Induction programs for beginning teachers

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Abstract
The first year of teaching has been described as a sink or swim experience. The beginning of a teaching career for some may be filled with excitement, challenge, and success. For others, the first year of teaching may seem to be a confusing, frustrating time, filled with feelings of defeat and failure (Ryan, 1970; Ryan et al., 1980; Gaede, 1979; Grant and Zeichner, 1981).
This Research Paper by: James B. Hamilton

Entitled: Induction Programs For Beginning Teachers

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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10/12/86
Date Approved

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10/14/86
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Introduction

The first year of teaching has been described as a sink or swim experience. The beginning of a teaching career for some may be filled with excitement, challenge, and success. For others, the first year of teaching may seem to be a confusing, frustrating time, filled with feelings of defeat and failure (Ryan, 1970; Ryan et al., 1980; Gaede, 1979; Grant and Zeichner, 1981).

Probably at no other time in their teaching career will teachers be so unsure of their own competence and ability as during the first year of teaching. First year teachers are faced with difficult challenges that effect their professional and personal self-confidence. Those who cannot meet the demands and challenges of the first year leave the teaching field.

There was a significant amount of literature devoted to the problems of beginning teachers. In an attempt to discuss these problems, books such as Don't Smile Until Christmas (Ryan, 1970) and Biting the Apple (Ryan et al., 1980), contain diaries of the lives of beginning teachers. In an effort to deal with problems confronting first year teachers, many educators (Conant, 1963; Hunt, 1968; Grant and Zeichner, 1981) have identified some factors which may enable new teachers to make a smoother
transition from student in a college or university to full-time teacher in an elementary or secondary classroom.

There was convincing evidence that beginning teachers who received the benefits of proper orientation and induction programs enjoyed better relations with pupils, peers and parents. They also were happier in their work; felt they were a member of the "team", and worked towards excellence in performance (Gaede, 1978).

Induction is the process of assisting new teachers to be professionally competent (Tisher, 1982). Although there was a substantial knowledge base about the importance of induction programs for beginning teachers, many school districts in the United States have neglected to put that knowledge into practice (Grant et al., 1981). The importance of an effective induction program for new teachers cannot be overestimated. Every year many talented and potentially capable teachers have left the field after just one year in the classroom. (Varah et al., 1986). Though there were various reasons for their departure, many left because they could not cope with the professional and personal adjustments forced on them by the first year of teaching. The consequence "is unfortunate not only for the young teacher but also for society, which loses the valuable services of a trained teacher (Conant, 1963)."
Problems Encountered During the First Year

References to the problems of beginning teachers in the literature were longstanding. The author will examine two general types: anecdotal or diary type reports by first-year teachers of the problems they encountered and studies by researchers about the problems of beginning teachers. This paper will present two perspectives about the difficulties of first year teachers, those expressed by the teachers themselves and studies of the problems by others.

Probably one of the best sources of information about the problem of beginning teachers in the literature comes from personal memoirs of the first year of teaching. Books such as Don't Smile Until Christmas (Ryan, 1970) and Biting the Apple (Ryan et al., 1980) contain diaries of the lives of first-year teachers. The main themes involved survival tactics and horror stories. Other authors have described the problems of beginning teachers often accompanied by advice for teacher program improvement (Grant and Zeichner, 1981; Lortie, 1975; Boyer, 1983). While there exists many problems during the first year, the writer looked at the following areas.

1. Discipline and class control
2. Finding and using appropriate materials
3. Isolation and insecurity
4. Social distance
5. Personal adjustments
6. Doubts about professional competence

One of the most frequently mentioned problems dealt with class control and discipline. Several studies have looked into this problem. Kevin Ryan (1980) also considered the problem of the new teacher's relationship with the student and a fear of discipline. He used the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory to measure teachers' attitudes toward their students. Prospective teachers were characterized as warm and positive toward their students. When the same test was administered to beginning teachers during the first four months, there was a sharp decline in positive attitudes. After that time, a very slow rise in attitudes began. Ryan labeled this the "curve of disenchantment".

Student misbehavior was the greatest source of difficulty for 180 interns responding to a questionnaire developed by Miller (1970) at Temple University. Polling the interns at the beginning, middle and end of their first year, Miller found that this area was hard to understand and hard to handle for the new teachers. This problem was mentioned by interns teaching in junior high schools more frequently than by interns working at the senior high school level.
First-year teachers are naturally susceptible to discipline problems (Ryan, 1970; Lortie, 1975; Doyle, 1975). The basic explanation for this occurrence can simply be that novice teachers had little or no practice in being "in charge". Very few college students have had much opportunity to give orders or coordinate the activities of a group of people, furthermore, students form early, almost immediate impressions about a teachers inexperience and hesitancy (Krajewski and Shuman, 1976). Blase and Greenfield (1982) found that problems associated with the control and discipline of students seemed especially stressful during the first year, so stressful in fact, it was an impetus for some to leave the teaching profession altogether.

Another frequently mentioned problem for beginning teachers has been finding and using appropriate curriculum. In many teaching situations what was learned in college did not fit the real situation. First year teachers also were frustrated in finding the correct methods and materials for their students. While the materials were at the appropriate level for some students, "the material was too abstract and presented too fast for others to assimilate" (Ryan, 1970). Similarly, in a study by Blase and Greenfield (1982), beginning teachers in Upstate High indicated that their knowledge of subject matter, teaching techniques, and materials were not adequate, and that it took
considerable time to develop the knowledge and skill to teach as effectively as they felt they should.

Insecurity and isolation were feelings frequently described by beginning teachers. Consider the following account: "I am still a little nervous around my principal. I'm so afraid I will not do my job well enough" (Swanson, 1968).

John Canfield explains his feelings quite aptly (1970):

A large part of the first year was spent in an overwhelming state of helplessness. That feeling that results from not being able to effectively intervene. As a first year teacher you are helpless to do anything. You have no real power within the structure. (p. 39)

The isolation of the new teacher in a school was discussed by Lortie (1975). Despite the fact schools are places crowded with people, individual teachers felt separated from each other as they performed their trade. This situation typically increases anxiety in new teachers because of the limited support they receive during the demanding early months. As a result, "beginning teachers spend most of their time physically apart from colleagues" (Lortie, 1975). As Erlandson and Pastor (1981) found, schools as being structured in such a way that inhibits
teacher to teacher contact, thus making the teacher the only adult in the classroom once the class begins and the door closes.

Commenting on the infrequent communication among members of a department, Ryan (1970) described the account of a first year teacher Linda Corman in his book Don't Smile Until Christmas. He reported that she realized that while teachers were friends in a social context, each preferred to close the classroom door to rest of the world. Furthermore, she experienced confusion when she asked a colleague about his classroom activities and was rudely repulsed. Finally, she adjusted to that kind of environment, that is, closing her door and her mouth for the rest of the year. For a variety of reasons, Linda Corman decided to leave the teaching profession.

Generally, the first year of teaching has been described as complex and difficult (Ryan, 1970). The first year teacher encounters an awesome task: they must establish a congenial reputation among students, faculty, and the administration; they must prepare lessons for courses they have never taught before; and must adapt to an entirely new role - that of an adult, and a professional. Additionally, the first year presents many adjustments for the new teacher, adjustments that frequently have nothing to do with teaching. Ryan et al., (1980) referred to this as "nonteaching adjustments". Most have just left the security of the campus where the major concern was to complete
college. Their immediate goal was graduation and finding a job. Suddenly, over the short course of a summer, beginning teachers' lives were changed abruptly. No longer students, they are now teachers.

With their teaching position - the first paycheck - may spell real financial independence in their lives. Since they are usually thrown into a new area, they need to find a place to live. For some, purchasing and maintaining their own car is a new experience.

Others may be confronted with financial decisions for the first time: where to bank, how to manage a checking and saving account. Many begin learning how to cook. Furthermore, the beginning teacher must learn where to shop, where to buy car insurance, where to find doctors and dentists, as well as a myriad of other mundane concerns (Ryan, et al., 1980).

In addition to the beginning teacher's problems with discipline, lesson plans, personal adjustments, and isolation, teachers also mentioned a problem with establishing appropriate social distance between the teacher and students. The relatively small age difference between themselves and their students poses a real dilemma for the first year teacher.

Blase and Greenfield (1982) found that many first year high school teachers attempted to relate to students in an almost peer-like and personal way. Ryan (1984) said many beginning
teachers selected between two extremes: strict and businesslike or the natural approach. The natural approach implies the teacher needs to be "accepted" and "liked" by their students. Unfortunately, this form of teacher behavior often undermines the teacher-student relationship. As Blase and Greenfield (1982) reported, beginning teachers learn that to be "one of the gang" can be incompatible with the teacher's responsibility to teach and manage students.

Another area in the context of teacher-student relationships that goes virtually unnoticed was that of sex. Beginning teachers are especially susceptible to this phenomenon. As alluded to earlier, proximity in age to the student can be a factor. Additionally, beginning teachers are more vulnerable because they're often times single, new to the community, and lonely (Ryan, 1984). "Sometimes under the stress of the new position, beginning teachers may desire affection, and it is quite possible that a twenty-two year old teacher would find a eighteen-year old student sexually attractive" (Ryan, 1984).

Another problem among first year teachers are doubts about their professional competence. First year teachers are less assured of their own professional and personal competence was the conclusion made by Gaede (1978). His investigation measured the self-assured professional knowledge skills of 272 educators in various levels of teaching, including student teachers,
graduates, first year teachers and experienced teachers. Using the Professional Training Readiness Inventory, the data indicated a rise in self-assessed knowledge during each stage except the first year. Beginning teachers revealed a lower score on every category, including:

1. Knowledge of basic methods of teaching.
2. Knowledge of the administration of public schools.
3. Knowledge of educational theory and history.
4. Knowledge of educational methods useful in teaching slow learners.
5. Knowledge of the proper use of educational media.
6. Experience in observing educational models.

Gaede also suggested that this was because first year teachers compared themselves to their more experienced colleagues. He also found that student teachers scored higher. Gaede suggested that student teaching usually is conducted in an atmosphere of support, and the student is not expected to have all the answers. However, the conditions of the first year required the teacher to have the knowledge and skills needed to teach. From his findings, Gaede concluded that the student
teacher tends to overestimate their professional competence.
That the student teacher usually does their internship close to
campus enabling them to turn to their professor for help when
faced with the demands of the situation was voiced by Krajewski
and Shuman (1976).

Induction Programs for Beginning Teachers

In the last twenty-three years since the Conant Report
(1963), which contained several suggestions for helping beginning
teachers, the induction phase has received a great deal of
attention in the professional literature. In response to
Conant's recommendations, the National Association of Secondary
School Principals' project on the induction of beginning teachers
(Hunt, 1968) has been considered representative of the type of
support needed. The main features of the NASSP project are as
follows:

1. a teaching load reduced by one class
   period;
2. a teaching load reduced by one class
   period for an experienced teacher;
3. assistance for beginners in finding
   and using good instructional materials;
   and
4. provision of special information on the character of the community and of the student body, and information on school policies.

The NASSP project on induction programs for the beginning teacher, has come to be known as the exception in regard to induction practices (Johnston and Ryan, 1983). Projects since then have duplicated or copied many of NASSP's main features. What follows are four components of induction programs prominent in the literature, and an illumination of each.

Reduced Workload

A reduced workload by one class period for the beginning teacher was found to be helpful to first-year teachers (Hunt, 1968; Conant, 1963; Lewis, 1980). Swanson (1968) states that no amount of education can adequately provide a student with all the answers that arise during the first year, and that a limited responsibility was one kind of help that truly benefits the beginner.

Mentor

A "mentor" or "cooperating teacher" should be assigned to work with specific beginning teachers who would provide advice and counsel (Hunt, 1968; Lewis, 1980; Varah et al., 1986). This mentor should have a reduced workload and an off period that will
coincide with the new teacher (Hunt, 1968). The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Teacher Induction Program (Varah et al., 1986) provided guidelines for selecting mentors.

1. The mentor must be in the same subject area and grade level as the beginner.

2. Mentors are not appointed, rather a teacher does it because he/she wants to.

3. Needs to have at least three to five years of teaching experience and demonstrated competence as an effective teacher; a person who knows the school, curriculum, evaluation procedures, and learning theories.

4. The mentor must have the respect of fellow faculty and have the ability to initiate change in the curriculum and school.

One of the primary functions of the mentor is to provide help and counsel for the inductee. However, there are additional responsibilities the mentor should perform. What follows is the kind of support that has commonly been recommended in the literature.
1. The mentor should orient the inductee into the school setting. This orientation should include: meeting the department head and the rest of the staff, explaining his assignment, reviewing texts and syllabi to be used, and discussing the nature of the community (Hunt, 1968; Lewis, 1980; Brown, 1973).

2. Discuss a plan for management of student conduct (Hunt, 1968; Varah et al., 1986).

3. Discuss school policies (Hunt, 1968; Varah et al., 1986).

4. The mentor should provide first year teachers with encouragement and reassurance so as to help them overcome insecurity and isolation (Varah et al., 1986).

5. To further prevent feelings of isolation of the novice, time must be provided for mutual observations by mentor and inductee (Varah et al., 1986; Lewis, 1980).
6. Finally, mentors need to assist the novice in planning and designing assignments and presentations (Hunt, 1968; McGinnis, 1968; Noda, 1968; Lewis, 1980; Varah, et al., 1986).

Group Sessions

Increased opportunities for discussion with other beginning teachers was emphasized by Swanson (1968) and Lewis (1980) as a method to overcome the feelings of isolation prevalent among first year teachers. The group meetings provided the beginning teachers with emotional support. The sessions were characterized by a warm and supportive atmosphere, where beginning teachers found comfort in knowing they were not alone in dealing with planning, motivation, and discipline (Swanson, 1968).

Class Size and Assignment

Hunt (1968) and Lewis (1980) recommended a lower number of students in the classes of first-year teachers as compared with the class sizes of more experienced teachers. Not only should principals be concerned about smaller classes for beginning teachers, but the teacher's assignment should be based on their preparation and background, "and not solely on traditional schedule needs" (Hunt, 1968). Furthermore, beginning teachers
need to be carefully assigned with students of average ability; common sense prevails here, if the veteran teacher finds it difficult to motivate top students and impossible to manage the slow ones, how can principals expect the beginner to meet these challenges effectively (Hunt, 1968).

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

The first year of teaching has been described as a time of great stress, anxiety, frustration and isolation for the beginning teacher. The literature has no shortage of reports describing the experiences of first year teachers (Ryan, 1970; Ryan et al., 1980; Howey and Bents, 1980). Furthermore, a sufficient amount of advice exists on how to alleviate problems encountered in the first year. Most of the literature has been written by higher education faculty members, such as "Seven Touchstones for Beginning Teachers" (Krajewski and Shuman, 1976) or simply "A Basic Survival Guide for New Teachers" (Boynton et al., 1985). The advice commonly focuses on classroom management and discipline (Doyle, 1975) and well-prepared lesson plans (Koslofsky, 1984). More thoughtful and concerted efforts designed to meet the needs and problems of beginning teachers have been recommended in the form of induction programs (Conant, 1963; Hunt, 1968; Swanson, 1968; Lewis, 1980; Varah et al., 1986).
A review of literature was conducted to examine first year teachers' problems and induction programs designed to support beginning teachers. During the review of literature, the author found suitable induction programs to aid the beginning teacher, such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals' project on induction of beginning teachers (1968), and other similar induction projects (Swanson, 1968; McGinnis, 1968; Noda, 1968; Lewis, 1980; Varah et al., 1986).

Despite the frequent calls for the development of programs designed for the support of beginning teachers there exists substantial evidence that induction programs, to say the least, are minimal or absent for the majority of beginning teachers (Zeichner et al., 1981; Ryan, 1980). In separate studies Lortie (1975) and Hall (1982) concluded teaching as one of very few professions in which the novice is expected to assume full responsibility from their first working day.

Based on the review of literature, there exists enough information about the beginning teacher to clearly support induction practices, however, this does not mean more research should not be conducted. There exists a need for more research to be done in order to assist school administrators in conceptualizing, designing, and implementing induction programs. Also, there exists a need for more data on induction programs. Finally, there exists a need for research on induction programs
and how it is perceived by the teachers involved; this could yield information that could lead to recommendations for improving induction programs in the future.

In conclusion, it is a sad commentary on the status of induction when orientation programs are minimal or nonexistent for the majority of first year teachers. As a result of this neglect of induction, beginning teachers face great stress, anxiety, frustration and isolation. Those who cannot meet the demands and challenges of the first year leave the teaching field.

As administrators know, finding and keeping good teachers can be difficult, even in the best of times, but they may become even harder to find in future years (Armstrong, 1985). Recent reports indicate an insufficient number of new entrants going into teacher preparation programs (Boyer, 1983; National Commission Report, 1983; Rand Report, 1984; Hawley, 1986). If the number of students entering teacher preparation programs continue to decline, then the future of education will face severe teacher shortages. To offset this problem, it is the recommendation of this writer that school districts design and implement induction programs to support their beginning teachers. By adopting induction programs, school districts could stem the flow of potentially capable teachers from leaving the profession.
References


