

A personal services paradigm of teacher induction

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ABSTRACT: There is an eclectic and often inconsistent approach to delivering teacher induction programs across North America. Successful induction programs facilitate a transition between beginning teacher learning from their preservice education to the inherent responsibilities of being a classroom teacher and are intended to improve the quality of teaching to improve student learning. Yet there is a disquieting irregularity with induction programs that are driven to in-service new teachers to promulgate school and board protocol. This article argues that beginning teachers not be considered the objects of induction practices, but the catalysts of their own professional development and proposes that teacher induction practices be less inclined to in-service new teachers and instead be more concerned with creating and sustaining environments that personally service professional growth. A personal service approach to induction affords beginning teachers the opportunity to engage in reciprocal relationships, determine their own professional development, and foster their leadership capacity.

Indeed we educators are nestled in an age of interpretive control given our need to provide the rhetoric to explain the multiplicity of educational initiatives. The all-familiar and not uncommon recourse is to in-service. Senior administrators structure in-services for school administrators, who in-service department chairs and division leaders, who in turn in-service teachers on matters of school reform, authentic evaluation practices, and balanced literacy initiatives to name only a few. It is of little surprise, then, that induction programs for entry year teachers (where they exist) tend to inherit this mode of information management and through their in-services promulgate school procedures ranging from classroom management to playground supervision.¹ This in turn operationalizes induction practices and neglects a more thoughtful approach to beginning teachers' personal needs (Bartell, 2005). These in-services may at times be useful for novice teachers, but their impetus remains ambiguous in light of more learner-centered paradigms (Mitchell & Laidlaw, 1999).

Be they described as "reality shock" (Teacher Supply and Demand Committee in Alberta, 2001, p. 5) or "baptism by fire" (Linton, Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mundragon, & Stottlemeyer, 2000, p. 14), it has been documented that problems of isolation, loneliness, and challenging students are unnerving at best and potentially threatening to beginning teachers' self-worth and professional identity (Cherubini, in press). Induction programs, given their best intentions and research-based objectives, can be reduced to a series of in-services that codify school and board procedures and in the process dissect the job of teaching but ignore what Portner (2002) referred to as the capabilities to make professional decisions and exercise individual capacities to improve classroom practice. Structured activities and programs, as Lieberman and Miller (1990) suggest, "have served to reinforce the status quo rather than changing it" (p. 105; see also Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000). In this context, it is difficult to adequately assess the potential that an induction program can have on a beginning teacher's sense of self-efficacy (Bartlett, Johnson, Lopez, Sugarman, & Wilson, 2005). Further, the risk exists that the onslaught of information offered at the in-services is repudiated in favor of real world techniques—implying traditional approaches to teaching practices that are most familiar to beginning teachers based largely on their own experience as students (Chodzinski, 1993). Research tells us; however, that quality induction programs can reduce attrition rates and offer professional assistance to novice teachers (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Tushnet, Briggs, Elliot, Esch, Haviland, Humphrey, et al., 2002; Wayne, Youngs, & Fleischman, 2005; Weiss & Weiss, 1999). Further, and most important, supporting entry year teachers improves both pedagogical practice and student learning (Leithwood, Fullan, & Watson, 2003).

This article argues that beginning teachers cannot be considered the objects of induction practices; rather, they should be perceived as the catalysts of their own professional growth and development. As we embrace the newest members of the profession, we need to harness the urge to be encyclopedic and all encompassing in both our directives and delivery to novice teachers and instead conceptualize induction programs not so much on in-services but on personal services. In this context, beginning teachers are not addressed as passive recipients of information in generic in-services that risk alienating, often insidiously, those who are already competent in certain areas. A personal service paradigm is a conceptualization of teacher induction that focuses upon the individual experiences, unique strengths, and specific needs of beginning teachers in networks that promote reciprocal interactions between fellow educators. Personal service allows the new teacher to derive a meaningful point of view during their induction into the profession that emanates from their own experiences.

Professional Teacher Induction

It is timely to examine induction practices given the influx of new teachers predicted to enter the profession, to reduce the attrition of those already in their beginning years, and to improve student achievement since the correlation between achievement and the quality of teaching is significant (Ganser, Marchione, & Fleisemann, 1999). Quality induction programs can reduce attrition rates and offer professional support to novice teachers (Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Weiss & Weiss, 1999). A Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) (2000) survey reported that approximately 45% of the present teachers in Canada would be eligible to retire by 2008 and identified high turnover of beginning teachers as one of the leading factors that would contribute to a shortage of teachers. As a result, the CTF encouraged regional school boards and provincial governments to collaborate with teacher federations to develop support programs for entry year teachers, accepting that beginning teachers need to be supported as they move from teacher candidate to teacher professional (Brighton, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Schwillie, & Yusko, 1999; see also Moir, Gless, & Baron, 1999; Odell & Huling, 2000; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000).

The forecast in the United States is similar. It is projected that more than 2 million new kindergarten to grade 12 teachers will need to be hired by 2009 as a result of growing enrolments in schools, reductions in class size, and predicted retirements among current teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Of these new teachers, more than one third will be employed in low-wealth urban and rural districts and the majority of these in city public schools with minority student populations of at least 20% (Weiss & Weiss, 1999).

Demands on what teachers must know and do have increased due to factors such as increasingly diverse student populations and pressures of accountability systems, making first year induction programs critical for the success of beginning teachers. According to research evidence, traditional sink or swim induction contributes to high attrition and to lower levels of teacher effectiveness. (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996, p. 40)

The word "inducere," Latin for "to lead into," suggests a process whereby one is lead into a new experience (Teacher Supply and Demand Committee in Alberta, 2001, p. 5). An important distinction between "induction" and "orientation" is articulated in the literature. Induction is defined as "an exposure to something unknown, an act or process of inciting; an initial experience" (Robinson, 1998, p. 3). Orientation is defined as "the introduction to an unfamiliar situation, an activity of a new kind" (Robinson, p. 3). Orientation sessions provide entry year teachers with information about the board, their school, and the various duties associated with their teaching assignment (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2002, p. 5). Unlike the medical and legal professions as well as many of the trades that require an apprenticeship before licensure, beginning teachers have traditionally been left to cope and endure their first years with little or no induction into the profession (Teacher Supply and Demand Committee in Alberta, 2001). Leithwood, Fullan, & Watson (2003), in their analysis of education policy in Ontario, recommended a strong support approach for teachers as a significant means of improving teaching and student learning. These authors advocated that such a support system be implemented from preservice education programs, to the teacher recruitment phase to induction and mentoring, through to continual professional development. They further recommended that the Ontario Ministry of Education needed to collaborate with the Ontario College of Teachers to establish "a substantial induction program to support new teachers in the first three years of teaching" (p. 29). Leithwood et al. (2003) cited high quality teaching as the most significant feature of desirable schools and argued for greater attention "to the development of teaching capacity" (p. 27).

The optimal focus of teacher induction, according to The Ontario College of Teachers (2003a) as the self-regulatory body for its 200,000 members, is on instructing new teachers in techniques to assist them help their students to succeed. From a school and board administration perspective, induction aims to recruit and retain the most proficient candidates (Schlechty, 1985). It is intended to improve teacher practice, promote the social welfare of beginning teachers, and communicate the culture of the system to them (North West Territories Teacher Induction, 2002).

Successful induction programs in America's school districts have not been widespread; instead, according to Weiss and Weiss (1999), informal and haphazard induction practices have been directly correlated with increased attrition and lower levels of teacher effectiveness (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). It was estimated that more than 20% of public school teachers abandon the profession within 3 years and 9.3% leave teaching before completing their first year. Urban districts in the United States of America cited a 93% retention rate for teachers who were formally inducted into the profession (Recruiting New Teachers, in Weiss & Weiss, 1999). In Ontario, fewer than 25% of beginning teachers benefited from a mentoring and induction program as recently as 2002 (Ontario College of Teachers, 2003b, p. 1).

Putz (1992) identified the research that examined the various obstacles and sporadic conditions of induction programs (see also Cole, 1994; Hall, 1982). These barriers included a lack of recognition of the induction period,

budget constraints, and inconsistency concerning the delivery and maintenance of the program. Sclan and Darling-Hammond (1992) reported that, although a number of state and school districts have created programs for entry year teachers since the early 1980s, the nature of those programs was significantly varied. Weiss and Weiss (1999) cited research that discovered 8 American states implementing teacher induction models in 1984, 31 states in 1991 (see also Gold, 1996), but a drop to 26 states and the District of Columbia in 1999. When induction was left to individual school districts with no state-mandated program, little support was applied to teacher induction and fewer teachers participated in it (E. Hirsch, Koppich, & Knapp, 1998).

It has been suggested that for induction programs to thrive they need to be an integrated part of the education system, rather than a separate entity conceived as an afterthought. This means that induction programs should be integral to all aspects of the planning cycle, including the system's strategic plan, the school's action plan, and the teachers' professional growth plans (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2002, p. 14).

In Johnson and Kardos' (2002) study of effective teacher induction, entry year teachers reported having little access to solutions or varying models of practice during their initial year of teaching, thereby compromising the quality of their teaching by challenging their professional competence and in some cases leading them to doubt their choice of profession. As a result, Johnson and Kardos concluded that the questions and uncertainty with which teachers entered the profession necessitated far more than orientation sessions, a mentor, lists of resources, and a copy of school policy. They determined that beginning teachers need experienced colleagues who have acquired the patience and understanding for the day-to-day dilemmas that often confront the novice teacher. Johnson and Kardos called for sustained, school-based professional development for entry year teachers developed by expert colleagues.

Schools must provide new teachers with on-site professional development and make sure that new teachers have access to help on short notice when a lesson goes awry, a student is not responding to the new teachers' repertoire of teaching strategies, or a parent requires an immediate conference. New teachers need mentors who have time to observe and offer advice or a small team of colleagues that they can convene for help on short notice (p. 5).

Huling-Austin, Putnam, Edwards, and Galvez-Hjornevik (1985) concluded that beginning teachers are not necessarily receptive to an abundance of information at the onset of their teaching career. Instead of attempting to provide beginning teachers with everything they need to know prior to the school year, successful induction practice entails providing essential information to beginning teachers over a few years (S. Hirsch, 1990). To be most responsive to entry year teachers' development, induction programs should be sensitive to the emerging needs of the teacher both in the first year and beyond.

Ultimately, the challenge for all the stakeholders in education is to assist the beginning teacher in coming to an awareness of the images they have of themselves as teachers and of the origins of the meanings they have acquired (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992). Entry year teachers need to be helped to become simultaneously students and architects of their own professional development. They need assistance to develop frameworks for thinking contextually and reflectively about their development; they need to become students of schooling and those aspects of institutional life, school practice, and interpersonal relations that are likely to enable or inhibit their development as professionals. They need to recognize themselves as centers of meaning-making, as producers of legitimate knowledge that is worthy of being shared and deserving to be acted upon (Bullough et al., p. 190).

Satisfaction with the professional role enhances teacher efficacy—expectancy about future outcomes that impacts upon present behavior (Ross & Cousins, 1999). Teacher efficacy is a self-perception of teaching effectiveness in creating conditions for student learning (Bandura, 1993, 1997). It is a form of self-efficacy that impacts upon behavior through cognitive processes, motivation, and affective and selection processes. Teachers who possess high levels of teacher efficacy essentially anticipate their own success (Bandura, 1993, 1997). Teachers with higher teacher efficacy were more inclined towards practicing innovative strategies, even when especially challenged (Czerniak & Schriver-Waldon, 1991; Dutton, 1990; P. Moore, 1990). Studies have determined that the effects of teacher efficacy on practitioners' willingness to be innovative were directly related to student achievement in core academic subjects (Cancro, 1992; W.P. Moore & Esselman, 1994; Ross & Cousins, 1999) and on affective goals like self-esteem (Borton, 1991), self-direction, motivation (Roeser, Arbreton, & Anderman, 1993), and attitudes to education (Miskel, McDonald, & Bloom, 1983). Programs in teacher induction may account for both personal and general teaching efficacy. Personal teaching efficacy, reflective of Bandura's (1997) construct, entails a self-conviction to organize and perform the respective duties, roles, and functions to produce the desired outcome. General teaching efficacy is the belief that specific actions will produce desired outcomes. As beginning teachers are nurtured to develop and negotiate their role as practitioners, induction becomes the process that links them to their schools and professional communities while becoming the means by which these communities are perpetuated and made to be enduring (Bullough et al., 1992).

A Personal Services Paradigm: Conceptual Definitions

Teacher induction, with a focus on personal services, would first allow beginning teachers to account for the diversity of pedagogical practices and second, cultivate opportunities to learn and appreciate their own strengths and weaknesses. A personal services approach to induction accounts for the unique needs of each beginning teacher, structures the respective professional development to facilitate individual growth, and promotes professional capacity so that beginning teachers are better able to adapt to the challenging circumstances that are known to be especially prevalent in the first year of teaching. This paradigm of induction wholly accepts beginning teachers and through reciprocal relationships (with induction facilitators and other educators) affords them the opportunity to determine their own development on a professional and personal continuum. Personal services augment individual strengths and cater to teachers' professional needs. Induction providers facilitate the concerns of each beginning teacher through consistent observations and regular communication with mentors and protégés alike. This format concedes that situational demands, and not necessarily generic needs, determine professional development. It is a comprehensive approach to personally serving beginning teachers as autonomous, professional educators supported by a community of learners. It is to personally serve each new teacher in negotiating the perplexities, ambiguities, and tensions of their first year by facilitating a personal understanding of their own struggles and accomplishments in a growth continuum. It is ultimately to service an understanding of experience on one's own terms.

Professional Culture and Beginning Teacher Leadership

A personal services paradigm of induction recognizes the pivotal role that school culture has on beginning teachers (Kardos, Moore-Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). Blasé and Blasé (2002) noted that school contexts with an embedded sense of trust and respect between experienced and beginning teachers share instructional responsibilities and effective pedagogical practices that foster reflective professional dialogue. Induction programs that personally serve each individual endorse meaningful professional learning, authentic teacher improvement, and a transparent level of accountability.

Induction providers recognize the stress of being a beginning teacher and are sensitive to clarifying expectations, offering support, and applying sensible standards to their practice (Namore & Floyd, 2005b). Bryk, Camburn, and Louis (1999) concluded that school cultures have a collective responsibility to have strategies for sustaining and developing constructive norms and practices over time attending to the way in which new members are brought into school faculties (p. 754).

Essentially, beginning teachers can then identify their work-related needs as well as their professional proficiencies within the occupational community into which they are inducted and supported (Daley, 2002; Olebe, 2005). As Wong (2002) stated, teachers remain in the profession when "they feel successful, supported, and part of a team working toward the achievement of common goals" (p. 52). In turn, both teacher expertise and student achievement grows in cultures of continuous inquiry (see Darling-Hammond, 2005; Lieberman, 1996). A personal service paradigm of teacher induction challenges entrenched, insulated, and traditional ideologies and assumptions of school cultures and embraces both individual teacher capacities and interdependent professional relationships (Tomlinson, 2004; Zachary, 2005).

The impulsion of a personal services paradigm of induction rests in individual growth and self-affirmation. It assumes that beginning teachers be granted opportunities to exercise their talents to pervasively impact upon school organizational culture and student achievement. This is to concur with the notion that all teachers, and not just those in formal positions of additional responsibility, have the capacity to lead (see Zapeda, Mayers, & Benson, 2003). As Barth (2001) stated, "if schools are going to become places in which all children are learning, all teachers must lead" (as cited in Zapeda et al., 2003, p. 120). A collaborative professional culture respects the individual leadership capacities of all its teachers, regardless of their years of experience. By favoring a personal services approach to induction, beginning teachers can concentrate on their professional development, the contributions they can make to the school community as a collective, and to improving student learning in their classrooms.

This paradigm of induction thus distinguishes beginning teachers' internal locus of control—"the perception of control over outcomes, and the belief that one has the competency to perform the behaviors upon which the outcome depends" (Merideth, 2000, p. 3). These perceptions are dependent upon beginning teachers' adeptness to first, evaluate the effectiveness of the board of education's standard induction program, and second, to draft a professional growth proposal in consultation with induction program stakeholders. Individualized expressions of exploratory professional development and participatory contributions to the school community could be listed as these evolve in their initial years of teaching as a compilation of related experiences, discreet perceptions, and profound reflections used to guide their professional transitions. From this perspective, beginning teachers are empowered to apply the information learned during their induction with the strengths they bring to the profession. As Namore and Floyd

(2005a) suggest, “many beginning teachers are exemplary educators who regard teaching with a deep and enduring commitment” (p. 770). A personal service agenda engages beginning teachers to self-affirm their leadership capacities. It is to espouse Murdock-Perra’s (2001) concept of self-knowledge whereby individuals define their beliefs in order to better comprehend their motivations:

It involves having the courage and initiative to use introspection to examine strengths and weaknesses and to understand the values, beliefs, and motivations that underlie them (p. 69).

The induction program, by providing sufficient human and capital resources, serves to extend these opportunities to beginning teachers as active participants in compelling and relevant learning experiences. Beginning teachers may then nurture the capacity “to make informed decisions, enrich [their] own knowledge, and sharpen [their] own abilities regarding teaching and learning” (Portner, 2002, p. 13).

Sustaining a Personal Service Approach

It is clear in the research literature that beginning teachers’ day-to-day activity is essentially determined by its functionality (see, for example, Mandel, 2006). Just as clear is the necessity to facilitate professional induction services that cater to individual beginning teacher needs and proficiencies to enable the self-discovery of personal successes. Personal service sanctions teachers to distinguish their needs through critical reflective practice and discern their individual aptitudes. This is to keep in mind that teacher anxiety is not lessened by in-services that highlight policy and school practices instead of the timely and relevant uncertainties that apply to their personal situations (Cherubini, 2006). It is not to suggest that teacher induction programs exclude all in-service on policy and procedure; instead, the objectives of induction include facilitating the development of each individual in terms of how they perceive, explore, and account for their responses. Induction programs must have strategic goals—“Some define the goal as teacher-learning that will increase the level of teacher quality, others see it primarily as a retention tool...still others connect teacher induction to student achievement” (Bartlett et al., 2005, p. 5). A personal service approach to induction recognizes that each beginning teacher may have potentially different approaches to the same initial circumstances, and as a result induction programs in and of themselves must be compatible to the needs and competencies of each new teacher.

The status quo of how we have been informally inducting beginning teachers into the professional culture of teaching is remarkably antiquated. Most deserving of further study are the processes that induction facilitators are structuring to ensure that their programs are most functional to those involved and not merely a series of scripted in-services to satisfy systemic needs, further, how school organizational cultures are being strategic and operational in generating collaborative and active beginning teacher responses within meaningful school improvement and student achievement contexts.

Conclusion and Implications

Some of the most significant challenges that confront beginning teachers are often subtle and subjective experiences that in turn lead to profound self-discovery (Tickle, 2000). A personal service to induction allows new teachers to assimilate and communicate individual experiences in a professional atmosphere conducive to self-discovery and open differentiation of personal responses (see Bartell, 2005; Cherubini, 2007). Beginning teachers could openly communicate their questions, clarify ambiguities about their practice, and genuinely discover a personal response to each circumstance.

The implication that presents itself to those directly responsible for teacher induction practice and policy is to successfully co-ordinate an alliance between recognizing the endemic stresses that accompany the first years of teaching, the needs of each novice, the social complexity of teaching, and, just as important, the drive of beginning teachers to be constructively involved in their own professional development. It is indeed a conundrum, but one that demands a superordinate commitment from the educational community in order for its novice members to derive the necessary support during their induction into teaching. Beginning teachers are deserving of personal services that strengthen their professional development so that it at least rivals their most difficult and anxious circumstances.

Endnote

1 Induction, in the context of this article, is understood as the first 3 years of professional teaching whereby “the novice becomes more familiar with their job responsibilities, the work setting, and professional norms and expectations” (Bartell, 2005, p. 5).

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