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Bruno Leutwyler - Claudia Meierhans - Miriam Aegerter<sup>1</sup>

*“Nightingale” in Teacher Education: A focus on the mentors.  
Learning processes and impact analysis*

*1. Introduction*

Mentoring programs are becoming increasingly popular in the higher education landscape, aiming at supporting specific disadvantaged or under-represented groups. Among many other target groups, socially disadvantaged children constitute a focus of many mentoring programs, such as “Big Brothers Big Sisters” in the United States of America<sup>2</sup>, “Perach” in Israel<sup>3</sup>, “Nightingale” in Europe<sup>4</sup>, or “Balu und Du” in Germany<sup>5</sup>, among many others. Generally, these mentoring programs aim at preventing children from engaging in high-risk behaviour and at fostering the general development of the mentees, including encouraging higher aspirations in education, gaining greater self-confidence and developing better relationships.

*1.1. Benefits for mentees and for mentors*

With the extremely diversified and heterogeneous program landscape in mind, it is difficult to assess potential benefits for mentees and for men-

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgment: This report is based on a research project that was supported by the Arcas Foundation (Zurich, Switzerland) and the “Integrationskredit des Kantons Zug”.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbbs.org>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.perach.org.il>

<sup>4</sup> <http://nightingalementoring.org>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.balu-und-du.de>

tors. The variety of different mentoring programs hardly allows for a clear definition of the unit of analysis: “The whole area of mentoring is fraught with definitional and conceptual problems”<sup>6</sup>. Already in 2003, mentoring was characterized as “a very fuzzy and ill-defined concept”<sup>7</sup> – an assessment that still holds true. Traditionally, mentoring meant a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced mentor and a less experienced mentee; nowadays this traditional meaning is expanded and also includes different forms of group mentoring<sup>8</sup>. For the following overview of potential benefits for mentees and mentors, the literature was reviewed with regard to mentoring programs that pair higher education students (as mentors) with underprivileged children or youths (as mentees) in one-to-one settings. The whole area of mentoring in business and for professional development is not considered.

Effects of mentoring programs on mentees have been empirically identified multiple times. The available evidence suggests that mentees are less likely to show problematic and high-risk behaviours (such as alcohol and illegal drug consumption) than comparable children that do not participate in a mentoring program; that the mentees miss fewer school days and show better academic behaviour and attitudes than their counterparts; that they show a better relationship with their parents and that they are better integrated in the school community than before the program<sup>9</sup>. Regarding the benefits for academic performance as well as for

<sup>6</sup> J.C. Hall, *Mentoring and Young People. A literature review. Research Report 114*, The SCRE Centre University of Glasgow, Glasgow 2003, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibi*, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> L.T. Eby - J.E. Rhodes - T.D. Allen, *Definition and Evaluation of Mentoring*, in T.D. Allen - L.T. Eby (eds.), *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring. A Multiple Perspectives Approach*, Wiles-Blackwell, Oxford 2011, pp. 7-20; C.L. Sipe, *Toward a Typology of Mentoring*, in D. DuBois, L. Karcher - M.J. Karcher (eds.), *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*, Sage, Thousand Oaks 2005, pp. 65-80.

<sup>9</sup> S. Drexler - B. Borrmann - H. Müller-Kohlenberg, *Learning Life Skills, Strengthening Basic Competencies and Health-Related Quality of Life of Socially Disadvantaged Elementary School Children Through the Mentoring Program “Balü Und Du” (“Baloo and You”)*, in «Journal of Public Health», xx, 2 (2012), pp. 141-149; J.C. Hall, *Mentoring and Young People. A Literature Review*, «Research Report» 114; C. Herrera - J.B. Grossman - T.J. Kauh - J. McMaken, *Mentoring in Schools: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring*, in «Child Development», lxxxii, 1 (2011), pp. 346-361; S. MacArthur - B.J. Higginbotham - E. Ho, *The Effects of Non-Academic Men-*

self-worth and self-confidence, the available evidence is, however, inconsistent<sup>10</sup>. Involved teachers expect that the mentees would broaden their horizons, develop new interests and gain stimulating experiences<sup>11</sup>. The study of Bartl et al.<sup>12</sup> suggests that teachers perceive their pupils after having participated in a mentoring program as more prepared to take decisions, as more integrated in the classroom community, as being more focused on the subjects, as less insecure when tackling new situations and with better self-organization and higher motivation to learn.

However, it seems to be clear that the empirically identified effects describe *potential* effects for mentees rather than *actual* effects that happen more or less automatically<sup>13</sup>. With this in mind, more recent research has focussed on differential effects on different types of mentees<sup>14</sup>

*toring on School-Related Cognitions: A Pilot Study*, in «Journal of Youth Development: Bridging Research and Practice», VIII, 1 (2013), pp. 28-37; H. Mueller-Kohlenberg - S. Drexler, *Balu und Du* ("Baloo and You"). *A Mentoring Program: Conception and Evaluation Results*, in M.S. Shaughnessy (ed.), *Mentoring: Practices, Potential Challenges and Benefits*, Nova Science Publishers, New York 2013, pp. 107-123; J.P. Tierney - J.B. Grossman - N.L. Resch, *Making a Difference. An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*, Public/Private Ventures, Philadelphia 2000.

<sup>10</sup> C. Herrera - J.B. Grossman - T.J. Kauh - J. McMaken, *Mentoring in Schools: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring*; K. Topping - S. Hill, *University and College Students as Tutors for School Children: A Typology and Review of Evaluation Research*, in S. Goodlad (ed.), *Students as Tutors and Mentors*, Kogan Page, London 1995, pp. 13-31.

<sup>11</sup> T. Özcelik - F. Stenzel - A. Blankenburg - E. Menzel, *Interkulturelle Begegnungen im Nightingale Mentoring-Projekt an der Freien Universität Berlin*, in B. Berendt - J. Wildt - B. Szczyrba (eds.), *Neues Handbuch Hochschullehre*, Raabe Verlags-GmbH, Stuttgart 2012, pp. 5.15.12.

<sup>12</sup> H.M. Bartl - S. Drexler - C. Weniger - H. Mueller-Kohlenberg, *Studie zur Nachhaltigkeit der Wirkung des Mentorenprogramms "Balu und Du"*, Department of Social Education, University of Osnabrueck, Osnabrueck 2012; see also H. Mueller-Kohlenberg, S. Drexler, *Balu und Du* ("Baloo and You") - *A Mentoring Program: Conception and Evaluation Results*.

<sup>13</sup> See in this regard the early discussion in K. Topping - S. Hill, *University and College Students as Tutors for School Children: A Typology and Review of Evaluation Research*.

<sup>14</sup> e.g. E. Bakkeiteig, *Evaluation of the Norwegian Nightingale Project. Paper Presented at the 4. International Nightingale Conference, October 25, 2013 in Oslo*, Norwegian Social Research Institute NOVA, Oslo 2013; R.B. Thompson - M. Corsello - S. McReynolds - B. Conklin-Powers, *A Longitudinal Study of Family Socioeconomic Status (SES) Variables as Predictors of Socio-Emotional Resilience Among Mentored Youth*, in «Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning», xxi, 4 (2013), pp. 378-391.

or on preconditions for effective mentoring programs<sup>15</sup>. These approaches investigated how a mentee's and mentor's characteristics as well as program characteristics facilitate or optimize the expected effects on mentees.

With regard to possible *effects for the mentors*, the available evidence is still rather sparse and is based, in the majority of the cases, on anecdotal evidence. Generally, the respective potential is seen in terms of social insight, in terms of social and interpersonal skills, in terms of a development of the mentors' self-esteem and in terms of intercultural learning<sup>16</sup>.

In terms of social insight, ex-post interview data suggests that mentors "began to develop an understanding of the economic difficulties afflicting the families of many of the children" and got to know "dysfunctional families"<sup>17</sup>. Mentors often report that they have developed "an increased understanding of the child's social and domestic living conditions" and that they "have gained direct insights into issues such as multicultural societies, integration, segregation and social estrangement"<sup>18</sup>. In this regard, a mentor in the Israeli Perach program concludes: "I came in contact with another kind of population that I didn't know before"<sup>19</sup>. Grander<sup>20</sup> argues that together with the social insight, the knowledge about socio-economic segregation processes might be developed.

<sup>15</sup> J.E. Rhodes, *Improving Youth Mentoring Interventions Through Research-based Practice*, in «American Journal of Community Psychology», xli, 1-2 (2008), pp. 35-42.

<sup>16</sup> J.C. Hall, *Mentoring and Young People. A literature review. Research Report 114*, p. 30; J.L. Warren, *Does Service-Learning Increase Student Learning? A Meta-Analysis*, in «Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning», xviii, 2 (2012), p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> B. Fresko - C. Wertheim, *Mentoring by Prospective Teachers as Preparation for Working with Children at Risk*, in «Journal of Education for Teaching», xxvii, 2 (2001), p. 153.

<sup>18</sup> C. Sild Lönroth, *The Nightingale scheme. A song for the Heart*, Malmö University, School of Teacher Education, Malmö 2007, p. 148.

<sup>19</sup> B. Fresko - C. Wertheim, *Mentoring by Prospective Teachers as Preparation for Working with Children at Risk*, cit., p. 155.

<sup>20</sup> M. Grander, *Learning Through Mentoring. Mentors As Bearers of a Model of Learning for an Integrated Society*, in «Pedagogia i Treball Social. Revista de Ciències Socials Aplicades», i, 1 (2011), pp. 51-75.

In terms of social and interpersonal skills, the literature suggests a benefit for the mentors with regard to enhanced social responsibility<sup>21</sup>, more developed empathy and better understanding of unfamiliar people<sup>22</sup>.

In terms of the mentors' self-esteem, mentors report having "successfully dealt with situations which they never would have believed they could handle"<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, Larose<sup>24</sup> shows with a methodologically robust longitudinal study that some mentors increase their perceived self-efficacy during a mentoring program.

In terms of intercultural learning, the literature suggests a benefit for the mentors in the sense of enhanced tolerance and intercultural sensitivity<sup>25</sup>, increased cultural awareness<sup>26</sup>, a better understanding of children and families with minority backgrounds<sup>27</sup>, or an "increased ability to move between different cultural worlds"<sup>28</sup>. Mentors report that they can discover "what it means to have come from another country, to be a refugee (or be exiled) from another country" and that they "have greater curiosity about things that are 'different'"<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> J.L. Warren, *Does Service-Learning Increase Student Learning? A Meta-Analysis*, cit., pp. 56-61.

<sup>22</sup> M. Szczesny - G. Goloborodko - H. Mueller-Kohlenberg, *Bürgerschaftliches Engagement als "additives Modell" zum Erwerb von Schlüsselkompetenzen: Welche Kompetenzen können im Mentorenprojekt "Balu und Du" erworben werden?*, in «SQ-Forum, Schlüsselqualifikationen in Lehre, Forschung und Praxis», VII, 1 (2009), pp. 111-124.

<sup>23</sup> C. Sild Lönroth, *The Nightingale Scheme. A Song for the Heart*, cit., p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> S. Larose, *Trajectories of Mentors' Perceived Self-Efficacy during an Academic Mentoring Experience: What They Look Like and What are their Personal and Experimental Correlates?*, in «Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning», XXI, 2 (2013), pp. 150-174.

<sup>25</sup> T. Özcelik - F. Stenzel - A. Blankenburg - E. Menzel, *Interkulturelle Begegnungen im Nightingale Mentoring-Projekt an der Freien Universität Berlin*, cit.

<sup>26</sup> J.L. Warren, *Does Service-Learning Increase Student Learning? A Meta-Analysis*, cit.

<sup>27</sup> E. Bakketeig, *Evaluation of the Norwegian Nightingale project. Paper presented at the 4. International Nightingale Conference, October 25, 2013 in Oslo*.

<sup>28</sup> M. Grander, *Learning through mentoring. Mentors as bearers of a model of learning for an integrated society*, cit., p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> C. Sild Lönroth, *The Nightingale Scheme. A Song for the Heart*, cit., p. 86.

To sum up, effects of mentoring programs have been extensively researched in relation to benefits for mentees and to a lower extent in relation to general effects for mentors. With regard to Teacher Education, it may be argued that the outlined general effects for mentors are beneficial for the teaching profession, too. The importance of these skills, experiences and attitudes is indisputable for teachers – they are not, however, teaching-specific.

### *1.2. Mentoring programs in Teacher Education*

As long as mentors engage in mentoring activities on a voluntary basis and in their spare time, the question whether future teachers can also specifically benefit for their profession is not urgent. However, some mentoring programs are formally embedded in Teacher Education programs and pre-service teachers can be awarded credits for mentoring activities. In these cases, the question regarding the teaching-specific benefits has to be seen in light of the strict separation of general education and teaching-specific training: University-based Teacher Education expects a completed general education and focuses on the development of the very teaching-specific competencies and attitudes. Within a Teacher Education program, the ever-present contest for the priorities of teaching content in the very limited study time requires a clear and explicit substantiation why a specific element is needed for pre-service teachers. With regard to mentoring activities, this substantiation is still rather vaguely understood.

The available literature suggests that pre-service teachers engaging in mentoring activities can, *firstly*, learn about children and children's perceptions of the world: In an evaluation of the Israeli Perach program, pre-service teachers reported after six to eight months of mentoring activity that they experienced individually how children learn and how learning difficulties can arise in socially and economically disadvantaged families<sup>30</sup>. In an evaluation of the Swedish Nightingale program, mentors report that

<sup>30</sup> B. Fresko - C. Wertheim, *Mentoring by Prospective Teachers as Preparation for Working with Children at Risk*, cit., p. 152.

they can discover "how a child copes with the transition from a Swedish school life to a different life at home – where norms and rules are very often completely different"<sup>31</sup>. In this regard, Özcelik et al.<sup>32</sup> report an increased awareness for foreign thinking styles. Grander concludes that awareness of the "effects of cultural differences"<sup>33</sup> on learning can be developed. These potential benefits for mentors may be read as teaching-specific translations of the general social insight in unfamiliar contexts (see above).

*Secondly*, pre-service teachers may improve their instructional skills: Fresko and Wertheim report that mentors experienced how to stimulate children's interests; that they "improved their ability to really listen to a child"<sup>34</sup> and, in this sense, raised their awareness to address individual needs. Furthermore, their evaluation of the Perach program suggests that pre-service teachers may develop their understanding for the children's cognitive processes. These potential benefits for mentors may be read as teaching-specific translations of the general social and interpersonal skills (see above).

*Thirdly*, the evaluation of the Perach program suggests that through mentoring activities pre-service teachers develop their self-confidence as future educators: They report having had "to cope with a very difficult and different case"<sup>35</sup>. This potential benefit for mentors, finally, may be read as teaching-specific translation of the general development of mentors' self-esteem (see above).

In the summary of the reported findings, it is obvious that teaching-specific effects are reported only scarcely and in rather vague terms. What does it mean when one increases his or her awareness for foreign thinking styles? What does it mean when mentors develop their understanding of the children's cognitive processes? The concrete benefits of mentoring experiences for future teachers have, so far, only partially been explained. The present study offers a contribution to close this gap in research.

<sup>31</sup> C. Sild Lönroth, *The Nightingale Scheme. A Song for the Heart*, cit., p. 86.

<sup>32</sup> T. Özcelik - F. Stenzel - A. Blankenburg - E. Menzel, *Interkulturelle Begegnungen im Nightingale Mentoring-Projekt an der Freien Universität Berlin*, cit.

<sup>33</sup> M. Grander, *Learning through Mentoring. Mentors as Bearers of a Model of Learning for an Integrated Society*, p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> B. Fresko - C. Wertheim, *Mentoring by Prospective Teachers as Preparation for Working with Children at Risk*, cit., p. 157.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibi*, p. 158.



### *1.3. Research questions and context of the study*

The present study analyses the benefits of mentoring activities from the specific perspective of Teacher Education and aims to establish a more concrete view of the learning and development processes that can be expected by participating in a mentoring program:

Which teaching-specific competencies and attitudes can be developed by participating in mentoring programs?

How do learning experiences differ in mentoring programs compared to regular settings of Teacher Education programs?

These questions shall be answered in the context of the Nightingale scheme at PH Zug.

“Nightingale” is a mentoring project that aims to contribute to the integration of mentees and to cross-cultural understanding and intercultural learning<sup>36</sup>. The mentors act as positive role models by establishing a personal relationship with the mentees. This in turn should help strengthen the children’s personal and social confidence. The mentors should gain insight into a child’s life, as well as increased knowledge about and a higher empathy for people who lead lives completely different to their own. The Nightingale mentoring program was established in 1997 at Malmö University. In 2006, Nightingale was implemented in seven European countries through the EU-network “Mentor Migration” financed by the EU-program Comenius 2.1. The Nightingale mentoring program has expanded both nationally and internationally to more than 20 sites. All European partners have joined The Nightingale Mentoring Network.

At PH Zug, pre-service teachers get paired with 8-12 year old children (mainly but not exclusively with immigrant backgrounds) from a primary school in the city of Zug. Mentors and mentees get together for approximately 2-3 hours a week over the period of 9 months. During these informal meetings, the mentors and mentees do enjoyable and everyday activities together. So, the focus of this program is explicitly not on school, learning or homework, but on spare time. Nevertheless, the mentoring activities of the mentors are awarded credits within their

<sup>36</sup> C. Sild Lönroth, *The Nightingale scheme. A Song for the Heart*.

Teacher Education program. Within this context, the question about potential teaching-specific benefits and about possible improvements of the project design shall be addressed. The following section describes the respective proceedings.

## 2. Method

In order to assess the teaching-specific benefits of the program, some specific methodological challenges need to be addressed: The potential learning of the participants is most probably – at least in parts – an implicit form of learning. The participants might not be aware of what they have learned. With this in mind, Fresko and Wertheim concluded in their study on the effects of mentoring practices that “many mentors had difficulty defining what their mentoring experience had taught them”<sup>37</sup>. Or, in contrast, the discrepancy between the subjectively experienced effectiveness (or the corresponding belief) on the one hand and the concrete, tangible development of specific competencies on the other hand is too big to be disregarded. Specific developments are difficult to assess and ordinary students do not normally have enough knowledge and insight into the complex topics connected to the constructs in question and are, therefore, unable to draw valid conclusions about them<sup>38</sup>. Furthermore, the usual retrospective self-reports imply a problematic causal attribution: Former participants retrospectively attribute the reported effects to their experiences during a specific intervention. This method is problematic when the diverse and complex interdependences of pre-conditions and process experiences are taken into account. In light of this, the ‘causal sequence problem’<sup>39</sup> has to be taken seriously. For

<sup>37</sup> B. Fresko - C. Wertheim, *Mentoring by Prospective Teachers as Preparation for Working with Children at Risk*, cit., p. 152.

<sup>38</sup> See in this regard M. Vande Berg - M.R. Paige - K.H. Lou, *Student Learning Abroad. Paradigms and Assumptions*, in M. Vande Berg, M. R. Paige, K.H. Lou (eds.), *Student Learning Abroad. What Our Students Are Learning, What They're Not, and What We Can Do About it*, Stylus Publishing, Sterling 2012, p. 21 ss.

<sup>39</sup> T.F. Pettigrew, *Intergroup Contact. Theory, Research, and new Perspectives*, in J.A. Banks - C. McGee Banks (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, John Wiley - Sons, San Francisco 2004, p. 772.

example: To what extent was a student teacher's ability and willingness to reflect on the role of different cultural contexts developed *before* the program's beginning and to what extent did this ability develop *during* the program? Or: To what extent was an already developed ability and willingness to reflect on the role of cultural contexts a driver and motivating factor to apply for the respective program? This is hardly reliably measurable by an ex-post subjective evaluation. Given this causal sequence problem, retrospective self-evaluations alone do not provide us with a reliable empirical basis to assess the actual effects of the program.

With these challenges in mind, the present study adopted a methodological approach that allows for an assessment whether the students' cognitions actually changed between the beginning and the end of their participation in the program. In order to achieve this, in-depth interviews were carried out with one cohort of participants (i.e. with the mentors) both at the beginning of the participation and some months after the formal end of the program. At  $t_1$  (the beginning of the program) the in-depth interviews covered questions about the mentors' motivation for participating and about their expected benefits. At  $t_2$  (about two months after the end of the program) the in-depth interviews covered the mentors' stories of their activities and their relationships with the mentees; questions about the perceived benefits and their relevance for the teaching profession; and questions about their general assessment of the program and their suggestions for its improvement.

The in-depth interviews at the beginning and after the end of the program provided two opportunities to access the mentors' perceptions of a hypothetical dilemma situation and their imagined behaviour in this situation. The comparison of how the mentors elaborated on this dilemma situation and how they said they would react at the beginning and after the end of the program allows for the identification of factual changes in the mentors' cognitions.

The hypothetical dilemma situation described the case of a schoolboy with a Portuguese background: The boy's teacher recommended to the parents that the boy should participate both in the local football club's regular training sessions and in courses in Portuguese language and culture. However, the parents have just realized that both activities

take place at exactly the same time and ask, therefore, for advice. The mentors were asked to comment on this situation, to outline how they would react and to give reasons for this intended reaction.

The sample of this study consists of one cohort of mentors in the Nightingale program at the University of Teacher Education Zug. In this cohort, 8 students participated as mentors: 7 women and 1 man, at the beginning of the program in their second year of the Teacher Education program for kindergarten or primary school teachers. In order to include an additional, more distant perspective on the program, the topics covered at  $t_2$  were also introduced to one cohort of students that had participated as mentors one year before. This cohort of students consisted of 7 mentors: 5 women and 2 men. At the time of the interview, the end of their participation in Nightingale dated back about one year. The students in this cohort were not confronted with the hypothetical dilemma situation as the methodological approach had not planned to cover possible changes over time within this former cohort.

In order to analyse the data, categories were developed from the transcribed interviews with an inductive approach and then structured into a category system in comparison with the few available research findings (cf. above). The data was then coded on this basis and firstly analysed on a case-to-case basis. In the ensuing "cross case analysis"<sup>40</sup>, case-orientated und variable-orientated strategies were combined and the individual cases were thereby condensed to typical patterns in relation to the research questions. The pivotal results of this analysis will be described in the following section. When quotes are used to illustrate a finding, pseudonyms are introduced in order to maintain the anonymity of the participants. Because of the small size of the sample, all cases are treated as female mentors. Pseudonyms starting with an A represent mentors from the cohort who took part in both interviews at  $t_1$  and at  $t_2$ ; pseudonyms starting with a B represent mentors from the former cohort which had only one interview about one year after the end of their participation. The quotes, originally in Swiss German, were translated as precisely as possible by the authors of this report.

<sup>40</sup> M.B. Miles - M.A. Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis. An Expanded Sourcebook*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks 1994<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. Results

In order to report on the impact participating in the program had on the mentors, a *first* part summarizes the participants' motivation to participate with a focus on their expected benefits. In doing so, this first part does not portray the factual benefits, it rather denotes a potential that is generally ascribed to the program. Subsequently, a *second* part approaches the assessment of the impact on the mentors with retrospective self-reports regarding the perceived benefits. A *third* part supplements this assessment with a comparison of the mentors' dealing with a hypothetical dilemma situation at the beginning and end of the program. This allows for an assessment of the impact on the mentors in terms of how their perception of a relevant dilemma situation and their intended reaction effectively changed between the beginning and end of the program.

#### 3.1. Motivation for participating and expected benefits

In order to assess the general potential that is ascribed to the program, the mentors were asked at the beginning of the program about their motivation for participating. The mentors mentioned different reasons why they decided to participate in the Nightingale project. First of all, most of them were interested in getting to know a new or foreign culture. Some also wanted to make personal contact with an individual child. Some also decided to participate because of philanthropic reasons. These motivations were reflected, at least partly, in the different expectations of how the mentors would benefit from their participation in the Nightingale project:

1. With regard to the mentors' interest in gaining an insight into an unfamiliar, foreign or new culture, the mentors expected to gain experience in dealing with people from a different cultural background than their own. Some expressed their interest in intercultural issues in general, whereas others had more specific expectations of what they might be able to learn. For instance, Alice expected to see into different parenting styles and practices and into a different religious context: "I am

interested in knowing more about how people from a different culture deal with parenting, what happens at home, for example how a different religion is dealt with." Alexandra expected not only insights into the so-called foreign familiar and cultural situation, but also into different perceptions of Switzerland. "It interests me what expectations or views these families have towards Swiss people."

2. With regard to the mentors' motivation to build a relationship with an individual child, these mentors expected to develop a better understanding of how children think and what children like to do. They hoped that they would be able to be responsive to a child's specific situation and, perhaps, gain a child's confidence: "I wanted to make personal contact with a child because, otherwise, the teacher education is so theoretical. And here, we have the chance to get to know a child and see how this child thinks, what kind of reflections he makes. In Nightingale, I can experience prototypically what it means to really understand a child" (Agnes). A few of the mentors even wished to make friends with and be a confidential person for their mentee.

3. Without a specific reference to motivation, Anna also expected to benefit in terms of improving her communication skills. "It is important to know how to communicate with different people without insulting them."

These expected benefits were reflected – at least in parts – in the way the mentors reported on the benefits after the end of the Nightingale program.

### *3.2. Outcomes and their relevance for the teaching profession*

With the expected benefits in mind, it seems nothing less than self-evident that the mentors reported *social insight into a foreign context* and enhanced *social and instructional skills* as the main benefits at the end of program. Furthermore, they also reported some benefits in terms of higher *self-esteem as future educators* as well as aspects of general *personal development*.

With regard to the *social insight into a foreign context*, the mentors pointed to two different facets that they considered important for future teachers. On the one hand, they stressed the fact that they got to know unknown cultural and social backgrounds and, in doing so, enhanced their intercultural learning. They enjoyed the opportunities to get insight into, for instance, a Tamil, Bosnian or Macedonian family and reported having gained intercultural knowledge from this. Some mentors stressed the fact that their Nightingale experience allowed them to deepen their understanding of what it means to be a migrant child. They concluded that this insight into a foreign culture was important for them as teachers because they had to know these foreign cultures very well in order to understand specific reactions of the children in the school context. Anita explained this perspective in the following way: “The exchange with this Turkish-Kurdish girl and her family facilitated a gateway to this ‘new’ culture. I have learned some words in Turkish – and I was able to sense what it means to have to work in low-skill jobs with bad reputations; what it means to experience racism in one’s own housing block and what it means to live in such an underprivileged way here in Switzerland.” Anita went on to report what this experience meant to her as a future teacher: “It affected me deeply. I didn’t know people from this social status. Having to go for a second job only for financial reasons; to see how deep their love and sympathy is for their children, and nevertheless having to leave them on their own because of the jobs. That was a very important experience for me: to take part at least partially in such a life and to know that you will have children from such families in your classroom. Often, these parents are accused of not caring about their children. But now, I really know what it means to be alone at home and why such a situation may arise.” Alexandra briefly summarised: “My future classes will definitely be very heterogeneous. So it is important for me to have an insight into very different backgrounds and ways of living”.

On the other hand, many mentors reported that the social insight in an unfamiliar context had increased their awareness that context matters. “When I was at my mentee’s home and talked with her parents, I suddenly realised how important it is to be aware of the children’s context,

how strongly the family background influences the children's thinking and behaving and how different this background sometimes is from my own world. The 'realities' and 'normalities' of a child are sometimes very different from my own 'realities' and 'normalities'" (Andrea). Angela concluded in this regard: "In order to understand a certain behaviour, I have to know the children's situation at home. Otherwise, I risk making unjustified interpretations."

With regard to *social and instructional skills*, the mentors highlighted how they developed an understanding of the 'children's world', of their perceptions and interests. "As a teacher, you have to understand the children in order to support them. During the Nightingale project, I had the opportunity to experience in a prototypical way what it really means to understand a child" (Agnes). The mentors reported how they appreciated the opportunities to exchange with an individual child and, in doing so, to learn how to become a confidential person for the child. Anita appreciated the opportunity "to learn how to build a bridge to the mentee's world." Beatrice reported as a highlight of the project having had the opportunity "to get an insight into the individual needs and personal dreams of a child and to understand the child's reality." Other mentors talked about this experience with regard to the school context and mentioned the importance of adapting their language to the children: "This kind of communication with a child is also important in teaching. I need to know how I can develop an argument or a question which will be understood by the children" (Alice).

In addition to this development of a general understanding of the so called 'children's world', many mentors appreciated the experience of communicating with parents – especially with parents with different backgrounds than their own. They reported that their experience in Nightingale was beneficial for future communication with parents in their specific role as teachers. Some mentors realized how important it was to involve the parents in communication, also in order to get more information about the family context of the children. "Before Nightingale, I had no experience in communicating with parents. Here, I made my first experiences and learned how to involve parents and how to speak to parents" (Alexandra). Other mentors re-



ported that they experienced communicating with parents even though they did not speak a common language. These statements can be read as expressions of enhanced communicative and social skills and illustrate that these benefits were considered as being very important for future teachers.

With regard to *self-esteem as future educators*, mentors reported their increased confidence to establish a good relationship with children who were unknown and unfamiliar to them. They reported knowing better how to approach an unknown child successfully and how to arrange a learning situation in order to meet the children's interests.

With regard to general *personal development*, mentors reported an increased reflection on their own approaches and prejudices. For instance, Anna talked about the situation when she discovered her own prejudices and intolerance with the mentee's mother. "I was very surprised when I realized that. I was not aware of this side of myself." Ariane realised during the Nightingale program that she was apparently very spontaneous and unstructured. To compensate she pushed herself to plan the activities with her mentee more in advance. In this way, these mentors reported having learnt to get to know themselves better. In addition to this kind of self-reflection, some mentors described their benefits with the general terms of increased openness, tolerance, flexibility, or appreciation of cultural diversity.

### 3.3 Changes in the perception of a hypothetical dilemma situation

As shown above, the participants reported manifold benefits after the program's end. In addition to these subjective, retrospective self-reports, the present project included an identical hypothetical situation to be dealt with by the participants during the first and the second interview. In many of the cases, the participants claimed they would deal differently with this imagined situation after the program than before. The differences can be seen in terms of the above-mentioned benefits regarding the *social insight*, the *social and instructional skills* and the *self-esteem as future educators*. No changes were observable regarding the above-mentioned benefit to *personal development*. However, it has to be

noted that the hypothetical dilemma situation was not designed in order to illustrate changes in this regard.

Regarding the *social insight*, the story of Anita illustrates how she learned to perceive more explicitly that a specific action can have very different meanings in different contexts. In both interviews, at the beginning and after the end of the program, she admitted that both activities, football training and courses for native language and culture, may be important for the child. She decided in both interviews not to recommend one of the two activities to the parents. However, at the beginning of the program, she clearly opted for football training – without being prompted to decide for one or the other activity. However, after the program, she no longer favoured football training. That might be seen as an expression of a stronger consideration of the child's context – in the sense that she was better aware that courses for native language and culture could have at least the same importance for the child and her family as football training could have for many of the majority culture. Following this interpretation, the social insight into a foreign context could have allowed her to shift perspectives from her personal view (coming from the dominant culture) to the view of a family from a minority culture.

Regarding *social and instructional skills*, many of the mentors considered more strongly and more explicitly the children's perspective at the end of the program than they did at the beginning. At the end of the program, Anita would have explicitly suggested involving the boy in the decision – something she did not mention at the beginning of the program. Anna, in turn, opted clearly for the football training both at the beginning and end of the program. However, at the end of the program, she argued in a much more differentiated way what this could imply for the boy: "In football training, the boy could meet his peers, he could use the German language also in his spare-time, and he could make new friends and experience companionship – something that is especially important in this age. The topics treated in the courses for native language and culture become more important later on, when identity becomes an issue." Without questioning whether she really knew and understood what is done in the courses for native language and culture, this

more differentiated argumentation might be read as an expression of a better understanding of a boy's world. At the same time, however, it might also be an indication that this mentor did not benefit in terms of the above mentioned social insight (which would have led to a stronger consideration of the individual context factors). Again another mentor, Alexandra, argued strongly from the perspective of the boy both at the beginning and end of the program and did not opt for one or the other option. However, at the end of the program, she also showed a more differentiated understanding of what might be beneficial to the boy's individual developmental needs. In a similar sense, Ariane argued in both interviews that she did not have the necessary information to take a decision. Whereas at the beginning of the program she would have asked the parents or the teacher for more information, at the end of the program she would have asked the child as far as possible. In this sense, she changed her intended behaviour towards a more child-centred approach; an approach that could express that she had more confidence in the boy's capacity to express what would be good for him. Angela, at the beginning of the program, commented on advantages of both options from her perspective. However, at the end she asked for possible reasons why football training or courses for native language and culture could be especially beneficial for the boy's development. In this sense, this might also be read as an expression of a stronger consideration of the child's perspective. With these interpretations in mind, these different changes in the intended behaviour of the mentors can be read as evidence that they indeed learned to listen to a child and to consider a child's perspective.

Regarding the *self-esteem as a future educator*, the story of Alice could be read as an indicator for this kind of benefit. At the beginning of the program, Alice was rather indecisive, but was inclined to advise the parents toward participating in the courses for native language and culture. In doing so, she expressed regret if the child "lost his original culture". However, she stressed the importance of considering the child's own perspective and his motivation. After the program, in contrast, she was very clear about how to react and did not consider it necessary to include the child in the decision. She was certain to advise the parents to choose

football training. This would be an important relief from everyday school life and would enable the child to make new friends from other cultures. Whereas she showed a lot of restraint at the beginning of the program, she was very self-confident about how to react in the given dilemma situation. On the one hand, this is a sign that this mentor did not benefit in the above-mentioned sense of stronger social and instructional skills. It might be seen, on the other hand, as an expression of being more self-confident – and in this sense an expression of higher self-esteem as future educator. Bearing in mind that this mentor neither considered the child's nor a possible family's perspective with the proposed approach, it is another question whether this kind of gain in self-esteem is indeed a benefit for future teachers.

In order to report all the data, it has to be mentioned that in two cases, no changes were observable. In one case, Andrea opted in both interviews identically to consider the child's perspective, respecting his own interests and motivations. In the other case, Agnes was very clear both at the beginning and at the end of the program: She was very certain that football should be much more important for this child than courses for native language and culture. In both interviews, she referred strongly to her own experiences as an immigrant child and concluded, from her own perspective again, that it was much more important to be integrated in activities "where the child learns the language and the culture from here". At the end of the program, she seemed to be even more certain about this: "It is okay to consider a migrant background. But now, the child lives here, and therefore, the child has to be integrated. That's it. He should do what the other children do. I don't approve of children being constrained."

#### *4. Discussion and conclusion*

The present study aimed to identify the benefits of mentoring activities from the specific perspective of Teacher Education. For this purpose, it aimed to establish a more concrete view of the learning and development processes that can be expected by participating in a mentoring program. To this end, the present study combined three different

methodological approaches: Firstly, by capturing the participants' motivation to participate, it uncovered the expected benefits which denote a potential that is generally ascribed to the program. Secondly, some months after the end of the program, it collected retrospective self-reports regarding the perceived benefits in order to uncover a self-assessment of the impact on the mentors. Thirdly, it compared how the mentors dealt with a hypothetical dilemma situation at the beginning and end of the program in order to uncover how the mentors' perception of a relevant dilemma situation and their intended reaction effectively changed between the beginning and end of the program.

The comparison of these three different approaches depicts the following picture of potential benefits (see *Table 1*).

The comparison of the three different approaches in *Table 1* shows a wide consistency with regard to the potential of social insights in unfamiliar cultural and social backgrounds and with regard to the development of social and instructional skills. Thereby, the present study contributes evidence that mentoring programs do indeed contain a potential to develop respective skills as reported elsewhere through retrospective self-reports<sup>41</sup>. In the hypothetical dilemma situation, many mentors showed modified perceptions and modified intentions for reactions that can be seen as expressions of enhanced social and instructional skills in the sense of a stronger or more explicit consideration of the children's perspective.

However, a potential impact of the gained social insight on the perception of a hypothetical dilemma situation or on the intended reaction was observable only in the case of Anita – the other mentors showed no changes that might be seen in relation to insights in unfamiliar contexts. Furthermore, other results suggest that the gained social insights

<sup>41</sup> B. Fresko - C. Wertheim, *Mentoring by Prospective Teachers as Preparation for Working with Children at Risk*, cit.; M. Grander, *Learning through mentoring. Mentors as bearers of a model of learning for an integrated society*, cit.; T. Özcelik - F. Stenzel - A. Blankenburg - E. Menzel, *Interkulturelle Begegnungen im Nightingale Mentoring-Projekt an der Freien Universität Berlin*, cit.; C. Sild Lönroth, *The Nightingale Scheme. A song for the Heart*, cit.

*Table 1: Comparison of three different approaches to capture the benefit for the mentors*

The mentors' motivation: ascribed potential	Retrospective self-reports: perceived benefits	Hypothetical dilemma situation: Changes in intended reactions
<i>Benefits in terms of social insight</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interest in gaining an insight into an unfamiliar, foreign or new culture</li> <li>• interest in gaining experiences in dealing with people from a different cultural background than their own</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased knowledge about unknown cultural and social backgrounds and enhanced intercultural learning</li> <li>• increased awareness that context matters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more explicit perception that a specific action can have very different meanings in different contexts</li> </ul>
<i>Benefits in terms of social and instructional skills</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• motivation to build a relationship with one individual child: better understanding of how children think and what children like to do</li> <li>• expectation to improve communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• better understanding of the “children’s world”, of their perceptions and interests</li> <li>• broader experience of communicating with parents – especially with parents with different backgrounds than one’s own</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stronger and more explicit consideration of the children’s perspective</li> </ul>
<i>Benefits in terms of self-esteem as future educators</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [no respective developments expected]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased confidence to establish a good relationship with children who were unknown and unfamiliar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearer position about how to react</li> </ul>
<i>Benefits in terms of personal development</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [no respective developments expected]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased reflection on one’s own approaches and prejudices</li> <li>• increased openness, tolerance, flexibility, or appreciation of cultural diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [no respective changes visible]</li> </ul>

did not equate to any measurable professional development of the teachers: When the mentors reported about their relationship with their mentees, some mentors perceived that the mentees had become more open and easier to approach during the program. In some cases, however, the relationship remained rather distanced and reserved until the end of the program and the mentors accredited this absence of positive development to individual characteristics of the mentees. They were reported to be shy or uncommunicative. This might, in fact, be one explication if the relationship does not evolve in the expected sense. However, such an individualised and personalised explication might also suppress the perception of contextual or cultural factors that might influence the perceived character of a relationship. The lack of any respective reasoning also at the end of the program might be read as an expression that the social insight into unknown contexts did not lead to a broader or better understanding of this context. With this in mind, the present study does not substantiate very clearly that this social insight has an expression in the professional lives of teachers. Or at least, given the empirical data, it has to be assumed that such an expression in professional contexts does not occur automatically: If the gained social insight should result in a measurable professional benefit, a specific transfer would surely have to be supported.

Regarding *self-esteem as future educators*, the retrospective self-reports in the present study support the findings of Fresko and Wertheim<sup>42</sup>. However, when the participants talked about their motivation, they did not have this kind of potential in mind. That means that this does not seem to be a general ascribed potential of the program. Furthermore, only in the case of Alice is an eventual expression of higher self-esteem reflected in intended behaviour in the hypothetical dilemma situation – in the other cases not. Even in the case of Alice, this expression has to be considered as problematic as her intended reaction after the program cannot be seen as more professional: Her clearer position on how to react considered neither the child's nor a possible family's perspective.

<sup>42</sup> B. Fresko - C. Wertheim, *Mentoring by Prospective Teachers as Preparation for Working with Children at Risk*, cit.

With this in mind, her self-esteem seemed to increase at the expense of a truly professional approach: a gain that is not really a benefit for future teachers.

Regarding the benefits in terms of personal development, the present study added evidence that was not yet reported in the available literature. However, the present study suggests this kind of potential only through some retrospective self-reports; not through the reported expectations at the beginning of the program or through observable changes in the hypothetical dilemma situation. Admittedly, the hypothetical dilemma situation was not designed in order to illustrate changes in this regard.

Nevertheless, the summary of these different approaches suggests a potential of mentoring programs for future teachers. The hypothetical dilemma situation, however, showed clearly that not all students modified their perceptions or their intended behaviour. This indicates that participating in the mentoring program does not automatically lead to a specific benefit, but that participation may provide an opportunity for participants to develop specific facets of professional competencies. This finding has clear implications for the practice of teacher education. If participation in mentoring programs should contribute to the professional development of future teachers, the learning opportunities have to be specified. Only with clearly defined expectations of learning opportunities, is it possible to conceptualize and implement optimal support for participants and to instruct expected transfers. In this regard, a comprehensive embedding of mentoring activities in teacher education programs should address questions of the appropriate preparations before the mentoring experience, individual coaching and supervision during it, and teaching-specific debriefing and wrap-ups afterwards. It seems clear that unguided, non-structured personal experiences during the mentoring activities do not automatically materialise into tangible effects – even less so if it comes to teaching-specific developments. A comprehensive embedding should, moreover, address questions about relevant *individual* pre-conditions so that productive developments can be maximised.



With this apparent need for a comprehensive embedding of mentoring activities in teacher education programs, the implications of the present findings seem evident for the implementation of the program. In addition, the implications for further research have to be seen within the methodological constraints of the present study. Even though the present study contributed with its pre-post-comparison in a hypothetical dilemma situation (a new approach to the assessment of the potential benefits), there are still some limitations to be considered. Firstly, due to economic constraints, the pre-post comparison was only conducted on a cohort of mentors, but not on a comparable control group. This allows for an assessment of how the mentors' perception of a relevant dilemma situation and their intended reaction effectively changed between the beginning and the end of the program; but it does not allow for a comparison of the mentors' development patterns with those who did not participate in the program. Strictly speaking, it is therefore not possible to attribute the observed changes unambiguously to the program participation. It might be the case that colleagues who did not participate would also show comparable changes – or the participants would also have modified their perceptions and their intended behaviours without participating in the program. However, the strong consistency between retrospective self-reports and observed changes might be seen as an indicator that these changes can be attributed to participation in the program. Furthermore, the curriculum in the formal teacher education program did not contain any modules with this topic. So, we do not assume that the participants developed their perceptions and intended behaviours due to other input or experiences in their teacher education program.

Secondly, the critical incident was not designed to be sensitive to changes in self-esteem as future educators or to general personal development. Self-esteem as future educators has to be considered an implicit construct that is not directly observable. A general personal development is too unspecific to be detectable in specified professional contexts as the hypothetical dilemma situation should illustrate. Therefore, this approach provided a new insight into how social insights and social and instructional skills might be applied or not in a given situation, but it is

not suitable for the detection of other eventual outcomes of a program participation.

Thirdly, the small number of covered participants (8 mentors in a cohort with two interviews; 7 mentors in a former cohort with one interview) can be considered as a constraint regarding the validity of the findings. Even though the adopted qualitative approach does not require large samples, the number of actual experiences within the program is rather limited. Nevertheless, the congruence with the existing literature and the fact that even a not-yet-reported outcome could be described are signs that the existing sample size did not lead to arbitrary findings.

These limitations show that more solid studies are necessary in order to capture the full potential of mentoring activities in teacher education. Such research should include measurements or assessments of learning outcomes beyond simple retrospective self-assessments, for instance by adding baseline-data on the given issue or by adding additional perspectives to those of the students. Such studies should, furthermore, consider the question of whether or how learning processes in mentoring activities differ from those in formal modules, for instance by tracing control groups for an analogous period of time. Further research should also aim at specifying more clearly the possible outcomes. The self-reports in this study as well as in the ones cited above operate too much with general and rather vague terms that are quite far removed from concrete professional competencies. However, research desiderata are not limited to a more solid and more concrete description of potential benefits. Research desiderata refer also to more insights in pre-conditions, at both the individual and institutional levels, for productive developments within the context of mentoring activities. A need for this further research is evident, but has to be addressed in further contributions.