

THE STATUS OF TEACHER INDUCTION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

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Catholic schools struggle with issues of teacher recruitment and retention. The experience of new teachers—both those recently graduated from college as well as those new to the Catholic sector—often impacts retention rates. This article presents a study of induction programs for such new teachers in the US and Canada, summarizes current trends, and offers recommendations for the future.

INTRODUCTION

Beginning teachers leave the teaching profession at alarming rates. Roughly one third of all beginning teachers leave within the first 3 years (DePaul, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Approximately 9.3% do not make it through the first year (Weiss & Weiss, 1999) and by the end of 5 years, 50% of beginning teachers will have left (Ingersoll, 2001).

Attrition of beginning teachers is a concern for Catholic schools. In an analysis of the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey, Ingersoll (2001) found that private schools (Catholic and non-Catholic) had a higher annual turnover rate (18.9%) than public schools (12.4%); among private schools, Catholic schools had a 17.7% teacher turnover rate. Taymans (2007) reported that Catholic secondary "schools experience a 25% teacher attrition during the first two years and a 45% turnover after three to five years of service" (p. 7). The median attrition rate reported in Ontario, Canada, for 1993-1999 was 27% during the first 3 years of teaching (Government of Ontario, 2005).

According to estimates by Hussar (1999), by the end of 2008, there will be a shortage of 2.2 million teachers, with half of that shortage due to teacher attrition. In Canada, the estimates of teacher shortages are not as dramatic as

reported in the United States. However, there currently are and predicted to be significant need for teachers within certain teaching specialties (e.g., special education, languages, etc.) and in different regions in Canada (Gervais & Thony, 2001; Ontario College of Teachers, 2006). The problem lies not simply with an inadequate supply of new teachers, but rather with new teachers leaving the profession for other careers (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Major contributors to beginning teacher attrition include lack of quality induction programs, unfavorable working conditions (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003) and inadequate compensation (Recruiting New Teachers, 2000). Research reveals that beginning teachers who experience induction, mentoring, and collegial support in their first year are less likely to leave teaching (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). In Catholic schools, teachers who are assisted by induction, mentoring, and collegial support in their first year are more likely to understand the mission and become a part of the school community (Cook & Engel, 2006; Taymans, 2007). To be effective, induction programs in Catholic schools must include support for the religious dimension as well as assistance with pedagogical and managerial issues common to new teachers (Brock, 1988; Brock & Grady, 2007; Chatlain, 2002; Chatlain & Brock, in press; Chatlain & Noonan, 2005).

The ability of Catholic schools to retain quality teachers is a pressing issue. Recruitment and retention of quality teachers are central to the ability of Catholic schools to maintain high standards of excellence. Teachers in Catholic schools must be faith-filled individuals who have the ability to infuse Catholic values into academic content in addition to being skilled teachers. This ability is critical to accomplishing the mission of Catholic education and it requires that the Catholic teacher be well formed in the faith. With the recent decline in numbers of clergy and consecrated people teaching in Catholic schools, increased pressure has been placed on our lay Catholic teachers. As the laity assumes these leadership roles, they feel deeply challenged by the demands on them given their level of formation. It is a tall order indeed for a Catholic school to find excellent teachers who are strong and well formed in their faith and ready to bear witness to it as is required. When these teachers are found, it is vital that they be supported and nurtured as there are few available.

The first few years of a teacher's career have profound and lasting effects on teacher retention and teacher effectiveness. Regardless of the quality of their preparation, new teachers are not fully prepared to become master teachers. Research reveals that they are even less prepared for the religious dimension of a teacher's work (Brock, 1988; Chatlain, 2002). New teachers

in Catholic schools require induction programs that include the religious, pedagogical, managerial, and socialization components needed for success as a teacher in a Catholic school. In a study by Squillini (2001), 51.6 % of respondents reported that support for new teachers was a very important factor in teacher retention. According to Taymans (2007), Catholic schools that have instituted programs for teachers new to their schools have found the investment to be well worth the cost.

Since the 1980s, research on teacher induction has proliferated. Growing concern about teacher attrition accompanied by research touting the value of induction and mentoring has prompted many schools to develop induction programs (Goodwin, 1999; Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., 1999; Weiss & Weiss, 1999). In the United States, several states are mandating induction programs for new teachers, with some states and school districts linking new-teacher assessment and continuing employment to their induction programs. In Canada, a similar pattern is emerging with the largest province implementing a mandatory new teacher induction program in 2006. In the absence of provincial direction, many districts and dioceses have developed their own induction programs.

The degree to which teachers are inducted into Catholic schools is a key component in their retention and development as quality teachers. Abundant research on teacher induction has been conducted in public schools. However, little research has been conducted on teacher induction in Catholic schools.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given the importance of adequate induction in retaining and developing quality teachers in Catholic schools and the dearth of research on this topic, the researchers initiated a study to explore the status of diocesan- or district-sponsored induction for teachers in Catholic schools. The purpose of the study was to explore current programs and future needs for new teacher induction in Catholic schools. Knowledge of induction strategies employed by dioceses in the United States and Canada may be useful to Catholic school superintendents and principals as they attempt to design induction programs for their schools.

METHOD

DATA COLLECTION

A qualitative paradigm, using narrative surveys for data collection, was selected. One diocese in each of the 50 United States and 48 Canadian districts in five provinces was invited to participate in the study. The researchers'

interest in exploring the status of teacher induction on an international basis influenced the selection of locations in the United States and Canada. The dioceses and districts were selected to provide a representative geographic sampling of the two countries. Information was returned by 28 superintendents, 16 in the United States, and 12 in Canada. Eight superintendents in the United States and 1 in Canada declined participation because they did not have diocesan teacher induction programs. The purposive sampling procedures and small number of participants decreased the ability to generalize the findings of the study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of the study, “new teachers” referred to graduates entering the workforce for the first time, late entrants to the teaching profession, experienced teachers re-entering teaching, and experienced teachers in a new school. “Induction programs” referred to institutional procedures established by a Catholic diocese for the purpose of inducting new teachers. The terms “diocese” and “district,” used in the United States and Canada respectively, describe the political boundary that defines the area of authority for a board of education. The terms are used interchangeably in this paper.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The Catholic dioceses and districts in the United States and Canada were similar in terms of their support and guidance of local parish schools and private schools operated by religious orders. Differences occurred, however, in terms of financial support and the administrative authority of the diocese. Catholic schools in the United States are administered by parishes and religious organizations, and funded by parish donations and tuition. Although schools operate by permission of the bishop and are subject to diocesan policies regarding the general operation of the schools, each school is administered independently and is responsible to the pastor of the parish or religious order to which it is affiliated.

Catholic schools in Canada operate under two distinct structures. First, in 7 of the 10 provinces, Catholic schools operate similarly to the United States where they are funded at least partially, if not fully, by tuition and parish support. Second, in the remaining 3 provinces (which comprise 52% of the country’s total population), the situation is quite different. Catholic school districts in these provinces receive complete public funding—no tuition is charged. Provincial curriculum is followed; however, flexibility exists that permits religion courses as well as the permeation of the faith into the provincial curriculum. School districts hire Catholic teachers and are

governed by an elected board of Catholic trustees. The elected board, in partnership with the diocese, administers each school and is accountable to the provincial ministry of education. The proportion of students accessing Catholic education in these provinces is much higher than in the others. For these provinces, this is a historical right that was afforded to the minority faith at the time of confederation in the early 1900s. This right was an important consideration when they decided to join Canada.

PROCEDURES

Superintendents who participated in the study were mailed a narrative questionnaire, written by the researchers after a review of the literature. Participants were asked to describe their current induction program, level of satisfaction with the program, and constraints that impeded additional program development. Respondents returned the questionnaire by mail or email. Six of the respondents included printed information about their induction programs. Demographic information about the dioceses was gained from an examination of their websites.

Narrative responses and documents were coded for content and analyzed for themes. The qualitative methodology of multiple sources of information, coding, and reviewing data for verification enhanced the validity and reliability of data (Creswell, 2003; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS

In the United States, the 16 responding dioceses represented a geographic cross-section. The number of schools per diocese ranged from 220 to 14. The diocese with the second smallest geographic area was located in a densely populated area and had the largest number of schools. The diocese with the largest geographic area was located in a more sparsely populated area and had the smallest number of schools.

In Canada, the 12 responding districts represented a cross-section of school districts from three provinces. These districts ranged from the smallest district comprised of 5 schools to the largest district comprised of 61 schools. The mean school district size was 18 schools. It is of interest and significance to note that all of the responses received were from school districts in provinces where Catholic education is publicly funded. In provinces where no public funding exists, no responses were received.

EMERGING THEMES

The following themes emerged from the study:

- Varied induction program frameworks
- Similarity of program goals
- Orientation at diocesan level
- Importance of mentorship
- Importance of religious dimension
- Variances in distribution of induction responsibilities
- Level of satisfaction with programs
- Challenges and constraints in making improvements

Each of these themes will be further explored and discussed. The reader may assume that, in reviewing the results of the survey, the information speaks to both the American and Canadian results except where the data are specifically disaggregated.

VARIED PROGRAM FRAMEWORKS

Program frameworks varied widely in structure and comprehensiveness, ranging from minimal to highly structured programs. Some superintendents reported programs that entailed a brief orientation at the diocesan level with additional induction activities delegated to local schools while others mailed the researchers literature describing comprehensive programs with multiple components and extensive assessments.

In the American context, 6 of the dioceses reported induction programs designed to fulfill state or government mandates, with 3 of those dioceses reporting induction programs linked with new teacher licensure. Nine of the induction programs were designed to fulfill diocesan mandates. Two dioceses reported programs in which the diocese had complete control over the administration, delivery, and assessment of the induction program. The rest of the dioceses reported establishing program frameworks with individual schools responsible for delivering varying amounts of the content.

Canadian participants reported slightly different results with 8 districts designing their programs to fulfill state mandates, and the remaining 4 programs being based on district developed induction programs.

INDUCTION PROGRAM GOALS

Most of the dioceses and districts reported similar goals for their induction programs, including: orienting new teachers to the mission and values of Catholic education; improving the quality of new teacher performance; and improving retention of new teachers. Additionally, a few dioceses and districts included the fulfillment of diocesan, state, or government mandates as a goal.

ORIENTATION

A diocesan orientation was a component of all but one of the induction programs. The amount of time for orientation varied from 3 days to a half day with one third of the induction programs holding a one-day orientation. One program reported a half day diocesan orientation followed by 1 to 3 days at local schools. In Canada, the mean reported length of orientation and initial meetings for new teachers was 1.54 days.

Most of the orientations included diocesan policies, procedures, and benefits and topics related to the religious dimension of Catholic education. The rest of the topics varied widely, but fell into categories of safe environments, instructional practice, curriculum, diversity, school law, technology, resources, and assessment. Two of the dioceses included explanations of new teacher requirements and assessments related to state mandates.

MENTORSHIP

The majority of respondents identified mentorship of new teachers as one of the most beneficial components of their induction programs. Only 4 of the responding dioceses did not have a mentorship program, one of which was in the process of developing one.

In the majority of programs, mentors were selected and assigned by principals and training was provided by the diocese. Although criteria for mentor selection varied, qualities most often mentioned included:

- Master teacher with teaching degree and certificate and at least 5 years' experience
- Willingness to serve as a mentor (self-nomination)
- Present assignment similar to that of new teacher, if possible
- Works well with students and peers
- Enthusiastic about the profession with a positive attitude toward the school
- Has knowledge of a variety of effective instructional and classroom management strategies

Most respondents reported training processes that included one or more of the following: workshops, print materials, demonstrations, conferences, case studies, and videos. One respondent reported a training program that included a half day review of the mentorship manual. Another respondent reported that mentors “are given one full-day of training in June with three 2-hour follow-up sessions throughout the year—Oct. Jan, March.”

Two additional respondents described their mentor training as follows:

- “[A three day training period that included the following] two days of training in Pathwise [an induction and mentoring program based on the work of Charlotte Danielson], one day of training on mentoring in a Catholic school; Catholic identity, basics of coaching, and the role of the mentor.”
- “[Presentations, discussions, and case studies on the] importance of the mentor in induction and retention; the ‘life cycle’ of a beginning teacher; issues of new teachers; strength/weaknesses of new teachers; reflective questioning; and a calendar for mentoring.”

Some respondents reported that responsibilities of mentors were established at the diocesan level, while others reported that mentor responsibilities were “a local decision” and “varied from school to school.” Duties of mentors varied among dioceses, but fell within the following general categories:

- Maintain regular communication with inductee
- Provide guidance, support, and coaching
- Assist inductee in prioritizing areas of need
- Assist with instruction
- Conduct classroom observations; provide feedback
- Assist with state or diocesan requirements

State and diocesan requirements included: “Completion of the Induction Program Evaluation Form and give suggestions for improvement to inductee;” “completion of required written documentation;” “attend mentor teacher workshops when provided;” “[follow] state guidelines and portfolio assessment.”

Topics included in mentor training included: “reflective questioning;” “strengths and weaknesses of new teachers;” “issues new teachers commonly face;” “importance of the mentor to induction and retention, and the life cycle of a beginning teacher;” “faith formation for adults;” and “overview and calendar of the mentoring program.”

Although half of the American respondents reported compensation for mentors, only 3 dioceses reported a designated monetary compensation:

- Between \$400 and \$1,000 per year per teacher mentored
- A \$500 stipend and 4.0 continuing education units
- State compensation

Other forms of compensation included: encouraging individual schools to offer “appreciation stipends” or “free time to observe,” and giving mentors “points toward teaching license renewal.” One respondent reported that compensation occurred “sometimes, depending on the school.”

Eleven of the Canadian superintendents indicated that they provide no compensation for their mentors. One district provided a \$150 professional development honorarium. One third of the districts provide mentor release time that varied from 1 to 3 days.

THE CATHOLIC DIMENSION

All of the respondents identified the religious dimension of Catholic education as central to and one of the most beneficial components of their induction programs. The following is a summary of the content reportedly included in orienting new teachers to the religious dimension of Catholic schools: code of Christian conduct and professional ethics; modeling Christian behavior; the role and responsibilities of teachers in Catholic schools; Catholic identity and culture, the mission of Catholic education; the ministry of teaching; the role of prayer; infusion of Catholic values; faith formation; the religion curriculum; Catholic social teaching; community service; the history of Catholic schools; permeation of the faith throughout the curriculum; and formal formation, a series of diocesan-sponsored classes related to faith formation.

SOCIALIZATION

Most of the respondents reported deferring to local schools for socialization of new teachers and training in classroom management. One respondent explained, “[socialization opportunities] are limited—they are together once before school begins.” One respondent in the United States indicated additional opportunities for socialization, reporting that they held “grade level gatherings four times a year” while 4 Canadian districts gather their new teachers for socialization purposes. Two other Canadian superintendents indicated that some socialization happens through their on-line learning communities and other electronic networking opportunities the district provides.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Although half of the respondents in the United States and all of the Canadian respondents reported including classroom management training as part of the induction program, most did not describe an annual training process that focused on the classroom management issues of new teachers. Most

described programs that were brief and part of the initial orientation or optional. Professional development was offered to principals with the expectation that they will handle training at the local level. Descriptions of the training processes follow:

- “We refer specific teachers to training.”
- “We provide services to principals and expect them to inspire/motivate teachers with local opportunities....We gather teachers every three years. On other years, principals plan these activities.”
- “Optional....Training is offered for two days.”

SATISFACTION WITH INDUCTION PROGRAM

Although most respondents reported being somewhat satisfied with their induction program, they were also seeking ways to improve. Their comments included the following:

- “On a scale of 1-10, probably a 7.”
- “Could do more.”
- “Needs improvement.”
- “We are always looking to improve, [but] at least we have something!”
- “Yes, but it is always open for improvement.”
- “Moderately. We are working to increase the substance.”

Two respondents indicated total satisfaction, reporting that the program is reviewed each year by mentors and entry-year teachers. Good feedback is received and adjustments are made if necessary. They were very pleased with the progress of the program. Those who were working with a new program were cautiously optimistic as early indications were positive.

Asked to consider how they would like to improve their induction program, most respondents said they wanted more opportunities for interaction between teacher-mentor pairs. One respondent wanted to add a mentor component but lacked personnel to implement it. Another respondent wanted to eliminate the Praxis III—a state-trained observer who observes new teachers for licensure. Others reported struggling with finding the correct balance of the roles and responsibilities for each group: the diocese, the principal, the mentor, and the new teacher. Participants felt the tension between how much of the program should be district/provincially directed and how much should be directed by the mentor or new teacher. Their sense was that a clinical, prescribed, one size fits all program would not be the best, yet they also knew that with no direction, nothing would happen and this support for new teachers was too important to leave to chance.

CONSTRAINTS

The challenges and constraints that hampered respondents from making desired improvements to their induction programs included: time (away from the classroom and after school hours), money, distance between schools, and the multiple commitments of the Catholic school office staff and new teachers. In Canada, an additional challenge surfaced around a differing viewpoint between the teachers' union and the district about hosting some of the orientation prior to the opening of school.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are summarized as follow:

- Teacher induction programs were uneven in terms of comprehensiveness
- Goals of teacher induction programs included: orienting new teachers to the mission and values of Catholic education; improving the quality of new teacher performance; and improving retention of new teachers
- Wide variance occurred in induction program delivery
- The Catholic dimension was regarded as important and was substantial in content
- Mentor programs were regarded as important and widely used
- Little structured training in classroom management was reported
- Superintendents with established induction programs were somewhat satisfied but looking for ways to improve their programs
- Superintendents who sought to improve teacher induction programs were constrained by time, money, and number of schools to serve and/or vast distances between schools

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several factors limited the findings of this study. First, data were collected from a relatively small sample of superintendents and dioceses. Additional participants would be needed to saturate the data and develop additional support for the themes. Second, the data gathered were based on the objectivity and reliability of the researchers. Typical of narrative data gathering, informant integrity becomes an issue of rigor.

Despite these limitations the results of the study revealed the structure and components of a variety of induction programs used in Catholic schools. The paucity of research on teacher induction programs for Catholic schools and the importance of induction to the retention of high quality teachers for Catholic education suggest a need for additional research on this topic.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research reveals that beginning teachers who experience formal induction have higher retention rates (Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003) and are more likely to understand the mission of Catholic schools and become a part of the school community (Taymans, 2007). Additionally, the growing number of state mandates requiring and/or linking teacher induction with licensure, is impacting Catholic schools in both the United States and Canada. Given the importance of each of these factors, the researchers assumed a high response rate for the study with most participants describing established teacher induction programs. That was not the case, however, as only 16 of the 24 United States dioceses that responded to an invitation to participate in the study reported having institutional induction programs. Four of the eight dioceses that reported not having institutional programs relied on individual schools for teacher induction. In Canada, all of the responses were from Catholic districts that are publicly funded. The high number of non-respondents left the researchers wondering if the dioceses did not have institutional programs or the superintendents did not have the time or interest to participate in the study. Only one invitee declined the invitation due to a lack of time.

The programs varied widely in terms of delivery and the depth. Some programs were managed and delivered entirely by the diocese. Other programs were developed and managed by the diocese with much of the delivery delegated to local schools.

In the majority of United States dioceses, induction involvement was limited to providing the format for the induction program and delivering an orientation in the fall. Other activities, such as mentorship, socialization, and training in classroom management were delegated to individual schools. The Canadian responses indicated that induction programming may be somewhat more formalized and developed; however, only those districts that are publicly funded chose to respond. The state of induction programming in the parochial Catholic schools remains unknown.

All of the dioceses reported similar goals for their teacher induction programs: orienting new teachers to the mission and values of Catholic education; improving the quality of new teacher performance; and improving retention of new teachers. Topics relating to the Catholic dimension were identified as important and were evident in substantial numbers in all of the programs.

The religious dimension and support for the ongoing faith formation of new teachers appeared to provide a foundation for the induction programs. All of the respondents reported sponsoring an orientation for new teachers

that mingled topics related to an overview of the diocese and the religious, pedagogical, and managerial dimensions of teaching. In certain cases, this was reportedly accomplished through a delivery model that exemplified a Catholic Christian lifestyle: time for personal prayer and reflection, discussion, celebration of the Eucharist, and sharing meals.

New teachers in Catholic schools face the complexity of learning the art and craft of teaching, with the added challenge of the religious dimension, which increases the importance of having a mentor to guide them. Respondents reported that mentor programs were regarded as important and widely used. All of the dioceses reported criteria for mentor selection and training for mentors. Compensation for mentors varied widely. Although half of the United States respondents reported compensation for mentors, only 3 dioceses reported a designated monetary compensation that included \$500 stipends, between \$400 and \$1,000 per year per teacher mentored, and state compensation for mentors. In most dioceses, compensation was the responsibility of individual schools and took the form of appreciation stipends, free time, and points toward license renewal. This is in contrast to the Canadian context where, apart from a little release time, virtually no districts compensated mentors.

Although a major contributor to new teacher attrition stems from classroom management problems, none of the dioceses required annual classroom management training for new teachers. Although most of the respondents reported including classroom management training, the training described was either optional or offered on an occasional or individual basis. Given the importance of student discipline as a factor in satisfaction (Squillini, 2001) and retention (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003), the inclusion of classroom management might serve to meet induction program goals by improving the performance of new teachers and their retention rate.

Superintendents reported being somewhat satisfied with their induction programs, but looking for ways to improve them. Improvements were hampered by a lack of finances and time, many of them citing demands that were disproportionate to the number of available office personnel. Some superintendents struggled with the density of the population, having a large number of schools within a small area. Other superintendents struggled with distance, having a small number of schools scattered over a wide geographic area. Although technology was considered as a communication option, differences in the availability of technology between schools were problematic in some dioceses.

Based on the findings of this study and literature in the field, the following recommendations emerge for the development of teacher induction programs for Catholic schools:

1. Provide a framework for teacher induction in Catholic schools to serve as a guide in creating induction programs. Although superintendents desire, or are required by state mandate, to create teacher induction programs, there are few models to guide them. Research on teacher induction in public schools is helpful in areas such as program development, processes, and evaluation. Although models of public schools are helpful in some respects, the structure of a Catholic diocese and the nature of Catholic education require a somewhat different format. Having a framework for teacher induction in Catholic schools available would facilitate the development of individual diocesan induction programs.
2. Encourage all dioceses to establish institutional teacher induction plans. Providing induction assistance to new teachers is an investment in the future of quality education for Catholic schools.
3. Use the Catholic dimension as the foundation for the induction plan and integrate it throughout the pedagogical and managerial aspect of teaching.
4. Maximize effectiveness of the induction program by tailoring it to the specific needs of the diocese and individual schools. Doing so requires a team approach that includes input, cooperation, and collaboration of diocesan personnel, local administrators, and teachers.
5. Provide training for principals on their role in the induction process. The principal plays a central role in the effectiveness and success of an induction program. Not all principals understand the importance of teacher induction and their role in the induction process.

Retaining highly qualified teachers who are committed to the mission of Catholic education is essential to the continuing success of Catholic schools. Beginning teachers who feel happy and successful are more likely to remain teaching in Catholic schools. Teacher retention fosters stable school environments, a sense of community, and ensures continuity of Catholic culture. Providing teacher induction during the early years of teaching is one way to ensure job satisfaction and the retention of quality teachers for Catholic education.

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