

KEY TO QUALITY TEACHING IN KENYAN SCHOOLS

JANE IRENE A. DAWO

Department of Educational Management and Foundations,
Faculty of Education, Maseno, Kenya.

E-mail address for correspondencen: dawojanei@gmail.com

Abstract: Induction is a vital step in the professional growth and development of a teacher because it acts as a bridge between pre-service training and the actual teaching job. Schools face different challenges and have unique opportunities for which no pre-service teacher training programme, however updated, would be adequate. Induction therefore helps Newly Appointed Teachers (NATs) to quickly adjust to the academic, social, and sometimes political environment in the new job with the guidance of the more experienced mentors. Today, induction of NATs is even more crucial considering that in Kenya, immediacy of post-training employment is not guaranteed. In fact, earlier graduation dates give competitive advantage to the prospective teacher when seeking employment in the public service. This implies that NATs face a myriad of challenges given that many of them may not have spent the pre-appointment period in a teaching-related environment. This paper seeks to highlight the induction needs of beginning teachers, challenges they face, essential mentor characteristics for effective induction, identify some strategies that school managements use in induction, and make recommendations for improvement in pursuit of better teaching for quality education in Kenya.

Key Words: induction, mentors, protégé, Newly Appointed Teachers, Newly Qualified Teachers

INTRODUCTION

In Kenya, induction of teachers is scheduled for the first 2 years christened ‘probation period’ as specified in the Teachers’ Service Commission (TSC) code of regulations (Republic of Kenya, 1986). At the end of the period, TSC may confirm or terminate appointment. It may sometimes extend the period of probation by 1 year if the Newly Appointed Teacher (NAT) exhibits unacceptable tendencies that are inappropriate to the teaching profession. Before termination, the supervisor principal (TSC agent-also referred to as headteacher) is supposed to issue a warning in writing and inform the TSC of the same by a copy of the letter. It is presumed that during the 2 years, the principal offers advice, guidance and assistance befitting the young professional besides providing adequate opportunity for adjustment and development for all NATs to qualify for confirmation. Available literature refers to proteges as Newly Qualified Teachers(NQTs) but this term may not be appropriate to the Kenyan case whereby since 1998,

TSC applies a demand-driven-teacher recruitment formula in which earlier graduation dates are a competitive advantage to the applicant. Teachers are posted subject to availability of vacancies followed by advertisement and successful interview. This makes it unclear the period length between pre-service training and employment which, for some applicants, may be as many as 10 years. The period lapse may cause room for regression in attitude, skill, knowledge and enthusiasm for teaching, besides possibility of curriculum modification between pre-service training and government employment hence the increasing need for quality induction for NATs.

INDUCTION NEEDS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

Transiting from being a student of teachers to being a teacher of students can pose real emotional, social, mental, and psychological pressure. A synthesis of literature by Wanzare (2007) described the first year of teaching in the following words: critical in beginning teachers' decision to make a commitment to teaching and remain in the profession (Gold, 1996; Hope, 1999); critical in developing novice teachers' confidence in themselves as maturing professionals; a period during which NQTs shape their attitudes, beliefs, and practices (Michael et al, 2002); a ritual bridge that NQTs have to cross to enter the teachers' world (Britzman, 1986; Roy et al, 1998); most challenging, exhilarating, and often most traumatic to beginning teachers (Cole et al, 1995; Kottler et al, 1998); trickiest on the NQTs' job (Bartell, 2005); and a period during which NQTs face unique problems (Hurling-Austin et al, 1989).

It is important to find out the actual needs of the NATs before purporting to induct them. Research has revealed that organizations and their appointed mentors may sometimes be involved in expensive rigorous fruitless induction programmes for their new employees. This is because of the tendency of the old timers to assume that their experience and forecast is all that makes induction (King, 2002) and end up treating the NATs as if they are 'tabularasa' in matters of teaching, the job they trained for. Being adults, the NATs abhor a domineering lecturing learning environment. They wish to feel appreciated, respected and resourceful despite their subordinate relationship during induction. The goal of the mentor-protégé induction relationship should always aim at providing basic teaching tips and ideas that can be immediately implemented into the classroom as a means of transfusing curriculum content and methodological expertise to benefit learners in schools.

Factors that may appear extraneous to the job such as culture sometimes impedes induction. For instance, drawing from data from 23 mentor teachers in the US, and China, Wang (2001) cited in Wang, Odell & Schwille (2008) explored the relationship between mentoring contexts and mentoring practice and learning opportunities for novices. Through comparative analysis, he found that mentors in different countries hold different beliefs about what novices need to learn. US mentors influenced by decentralized curriculum and individualistic culture of teaching tended to believe that learning about individual students and establishing purposes for teaching were important. Chinese counterparts believed that novices should develop a deep understanding of the subject matter, curriculum and professional ethics. The result was that the US spent little time with novices only focusing on curriculum materials while Chinese spent more time with novices focusing on pedagogical issues. In Kenya, Indoshi (2003) found out that NATs wished to have a close impersonal relationship with the mentor for emotional and social security for optimal result from such quality interactive teacher-learner relationship. It is therefore important to focus on induction needs of teachers because probably, the mentors may be providing biased information which may not be what the protégés need.

Induction needs of beginning teachers are insurmountable and may vary according to varied personalities, visions, environments and backgrounds. A study carried out in Bungoma East District in Western Province of Kenya had the following findings. Simatwa (2010) realized that primary school teachers wished to be inducted in: knowledge of school policies, acquisition of learning resources, time management, procedure for use of facilities available, support staff and their roles in schools, professional ethics, professional support programmes, knowledge of scheme of service for primary teachers, Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) Service Charter, Provisions of TSC code of regulations, legal provisions in education, appraisal programmes, induction to school neighbourhood, accommodation and travelling, learning about children and culture in and out of school, and tactics of handling difficult students. Indoshi (2003) in a study of graduate school teachers in Kisumu District in Nyanza Province of Kenya during their first 2 years in teaching (probation period) discovered that they wished to learn school

organization, curriculum, teaching methods, student discipline management, interpersonal relationships, school rules and regulations, and school vision and mission.

Available literature reveals varied needs of protégés across the globe. Stuart (2002) identified the need to learn designing and pacing of lessons that are developmentally sound while for De Paul(2000), identifying opportunities for professional development. Bob & Brian (1995) categorized induction needs of Queensland primary school teachers into four:

- Personal emotional support:-opportunity to have someone to talk to and need to feel comfortable in asking for advice and assistance;
- Task- related assistance and advice:- advice, ideas, resources, information and practical help regarding school routines, covering required content, assessing and reporting student progress and managing multiple demands;
- Problem-related assistance and advice:- having someone with whom to discuss problems, and explore possible solutions such as classroom behaviour problems and learner needs;
- Critical reflection and feedback on practice:- guided reflection and formal feedback regarding their professional practice.

CHALLENGES FACED BY NEWLY APPOINTED TEACHERS (NATs)

NATs experience a host of challenges during the probation period some of which may make them have a poor entry perception into teaching, orientate to poor teaching strategies, make them to be in teaching as a stop gap measure while they seek better job alternatives, seek transfer to other stations of teaching, or even make them abandon teaching altogether.

Indoshi (2003) classified these indicated by his respondents difficulties into four:

- About students:- they described students as naughty, lazy, shy, dishonest, passive, disrespectful, resistant, undisciplined, noisy, and unmotivated. They hated the subject, were late comers, abused drugs and had a poor study culture. They perceived young teachers to be near-age mates hence student control was a challenge.
- About colleagues:- the more senior teachers who were supposed to be their mentors were reserved, uncooperative, uncaring, discouraging, lazy, dishonest, gossipers and rumour mongers. Because of such, they tried to establish their own survival mechanisms.
- About the principal:- asked others about new teachers, not open, uncooperative, withdrawn, uncaring, not interested in academic excellence, poor public relations, cunning, unconcerned, witch-hunting, suspicious, meddling in personal issues and untrustworthy.
- About the school:- poor working conditions, hostile community, remoteness, lack of resources, lack of clear mission, hostile climate, and uncooperative parents.

According to Wanzare (2007), these new teachers faced the following challenges; work over-load, inadequate professional support, 'reality shock' or 'culture shock', student discipline management, personal versus professional demands, classroom management, isolation, students and parents demands, undefined role expectations, and inadequate resources. The responses to these challenges often negate the very purpose for which they are assigned teaching roles as shown in Figure 1.

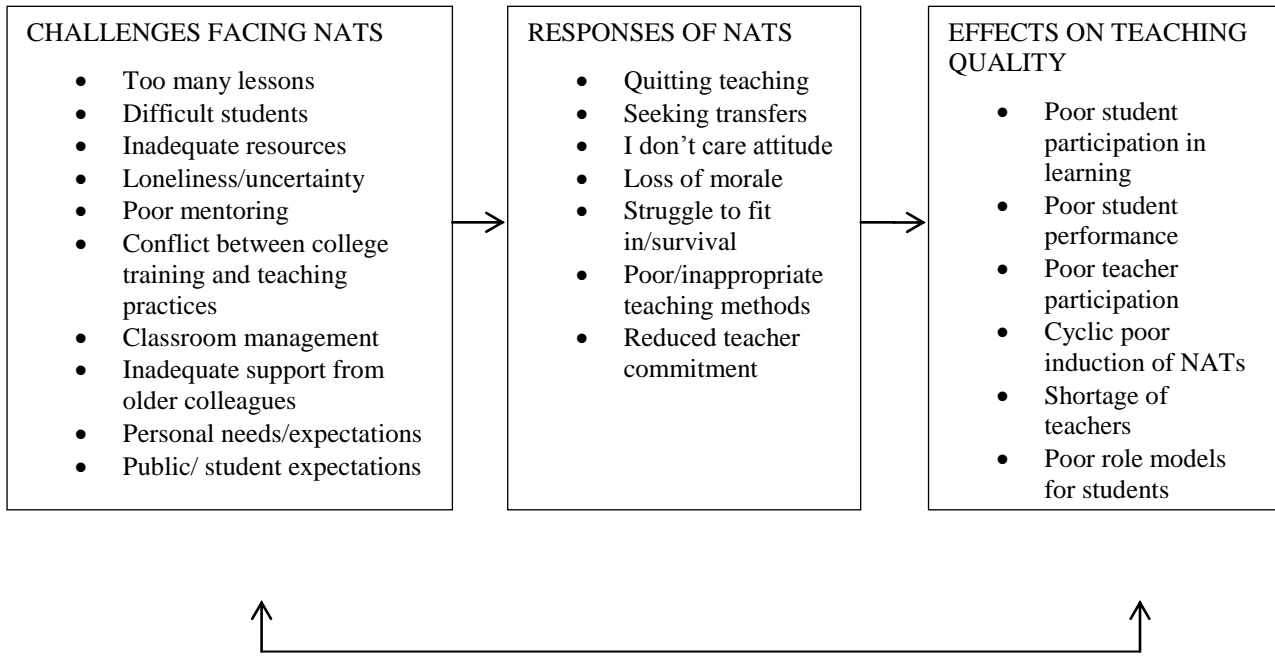


Figure 1: Challenges faced by beginning teachers, their responses to challenges and the effect of their responses on teaching quality.

INDUCTION STRATEGIES FOR NEWLY APPOINTED TEACHERS

Induction is a complex activity whereby diverse approaches may be used by varied organizations. It happens whether it is programmed or not and so it is important for educational leaders to consciously design a way to clearly articulate professional norms and expectations. Some of the factors determining the kind of induction programme to be used may be organizational financial resources, availability, willingness and competence of personnel, the task to be inducted for and previous experience of the protégé. One thing that is common to all induction programmes is that there is some form of mentoring in which an experienced teacher provides support to the beginning teacher in a variety of ways. Secondly, induction begins once the teacher commits himself to a teaching environment and ends sometime in the future depending on how fast the protégé is successfully enculturated to the profession.

NATs need to be nurtured helpfully towards the goal of improved teaching quality. In Primary schools in Bungoma East and North Districts, headteachers relied on themselves, deputy headteachers, senior teachers, experienced teachers, class teachers and guidance and counseling teachers to mentor the NATs (Simatwa, 2010). He explained that seminars, workshops, in-service training, classroom observation, informal guidance, attachments to career teachers, appraisal and discovery methods were prevalent induction practices. Indoshi(2003) indicated that teachers on probation were assisted by senior teachers, school inspectors, and Teachers Advisory Centres, the latter being the least useful. They preferred face-to-face discussion methods to demonstration of lessons, and provision of relevant literature.

Rather than separating the employee learning experiences from the context of actual job performance, trainers incorporate everyday work issues as learning examples thus increasing the realism of training and learning exercises and scenarios. Most training takes place on the job, and in all probability, this method is by far the most effective

means of employee development (King, 2000). The learning organization human-capital-theorists like Bronchi (2003) and Babalola(2003) draw attention to aspects of learning previously ignored or taken for granted by the earlier obsession with schooling and credentialed knowledge. Induction is the very first step to on-the-job learning, invaluable though without certification of proof.

MENTOR CHARACTERISTICS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHER INDUCTION

There are certain characteristics necessary of mentors for quality induction process to effectively move NATs from being novices, through to competent teachers, proficient teachers to being expert teachers. These include the following:

- Knowledgeable of the beginning teachers' needs; (Kajs, Alainz, William, Maier, Brott & Gomez, 2011, Wang et al, 2008, Wanzare, 2007).
- Good interpersonal skills (Simatwa, 2010)
- Willing to protect the protégé from major mistakes by limiting their exposure to responsibility(Beardwell & Claydon,2007, Kajs et al, 2011)
- Having internalized knowledge of the organizational vision (King, 2000)
- Role model in word and deed (Simatwa, 2010, De Paul,2000)
- Interested in the development of other staff for the benefit of the organizational whole(Wanzare, 2007, Wang et al,2008)
- Patient enough to continue with or repeat processes where necessary, till the protégé is eventually able to walk alone(Indoshi, 2003)
- Respectful of the protégés potential resourcefulness during induction process(Kajs, et al 2011, Carroll & Gillen, 2001)
- Objectively evaluates others and gives feedback(King, 2000, De Paul, 2000)
- Willing to be evaluated by others for feedback mechanism (Beardwell & Claydon, 2007)
- Experienced and mature in thought and behaviour (King, 2000, Carroll & Gillen, 2001).

THE QUAGMIRE OF TEACHER INDUCTION PRACTICE

Although learning to teach occurs in multiple stages of a teachers' career, the probation years are crucial and generally, a problematic period. First year teachers assume responsibilities similar to those of experienced teachers while learning their job with limited experience and preparation. A lot of effort tends to focus on how comfortable they feel and not how well they are adjusting to local teaching contexts yet simply adjusting to the local school culture does not necessarily translate into effective teaching. Indoshi (2003) found out that it was necessary to evaluate the NATs. Respondents suggested that there be internal inspection by the school principal or his delegatee, others preferred the use of external supervisors from the Ministry of Education, some, an end-of-probation examination, while others suggested evaluation of their service delivery by their clients, the respective students. Who bears the blame in case of failure?

Good teaching practice learnt during induction is not automatically transferred to actual teaching. Odell(2003) reported about 2 interns who developed strikingly different ways to adjust to a context which led to different teaching and different consequences for students' learning even when offered opportunities to follow their own agendas with the same mentors.Simatwa (2010) noted that mentors revealed that they were themselves ineffective during induction due to lack of support from school management, time constraints, poor levels of appreciation of the induction process by both the protégé and old staff, and absence of teamwork. Some indicated that they required

financial motivation and support, which was not forthcoming, for success. How much money or material reward would adequately compensate a mentor?

Carroll & Gillen (2001) found a variety of barriers to induction. For instance people do not readily accept mentoring roles, some of them lack interpersonal competence, lack of time, performance pressures, and generally, employees tend to feel that it should be done by another person probably in management. Mentoring has disadvantages such as the risk of over-reliance by protégés, the danger of picking up bad habits, the fact that the protégé may be alienated from other sources of expertise, and the sense of loss experienced when the mentor leaves. Sometimes, the mentor and his student may have difficulty in harmonizing conflicting views in their unequal relationship (King, 2002). How would a NAT be shielded from both formal and informal dysfunctional induction?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Mentors should be assigned from more experienced colleagues to co-ordinate initiation into teaching and its various aspects such as curriculum, co-curriculum, and social dimensions of teaching. This should be in conjunction with various relevant staff such as sports master, guidance and counselor and heads of departments.
- Both formal and informal induction programmes should be institutionalized into a school culture to enhance mentor willingness and commitment.
- There should be forums whereby the more experienced teachers in a school revisit their induction needs at their entry time into teaching. This would form a base from where new teachers would be inducted from a point of understanding by mentors.
- Prospective teacher mentors should be in-serviced before assignment of any duty or else they would perform poorly causing disillusionment against the very cause of induction.
- Beginning teachers should be voluntarily given information, and more information that is relevant to facilitating their adjustment without having to seek it from individuals or offices. Such may include; school examination progress reports, teaching timetables, school strategic plan, teaching resources like textbooks amongst others.
- The beginning teacher should initially be socialized by school authority such as through introduction to the staff members, students, and subordinate staff. In addition, it should remain primarily in-charge of induction, only delegating roles.
- The Ministry of Education should design procedural induction programmes for NATs.

REFERENCES

- Babalola, J.B.(2003). Budget Preparation and Expenditure Control in Education. In Babalola, J.B.(ed) Basic Text in *Educational Planning*, Ibadan; Awemark Industrial Printers.
- Bronchi, C.(2003). *The Effectiveness of Public Expenditure in Portugal*. Economics Department Working Paper, 349; OECD.
- Carroll, S. & Gillen,D.(2001).Exploring Teaching Function of the Managerial Role. *Journal of Management Development International* Vol. 5, pg 330-342.

- De Paul, A.(2000). *Survival Guide for New Teachers: How New Teachers Work Effectively with Veteran Teachers, Parents, Principals and Teacher Educators*. Washington, D.C: US Department of Education.
- Indoshi, F.C.(2003).Teachers' Experiences of the Probation Period of Teaching in Kenya: Implications for Teacher Induction Policies and Programmes. *Journal of In-service Education*, Vol.29(3) pg 473-489.
- Kajs, T.L, Alainz, R.,William,E, Maier, J.M., Brott, P.E, & Gomez, D.M (2011). *Looking at the Process of Mentoring for Beginning Teachers*. <http://www.alt-teachercert.org/Mentoring.html>.
- King, Z. (2000). New or Traditional Careers? A Study of UK Graduates Perceptions. *Human Resource Management Journal*, Vol 13 (1) pg 5-6
- Republic of Kenya (1986). *TSC Code of Regulations for Teachers*. Nairobi: Government Printers.
- Rob, B & Brian, H.(1995). Mentoring Beginning Teachers: A Qualitative Analysis of Process and Outcomes. *Educational Review*, Vol 47(3) pg 297-308.
- Simatwa, E.M.W.(2010). Induction Needs of Beginning Teachers in Public Primary Schools: A Case Study of Bungoma East and North Districts. *Educational Research Journal*. Vol. 1(10) pg 481-491 ISSN:2141-5161 <http://www.interestjournals.org/ER>
- Stuart, L.(2002).*What New Teachers Need: A Principal's Perspective*. Principal Vol 81(4) pg 18-21.
- Wang, J., Odell, J. & Schwille, S.A.(2008).Effects of Teacher Induction on Beginning Teaching: A Critical Review of Literature. *Journal of Teacher Education*.
- Wanzare, Z.O.(2007). The Transition Process: The Early Years of Being a Teacher in Townsend, T. & Bates, R.(eds), *Handbook of Teacher Education*, pg 343-364; Springer, Netherlands.

SUGGESTED REVIEWERS

- Simatwa, E.M., E-mail simatwae@yahoo.com Lecturer Department of Educational Management and Foundations, Maseno University, Kenya.
- Odebero, S.O., E-mail sodebero@yahoo.com Lecturer, Department of Education Management, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya.
- Ngala, F.B.J.A., E-mail ngalafred@yahoo.com Lecturer, Department of Education Management, Kabarak University, Kenya.