



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 3. Issue.3.,2016 (July-Sept.)

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

SURVIVE AND SUCCEED: INDUCTION OF NOVICE LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The significant rise in the school enrollment and intake of teachers in schools increases the need to shepherd the novice teachers in successfully navigating changes in their profession and learning standards. A comprehensive awareness about the challenges faced by novice teachers in the first few years of their career is crucial and becomes a good base for the continued service. Novice teachers are the ones who are involved in the process of building next generation. Their success will determine the success of the school and the taught. A comprehensive, coherent and sustained induction, mentoring and professional development programme could play a significant role. The challenges faced by these novice teachers can be categorized into six themes which are pedagogical issues, classroom management issues, concern for student motivation and counseling, work pressure, challenges relating to social circle and problems related to inner circle of the individual. This paper proposes the importance of induction in the professional life of a teacher and based on the challenges identified, suggests objectives, methods and design for induction of novice teachers. Schools that provide continuous and comprehensive training for their teachers achieve what every school aims to achieve – improving student learning. When learning needs are met, new teachers can reach their full potential—not only by staying and succeeding in the profession but also by improving learning of students. The author suggests certain measures which have been developed considering the three interconnected phases of induction, mentoring and professional development in the lifecycle of language teachers.

Keywords: Mentoring, Induction, Novice Teachers, Professional development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Paloma, a trained teacher graduate of the Department of English Language and Literature, describes her first teaching experiences as jumping into the sea without knowing how to swim:

“When I was ordered to go and teach for 21 hours a week to unmotivated elementary students, I felt as if somebody told me to jump into a deep pool without asking me whether I knew how to swim. At that time, I needed something such as a life jacket to make me feel confident.”

Paloma’s experience showed that she needed a kind of pedagogical support that would make beginning teachers feel more confident when teaching in early classes (Ozturk&Yildirim, 2012). The most important indicator of the success of any school is the achievement of its students. Research shows that teacher and teacher quality contribute and are predictors of student success.

Novice teachers of today are the ones who are involved in the process of building next generation. Their success will determine the success of the school and the taught. A comprehensive, coherent and sustained induction programme could play a significant role in this context.

MOTIVATION

While pre-service teacher preparation programs may offer foundational experiences and practice, becoming a teacher also requires substantial knowledge and experience that can only be learned in the classroom (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The initial few years of a teacher’s career is a dynamic time to develop their own “teacher persona,” or their personal public teaching identity (McCann & Johannessen, 2004) and ideas about the kind of teacher they want to be and the approaches they must employ to become this teacher (Cook, 2006).

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Most studies support that where goals or competences are individually targeted, the greater the chance of New Qualified Teachers (NQT)’ professional development (Dallat et.al., Spindler and Biott, 2000). Some studies have reported that major challenges of novice teachers are evaluation and grading and knowledge of subject and curriculum. Curriculum planning includes issues like macro and micro plan for the entire year, structuring lessons and assignments to promote independence and planning activities especially for gifted and slow learners. Although curriculum varies from Board to Board, the language skills have been taught in the schools under four heads i.e. Reading skill, Writing skill, Listening skill and Speaking skills (LSRW). Many language teachers lack these skills and find difficulty in including them in their lesson plans appropriately. Moreover, they also find it difficult to assess the students on these skills. “The conditions under which a person carries out the first years of teaching have a strong influence on the level of effectiveness which that teacher can achieve and sustain over the years; on the attitudes which govern teachers’ behavior over even a forty-year career; and, indeed on the decision whether or not to continue in the teaching profession” (Feiman-Nemser, 1996, p. 1026).

3. OBJECTIVES

- The purposes of this paper are to discuss key problems and concerns faced by beginning educators, to explore current professional development practices created for assisting beginning teachers, and to examine new ways to support beginning teachers
- Specifically, this article proposes approaches to guide the design and improvement of novice teacher induction programs in specific to English Language Teachers.

4. METHOD

Sources of data:

- Published literature in the area of novice teachers induction/commencement of teachers
- Anecdotal Approach: Author’s class room experience with primary, middle and high school teachers in four English Medium High Schools located in urban and semi-urban areas and undergraduate students of a Management/Technology Institute in a similar setting, involved in Recruitment and Training of Teachers for an international school, Span of study: 1999-2014

"Induction is a process which is – a comprehensive, coherent and sustained professional development process that is organized by management to train, support and retain new teachers and seamlessly progresses them into lifelong learning"(Wong, 2004).

It is also a process of enculturation which means recognizing that working conditions and school culture powerfully influence the character, quality, and outcome of new teachers' early years on the job. It is also a support process which continues for 2-3 years and later seamlessly becomes a part of the professional development of teachers. Induction should not be confused with mentoring;it is only a part of the induction process. A mentor is an important person assigned to each inductee to ease anxiety quickly and to serve a close acquaintance when needed.

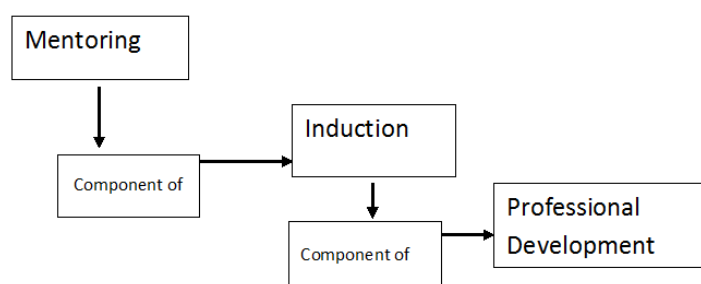


Figure 1: Relationship between Mentoring, Induction, and Professional Development

(Source: NASSP Bulletin, Wong, 2004)

5. CHALLENGES FACED BY NOVICE LANGUAGE TEACHERS

The author's experience as a teacher, her extensive interactions with colleagues and a brief review of the related literature suggest that teachers highly value the opportunities they get during first year in-service to observe effective language teachers in their departments and to be observed by their mentors and language teaching colleagues. They also welcome and benefit from discussions with their department about effective language teaching methodology.

A comprehensive awareness about the challenges faced by novice teachers in the first year of their joining school is crucial and becomes a good base for the continued service. Major challenges faced by these novice teachers can be categorized into six themes:

1. Pedagogical issues
2. Classroom management issues
3. Concern for student motivation and counseling
4. Work pressure
5. Challenges relating to social circle and
6. Problems related to inner circle of the individual

Pedagogical issues: The English language is taught as a second language in most of the schools in India. Today with the introduction of Right to Education Act, the classroom composition consists of students from various backgrounds and strata of society. Hence, schools today do not cater to the need of only one section of society or neighborhood. Although curriculum varies from Board to Board, the language skills have been taught in the schools under four heads i.e. Reading skill, Writing skill, Listening skill and Speaking skills (LSRW). The College Education often does not prepare the graduates on these skills effectively. Many of language teachers lack these skills and find difficulty in including them in their lesson plans appropriately. Moreover, they also find it difficult to assess the students on these skills.

Apart from it, a huge challenge to teachers, especially novice teachers, is to face issues like instructional setting and activities, curriculum planning and teaching methodology, assessment techniques (Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation), use of technology as resources in the classroom, preparing lesson plan, etc. Some studies have reported that major the challenges of novice teachers are evaluation and grading and knowledge of subject and curriculum. Curriculum planning includes issues like macro and micro

plan for the entire year, structuring lessons and assignments to promote independence and planning activities especially for gifted and slow learners.

Classroom management: The second concern is classroom management especially to create an overall teaching environment and to maintain discipline. Novice teachers struggle to establish control and authority, to handle students with disruptive behavior and various disorders, and to handle various groups in the class while having an insufficient response from the management concerning student discipline. Some of the students consider that if they can speak the English language, they have mastered the language. So a disinterest is seen among students in actually mastering the language at higher levels.

Concern for student motivation and counseling: Another concern that is faced by novice teachers is about guidance and counseling. Although most of the teachers get formal training on guidance and counseling during their degree programme in education, it does not really prepare them to handle a culturally and economically diverse classrooms. Novice teachers lack hands-on experience in areas like motivating students, handling individual differences, coping with students disinterest in school and school related activities, dealing with hyperactive students, students from broken homes, and students with the single parent having struggles in the family.

Work pressure: Excessive workload, inability to manage time, difficult working conditions and fatigue are some of the concerns of novice teachers. Empirical studies show that excessive workload i.e. various assigned tasks and responsibilities unrelated to classroom force them to quit teaching at early stages of teaching.

Challenges relating to social circle: As far as the social circle is concerned, novice teachers have mental pressure to build formal and informal relationships with parents, peers, pupil, colleagues, administrators and supervisors. A novice teacher attaches importance to the need for information about the new institution and to participate in teacher development programmes. They often feel left alone and feel the disadvantage of being a minority to learn at their own and have the desire and need to learn more from the mentors. Inter personal distance in the institution and group formations further add to the uneasiness of the novice teachers.

Problems related to inner circle of the individual: Apart from all these there are internal detractors like perception of role, self-image i.e. appearance and identity and the emotional need for one's own personal and professional development. They also struggle for one's identity as a teacher in the society where the job is not lucrative and pay packets are not at par especially in private schools. Hence a constant desire to search for jobs with better prospects leads to high attrition rate in private schools.

CURRENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

These training programmes are offered by various recognized school boards

- One week training programme in an year
- Principal monitor and mentoring programme.
- Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation training programme on Evaluation
- Capacity building training
- Online Training Programme on Assessment

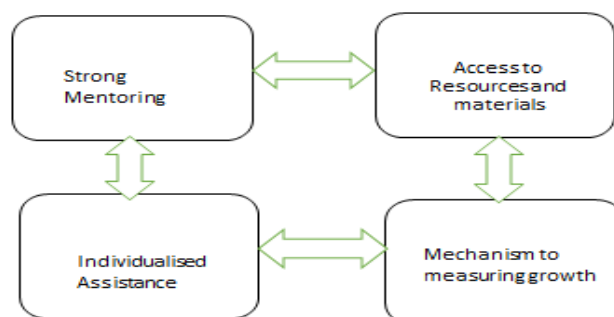


Figure 2: Factors for Designing Novice Teachers Program

(Source: Contemporary Educational Technology, Koehler & Kim, 2012)

6. PROPOSED APPROACH TO INDUCTION PROGRAM

Given the importance of induction in the professional life of a teacher and drawing on the challenges identified above, the following objectives, methods and design are suggested for induction of novice teachers in schools both private and public. This approach has been developed considering the three interconnected phases of mentoring, induction and professional development in the lifecycle of a language teacher.

Table: 1 ;Phases of mentoring, induction and professional development

Dimension	Objectives	Methods
Mentoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a close confidante so as to ease anxiety of the new teachers To develop expertise in classroom management and instructional skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allotment of mentors who are approachable and experienced, with role clarity. Scheduling of activities ensuring less teaching load and low administrative work during the first year of teaching. Spending time with mentors who will assign the day's schedule and task of observing instructional techniques and delivery.
Induction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To train and acculturate teachers in the academic standards and vision and mission of the Institution To address the school specific needs in teacher development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generation of portfolios – content specific portfolios which is designed to assess their pedagogical knowledge and skill development. Developing a set of lesson plans for prose, poetry and grammar, Rubrics for assessment of four skills (LSRW) – evaluated samples of students work. Provide ample opportunities for inductees to observe demonstration classrooms. Connecting the novice teachers with various English forums and include their contribution in portfolios. Access and hands on training to various in-house resources to use in classrooms especially related to technology. Create learning circles and establish a connection with veteran teachers. Conducting relevant and need based personality development programmes. Administer questionnaire for measuring self-image.
Professional development	To get inputs from induction programme that could inform the management about the type of professional development programmes for novice teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using feedback from induction phase on the knowledge and skillgaps of novice teachers for program design. Access to various resources and collaboration

7.CONCLUSION

Effective schools connect their teachers' development to the goals of the school and students' needs. These goals and needs are formulated based on the feedback received during induction programme. It is known that students learn what they are taught, and they will learn more if they are taught effectively. Thus, how well teachers are prepared to be effective in the classroom influences students' performance. The bottom line is to develop effective teachers who make a difference in the performance of students and thus help achieve the purpose for which the school exists. Schools that provide continuous and comprehensive training

for their teachers achieve what every school aims to achieve – improving student learning. When we meet their learning needs, new teachers can reach their full potential—not only by staying and succeeding in the profession but also by improving learning for all students. This approach has been developed considering the three interconnected phases of mentoring, induction and professional development in the lifecycle of a teacher.

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