

Opening learning spaces for novices in the workplace: guidance and facilitation in business internships

Empirical insights from the Sparkling Science Project PEARL

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What is PEARL?

PEARL: „Interns investigate their working and learning”
(PraktikantInnen erforschen ihr Arbeiten und Lernen)



- Research project (2015-2017) on learning during curriculum-embedded internships at Austrian higher vocational schools (secondary school level with a specific vocational focus) from the interns' perspective
- Working context: tourism, administration, technical
- 59 'cases' of internships; 17-18 year old pupils; full-time; 8-12 weeks
- Preparation and involvement of the interns as junior researchers
- Autoethnographic 'research' of the junior researchers during the internship: documentation of learning situations and objects by the interns (logbook, photos, brochures, objects...)
- Material-stimulated qualitative interviews with all 59 interns on return from internship



Learning Spaces (selected and grounded in empirical data)

Personal learning spaces
(emotion management,
self organisation,
willpower)

**Content related
and aesthetic
learning
spaces**

Social learning spaces
(integration in a
community of practice,
social interaction and
communication,
intercultural learning)



**Workplace mentoring
as opening spaces (scaffolding) for learning is needed.**

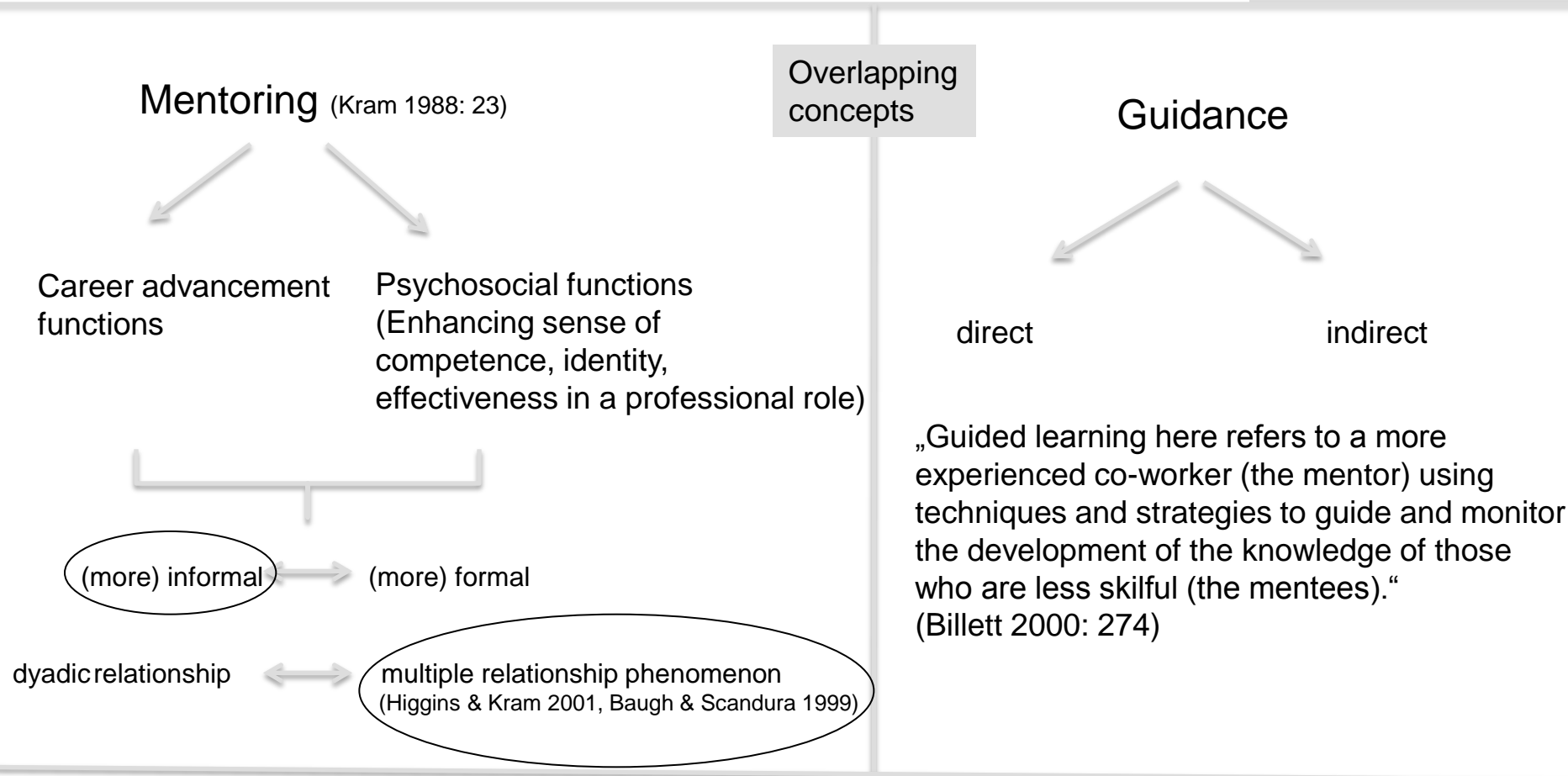
Research question and Special analysis on internship mentoring

How can we develop a deeper understanding of learning in business internships and the meaning of formal and informal mentoring processes?

Business context	Overall impression rather positive	Overall impression rather negative
Administrational	case 21, m, SE	
Technical	case 50, m, LE	
Tourism Service	case 2, f, SE case 37, f, SE	case 38, f, SE
Tourism Cooking	case 13, m, SE, abroad	

LE = Large Enterprises (>250 employees)
SE = Small Enterprises (1-49 employees)

Supporting learning processes in the workplace: guidance or mentoring or...? - looking for appropriate semantics



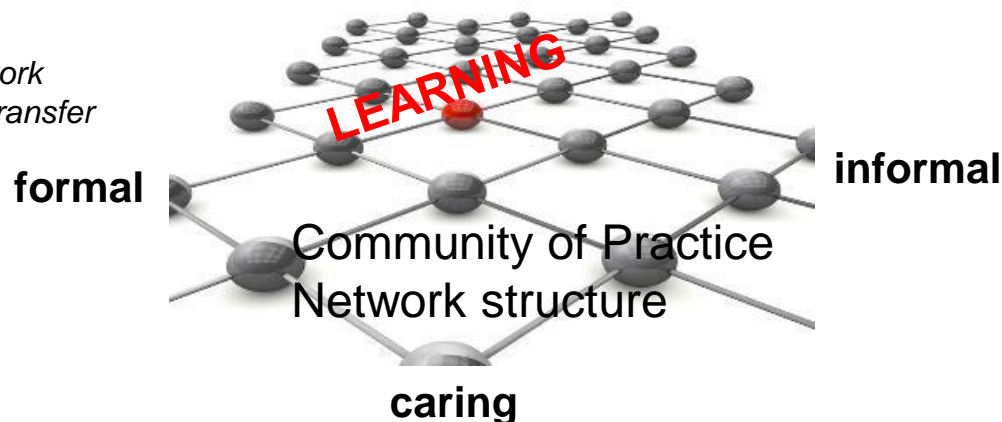
 Mentoring is used in our work

Result 1:

Internship mentoring is more a network phenomenon than the responsibility of one individual. Several employees at different hierarchical levels can be involved. Peers also come to feel responsible for the mentoring.

Knowledge transfer

(Billett 2002)
Guided learning at work
Guided learning for transfer



(Billett 2002)
Participation in work activities

The implication is that research and practice should be located within a relational phenomenon and associated network structures.

Result 2:

Protection requirements are recognised. Coordination therefore is needed

“Und dann habe ich da halt um 12 schon kommen müssen und habe/ also normalerweise Arbeitsbeginn war um halb vier und da halt um zwölf und dann trotzdem bis ein-half zwei bin ich heimgefahren und des war recht schockierend für den Anfang und ich habe gedacht, das darf man mit Praktikanten nicht machen usw, aber es hat irgendwie keinen interessiert.”
(Fall 38, Z 59)

„And so I had to be there at 12 – normally work started at half past three but there at 12 and even then until one or one thirty when I went home and it was quite a shock to start with and I thought, you can't do that with an intern but somehow it just didn't interest anybody.“
(case 38, 59)

Result 3:

Displaying and explaining (besides delegation of tasks) are given priority especially within administrative and technical internships; in tourism internships the integration in the team is given more weight

„Sie haben mir alles erklärt und darauf geachtet, dass sie es nur erklärt haben und nicht gleich jeder etwas machte. Damit ich es eben besser verstehen konnte.“ (Fall 2, Z. 84)

„They explained everything to me and made sure that they only explained it and not that everyone just did something. So that I understand it better.“ (case 2, 84)

„Ich habe schon das Gefühl gehabt, dass ich jetzt ein Teil vom Team bin und eigentlich ein anderes als bei zu vorherigen Praktika.“ (Fall 17, Z. 207)

„I did have the feeling that I was now part of a team and definitely a different feeling than in previous internships.“ (case 17, 107)“

Result 4:

There are additional components visible as organisational hierarchy experiences which influence the learning spaces of interns

„Also als Praktikant bin ich zur gleichen Zeit gekommen wie die Lehrlinge und da haben wir als erstes geputzt, also staubsaugen und alles abwischen, abstauben usw. Das haben alle anderen nicht gemacht, nur Praktikanten und Lehrlinge (lacht leise), was eh schon interessant war.“ (Fall 38, Z 55)

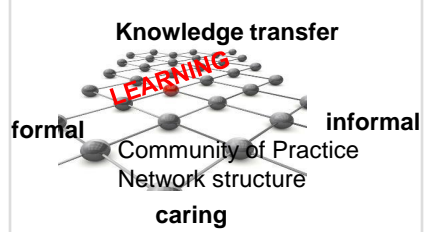
„So, as an intern I arrived at the same time as the apprentices and the first thing we did was cleaning, like vacuuming and wiping everything, dusting etc. The others didn't do that, only the interns and apprentices (laughs quietly), which was quite interesting anyway.“ (case 38, 55)

The necessity for opening up the learning spaces

Using the different learning spaces offered in internships requires an active opening up of these learning spaces in **three dimensions**:

1. ‘Opening up’ the **person** itself for new experiences. Development of a reflective attitude supported by specific tools like portfolios, learning journal, logbooks...
2. ‘Opening up’ the learning spaces by **school** driven activities: before, during or after the working experience period
3. ‘Opening up’ the learning spaces through in-company **workplace** mentoring (network) and integration into a ‘community of practice’

The Opening Tableau

Phases of internship	pre	during	post
Opening dimension			
Individual learner	Careful selection of internship positions related to own learning interests. Preparing reflective tools (like logbooks).	Continuously reflecting and documenting the learning experiences, special events, new insights	Comparing and sharing the reflections with peers and teachers
school	Preparing the logbooks/portfolios/other tools together with the learners Counselling in the application phase, Setting quality criteria	Infrastructure for special needs Motivate the individual learners to reflect	Combining work experiences with subject related knowledge Being open to innovation coming from the workplaces
company	Organising and information of the ,network‘ Becoming informed about school curricula and requirements	 <p>Knowledge transfer LEARNING formal informal Community of Practice Network structure caring</p>	Supporting school and interns by giving feedback

Thank you for your attention!

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