Broadening Landscapes and Affirming Professional Capacity: A Metacognitive Approach to Teacher Induction

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Abstract

   The Faculty of Education at Brock University and an Ontario, Canada, self-regulatory body for the teaching profession partnered to create an innovative teacher induction project conceptualized to enable new and mentor teachers to self-affirm their professional capacities as autonomous and collaborative professionals. A distinguishing feature of the project is its focus on participants' meta-cognition throughout the inquiry process. Participants engaged in critical thinking and retrospective analysis with new and experienced colleagues. The resulting data confirmed that the induction model engaged participants in the broadening of their teacher landscapes and provided a heightened sense of self-affirmation.

   Teacher induction continues to be a topic that has profound relevancy across North America. Darling-Hammond (2006), among other researchers, underscores the fact that teachers' abilities contribute most significantly to student achievement and educational improvement (see also Cochran-Smith, 2006). Effective teacher induction programs are instrumental in terms of both new teacher retention and in strengthening pedagogical practice (Fulton et al., 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The literature, however, suggests that new teachers too often lack the professional support and constructive dialogue necessary to make the successful transition from pre- to in-service teaching (Brock & Grady, 1997; Danielson, 2002). The result is a staggering number of new teachers who abandon the profession in the first three to five years — 46% in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Further, research shows that teacher retention is more aligned to the nature of the first teaching experience than to an individual's academic proficiency or to the quality of his or her professional teacher education program (see Nielsen et al., 2006; Odell & Ferraro, 1992); therefore, the necessity to support new teachers is strikingly clear (National Commission on Teaching, 2003; Wilkins & Clift, 2006).

The Ontario Context

   The Ontario Ministry of Education's New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) is considered "the second step in a continuum of professional development for teachers to support effecting teaching, learning, and assessment practices, building on and complementing preservice education programs" (NTIP, 2006, p. 5). New teachers need to attain two satisfactory ratings on their performance appraisals within the first twelve months of practice to mark their successful completion in the NTIP program. A third and possibly fourth appraisal is required if either of the first two evaluations resulted in a "Development Needed" outcome. Among the objectives of NTIP is to provide sustained and full-year support for new teachers to

complement the learning from their professional teacher education programs and to further develop the essential aptitudes and knowledge that will contribute to their effectiveness as a classroom teacher in Ontario schools.

Additionally, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) allows teachers to govern their own profession in the name of public interest and accountability. The OCT issues official certificates of qualification to those interested in teaching in Ontario public schools. Among its mandates, the OCT establishes the standards of professional practice for all educators, is the accrediting body for teacher education programs, and contributes to the professional learning and development of its members. As the body that investigates instances of teacher misconduct and incompetence, the OCT also has the authority to suspend or revoke teaching certificates.

There has been a commendable focus on teacher induction practices in Ontario. This focus has been fueled in part by the realization that beginning teachers function more efficiently and effectively when they are supported during their induction into the profession. Equally noteworthy, teacher mentors also significantly benefit from participation in professional learning initiatives that enhance their roles as teacher leaders. As the literature attests, successful mentoring practices contribute directly to improving teachers' sense of self-efficacy and, in turn, better equip them to cope with the expectations of being professional educators. Teacher professional development, regardless of a teacher's years of experience in the classroom, is meant to improve teaching practice in an effort to improve student learning (Ganser, Marchione, & Fleishmann, 1999). This research project and the subsequent induction model under discussion underscores the significance of nurturing self-critical and adaptive educators (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

This research endeavor involves a strategic partnership between key educational stakeholders (including a faculty of education, the Ontario College of Teachers, and 6 district school boards) to deliver an innovative model of teacher induction. The project addresses the pressing need to situate teachers' knowledge, regardless of their status as either protégés or mentors, in a context-based and reflective environment (see Wang, Odell, & Strong, 2006), whereby their inquiry skills and constructive responses illuminate their potential as teachers. In this view, the purpose of the study was to examine participants' reflections to determine the success of the induction model as an effective means of nurturing new and mentor teachers' critical inquiry.

The Teacher Induction Project: Theoretical and Pragmatic Contexts

The Faculty of Education at *City Center University* and the Ontario College of Teachers (the provincial self-regulatory body for the teaching profession) partnered to create a teacher induction project as an innovative and effective means to support beginning teachers. The teacher induction project, involving 6 district school boards in Ontario, Canada, identified the following specific objectives:

- To enhance teacher induction and mentorship practices in Ontario
- To model a strategic partnership approach to induction with district school boards
- To support the induction of beginning teachers by using professional learning processes that include dialogue, reflection, inquiry, and collaboration

Although teacher induction programs vary in their composition given the unique contexts of each province and state, the fundamental components of effective programs include a formally established mentor/beginning teacher pairing (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004), consistent professional development that is relevant to the needs of new teachers (Cherubini, 2009a), release time for mentors and protégés, and opportunities for novice teachers to network with other new and experienced colleagues (Hirsch, 2006; Wilbur & Zepeda, 2004). Facilitating time for novice teachers to collaborate with veteran colleagues has a significant positive impact on new teachers' enculturation into the profession (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Fulton et al.'s (2005) qualification is especially timely:

> If teachers are to meet the needs of their students in the 21st Century, we must think about planning and then studying induction programs based on multiple goals, including building teacher knowledge and professional skills; integrating new teachers in the teaching community … and encouraging dialogue that supports best practice (p. 22, as cited in Nielsen et al., 2006).

The teacher induction model was responsive to the respective research literature, NTIP, and the voices of the partner-school board officials responsible for inducting new teachers. In forming a strategic partnership, the Ontario College of Teachers, the Faculty of Education at Brock University, and the 6 participating school boards collaborated to create professional learning sessions. The triumvirate of a faculty of education, a self-regulatory governing body, and regional school boards across the Golden Horseshoe Learning Consortium in southern Ontario collaborated to investigate the following research questions: First, is the model conceptualized by this strategic partnership of educational stakeholders supportive of induction practices for both new and mentor teachers? Second, is the case pedagogy approach adopted by the model an effective means of nurturing participants' critical inquiry?

The project is firmly grounded in the research literature. To begin, a collegial and trustworthy relationship was established between university-based teacher educators and the 6 public school boards that facilitated an effective working alliance based on mutual goals and a shared vision of new teacher needs and mentor practices (see, for example, Dallmer, 2004; Lefever-Davis et al., Lieberman & Miller, 2001). The impetus for this professional alliance between a faculty of education and schools is a logical extension of professional education teacher programs graduating the teachers whom school boards are responsible for inducting into the profession (Shroyer, Yahnke, & Heller, 2007). Timely professional support for new teachers, including being paired with a mentor, is cited as a significant factor in not only retaining teachers (Cherubini, 2009b; Johnson, 2004; Wilkins & Clift, 2007), but in facilitating their emotional development (Bullough & Draper, 2004), enhancing their satisfaction with the role of teacher, and most significantly, in improving pedagogical practice to improve student learning (Howe, 2006).

To build an innovative approach to teacher induction embedded in the research and also responsive to the Ontario context, the objective of the model was to introduce new and mentor teachers to critical inquiry while providing ample opportunity to foster what Feinman-Nemser (2001) refers to as 'the habits of critical colleagueship.' In a nonthreatening forum, professional interactions were facilitated between teacher colleagues where key issues regarding new

teacher concerns were identified, discussed, and reflected upon to enhance not only the participants' development as new and mentor teachers, but their understanding of themselves as professional teachers (see also Flores, 2006). This project reconceptualized teacher induction practices by underscoring new and mentor teachers' potential to self-affirm their respective roles as critically conscious practitioners. As Tickle (2000) suggests, induction is more than a socialization process and needs to incorporate "opportunities for self-questioning and reflection not only upon teachers' own actions, but also upon the values and norms underlying the educational settings in which they work" (p. 63).

Methodology

Participants

The researchers established a partnership with each school board and, in some cases, served on their NTIP steering committees. In these instances, the university faculty researchers provided insight into the content of teacher-preparation programs and how this learning could most naturally be bridged with school board induction initiatives. In turn, the faculty representatives shared the process by which the collaborative teacher induction project under discussion complemented the support services offered by the school board NTIP providers. The dialogue between all stakeholder participants was sustaining and mutually beneficial.

Two new teachers from each of the 6 boards of education, as well as 2 mentor-teachers from the same school boards, voluntarily participated in the project. Each school board NTIP coordinator recommended potential participants. New teacher participants' teaching experience ranged between one and three years, with a mean of 1.8 years. Their teaching responsibilities ranged from grades 1 to 8. New teacher participants taught in different schools across their school boards, and represented varied socioeconomic student demographics. Four of the new teacher participants were male and seven female. The mentor teacher participants served in the capacity as mentor between one and two years, with the mean mentoring experience being 1.2 years. The three male and nine female mentors did not teach in the same school as the new teacher participants, nor did they serve as their mentor. The purposeful sampling approach was taken to ensure that participants had not previously worked together and, as a result, were not influenced by prior opinions. Mentors, like the new teacher participants, taught in schools that represented varied socioeconomic student demographics. The participants served as a cross-representation of school boards in southern Ontario. Each school board is considered mid-sized in the Ontario context serving between 55 and 80 schools. As will be discussed, the new teachers participated in two full-day sessions in November. Mentor teachers attended a one-day session in January, while both new and mentor teachers participated in a joint session in March of the same academic year.

Data Collection

To begin, both the new and mentor teacher project participants engaged in numerous written critical reflections on various issues confronting new teachers and on developing meaningful support for new teachers. Each reflection was prompted by the project facilitators at strategic intervals to encourage independent participant responses and opportunities to share perspectives in light of the larger group. Sample reflection topics included:

- What issues do new teachers/mentors face?
- Identify a new insight or key learning that occurred as a result of this topic discussion.
- What impact did the case-writing process have on you as a new mentor/teacher?
- What were the benefits of your reflections on your own practice as a new mentor/teacher?

Second, throughout the four-day project sessions, participants wrote their viewpoints on charts to collectively reflect and discuss the impact of certain topics at pivotal junctures during the work with cases and commentaries. As an example, participants were asked to read a case and respond to the various ethical dilemmas by assuming the role of the case-study teacher. They also had opportunities to reflect in writing their analyses of the case circumstances in view of the professional standards of practice. As a component of the reflections, participants identified underlying values and norms associated to teaching, and in the process, they discussed these implications on their roles as new and experienced teachers.

Lastly, structured virtual interviews of approximately 50 minutes involved a set of scripted questions that were posted in an electronic site and made exclusively available to project participants. Both mentors and new teachers were invited to express their thoughts to the various questions over a three-day period. The virtual interviews were conducted four weeks after the delivery of the final project session. The online interview protocol invited responses to a range of questions related to their participation in the project and its influence on their teaching and learning paradigms, their work with colleagues, and their own professional development as new and mentor teachers. Sample questions included the following:

1. As a new teacher/teacher mentor, what would you identify as your professional development needs?
2. The project presenters stressed community from the first activity (titled "Community Builder") to the closing activities. How effective were these activities in building community? How important was this to your experience of the workshop?
3. You were often asked to reflect on your teaching experiences and your images of teaching. How valuable were these opportunities for reflection? Compare the value of reflection to the value of teaching strategies or curriculum-oriented professional development.
4. The study of case studies was a critical component of the workshop. How enriching were the case study and follow-up activities? How have they informed your practice?
5. During the joint session with new teachers and teacher mentors, you worked closely with the mentors discussing and crafting some of the cases written during your first two-day session. How valuable was this experience? Did you feel any tensions during this process? Was this process useful in terms of your understanding of teaching and/or mentoring?
6. Looking back on your experience during these sessions—and in the time since—please comment on the value of these sessions in your professional development as a new teacher.
7. How would you compare these sessions to other professional development you have received?

Participants' responses to the online interviews were posted throughout the three-day life of the virtual site. This virtual site was purposefully designed to allow the new and mentor teacher participants various opportunities to juxtapose their reflections with those of other participants. There was sufficient flexibility for individuals to comment beyond the scope of the questions.

Data Analysis

The study's qualitative methodological approach derived from the principles of grounded theory. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), grounded theory is not predictive about outcomes. It is a methodical approach to data reduction that involves the pertinent codes and categories that emerge from data. Grounded theory is predominantly qualitative and particularly well suited to educational and sociological research due to its practical theory that is grounded in participants' observations and contributions (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003; Kennedy & Lingard, 2006). The process of data analysis within this qualitative tradition is significantly different from those methodologies that describe participants' realities with little input from the researcher (Glaser, 1993; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). The research design that evolved as part of this process considered both Eaves's (2001) synthesis of various grounded theorists (including Charmaz, 1983; Chesler, 1987) and the work of Glaser (2001; 2003) and Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Data derived from this study were coded and constantly compared. Initially, the open coding process distinguished discrete concepts (basic units of analysis) and the properties respective to each concept. Key phrases were captured in the participants' own words and used in the line-by-line examination of each participant's responses (Chesler, 1987). The concepts were translated into a discussion of observations, which resulted in an analysis of the data on a higher conceptual level (Orona, 1997). In this light, data analysis resembled "a discussion between the actual data, the created theory, memos and the researcher" (Backman & Kyngas, 1999, p. 149; see also Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

To continue, the axial coding process grouped codes into code phrases and, subsequently, into concepts (Eaves, 2001). The various concepts were grouped to create the preliminary categories. Categories were distinguished as concepts that emerged when codes relating to similar phenomenon were continuously juxtaposed with one another. Using the constant comparison technique, categories were then developed and tested against the collected data. The technique also provided the opportunity to use the categories to examine additional data in subsequent reflections, scripted charts, and interviews as they were collected. Therefore, categories were revamped throughout the data collection to reflect the emerging details. As Taber (2000) suggests, it is a "constant process of reviewing the emergent model against the data" (p. 471). The grounded theory analysis was not a structured and linear process; rather it fluctuated among lateral, vertical, and cyclical transitions. The process of theoretical sampling after the analyses of participants' reflections and scripted chart notes identified various preliminary hypotheses that emerged in the data. The virtual focus group interviews allowed for additional probing and for the conceptual saturation of the core categories being presented.

Critical to grounded theory is the ability of the researcher to engage in such a conceptual discussion without manipulating the data into predetermined paradigms. Of further import to the process is the understanding that the data themselves enable the pattern. Therefore, the researcher,

Must exercise the patience to *enable that which enables* and hence allow the voices of the participants to materialize. Having said this, the researcher is obligated to resist all temptations to shape the findings and lean towards more traditional forms of qualitative research methodologies (Cherubini, 2007, p. 112).

The researcher is certainly active in the process of tracking and recording procedural modifications and detailed descriptions as the findings emerge, but the researcher must resist controlling the direction of the analyses into predetermined conclusions (Charmaz, 1983; Jeon, 2004).

The study accounted for the rhetorical construction and frames of reference employed by the participants in terms of the manner whereby language impacts perception to create versions of reality (Avdi, 2005; Johnstone & Frith, 2005). The research team, well versed in qualitative measures, crosschecked the data and triangulated the results by completing both individual and collective coding sessions. This process was intended to increase the study's validity and reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This paper cites the discourse that was representational of the codes, properties, and categories emerging from the data.

Results

The results of this research shed light on the critical thinking processes that "actually go on in the minds of teachers" that, according to Grant and Zeichner (1995), has gone largely unexplained in the research. The inductive approach adopted throughout the analysis resulted in the emergence of four codes identified as "opportunities for participants to voice their contributions," "relevant professional development," "collegial partnerships," and "constructive and positive self-growth." In the tradition of grounded theory, the codes were collapsed during axial coding into two core categories: "reflecting on a new landscape for teachers," and "a heightened sense of self-affirmation as new and mentor teachers."

(1) **Reflecting on a new landscape for teachers.** Although participants acknowledged the significance of what one new teacher described as colleagues and principals who are "very supportive [and] provide positive re-enforcements," other participants admitted that in many instances they felt neither prepared nor properly inducted for their role as teacher. Typical of others, another participant stated, "Teaching has not been what I expected. I knew teaching would be a lot of work, but I did not know it would be quite this much." Participants were candid in stating their retrospective needs as new teachers. One participant wrote, "I would have appreciated more guidance from the board." Similarly, another suggested, "I thought I would have greater guidance from the other same-grade teachers." Another new teacher shared her discovery that "I really have to search out information on my own … support is scarce." The new teachers consistently cited their appreciation for the support that their school boards were able to offer, but they often admitted to it being insufficient. Characteristic of others, this new teacher stated, "the school board did the best they could with NTIP, but it was backwards. There was an in-service on classroom management in June." Although the board-led programs seemed to be lacking in some instances, the participants credited the mentors from their respective schools who knew, as this new teacher described, "exactly what I need to get through this first year alive and be effective." Others referred to the positive impact of the "constructive criticism" from their mentors who, as another new teacher referred to, "really helped [with] curriculum, routines, [and] union issues."

In this light, new teachers attested to the fact that their participation in the induction project enhanced their understandings of their respective roles as new and experienced teachers given the fact that they were privy to a broader vision of the educational landscape. Their involvement resulted in a realization that their teacher landscape has been for the most part marked by relative isolation. By engaging in case inquiry with this collaborative partnership, participants were able to perceive and make sense of their role as novice teachers from more inclusive and invitational educational perspectives. New teachers especially appreciated the discussions emanating throughout the project for, as many described, "offering another perspective, especially from outside of your own community." The conversations were consistently framed in references that captured new teachers "opening [their] eyes to new perspectives," providing "constructive ways of revising and connecting things," and as even another wrote, "recharging my mental faculties."

In turn, the case-based process employed in this induction project not only increased new teachers' awareness of the OCT's standards of professional practice, but embedded their understanding of these in contextually relevant circumstances. Similar to other new teachers, this participant declared that the sessions "made [me] aware of the standards [and] showed me that I was living up to these standards without knowing it." New teachers harbored a greater appreciation of the standards as they re-envisioned their role at the center of the educational landscape. One teacher reflected, "Finally there is some relevance to the standards." Another stated, "I can see how the standards are reflected in our universal cases." Still another concluded, "I will be a better teacher because of this opportunity. I will use this experience to further my development and understanding of ethical and professional standards of practice."

Surprisingly, however, this broadening of the educational landscape was not limited to only the new teacher participants. Mentors, too, concluded that the case process allowed them "to reflect on various points of view," to be attentive and "open-minded" of new teachers' needs, and as yet another individual stated, "to look at a variety of perspectives." Mentors, like beginning teachers, cited how "great it was to open our minds to more than one viewpoint." Particularly insightful was this comment shared by a mentor participant:

> It is through this discussion that I learn and gain ideas to shape my own practice, which I feel will make me a better mentor who has much to offer. I learned that we all face the same issues, feel the same joys, have the same worries, [and] without sharing, discussing, and listening we would not have this opportunity.

Mentor teacher participants reflected on the various insights and interpretations into the case dilemmas, as well as those others posed by new teachers. These mentor teachers concluded that the "great dialogue with colleagues from other boards" provided alternate and enlightened understandings." On numerous occasions, mentors recorded their "amazement" that they "miss[ed] important facts or neglect[ed] to see all the angles" of situations. They typically concluded that the dialogue stemming from the cases induced their critical thinking capacities and "forced [them] to dissect a situation and view the perspectives to identify the real issue versus the imposed emotional response."

For both new and mentor teacher participants, the broadening of their respective teacher landscapes represented a retrospective critical thinking process. Participants admitted to be

intrigued by the process of interrogating the facts, considerations, and competing perspectives under discussion. As a result, the discussion "provided a new means to communicate ideas and thoughts." Participants acknowledged that their thinking processes kept them "focused" and that the process of "reading, recording, discussing, and reflecting" engaged them in constructivist-driven insights. Common throughout the reflections were participants' comments about "benefiting from talking through" the various perspectives and how "reflection helps to see and review one's own actions." All participants made reference to the critical capacities of observation, introspection, and reflection as landmarks of their thinking processes. One new teacher stated, "There is a need for understanding the world of a beginning teacher." The induction project broadened their conceptualizations beyond their roles as new and mentor teachers by cultivating their thinking in a manner that transcended self-interests. The case-inquiry process provided a professional development intervention that allowed participants to engage in introspective and communal analyses in a spirit of intense reflection. Many participants determined the success of the project by the opportunities they were afforded to reflect in light of their teacher landscapes. Typical of others, this participant noted, "The most useful component was the reflection. I have not had a chance to reflect on my career as a teacher."

(2) **A heightened sense of self-affirmation.** The properties of this discourse with new teachers and mentors focused on their observations of personal growth during what they described as meaningful professional development. New teachers in particular commented on the dynamic process throughout the induction project that fostered critical thought where "ideas flowed freely." One participant in the project wrote that s/he benefited from the "collaboration with others who are at different stages of their careers." New teachers described the project as a means of reducing their isolation since they were consoled by the fact that the feelings of being overwhelmed were not theirs alone. "To hear common problems of new teachers," as one new teacher shared, made them realize that they "didn't know how common they were." Therefore, new teachers felt affirmed that the experiences of their peers and the insight of their mentor colleagues were aligned with their own paradigms and experiences. Particularly captivating were participants' comments characteristic of the following new teacher's description of participating in the project, which resulted in the "validation that I am on the right track and that there is support always available … it recharged my batteries." Their heightened sense of self-affirmation inspired new teachers' energy.

Of further significance, the self-affirmation gleaned from these sessions provided the new teacher participants with a more relative perspective of their own professional development as novice educators. In many instances, new teachers reflected that the experience of engaging in critical reflection throughout the process led to an understanding that, as this individual's summary amply represents, "it is a learning process." New teachers identified their professional growth as positioned on a continuum of learning. There existed a greater acceptance of the fact that being a novice educator implies certain challenges. Feeling validated in their role as novice teachers, participants admitted that "there is so much to learn" from, what another new participant teacher described as, "such meaningful discussion." In a constructive, positive, and self-affirming teacher induction process, participants distinguished "the bond existing between all teachers that is difficult to define but is inexplicably beautiful." The process of critical inquiry illuminated for new teacher participants a connection of sorts between new and experienced educators, the landscape they share, and the ones more private.

Participants were intrigued by the experiences of their colleagues from across the regions and distinguished the existence of an intimate conceptual relationship they shared with all teachers that was made evident by "talking through" and thinking critically of issues most relevant to their professional development.

Mentor participants also felt validated by their experience in the process. "It was affirming to know," as this mentor discussed, "that I am doing things to help." Mentors felt affirmed by the bilateral and contextually meaningful discussion between new and experienced teachers alike. Another individual reflected, "As a mentor, it confirmed that everyone goes through the same challenges as I have," and as a result, a different participant suggested that a strength of the project was to establish "mutual understandings of some of the issues faced by a beginning teacher and an experienced teacher." Mentors commented that the process of case-based inquiry affirmed that their contributions both during the sessions and at their own schools were valuable in terms of protégé development. They distinguished the importance of professional development that invites their critical thought as professional teachers to, as was typically described as, "a wide variety of ideas and suggestions." Common in the feedback were sentiments about the case-inquiry process that enabled them "to discuss open-ended issues and concerns that we all share" and how the sessions represented "insight through communication" as opposed to more traditional means of in-service whereby information is communicated in a passive transition model.

Further, mentor teacher participants reported that they valued the opportunity to not only make direct contributions to new teacher development, but to have their reflections juxtaposed with those of other experienced colleagues. In several instances, mentors reflected, as this individual stated, that the benefit of "writing my commentary and hearing other peoples' views and perspectives [led to the] realization that my opinions and views are valuable [and that] I like learning from other professionals." Mentors often commented that the process was "renewing" for them since the conversations between colleagues across the region provided them a better perspective of the "very specific" needs of new teachers and mentors alike. Representative of other mentor teacher participants, this individual stated, "I like listening to my colleagues' opinions and interpretations of the different cases and commentaries. It's nice to look at things from a different perspective and also to have my own ideas validated." For all participants, the case inquiry process enabled them to critically account for the multiplicity inherent in the profession. Consistent in the data were also comments that underpinned the importance of the sessions to, as this mentor participant wrote, "generate the opportunity to talk to other teachers." Participants reported feeling affirmed by the genuine conversation that resulted between participants. As another participant wrote,

> I feel that sharing sessions with your colleagues can rejuvenate and inspire you, because it provides you with a sense of comradery and that basic feeling that comforts you.… What makes us good teachers is that we continue to question our decisions and look to find new and better ways to help our students and support one another.

Discussion

As evidenced in the voices of the participants, this inquiry-base case model of professional learning clearly presents a unique reconceptualization of a teacher induction practice that is supported by the research literature and is relevant to the respective educational policies.

Further, and perhaps more significantly, the case-inquiry process facilitates for new and mentor teachers opportunities to reflect critically on the educational, social, emotional, psychological, and political contexts (as discussed in Grant & Zeichner, 1995; Wang et al., 2006) that have the potential to influence pedagogical practices. Inherent in the findings and emerging from the core themes are the implicit benefits of focusing teacher induction on the processes of critical inquiry in supportive professional communities of practice (see Hargreaves et al., 2001; Lieberman & McLaughlin, 2000). The outcomes, including those already presented, lend themselves to improving teachers' knowledge and skills, thereby supporting research that declares teacher quality to be "one of, if not the most, significant factor in student achievement and educational improvement" (Cochran-Smith, 2006, p. 106).

Participants distinguished the benefit of the model's focus on new and mentor teachers' metacognition throughout the inquiry process. Hamnerness, Darling-Hammond, and Bransford (2005) suggest that teachers are most effective when they "accurately reflect on what they are doing well and what needs to be improved" (as cited in Heller et al., 2007, p. 229). The participants in the induction model were engaged in knowledge-creation, critical thinking, retrospective analysis, and sustained collaboration with new and experienced colleagues. The research study participants attested to the benefit of having plentiful opportunities to self-reflect on the case dilemmas and implications related to the professional standards of practice; apply retrospective understandings to their own circumstances; and then engage in group discussion within the context of purposeful collegial relationships. Participants felt their contributions throughout the group discussions served as a vehicle for guiding the induction sessions. New and mentor teachers self-reflected, articulated their thinking and thought processes, and offered numerous anecdotes to extend the critical consciousness of the group. What emerged was a rather complex system of interrelated components. The critical consciousness of each new and mentor teacher served as a foundational element that contributed to a group professional consciousness that, in turn, assumed a conceptual force of its own.

Critical to the conceptual momentum of the discussion rooted in a metacognitive paradigm were the inquiries that often had the greatest relevance for the participants themselves. The process reflected a personal service to teacher induction (Cherubini, 2007). It complemented and extended the principles of NTIP by providing new teachers with a network of both their peers and experienced colleagues, while facilitating professional development in a supportive professional learning community (Hirsch, 2006; Martin & Rippon, 2006). The voices of the research participants substantiated the fact that the induction model engaged them in broadening of their teacher landscapes and provided a heightened sense of self-affirmation in the process of reflecting on their knowledge, capacities, and critical thinking (Richardson & Anders, 2005). The model fashioned sustained and focused attention on participants' reflections, thinking, and actual practice. The ensuing dialogues generated authentic conversation in mutually benefiting capacities. Participants suggested that they benefited from engagement in the case-inquiry design as it enabled them to share their discoveries and insights while often dispelling anxieties of their beginning colleagues in their assurances and considerations. Throughout each session, participants evaluated their individual and collective judgments and their potential to problem solve effectively (see Zambo & Zambo, 2007). For new teacher participants especially, the metacognitive function of this model enlightened their comprehension of complex circumstances. By reconceptualizing induction practices in this

light, new and mentor teachers can now better negotiate the unique and common realities of their practice, and the profound and sensitive implications associated with them.

The results of this research point to the benefits of an educational partnership that engages new and experienced teachers in a unique model of professional development. The project honored the voices of the participants—both new teachers and mentor teachers. This model of teacher induction generated sustained, profound, and purposeful professional development. The reflections of the new and mentor teachers, both during and subsequent to the sessions, gave the project its vitality, authenticity, and promise of relevancy.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study was based on grounded theory. Thus, emergent concepts are restricted to the context in which the research was conducted, the data examined, and the degree to which any research contextualized within the grounded theory structure is qualified. Given that the sample was exclusive to 4 participants from each of the 6 school boards, the results can only be limited to the population of the study as conclusions are not necessarily generalizable beyond this sample.

Teacher induction could benefit from formal inclusion of case-based professional learning. This research project explicitly demonstrated the significance of integrating a case approach for supporting the development of both beginning teachers and mentors. Professional learning that honors and respects the lived experiences of educators is highly relevant for induction. The written dilemmas encountered by beginning teachers in this project served as highly meaningful resources for both beginning teachers and mentors to inquire into professional practice.

Further, the opportunity for participants to engage in periods of sustained dialogue and critical reflection with colleagues about topics that have personal relevance to their practice is instrumental to their growth as teachers. Induction processes could be enhanced by regularly scheduled meetings between new and experienced teachers who can converse about professional issues away from the distractions of the classroom.

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