

Chapter 1

Introduction

Beginning to teach involves both starting a new job and entering a new way of life. There may be more or less ceremony (of welcome or initiation) at the school where one starts; there may be formal or informal procedures intended to aid or ease the challenges of this beginning. There may be nothing in evidence at all. Whether officially inducted or not, new teachers begin teaching every year, all over the world.

As its title suggests, this book is concerned with teacher induction, a topic of growing interest around the world. However, in North America at least, much of the discourse about and practice of induction frames it as a rather straightforward solution to a simple problem. If, for instance, we look across the ever-increasing number of U.S. programs now requiring induction for beginning teachers (currently in more than thirty states), the universe of practice seems remarkably narrow: mentoring predominates and often there is little more.

‘Mentoring’ has come to stand for an automatic remedy to a problem that tends to remain unexamined. It is variously seen as insufficient experience of the exigencies of teaching, inadequate information about local practices and customs in the particular school or incomplete knowledge of various sorts required for teaching. While the surface analyses vary somewhat, they all share the common presumption that the novice arrives lacking something, arrives equipped with a particular *deficit*: ‘induction’ – here, meaning the assistance of a mentor – is somehow to make up for this deficiency.

However, induction is not simply the filling in of gaps. Teacher induction can be – and in some places is – far more than the mere orientation of beginning teachers at the start of the school year or the provision of on-going practical support throughout the school year. Induction programs can recognize that even fully prepared beginning teachers need to learn (and can use help in learning) more about teaching. This is so, even though they could not have learned these things before starting to teach – hence neither they nor their teacher preparation programs can be said to have failed in this regard. Induction can go beyond immediate teacher support and survival to assist beginners to learn more about how to: assess pupil

understanding; craft a lesson; develop a repertoire of instructional practices; gain a deeper knowledge and broader awareness of subject-matter issues; work with parents; and more. Given this claim, we argue it is important to recognize there are many possible goals for induction and we can imagine systems as being more or less *comprehensive* in their attempts to attend to them. One could imagine an underlying continuum. Figure 1 illustrates possible distinctions between what we have termed ‘limited’ and ‘comprehensive’ teacher induction.

Program Feature	Limited Induction	Comprehensive Induction
goals	focuses on teacher orientation, support, enculturation, retention	also promotes career learning, enhances teaching quality
policies	provides optional participation and modest time, usually unpaid	requires participation and provides substantial, paid time
overall program design	employs a limited number of <i>ad hoc</i> induction providers and activities	plans an induction system involving a complementary set of providers and activities
induction as a transitional phase	treats induction as an isolated phase, without explicit attention to teachers’ prior knowledge or future development	considers the influence of teacher preparation and professional development on induction program design
initial teaching conditions	limited attention to initial teaching conditions	attention to assigned courses, pupils, non-teaching duties
level of effort	invests limited total effort, or all effort in few providers, activities	requires substantial overall effort
resources	does not provide resources sufficient to meet program goals	provides adequate resources to meet program goals
levels of the education system involved	involves some levels of the system, perhaps in isolation	involves all relevant levels of system in articulated roles
length of program	one year or less	more than one year
sources of support	primarily or solely uses one mentor	uses multiple, complementary induction providers
conditions for novices and providers	usually attends to learning conditions for novices	also provides good conditions and training for providers
activities	uses a few types of induction activities	uses a set of articulated, varied activities

Figure 1: Key features of limited versus comprehensive induction programs

The figure begins with goals, because tackling more comprehensive goals necessitates other features of comprehensive systems. In other words, addressing more (and more diverse) needs of both beginning teachers and the educational systems they inhabit requires more effort, more resources, greater participation by all sectors of the educational system, more kinds of people, more kinds of activities, more time in the year, a longer period of time, and so on. The list of induction program features presented in Figure 1 is drawn from the set of systems described in this book. No individual system exhibits all of the features listed in Figure 1, yet examined together these systems support the possibility of such a continuum.

This book, then, predominantly based on a three-year international study which examined systems for early career learning within four countries, is about comprehensive and *systematic* forms of teacher induction. The study allowed us to expand thinking about induction, to understand better some complexities at the very heart of induction and to reframe a conceptualization of induction itself. There are other ways of viewing induction beyond the elimination of deficits, ways that force a rethinking of fundamental questions about what induction is. These include asking why induction is considered important (and for whom), what induction entails, how it is to be organized and provided, when it is to occur, where it should take place and who should be involved (both as provider and recipient).

Simple (or fundamental) as these questions are, by problematizing tacit assumptions about induction, we have found approaches which can generate new insights into the nature of and hence the possibilities for induction. These questions also encourage us to see induction as something which can itself be talked about in both pedagogic and curricular ways. In short, we argue that it is important to rethink both induction and a ‘curriculum’ of learning to teach.

What are some of these ways of conceiving induction? Our initial viewpoint was significantly influenced by Sharon Feiman-Nemser’s framework for seeing induction variously as a phase in learning to teach, as a process of enculturation and as a formal program for beginning teachers (see Feiman-Nemser *et al.*, 1999a). Further informed by our emerging cases as our study developed, we came to see induction in terms of four broad categories, somewhat differently specified from Feiman-Nemser’s. These categories conceive of induction as:

- (1) a *process* for learning;
- (2) a particular *period* of time;
- (3) a specific *phase* in teaching;
- (4) a *system*.



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