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Sources of Support and Their Benefits for New Primary School Teachers in Switzerland

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Abstract: In Switzerland, teacher education comprises a single phase of training, with students entering the profession directly after graduation. New teachers face challenges that they do not experience during training. Therefore, it is crucial that they receive support before and during this transition period. To identify the forms of support that meet the needs of teachers entering the profession, we investigated this issue through semi-structured interviews and a complex code configuration. The results showed that various sources of support ease teachers' entry into the profession. Central aspects include exchanging teaching experiences and receiving reassurance related to their teaching practice. It is therefore conducive to the careers of new teachers if the school culture promotes looking for and accepting help, asking questions, and the exchange of teaching material.

Keywords: career entry; support; mentoring; complex code configuration

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1. Introduction

Teacher education is complex, consisting of theoretical foundations and experiences with professional practice. The latter is a core element of the education and training of teachers (Hennissen et al., 2017). In recent years, many German-speaking teacher education institutions have reformed the proportion of practical school training in their programmes (Ronfeldt & Reiniger, 2012). In addition, increased attention is being paid to the career entry period to ensure that new teachers remain in the profession longer (Freisler-Mühlemann & Winkler, 2022; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). This transition is especially relevant in countries that follow a single-phase training model, in which students enter the profession directly after their training is complete. New teachers are responsible for dealing with the tasks they encounter and developing the competencies necessary to cope with them (Farahmandpour & Voelkel, 2025; Hascher & Winkler, 2017). Thus, the career entry phase can be decisive (Smith Washington, 2022). Teachers perceive the demands of teaching, extracurricular duties (e.g., administrative and organisational tasks; meetings), and school reforms to be particularly challenging (Nguyen & Springer, 2021). Dealing with these issues helps teachers to develop their professionalism, which 'must not only be acquired, but also cultivated and further developed according to the current demands' (Keller-Schneider, 2016, p. 278). Therein lies the dynamism and inevitability of the process; working through these demands often leads to new perspectives and an increase in competence (Freisler-Mühlemann & Winkler, 2022; Stewart et al., 2020).

To achieve professionalisation in the career entry phase, teachers use the personal and social resources available to them (Freisler-Mühlemann & Winkler, 2022). Personal

resources, such as motivation, self-efficacy, conscientiousness, and resilience, promote the development of competence (Tang et al., 2024; Winkler & Freisler-Mühlemann, 2023). Social resources, such as support in the professional environment, help teachers deal with demands and achieve professional well-being (Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2022; Hobson et al., 2009). Sources of support are helpful because they supply key learning opportunities and advance the professional development of teachers in the career entry phase (Kemmis et al., 2014).

However, the current research does not supply a clear answer as to which forms of support are important for professional development (Admiraal et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the subjective perception and use of social support are central to coping with professional demands (Farahmandpour & Voelkel, 2025; Lane & Sweeny, 2018). They enable the reflexive examination of professional challenges in a professional learning setting and thus a broadening of perspectives (Winkler & Freisler-Mühlemann, 2023). Social resources also have a positive effect on teaching competencies during one's studies and first year in the profession (Sancar et al., 2021). Support from teaching staff is perceived as particularly helpful when it comprises joint lesson planning (Hobson et al., 2009). Cooperation and collegial support are also valued by students as promoting their development (Bonsen & Frey, 2014; Lane & Sweeny, 2018). Collegial support is particularly helpful when it entails intensive cooperation to solve professional challenges (Lane & Sweeny, 2018; Smith Washington, 2022).

There are considerable differences among the support teachers receive during the first year of employment (Winkler & Freisler-Mühlemann, 2023; Keller-Schneider, 2021). For example, there is institutional support in the professional environment and private support from other individuals (Freisler-Mühlemann & Winkler, 2022). Intra-school support often includes (partially paid) mentoring by experienced teachers who work with new teachers and function as contact and support persons (Tang et al., 2024; Winkler & Freisler-Mühlemann, 2023; Lane & Sweeny, 2018). Exchanges about teaching, organisation, pupils, and classes are particularly valuable for professional well-being (Hennissen et al., 2008).

However, empirical studies also show that collegial support can be experienced as stressful. This is especially true when personalities and attitudes clash (Lane & Sweeny, 2018; Winkler & Freisler-Mühlemann, 2023). This raises the question of how higher education institutions and schools can ensure that sources of support in the career entry phase promote professionalisation.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Mentoring as a Source of Support in the Career Entry Phase

Sources of support for new teachers have developed over time. Intra-school mentoring has played a significant role in programmes in the English-speaking world since the 1980s. This is described as a form of one-to-one support involving an experienced teacher (mentor) and an early career teacher (mentee); it aims to reduce stress, increase self-esteem, and make learning feel good (Bullough, 2012; Ewing, 2021). This traditional model of mastery teaching, characterised by clear hierarchies, has been replaced by the concept of constructive reflection, which focuses on professional development (Wang et al., 2010; Kuhn et al., 2022) and emphasises the construction of knowledge through collaborative 'active thinking' processes. This movement towards cooperative mentorship is based on the principle of peer-to-peer mentoring (Baeten & Simons, 2014; Fabel-Lamla & Gräsel, 2022). Peer-to-peer mentoring does not mean that 'everyone is equal because of their knowledge, expertise and experience, but means the interaction that enriches knowledge and cognition based on the diversity of people' (Meri, 2014, p. 150). Connected to this are the goals of promoting the

learning and further development of both the mentees and mentors (Ewing, 2021; Kuhn et al., 2022).

In German-speaking countries, mentoring programmes at schools are rather rare and empirically little studied (Keller-Schneider, 2021). In Switzerland, research on the quality and effectiveness of in-school training programmes during the career entry phase is similarly modest. For a long time, teacher training was mainly focused on providing basic skills and knowledge. The establishment of teacher training universities in the 2000s was accompanied by drastic structural changes (Tettenborn Schärer & Tremp, 2020). For example, they were also responsible for the continuing education of teachers. This led to the development of many educational sources that support and further train teachers as they enter their careers (Zimmermann et al., 2018).

Within the framework of continuing education, concepts of mentoring for teachers entering the profession have been developed in Switzerland. Mentoring is understood as a 'Variant[. . .] of cooperative learning and working Forms[. . .] as they are increasingly demanded for the development of school and teaching quality' (Staub & Niggli, 2012, p. 40) and a format of guided professionalisation (Smith Washington, 2022). The mentor–mentee relationship is understood as crucial in professionalisation (Ewing, 2021). In mentoring, teachers are given the opportunity to expand their competencies by reflexively connecting practical experience and theory-based knowledge (Kemmis et al., 2014). Mentoring processes aim at 'a critical analysis of existing practice' (Hascher, 2012, p. 112). Professional development is thus a form of self-development; teachers are responsible for shaping their professionalisation processes in a self-responsible manner while interacting with various support services (Keller-Schneider, 2021).

These explanations make it clear that mentoring cannot be the sole responsibility of schools but requires the binding cooperation of schools, universities, and individual actors to meet the needs of teachers entering the profession. Teachers have to work together in various situations at school, and mentoring can be cooperative; therefore, cooperation is important for teachers entering the profession. To better understand how teachers cooperate with others to cope with the challenges entering the profession, and which sources of support are used to meet teachers' needs, it is necessary to consider the forms of cooperation that teachers encounter.

Several studies have shown that cooperation in everyday school life is mainly limited to the exchange of information and teaching materials between teachers (Freisler-Mühlemann & Winkler, 2022; Lane & Sweeny, 2018; Tang et al., 2024). Sophisticated forms of cooperation, such as the co-construction of knowledge, are rarely found (Stewart et al., 2020).

Before Baeten and Simons (2014), with their description of different qualities of cooperation, and Gräsel et al. (2006), with their classification of cooperation into contrasting functions, Little (1990) examined different intensities of cooperation. She described the least intensive form of cooperation as comprising 'storytelling and scanning for ideas', a non-binding, spontaneous exchange such as telling stories from everyday life and listening to the stories other teachers tell. Teachers receive information and certainty through the quick exchange of stories and can start a joint reflection process. A slightly more intensive form of cooperation is 'aid and assistance', which involves selective, mutual help and support; it often means asking for advice. In this way, teachers entering the profession can ask for help and, at best, discuss and avert difficulties.

More intensive cooperation involves routinely exchanging materials, methods, ideas and opinions. Little (1990) called this form of cooperation 'sharing'. This makes teaching less private and communicates a teacher's work to others. In this way, it reveals their expectations of themselves and their students, as well as their own abilities. The most inten-

sive form of cooperation is described as 'joint work' and involves shared responsibility for teaching, collective notions of autonomy and support, leadership, and group membership based on professional work. Cooperative work depends on the framework, organisation of tasks, time, and other resources (Little, 1990). The intensity of cooperation present in sources of support has not been widely investigated to date. However, knowing the level of intensity in cooperation experienced by teachers entering the profession is relevant to the development of support services in order to tailor them to the needs of those entering the profession and to best support their development.

2.2. Sources of Support in the Canton of Bern (Switzerland)

In this paper, we explore this question by examining data from a study in Switzerland. In the canton of Bern, teachers are trained at the University of Teacher Education Bern, Switzerland PHBern). There is a three-year, full-time programme for primary school teachers and a 4.5-year, full-time programme for secondary school teachers. As this research focuses on primary school teachers in our research project, the following section provides more detail about the support provided during the career entry phase of this programme (PHBern, 2021a).

In their first semester, students gain an insight into everyday school life and culture through eight weekly half-day classroom visits and a two-week block of practical training in the middle of the semester. By the end of their studies, they complete a total of five internships with different focuses. Before, during, and after the internships, they are supported and accompanied by various university lecturers and seminars. During the internships, a practice teacher is responsible for supporting the students (PHBern, 2021a).

At the end of their last semester, students are specifically prepared to enter the profession in a planning and orientation week. This is a cooperative, cycle-specific programme to help them prepare for the school year. Along with their university lecturers and fellow students, the prospective teachers develop an annual plan for their future classes. During the introductory phase, a practice support group and continuing education courses on various key topics are offered. In the practice support group, the teachers meet to exchange their experiences and discuss difficulties together. The courses are short training sessions which refresh or deepen their knowledge of relevant topics, such as assessment or classroom management. In addition, teachers can take advantage of individual coaching sessions that are tailored to their needs and are free of charge (PHBern, 2021b).

In addition to university support, on-site support at the school is also important, as new teachers take on responsibility for their own classes for the first time. The canton of Bern offers financial compensation for mentors who cooperate with and support teachers entering the profession. Mentors are usually experienced teachers who work at the same school and have an interest in consciously and specifically cooperating with new teachers. To become mentors, they can complete a course at the university and/or apply directly. In this course, they reflect on the distribution of roles and tasks and thus advance their own professionalisation. Currently, there is no comprehensive further training for mentors (PHBern, 2021b; Freisler-Mühlemann et al., 2021). Further support for teachers entering the profession is the responsibility of the practical schools.

Our research project, 'Ready for practice? A professional biographical study on the career entry of teachers', which is discussed in this article, showed that the greatest challenges at the beginning of professional life relate to working with parents, classroom management, and lesson planning, as well as cooperation with the other teachers at school. Participants described the practice support groups provided by the university as helpful. They appreciated having a space where people in the same professional situation could come together and share their experiences. They also considered the planning weeks, in

which they can prepare for the upcoming year of teaching in cooperation with lecturers and other new teachers, particularly important (Winkler & Freisler-Mühlemann, 2023). In all these situations and sources of support, the teachers entering the profession have to cooperate with other teachers. In this article, we specifically investigate in which form and level of intensity (based on Little's (1990) framework) new teachers perceive support. Knowing which forms of support are suitable will enable the targeted orientation of support in professional practice and help to understand how new teachers could be supported to stay longer in the profession.

3. Materials and Methods

Within the framework of the research project, 'Ready for practice? A professional biographical study on career entry', we collected qualitative data to answer these questions. The project was based on a mixed-methods design, as it included a longitudinal, quantitative questionnaire with three measurement points and in-depth semi-structured interviews that took place after the participants completed one year of teaching. These varied data collection methods provided unique insights into how people deal with requirements during the career entry phase. Qualitative approaches are suitable for an explorative study of the use of support services, as they allow for deep insight into subjective views and orientations, which is not possible in quantitative surveys. Accordingly, this article is based on a qualitative survey (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023). The qualitative sub-study included interviews with teachers from the 2018 graduation cohort of the University of Teacher Education Bern's primary education programme, which were conducted at the beginning of their second year in the profession. The participants agreed to be interviewed when they took the quantitative survey and were later contacted to take part in the qualitative sub-study. Twenty-three women and one man took part, with an average age of 25.5 (SD = 3.84) years old.

The interviews were conducted at the participants' schools by two moderators using a semi-structured guide, which was based on the quantitative surveys and the research questions of the qualitative sub-study. Each interview lasted between 34 and 96 min and included questions about their experiences in the first year as a teacher, their social and personal resources, the relevance of practical experiences during their studies, and improvement potentials in the support system of the school and the teacher university. With the verbal consent of the participants, the interviews were recorded with a dictation device and permission was given for the results to be published anonymously. They were then transcribed and analysed deductively according to the questions and inductively according to the speakers' contributions using the MAXQDA 22 software, following the guidelines laid out by Kuckartz and Rädiker (2023). The final category system was created using Cohen's Kappa for the frequency of agreement of the codes related to the main category 'Relevant social resources' ($\kappa = 0.87$; What forms of support were important for you to master challenges in the career entry phase?), which comprised 'Support of teaching staff' ($\kappa = 0.87$; How important was the teaching staff as a form of support?), 'Support of university' ($\kappa = 0.81$; How important was the university as a form of support?), 'Support of school principal' (How important was the school principal as a form of support?), 'Support of private environment' ($\kappa = 0.79$; How important was the private environment as a form of support?), and the main category 'Support of Mentor' ($\kappa = 0.84$; How important was the mentor as a form of support?).

The various codes were discussed and finally assigned during an intercoder conference. In a further step, the coded speech contributions were re-coded based on the aforementioned categories to consider sources, areas, and forms of support. Care was taken to ensure that a form and an area were identified for each offer of support mentioned.

Often, no specific area was mentioned, but support was expressed in general terms. For these segments, the support area 'no specific area' was used.

Subsequently, the forms of support were classified in terms of Little's (1990) four forms. This classification is suitable for our analysis because it describes different intensities of cooperation, which correspond to the pre-formulated categories or support the grouping of subcategories: ST (Storytelling and scanning for ideas) includes exchange and report experiences, obtaining an external perspective; AA (Aid and assistance) includes receiving encouragement, support, help and answering questions; JW (Joint work) includes collaboration and closing knowledge gaps; and SH (Sharing) includes exchanging teaching material.

The three main categories, 'offer of support', 'support area', and 'form of support', were discussed consensually in a total of five interviews and finally assigned. Table 1 supplies an overview of these three categories, the subcategories, and the number of times they were mentioned in descending order of frequency.

Table 1. Main categories with subcategories and number of mentions.

Source of Support	N	Support Area	N	Form of Support	N
Private environment	27	Teaching	51	Storytelling and scanning (ST)	92
Teaching staff	25	No specific area	50	Aid and assistance (AA)	85
Mentoring	25	Parental work	12	Joint work (JW)	28
School principal	20	Challenging situations with pupils	12	Sharing (SH)	10
Practice Support Group	6	Teaching resources	10		
Planning week	5	Admin./Orga.	9		
Former fellow students	5	Workload	9		
Further training support	4	Self-confidence	7		
Lecturer	2	Teaching resources	3		

To work out which offer of support was used for which area and form, a complex code configuration was conducted in MAXQDA22. This is particularly suitable for the analysis of correlations between various dimensions (MAXQDA, 2023).

The columns in Table 2 were formed using the main categories, and each row holds a combination of the subcategories. The column 'Number of combinations' supplies information on how often each combination occurs in the data and the percentage it represents of all combinations found. The hits were counted only once per document, regardless of how many segments of a document included the same combination of codes.

Table 2. Results of the complex code configuration of the support categories.

Source of Support	Area of Support	Form of Support	Number of Combinations
Mentoring	Teaching	AA	12 (5.7%)
Mentoring	Teaching	ST	10 (4.3%)
Mentoring	Admin./Orga.	AA	6 (2.6%)
Mentoring	Teaching	JW	5 (2.2%)
Mentoring	Admin./Orga.	ST	4 (1.7%)
Mentoring	Teaching	SH	4 (1.7%)
Mentoring	Teaching material	ST	4 (1.7%)
Teaching staff	Teaching	ST	10 (4.3%)
Teaching staff	Teaching	AA	6 (2.6%)
Teaching staff	Situations with pupils	ST	5 (2.2%)
Private environment	Teaching	ST	7 (3.0%)
Private environment	Teaching	AA	4 (1.7%)

Table 2. *Cont.*

Source of Support	Area of Support	Form of Support	Number of Combinations
School principal	Parental work	AA	6 (2.6%)
School principal	Teaching	JW	4 (1.7%)
Planning week	Teaching	ST	4 (1.7%)
Further training support	Teaching	JW	4 (1.7%)
			232 (100%)

4. Results

The results in Table 1 illustrate the importance of support services in teaching. In particular, the lower-intensity forms of support, such as 'ST' (Storytelling and scanning) and 'AA' (Aid and assistance), were the most widespread. It is also striking that support from the private environment, teaching staff, mentors, and school principals were mentioned equally often, which indicates that diverse forms of support are relevant for teachers entering the profession. Since the research question focuses on specific areas of support, the subcategory "no specific areas" was not included in the complex code configuration. Table 2 shows the combinations that were mentioned the most often.

The combinations are arranged according to their frequency. First, mentorship was present in seven different combinations that appeared in more than one interview. This offer of support was used both in relation to teaching and administrative/organisational tasks—mostly in the lower-intensity forms, ST and AA. With regard to teaching, however, there are also higher-intensity forms of cooperation intensities, such as 'SH' (sharing) and 'JW' (joint work). One quotation from an interview describes the use of mentoring. The quotations have been translated from German into English.

> *'As a first point of contact for problems //Mhm// As support, giving concrete ideas on how to implement things, but also giving materials for copying, or whatever. So simply that what then relieves like there, where it is necessary. [. . .] That you do not have to work everything out yourself from scratch, [. . .]. Yes, and also the exchange about challenges, how the other teacher would do it.'* (LP281)

Support from other members of the teaching staff, who are also responsible for classes and have similar challenges, were mainly used for ST about teaching, sharing experiences and hearing about how other teachers are doing. At the AA level of intensity, teaching staff engaged in answering questions and providing motivating and confirming statements. In contrast to the other sources of support, the teaching staff was mentioned seven times in connection with ST about situations with pupils. The support included exchanges about challenging situations, uncertainties with teaching and mutual experience-sharing. This is illustrated by the following quotes:

> *'And if you're lucky enough, like I am, to be able to work so closely with someone who is also willing to show you things and has the patience to explain things, then that's invaluable //mhm//.'* (LP32)

> *'It is very important for me because it always motivates me //mhm// also just sitting together, talking about, about children and telling each other about situations that didn't work out or that were just funny.'* (LP76)

> *'The teaching staff is a bit, it sounds a bit romantic now, an anchor for me. I can talk to them about everything that happens in class, and they always have an open ear or say, yes, just now (.) I did not want to say that I'm sick. //mhm// And one of the colleagues was then like now you go home, we are here.'* (LP172)

The private environment is also an important source of support for new teachers. It was most often mentioned in relation to ST about teaching. Being able to talk about their experiences with individuals who are independent of the school can help teachers distance themselves, as well as categorise and process what happened. In addition, the private environment can provide companions for excursions or class trips, or validate a teacher's actions. This rises to the AA level of intensity:

> *'My environment has helped me a lot in all kinds of situations, be it in the form of some kind of support during a school trip //mhm//, if you need an escort or even if you have situations where you don't really know what to do or where you are not quite satisfied with yourself, that you can really just get rid of everything or just do things again that have nothing to do with school in order to clear your head.'* (LP76)

The school principal, on the other hand, was mainly used for support with dealing with parents (AA) and teaching (JW). Teachers consulted the school principal when they faced challenging situations with parents so that they could receive assistance:

> *'So, the reassurance that, (.) especially in the cooperation with parents, that you can discuss it with the school principal and that he then stands behind you.'* (LP266)

The teachers also mentioned cooperating with their school principals (JW):

> *'Maybe for difficult contact with parents, if there were problems, also certain administrative things, ehm, yes, actually also in the form of, if the burden becomes too great, reducing it. [. . .] She was also sometimes present at preliminary discussions of the clarification //Yes// And she has taught for a long time herself and could offer pedagogical support.'*. (LP281)

Contrary to the expectations that teachers would engage in JW or SH during the planning week, this time is most often used for ST (i.e., sharing experiences or ideas) about teaching. They are happy to have a place where they can exchange ideas, also because not all teachers have the same level of self-confidence when they are entering the profession:

> *'I was also in the preparation week //yes// at the University, which I found really great, that you also exchange information between other newcomers but also between experienced people. And so, it also became clear that some people did not yet feel so confident about starting and that I was not alone.'* (LP40)

It is gratifying for the university that its continuing education programmes are used to promote JW in teaching. Teachers sign up for them to work through their knowledge deficits with others:

> *'So, I have, ehm, the further training that I have done, I have done further training in [language teaching] because last year I was still employed for one lesson in [language teaching]. So, I think the further education offer, I think it's still important to fill the gaps, but also to deepen areas that you find interesting.'* (LP281)

So, the entire range of support services is used during the career entry period, albeit in different forms and predominantly for the area of teaching.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the situations in which sources of support were mentioned makes it clear that uncertainties arise, especially in teaching. This supports the findings of earlier research that the requirements of teaching are perceived as particularly demanding (Keller-Schneider, 2021; Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2022). To counteract these uncertainties, teachers entering the profession resort to a variety of support services (Ewing, 2021; Lane & Sweeny, 2018). This shows that they specifically seek opportunities to develop their teaching skills

and improve (Admiraal et al., 2019). Future studies should investigate the relationship between the forms of support and professional development (Tang et al., 2024; Sancar et al., 2021), considering the fact that the least intensive forms of cooperation seem to be the most common (Little, 1990). It seems that first-year teachers predominantly need to exchange experiences and feel validated in their own actions to learn and strengthen their well-being (Ewing, 2021; Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2022). To engage in the reflexive linking of practical experience and theory-based knowledge and thus more intensive forms of support, they need to be offered further education courses or encounter challenges that cannot be mastered alone—for example, legally complex situations involving parents (Kemmis et al., 2014; Winkler & Freisler-Mühlemann, 2023). In addition, the effectiveness of the forms of support for professional development could be analysed in an intervention design.

The fact that the private environment, teaching staff, mentors, and school principals were mentioned equally often underlines the vital importance of a variety of support (Winkler & Freisler-Mühlemann, 2023). This is particularly important because collegial support can sometimes be perceived as a burden (Lane & Sweeny, 2018; Hobson et al., 2009); in such cases, external sources of support can be helpful. If the interpersonal relationship is right, mentors can also provide versatile forms of support (Kemmis et al., 2014). Such sources of support are used in various contexts, including teaching and administrative and organisational tasks (Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2022). Mentoring is strongly represented in the less intensive forms of cooperation, ST and AA. This suggests that mentoring plays a key role in the individual support of teachers and their well-being (Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2022; Kemmis et al., 2014; Kuhn et al., 2022). It is therefore important that new teachers are accompanied and supported in their first year on the job so that they can continue to develop, train their professional behaviour, and avoid overwork.

Support from the teaching staff, on the other hand, generally comprises sharing experiences, which are not only about teaching but also demanding situations, uncertainties and challenges in everyday school life. These exchanges cover various forms of intensity and are particularly important in creating a sense of community and cohesion. This goes hand in hand with the fact that collegial support is particularly helpful when colleagues seek solutions together (Keller-Schneider, 2016; Lane & Sweeny, 2018). However, our research highlights the unique observation that having a relationship with one person from the teaching staff is sufficient for intensive cooperation (Winkler & Freisler-Mühlemann, 2023). It is not important which function this person has, although it is helpful if they know the class as well. A culture of openness in the school is generally conducive to balancing the need for exchange and validation of one's own actions (Admiraal et al., 2019; Tang et al., 2024). However, from the perspective of teacher education, it is crucial to understand how these people support the teacher professionally in order to enhance the quality of classroom education (Tang et al., 2024; Farahmandpour & Voelkel, 2025).

The school principal is mainly used to support working with parents (AA) and teaching (JW). In demanding situations with parents, the principal can back the teachers up and take part actively if necessary. This underscores the role of the school principal in promoting cooperation between teachers, parents and the school community as a whole (Zimmermann et al., 2018). The main tasks of school principals are therefore to support their teachers in their work with different people and stand by them when challenges arise (DeMatthews et al., 2021).

Outside of the school, teachers can talk about their experiences in their private environments. This was particularly significant in allowing teachers to engage in collaboration at the levels of ST and AA in connection with coping with stress and emotional strain in the classroom. This is in line with the findings of earlier research, which showed that social resources support teachers in dealing with demands and their own well-being (Freisler-

Mühlemann et al., 2021; Lane & Sweeny, 2018). In such contexts, teachers can share and process their experiences and thereby experience reinforcement (Bullough, 2012; Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2022). In addition, they can recruit companions for excursions from the private environment.

6. Conclusions

Our study was based on 24 interviews, in which teachers retrospectively considered their first year in the profession. It provides a specific insight into the career entry phase of primary school teachers in the canton of Bern in Switzerland. Its agreement with earlier findings suggests that the analyses can also supply indications of the use of social resources among other new teachers. However, only combinations occurring more than three times in the complex code configuration (MAXQDA, 2023) were discussed, and the other combinations were not addressed. This means that this study provides limited insight into the use of support but shows the central combinations relevant to the research question.

Overall, there are situations at the beginning of their careers in which new teachers are uncertain. To cope with these situations, the teachers mainly confide in people with whom they get along well and who are willing to help them. A broad range of support, which enables the exchange of experiences and encouragement in teaching, is extremely helpful (Winkler & Freisler-Mühlemann, 2023; Smith Washington, 2022). Therefore, it is conducive to a successful career entry phase if the school culture promotes seeking and accepting help, asking questions, and exchanging material (Sancar et al., 2021). The university addresses needs related to lesson planning and content preparation and offers teachers opportunities to link theory and practical experiences (Hennissen et al., 2017; PHBern, 2021a). All these factors contribute to supporting the integration, professional development, and retention of new teachers, both in Switzerland and internationally. In the end, knowing the sources and specific kinds of support that are helpful to new teachers will strengthen their entry into the profession.

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