

Preface

This book provides a detailed examination of how systems located within five countries shape the early career learning of beginning teachers. It describes, discusses and analyzes comprehensive teacher induction found within France, Japan, New Zealand, Shanghai and Switzerland. We refer to the phenomena we observed as induction ‘systems’ because they are ambitious, substantial and established: all beginning teachers in these various locales are served; there are no unfunded mandates; these systems have been in place for 10–25 years. Nevertheless, they are still evolving, undergoing review and change – they are dynamic systems. While sharing such similarities, these systems also present striking contrasts in their purposes, policies, program design and the specific activities that constitute them.

These induction systems operate within countries having both centralized and decentralized education systems, and within large jurisdictions as well as smaller ones. Although we primarily looked at beginning mathematics and science teachers of the lower secondary grades, many aspects are relevant to novice teachers of all school subjects at these grade levels, and some structures and insights are germane to the induction of elementary teachers as well.

We have tried to strike a balance between fostering ideas that could be useful elsewhere, while providing sufficient context and detail to discourage wholesale implementation without adequate adaptation. We were alert to the seductive appeal of simple borrowing of specific practices, programs and even policies. Yet, as individuals with daily involvement with and commitment to teacher development in North America, we also appreciate the desire for ‘lessons’ that might emerge from international study.

We offer four reasons for attending to this volume on teacher induction. First, induction is coming to the forefront of contemporary educational issues. At the time of writing, the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) is hoping to undertake a large, multi-country study of teacher education, likely including attention to induction. The OECD (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development) is interested in studying teacher development internationally as well. In addition, at the outset of the study which forms the basis for much of this book, we conducted phone interviews with international colleagues in a dozen countries (many of whom were involved in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study – TIMSS). Most reported that, in their setting, there was limited or no teacher induction but that they wished this situation were different.

Second, these comprehensive teacher induction systems expand considerably a sense of what induction can and even should be. They target broad and diverse goals involving varied providers and articulated activities, going beyond the important but limited support afforded by more common forms of induction, such as orienting teachers to school facilities and procedures for helping them manage pupil behavior. The studied systems also help novices gain more understanding of and skill in how they might teach their subject(s), how to think and talk about their emerging practice, how to assess pupil learning and understanding, how to work with parents and colleagues, and much more. To accomplish such diverse goals, these systems necessarily involve multiple providers drawn from different parts of the educational system to work with both novices' and the systems' sense of need.

Third, examining induction permits an exploration of key aspects of teacher preparation from a number of perspectives. In particular, it allows us to see teacher preparation in a new way, to understand its contribution to teacher formation differently. Reciprocally, knowing about teachers' prior preparation is essential for making sense of what occurs in teacher induction in each setting.

Finally, this study enlarges the body of research on teacher induction. It drew on the extended and repeated observations of multiple sets of eyes, with observers having listened to insider perspectives, but was undertaken with an outsider's gaze. Each study chapter is written with sufficient depth that a reader can gain an understanding of the complexity of practices and contexts that constitute and foster induction there. Much prior writing in English offers the valuable vision and experiences of individual stakeholders in teacher induction. Rarer, however, are studies that provide empirical, external perspectives on induction programs, their design or actual implementation. Research-based articles commonly only provide in-depth studies of particular induction practices or single locales, or surface contrasts across multiple settings.

One project advisor noted:

Despite the importance of this period of professional learning [induction], it has often been overlooked by researchers [...] impeding the development of an empirically-grounded theory.

While we do not claim to provide such a theory in this book, we do attempt to move beyond description, especially in Chapter 7 where we take a long and hard look across the cases reported in the earlier chapters. Our intent is to make the book more than the sum of the individual cases, with a view to reframing and re-orienting questions and underlying thinking about induction. Individually and collectively, these cases challenge certain conceptions of induction, its purposes, its clients and what might be called the 'curriculum of induction' that should be available for early career learning.

Audiences

This book is intended for several groups of professionals interested in or involved with beginning teacher induction.

- *Researchers* who study teacher induction or professional development, teacher learning, educational policy, teacher education and comparative education – particularly in mathematics or science education. Similarly, faculty in university departments or colleges of education who teach courses related to the above areas or graduate students researching these or related issues will find much here.
- *Education leaders* who establish policies (at national, regional or local levels) for the funding or specification of teacher induction and certification or who provide educational leadership and administration for teacher induction programs at any of these levels. This book examines and explores policies concerned with deciding whom induction should serve and what resources (both material and cultural) are necessary for its success. Administrators overseeing induction programs will become better informed about the types of resources, individuals and organizations that can be used to achieve specific but wide-ranging purposes and goals.
- *Professional developers, school system staff or teacher leaders* who design and implement programs for beginning teachers. This volume presents an opportunity for professional developers to step back and inform themselves further about how others have approached questions of induction, in order to reflect on the fundamentals of what they are trying to accomplish. It might stimulate the possibility of change in their induction programs' design and in the nature of activities that can best address the perceived needs both of their beginning teachers and of the system itself.

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