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Title

The Importance of Induction Programmes for Beginning teachers in Independent Catholic Secondary Schools in New South Wales

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Abstract

      Beginning teacher induction is an important process in acculturating teachers to their new profession (Kearney, 2010). Researchers argue that the first year of teaching is crucial in the success, retention and development of teachers (Smith & Ingersoll 2004). The aim of this research is to ascertain the effectiveness of induction programmes in Catholic Independent High Schools in NSW; establish whether those programmes are congruent with what the literature deems as best practice; and to determine the implications this has for policy for the independent school sector. The study will comprise: an extensive literature review; a document review of induction/mentoring policies in NSW and in the schools chosen for the research; and in-depth interviews with administrators and participants of induction programmes. Researchers point out that the support and guidance in the first year of teaching is critical in arresting growing attrition rates and enabling the capacity to establish beginning teachers as valuable members of the profession (Smith & Ingersoll 2004, Wong 2004). With a looming teacher shortage crisis in NSW, effective induction programmes could be the answer; however, there has been insufficient research, especially in the independent sector, with regards to these programmes.

Key Words

Induction, Beginning Teacher, Teacher Attrition, Mentoring

<u>Introduction</u>

The art of becoming a successful and effective educator is not one that happens overnight; however, in most cases this is what beginning teachers are faced with. Recent graduates who apply for a teaching position and get offered a job are often required to carry out the same responsibilities and function as the seasoned veteran in the next classroom, on the first day of their new career. Can this be right? Is there another profession that demands of its new recruits what it expects of their more experienced colleagues?

It is no wonder that in New South Wales, in particular, we are facing a teacher shortage crisis (Australian Associated Press [AAP], 2008). With the baby-boom generation of teachers nearing retirement and an estimated 40% of the teaching community retiring in the next five years, coupled with a 25% attrition rate of teachers within their first five years of teaching (Department of Education, Science & Training, 2003), we face an uncertain future. Is New South Wales, or Australia, any different from the United States or Britain? In the U.S., Ingersoll & Smith (2004) found that up to 40-50% of beginning teachers leave the profession in the first five years. The numbers are similar in the U.K. where 30% of teachers leave in the first five years (Adams, 2003).

There seems to be a growing trend in Australia for teachers to abandon their training and move on to other fields. While this was also the case in the United States, this trend has slowed significantly since the Global Financial Crisis and growing unemployment rates in the U.S.; however, it is possible that this trend will continue once the economy has improved and unemployment rates are low and steady. While it is difficult to speculate about the varying reasons teachers are leaving the profession, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) report a correlating link between teachers who are inducted into their workplace and attrition rates; they say that involvement in an induction program reduces the probability of teachers leaving the school or the profession by up to 20%. Noting this link between attrition and induction, and the 'looming teacher crisis' in New South Wales, it would seem practical and reasonable to suggest that implementing effective induction could help to improve the situation in the long-term.

The promotion of effective on-going induction is not new, nor is it unfamiliar in the New South Wales public school system. In 2002, the Australian commonwealth Government published, *An Ethic of Care: Effective Programs for Beginning Teachers*, which recommended induction and mentoring for all beginning teachers in Australia, and subsequently, NSW has instituted policy that mandates some aspects of the recommendations. This however, is not the case in many independent schools. Because all registered schools, public, independent, and Catholic systemic in Australia receive funding, there is scope to ensure that government recommendations are upheld; however, because of the lack of government monitoring and bureaucracy in independent schools, this does not seem to be the case.

This paper presents initial findings from research currently being conducted and will illustrate some of the key issues surrounding the problems faced by beginning teachers and how, through the implementation of effective on-going induction, these problems may be ameliorated. First, key ideas from the research and the literature in both the United States and Australia regarding induction will be presented. Second, findings from the literature review with regards to what constitutes effective induction will be presented and justified. Lastly, a discussion of the proposed methodology and expected outcomes of the research will be presented followed by concluding comments.

<u>Key Findings from the Research</u>

<u>Defining Induction</u>

If one inference can be made from the literature, it is that induction has various meanings and can be described in many different ways. Definitions of induction range from simple orientation (Martinez, 1994) to system-wide, on-going support that becomes part of an integrated professional development program (Wong, 2004). With such varying degrees of interpretation it is difficult for schools, and teachers, to understand what constitutes effective induction and for school leaders to implement

programs.   In Australia, the Department of Education, Science and Training (2002), notes that the term induction denotes a 'critical phase' in a 'continuum of professional development' (p.11).

Martinez (1994) says that the term induction needs to be considered very carefully to avoid an interpretation that results in orientation to the workplace. Therefore, for the purpose of this research project it was essential to determine what constitutes effective induction as a starting point in analysing current programs. The operational definition of induction for this research is based on the Australian Commonwealth Government's recommendations and the Victorian state government's definition, which is founded on the premise of developing learning communities:

Beginning teacher induction is defined as, "the primary phase in the continuum of beginning teacher professional development towards their progression into the learning community and continuing professional development throughout their career" (Kearney, 2010).

Problems Faced by Beginning Teachers

The difficulties beginning teachers face in commencing their career are well documented in the literature: failure to receive mentoring and supervision, receiving support for behaviour management, excessive responsibilities and lack of recognition for professional growth (McCormack, 2005; Ramsey, 2000) are all common issues raised by beginning teachers. While many of these same dilemmas might be faced in similar professions among newcomers, the extent to which teaching happens in isolation from professional peers, as well as the obvious variables of dealing with up to thirty students simultaneously, compounds these problems to the point that teachers face burnout (Wojnowski et al., 2003).

King and Newman (2000) report a correlating link between the extreme challenges faced by beginning teachers and the quality of teaching and learning that is occurring in those classrooms where teachers struggle. This is not a problem realised solely by academics and those conducting research, most of this criticism comes from anecdotal feedback received and research concerning the perceptions of teachers in their early career who indicate that professional development and support, specifically in their early years of teaching, would help alleviate some of the difficulties faced during this time (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Suk Yoon & Birman, 2001).

Attrition and Retention

Although the alarming attrition rates amongst teachers have been discussed, it is important to look at this from an alternate point of view, teacher retention. What is the responsibility of the profession with regards to teacher retention? Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found a correlating link between induction and a 20% increase in retention of teachers who were inducted into their workplace. The DEST in Australia, has stated that an on-going induction process "is essential for effective teaching" (2002, p.11). If the research confirms that induction is successful at retaining teachers, why do Smith and Ingersoll (2004) point out that in many cases, beginning teachers are left on their own, "to either succeed or fail in their own classrooms?" (p.682).

In 2002 the DEST found that administrative supervisors reported that 82.6% of teachers were mentored, while only 39.9% reported that they received mentoring. The overall findings in this study indicate, "variation and inconsistency in the management of induction" (DEST, 2002 p.16). The Australian Education Union has been conducting surveys of beginning teacher over the past few years and they have found that in each of the past three years, there has been an increase in the number of beginning teachers who report not having participated in either on-going induction or formal mentoring. In 2007 they found that 55.3% of teachers in their first three years of teaching had not had on-going induction and 52.7% had not had formal mentoring; this was a 7% increase from the findings of the previous year. These findings are in stark contrast to the recommendations of the Australian DEST (2002), which states that all beginning teachers should undergo an induction process that includes mentoring and on-going support.

According to the Ramsey Report (2000) this systematic ambivalence towards recommendations is not uncommon in Australia:

> Teaching is the most reviewed profession in Australia … since 1980 there have been 20 significant national and state reviews of teacher education. The most common characteristic of these reviews has been the lack of action on their recommendations. This situation contrasts markedly with other professions (par. 35).

These findings are astounding when compounded with the current rates of attrition amongst beginning teachers. Induction programs for beginning teachers are thought to be the most useful practice to assist new teachers and prevent attrition and burnout (Serpell, 2000; Wojnowski et al., 2003), yet we ignore this aspect and complain about the looming 'teacher shortage crisis'. Attrition however, should not be the sole justification for the introduction of induction, rather, there should be a focus on support, longevity and the subsequent effect it will have on the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Induction

The conceptual groundwork for this research project relied heavily on Lave and Wenger's Situated Learning (1991), which further relates to Vygotsky's theory that learning is a social construct and that people best learn through social interaction. Base on the premise of social cognition, Situated Learning and Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) form the basis for the construction of learning communities in schools and amongst staff. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that such learning is situated in a specific context and embedded within a particular social and physical environment; in this case the school. Through a process of Legitimate Peripheral Participation, the beginning teacher becomes accustomed to the community (teaching profession) they have newly entered and through participation in that community they move from the periphery into full participation in that community; in this instance, through the process of on-going induction.

The transformation to a learning community is the purpose of an effective on-going induction program not only designed to relieve the stress of early career teachers, but also to acculturate that teacher into an organisation that is focused on professional learning and quality teaching and learning in the classroom (Kearney, 2010).

Characteristics of Effective Induction

A review of five relevant studies[1] was conducted to determine what constitutes effective induction: AEU 2006, which surveyed beginning teachers across Australia; NCTAF 2005, which examined induction into learning communities in schools across the U.S.; Smith and Ingersoll (2004), which investigated the effects of induction on beginning teacher attrition; Wong (2004), which considered the ways that induction programmes help improve beginning teacher practice; and, DEST (2002), which examined effective programmes for beginning teachers in Australia. Of the fifteen elements of induction mentioned in the five studies, the elements that were chosen to denote effective induction for the purpose of this project had to be represented in three of the five studies. Only one element of induction was advocated by all five of the studies as being essential for effective induction, Provision of a Mentor. Structured time release, external meetings and seminars, and being part of a larger professional development program were deemed essential by four of the five studies. Lesson observation and multi-dimensionality scored lowest, only being mentioned by one of the five studies. The other three elements that make up the seven 'best practice' characteristics for effective induction are: professional support, collaboration with staff and beginning teacher conferences.

The seven characteristics of 'best practice induction' for the purpose of this research are:

- Professional Support
- Structured Time Release
- Collaboration with Staff

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[1] Wong 2004; Ingersoll & Smith 2004; NCTAF 2005; AEU 2006; DEST 2002

- External Meetings or Seminars

- Beginning Teacher Conferences

- Provision of a Mentor

- Induction as part of a larger school, district, or state based programme of learning

<u>Methodology</u>

A qualitative, collective case study has been selected for this research project to examine the nature of effective induction in the particular schools chosen. Because this study specifically involves independent Catholic schools, it will be important for the researcher to focus solely on the particular characteristics of those schools and their programs in the given context. Stake (2000) states that collective case studies are chosen because it is believed that, "understanding them [the various cases] will lead to a better understanding perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases" (p.437). While this study will concentrate on the six cases chosen, it is not intended that these cases will be typical of the norm; rather, it is the exceptionality of these cases that will be showcased. This project is concerned with the process and nature of induction on a broader scale throughout the independent education sector; therefore, it hopes to present the nature of effective induction and make recommendations to apply this on a broader scale.

The study will comprise four phases:

- The first phase is an extensive literature review, the purpose of which is twofold[2]:
  - to develop an operational definition of induction for the purpose of the study, and
  - to determine the critical elements for 'best practice' induction, which will establish the schools that are selected for the study and their congruence with the literature.
- The second phase will be the selection of the schools to be part of the collective case study.
  - This will be done through purposive sampling. The researcher has worked in the Independent Catholic education sector and will use contacts at particular schools, the AIS (Association of Independent Schools) and the IEU (Independent Education Union) to ascertain what schools are conducting effective induction.
  - The collective case study will comprise of three boys' and three girls' Catholic Independent high schools in the Sydney region. Sydney was chosen because it has the densest population of these schools in NSW. And single gender schools were chosen because there are only two co-educational Catholic independent high schools in Sydney, and therefore are not typical of the population.
- The third phase is a policy review.
  - An examination of policies and policy statement of administrators of induction programs and/or executive boards of the schools that are chosen for the study.
  - An extensive review of policies, documents, recommendations and procedures regarding induction by government departments, unions, and other organisations that work in conjunction with the independent education sector, i.e. IEU, AEU, AIS.
- The final phase of the research will be interviews with the administrators of the induction program and beginning teacher participants of those programs.
  - In-depth interviews will first be conducted with administrators of the program to ensure that the program selected meets the criteria for 'best practice' induction.

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[2] The first phase has been completed and has been reported in this paper

- These interviews will be used to identify: congruency with administrative expectation and teacher goals; compatibility with best practice; how the programs were developed; and, how the program is evaluated and improved.
    - o In-depth interviews with teachers who are or have participated in the program.
        - These interviews will be used to determine the nature of the program implemented, specifically: purpose, success factors, limitations and the processes of administration of the program.

<u>Expected Outcomes & Implications</u>

This study hopes to ascertain the nature of effective induction in independent Catholic high schools in NSW and make policy recommendations to the AIS (Association of Independent Schools) to implement professional development programs for school administrators to instruct them with regards to the value of implementing induction for their beginning teachers. A central aim in this research project is to give teachers a voice with regards to what they think and what they need to support them through those critical first few years in their careers so that they may flourish as educators and provide the best educational experience to their students. Lastly, this study can provide a platform for further research within the independent education sector nation-wide in Australia to ensure that there is more monitoring in these schools, and government recommendations and policies are being implemented and adhered to. Further research could examine the positive and negative effects of the programs in this study, to validate the findings that these programs are successful.

<u>Concluding Comments</u>

The definition of induction can be determined through a review of the literature; however, further research is needed to determine how schools in the independent sector define and implement induction. The finding by the DEST (2002) about the discrepancy between what is reported and what is actually happening suggests that induction is not fully understood by administrators or inductees. The research also reveals that many systems fail to differentiate between the terms mentoring and induction and often use the terms interchangeably (Wong 2004). This fundamental misunderstanding of the rationale and objective of induction makes further research necessary.

While significant research has been conducted in induction, most of the pre-eminent studies in Australia are nation-wide studies, which, while significant, have not focussed on any particular system in order to propose detailed modifications to improve current practice. What is needed is additional rigorous and specific research that examines the nature and context of beginning teacher induction in particular sectors of education so that policy proposals can be made where current policy is either inadequate or does not currently exist. The independent sector of education, because it is the least regulated by both federal and state agencies and has no bureaucratic hierarchy, can potentially be seen as the sector that may be the most non-compliant with current trends, suggestions and mandates by the governing institutions.

In NSW, the governing body for teacher certification is the NSW Institute of Teachers. While this body does not implement policy, they have the capacity to mandate certain criteria for beginning teachers before they become 'professionally competent'. In 2005 the Institute welcomed the Australian Government's establishment of a National Institute of Quality Teaching and School Leadership, which listed induction and mentoring as key elements for improving teaching across Australia; this however, has not resulted in mandating any such programmes or requirements for beginning teachers in NSW.

The successful development of early career teachers into effective educators needs to be at the forefront of educational reform. If we acknowledge that quality teaching is one of the most, if not the most, significant factor effecting student achievement levels (Hattie 2003), then ensuring that teachers are capable of delivering quality education has to be at the forefront of educational reform.

This paper seeks to open the discussion with regards to the importance of induction and mentoring to new teachers. The 'sink or swim' mentality of the 20th century needs to be revolutionised to foster the

career and the development of our young teachers, to make them effective educators of the next generation. By ignoring our teachers' development into successful and effective educators, we are subsequently overlooking their impact on future generations.

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