the time. As Bernstein (1990) argues, a weakening in the framing value indicates a less fixed relation between transmitter and acquirer. This indicates that the mentor provides a space for the mentee to select the content within this subcategory. The mentee mainly introduces this subcategory by asking questions relating to how to present the academic subject in the classroom. The weakening in the framing value can indicate that this is a theme the mentees want to discuss more frequently and that the negotiation of control between mentor and mentee is less prominent within some knowledge areas.

Subject didactics is the second most discussed knowledge area (24%). The subcategory *didactics in the classroom* is discussed 80% of the time and *didactics in relation to the pupil* 20% of the time (Figure 3). This points out that what is most frequently discussed within this knowledge area are different models for planning a lesson, how to evaluate assignments given, or planning assignments to give to the pupils. The mentors mostly introduce this knowledge area by giving feedback on assignments and assessments the mentees have planned or carried out, while the mentees do this by asking for advice on how to evaluate a test. This knowledge area is also specified through a strong framing value, where three out of four times the mentor introduces this as a theme. The strong framing value indicates that the mentor more explicitly controls the communication. This shows that the mentors are active and select the discussions in this category and that the mentees are given less space to actively select what is discussed within this knowledge area.

Pedagogy as a knowledge area is the second least discussed area in the dialogues (18%). Moreover, this knowledge area has a strong framing value where the mentors introduce the themes five out of six times (Figure 3). The strong framing value indicates that the mentors have strong control when this knowledge area is selected for discussion. This indicates that the mentor gives the mentee less space to select what is to be discussed within this subcategory and that the mentor sets the premises for what is to be discussed. The most frequently discussed subcategory within pedagogy is *professional identity*, which is discussed 62% of the time. Within this subcategory there are often discussions where the mentor gives feedback on how the mentee has developed in practice and feedback on how to evolve further. Reflection on empowering the mentees' professional development is more infrequently discussed, however, it is discussed more frequently in three of the dialogues. The strong framing value indicates that the mentors most often select when to discuss the mentees' development, while the mentees rarely introduce their own professional development as a theme. The subcategory *pupils and relational competence* is discussed 25% of the time, whereas the subcategory *society and pedagogical models* is discussed 13% of the time. Both these subcategories have a very strong framing value and are subcategories where the mentee is less frequently given a space to discuss and where the mentees are less concerned about the themes to be discussed. Pedagogical models are rarely discussed, and an especially interesting fact is that the mentees never initiated discussions on the teacher's role and teaching in a societal perspective. When the mentors introduce this subcategory, the discussion often revolves around the purpose of teaching and being a teacher.

The knowledge area that is most frequently discussed is *practice* (45%). Like the other knowledge areas, this area has a strong framing value. The mentors select discussions in this area as a theme 75% of the time (Figure 3). This indicates that the mentor is more active and introduces themes while the mentees are given less space to select what is to be

discussed. Within this knowledge area there are two subcategories that are more frequently discussed, *pupils and contextual knowledge* (40%) and *classroom organization/management* (39%). There is a strong framing value within *classroom organization/management*, which typically involves the mentor giving feedback to the mentee on how to start a lesson, end a lesson, give instructions, or get the pupils' attention in the classroom. Bernstein (1990) claims that when the framing value is strong it is more likely that there is a fixed relation within the communicative context. This implies a focus on the mentee as a leader in the classroom, on how the mentee manages the classroom and on which strategies and skills the mentee utilizes to organize the classroom. This focuses attention on how the mentee can improve his teaching skills. In subcategory, *pupils and contextual knowledge*, the mentors often tell the mentees about a pupil's history or ask the mentees questions about how they talked to or helped a pupil in the classroom. If the mentees brought these two subcategories into the discussion, it was often because they wanted to seek advice in relation to how to deal with a class or a pupil. The last subcategory, *school and contextual knowledge*, is the least discussed area, just 21% of the time. This subcategory also has a strong framing value, where the mentors control the selection. The mentors are often interested in telling the mentees what is happening at the school or what the school rules are. When the mentees raise this theme, it is often to ask about which rules are important at the school or what is happening at the school.

Use of Criteria

This section will describe the form of control that is exercised in the dialogues by looking at whether external or internal criteria decide the selection of the content. When the mentors are asked how the content is determined, seven out of nine answers: *the planning document*⁴ and *contextual situations*, while one mentor answers only *contextual situations*. The mentees' answers are in line with the mentors', eight answer *the planning document* and/or *contextual situations* and two express that the mentors decide the content. The mentees' answers confirm the *strong internal framing value* and the fact that the mentors' control which content is discussed while the mentees more often react to the selected content. Nevertheless, the mentors and mentees answers have both *strong and weak external framing values*. A *weak external framing value* is present because the contextual situations from the last taught lesson decide the content that is to be discussed. This indicates that the mentors have the power to control what to discuss in the mentoring dialogues based on contextual situations that arise in the school context. However, there is also a *strengthening in the external framing value* because the *planning document* influences what is to be discussed. This document is compiled by the university and given as a mandatory assignment. Thus, it frames how the mentee is supposed to plan and evaluate a teaching lesson and gives the university the possibility of having influence on what is discussed in mentoring. This points out that both external and internal criteria set the premises for what is to be discussed in the dialogues. However, the *weak external framing value* is also present as the mentors and mentees state that they have not been given any external guidelines or that they use the learning outcome descriptors to select the content. Several of the mentees point out that they have not read or seen them at all. The mentees express an uncertainty as to whether the learning outcome descriptors are used or not and Mentee 12 expresses it in this way: "[M]aybe they [the mentors] talk about it implicitly, not so explicitly...". This weak external framing value indicates that the mentors are not using the learning outcome descriptors to

⁴ [4] The planning document is compiled by the university and given as a mandatory assignment in the mentees practice. It is given to the mentees to be used as a template that they are supposed to follow when they plan their lessons.

select the content but have the power to control the themes that are discussed. Examples of this are given by these four mentors:

- (1) *[B]ecause I think teaching in a way is 'in the moment', so you have to take it, take it lesson by lesson (Mentor A)*
- (2) *[W]e focus on three major themes, from a personal conviction and belief... (Mentor D)*
- (3) *I think, maybe we mostly use our own experience.... (Mentor B)*
- (4) *[I] think that I have some points that I would like to talk about (Mentor F)*

The mentors mention in these extracts that they control what is discussed in the mentoring through their own personal conviction and according to issues that are related to the classroom context and the mentees' development. Through these statements, the mentors confirm the weak external framing value and that internal criteria control what is discussed. At the same time, the mentors describe a strong classification between external criteria and what they discuss in the mentoring dialogues. Three examples of mentors' statements are:

- (5) *[I]t's perhaps not my role to talk about Piaget and Vygotsky, I use the theory in practice, they [the teaching students] can make the connection themselves... (Mentor B).*
- (6) *[K]ind of, there's the academic subject and the profession, that's kind of the point, and it's both (Mentor C).*
- (7) *[I]t's the university that should give them the general pedagogy, they should give them the subject knowledge and the subject didactics and that's it, here [in practice] is where they learn to be... there is here they get see how it is (Mentor E).*

In these extracts, the mentors discuss a clear responsibility for using the knowledge taught at the university in their practice. This points to a weak external framing value where the mentors argue for a strong classification between university and practice.

Discussion

Through a strong internal framing value and a weak external framing value, the findings show that most of the mentors control the selection of content and the use of criteria in the mentoring dialogues. This then indicates that the mentors have strong autonomy. The implementation of the ITE program intended to increase the focus on the academic subject and to create an education close to practice. These aspects will be discussed in relation to the paper's findings.

In this paper, the mentors control the selection of content, and they are mainly concerned with discussing practical issues and classroom management. The fact that the mentoring dialogues are found to be mostly concerned with practical issues agrees with the findings from earlier national (cf. Ottesen, 2007; Sundli, 2007; Østrem, 2016) and international research (cf. Msimango et al., 2020; Strong & Baron, 2004). The strong internal framing value reveals that these are issues the mentors are more interested in discussing and the strong autonomy enables them to discuss these issues. At the same time, the academic subject is the knowledge area that is least discussed in these mentoring dialogues. These findings confirm other national and international research studies that have also found that the academic subject is given little attention in mentoring, even if there is an increasing interest in subject knowledge in mentoring (cf. Becker et al., 2019; Høyne et al., 2019).

At the same time, the strong internal framing value means that the mentees have a more reactive role where they more often react to themes the mentors have introduced. This reactive role of the mentee in mentoring has been confirmed in other Norwegian research

(Merket, 2022) and indicates that the mentees are given less space in the dialogues to select what is to be discussed. This could create a strong classification between mentor and mentee and a more hierarchical relation. Research on mentoring has pointed out the importance of having a more reciprocal relationship between mentor and mentee (see Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Kourieos, 2019) and therefore, a hierarchical relationship could influence the mentees' professional development in practice (Hobson & Maxwell, 2020). However, a weakening in the internal framing value was identified within the academic subject area, where the mentees more actively ask questions relating to how to adapt the academic subject to the classroom. This could indicate that the mentees are more concerned about discussing the academic subject in the dialogues. According to the National Guidelines, the intention is to realize the connection between the four knowledge areas where mentoring involves active mentees who process their own knowledge by exercising theoretical reflection (UHR, 2017). This requires a more reciprocal relationship between mentor and mentee and a weakening in both the classification and internal framing values, where the mentee is more active and contributes to the selection of the content to be discussed in the mentoring dialogue. This shows how the negotiation of control between mentor and mentee can also have an effect on what is discussed in the mentoring dialogue.

Concurrently, policy encourages a close collaboration between university and practice (MER, 2017) and unquestionably, in teacher education, the university and practice have to collaborate closely. However, there are different ways of understanding what it means to create a close relationship. If there is a strong classification between categories, Bernstein (2000) argues that they have their own unique voice and identity. As part of such a perspective, it could be argued that close collaboration could be a relation where university and practice maintain their own unique identity. In this paper, the mentors argue for more distinct and specialized voices where the university is responsible for the academic knowledge and the place of practice is responsible for the contextual knowledge. At the same time, the weak external framing value identified in this paper indicates that the mentors have strong autonomy to decide the criteria for guiding the selection. The mentors select the criteria for the content to be discussed in mentoring by relating the content to the contextual situations within the mentoring learning context and not to the criteria given by the ITE program. The mentors describe this as a conscious choice where they use their own experience and situations that occur in the school setting to decide what to discuss in the mentoring dialogue. However, at the same time, they do not reject the learning outcome descriptors and claim that while agreeing with them, they do not actually use them as direct descriptors for the mentoring dialogue. In this way, the mentors in this paper argue for a weak external framing value and a strong classification where university and practice are responsible for different knowledge areas and where they have their own unique identity.

Bernstein (2000) also argues that if there is a weak classification between the categories, they have less specified voices and identities. As part of this perspective, a close relation between university and practice could imply a relation where they have a more unison identity. In this paper, the mentors state that the planning document often is a criterion that guides the selection of content in the dialogues. This document is a mandatory assignment produced by the university to be exercised in practice by the mentees. It provides a set of structures and teaching theories that are to be followed. Thus, when the university prescribes this as a mandatory assignment to be exercised in practice, this can be one way to have influence on the criteria that guide the selection of content that is discussed in mentoring dialogues. This could therefore be a way of strengthening the external framing value and a way of weakening the classification between university and practice. However, Bernstein (2000) argues that if there is a weakening in the classification value, the category is in danger of losing its identity. Teaching has a complexity that makes it impossible for the university

alone to provide the full complement of skills and knowledge required to be a teacher (Mena et al., 2017) and at the same time, different forms of knowledge contribute complementary perspectives on being a teacher (see Hestbek, 2014). Consequently, using Bernstein (2000), it could be argued that in order to create close collaboration between university and practice, it is important to maintain the space between them, where they have their own unique identity and specificity. From this perspective, close collaboration between university and practice would imply a relation where they contribute their complementary perspectives and not a relation where they are seen as contributors of a more unison perspective.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to explore what characterizes the content that was discussed in mentoring dialogues, and how this content was negotiated and related to Norwegian policy. The findings indicate a strong internal framing value where the mentor sets clear premises for the selection of content in the dialogues. The main themes discussed are practical issues; the academic subject is discussed to a lesser degree. At the same time, this paper has implications for mentoring practice as it has been found that the relation between mentor and mentee can have influence on the mentee's development in practice beyond the Norwegian context. However, this research is unable to say anything about what is discussed and how this is negotiated in the mentoring dialogues on the overarching level. Even so, some questions are raised about the role of the mentee and mentor, and how the negotiation over control between them can affect what is discussed. Therefore, if the mentoring practice is to be strengthened, further research should look more deeply into the role of the mentee and how mentees can control their own professional development more actively.

At the same time, there is an aim on the international level to increase the relation between university and practice, and bearing this in mind, this article discusses different perspectives on what it means to create a close relation. The use of criteria shows that both internal and external criteria set the premises for what is discussed in mentoring. As a result, a close relation between university and practice could be one where these institutions complement each other or where they have a more unison voice. Therefore, more research is needed globally to explore what it means to create a close relation between university and practice, and thus, how policy is realized in practice.

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