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Developing Comprehensive Induction Programs at Christian Schools

JoAnn Looney

The 1980s were classified as a time of “national awakening” (Goodlad, 1990, p. 1) to the complexities of restructuring our schools. Educational problems ranging from high drop out rates to low test scores could not be adequately and professionally addressed until the nation’s leaders acknowledged that “the renewal of schools, teachers and the programs that educate teachers must proceed simultaneously” (Goodlad, 1990, p. 4).

Goodlad (1990) continues by declaring “that the education and training of teachers and principals must be closely tied to both the realities of schools and the conditions necessary to their substantial improvement” (p. 27). One way to “prepare teachers for school circumstances now prevailing” is to mentor the beginning teacher during the first year of employment.

Since the time of “national awakening,” mentoring for beginning teachers has gained considerable momentum. Many states now recommend or even require induction programs for teachers. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future reports that the number of states requiring mentoring has increased from seven states in 1996 to thirty-three states in 2002. Hall (2005) found that 33 states mandated new teacher mentoring programs and twenty-three states required mentor training. In fact, induction programs for beginning teachers have now existed for more than a generation of teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996).

The report, *Induction into Learning Communities* by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2005), challenges schools and districts to move away from the “norms that governed factory-era schools...isolated teaching in stand-alone classrooms” (p. 1). It promotes the philosophy that induction should support entry into a “learning community” (p. 1). In addition, “external networks supported by online

technologies can add value” (p. 1) and should be a tool used to address 21st century beginning teachers’ needs.

This paper will place mentoring and induction in its current research-based context by examining the roles and the effectiveness of mentors and induction programs. In addition, it will present a theoretical model of 21st century learning communities (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future [NCTAF], 2005) appropriate for Christian schools. It will describe ways in which the Christian university can provide assistance for customized, biblically-based induction program development for mentor training and for program evaluation.

Why Do New Teachers Fail and Why Do They Leave the Profession?

Mentoring and induction do take place in some schools and districts which address beginning teacher needs. In fact, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) reported that the majority of new teachers (83% public school and 60% private schools) indicated that they participated in some facet of induction. However, there are still significant contextual factors which can result in beginning teacher failure. Kardos and Liu (2003) of Harvard Graduate School’s Project on the Next Generation of Teachers surveyed 486 randomly sampled first and second year teachers in California, Florida, Massachusetts and Michigan. This study revealed that:

1. 33% of new teachers are hired after the school year has already started, and 62% are hired within 30 days of when they start teaching
2. Only 50% of new teachers interview with any of their future teacher colleagues as part of the hiring process
3. 56% report that no extra assistance is available to them as new teachers

4. 43% of new teachers go through their entire first year of teaching without being observed by a mentor or a more experienced teacher
5. 77% of new teachers shoulder the same load of academic and administrative responsibilities carried by their veteran colleagues. Only 23% have any sort of reduced load

These above factors can foster a high attrition rate from the profession: 33% to 50% of teachers leave within the first five years, and 40% of those leave during only the first two years (Hope, 1999; NCTAF, 2003). Furthermore, *Quality Counts 2000* (Education Week, 2000) posits that the high rate of attrition could be a variable in the burgeoning teacher shortage. The mass exodus of teachers at the beginning of their professional careers has been described as a national crisis (NCTAF, 2003). Induction programs in the 21st Century are proposed to be antidotes to this national crisis.

Mentoring and Induction Defined

The data gathered by researchers Smith and Ingersoll (2004) on the relationship between induction and teacher retention reveal that beginning teachers who participated in support programs (mentoring or induction) were less likely to leave the profession. There is a conceptual difference between mentoring and induction that must be noted. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that less than one percent of teachers participated in a comprehensive induction program defined as having a mentor, supportive communication from a principal or other administrator, collaboration time, and participation in an external network of teachers. The remaining beginning teachers participated in more informal and less structured mentored activities such as intermittent observations, informal conversations and casual peer support.

The terms “mentoring” and “induction” are often used interchangeably, and are considered synonymous (Odell, 2006). However, they are not synonymous. Mentoring is actually a component of a well-designed induction program. Wong (2005) defines induction:

Induction is a noun. It is the name given to a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support and retain new

teachers, which then seamlessly guides them into a lifelong learning program (p. 43).

Huling-Austin in 1990 described induction programs as offering “systematic and sustained assistance” (p. 536). During the 1980s, induction programs addressed the orientation of new teachers to district and school policies and culture. Currently, induction programs attempt to provide more long-term support by emphasizing planning and teaching, standards-based curriculum development, and management techniques (Gold, 1996; Wong, 2005).

Smith and Ingersoll (2004a) cite several components that contribute to the successful induction of beginning teachers. These factors go beyond fundamental mentoring and provide full support which includes the following: (1) close mentoring by a mentor from the same content area; (2) collaboration or networking support such as seminars or common planning time; and (3) additional assistance to ease the transition into teaching, such as reduced schedules and preparations or having a teaching assistant.

More specifically, Horn, Sterling and Subhan (2002) cite several components embedded in most effective induction programs: orientation, adjustment of working conditions, release time, professional development, opportunities for collaborative program evaluation and mentoring. Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) extend these components to the development of learning communities and administrative support as being necessary for effective induction programs as well. These factors are even more critical to the support of new teachers as high stakes testing is requiring that teachers possess strong instructional skills, content knowledge and knowledge of diverse student populations (Ganser, 2002).

Research supporting the benefits of induction is limited, but induction has proven successful in (1) teacher retention (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999; Gold, 1999; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004b); and in (2) teaching practice (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Humphrey, et al, 2000). Research on improved student achievement is still very limited; however, Darling-Hammond’s (1999, 2000) study of Connecticut’s induction program (Beginning Educator Support and Training Program – BEST) described gains in student achievement

with the implementation of their induction program, which emphasized the importance of highly qualified teachers in classrooms. A study conducted by Educational Testing Service (ETS) showed that there was improved student achievement which correlated with beginning teacher participation in the California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessing (BTSA) programs using the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST) (Thompson, Paek, Goe & Ponte, 2005). **See Table 2** for a detailed explanation of these two programs.

In contrast to induction, Wong (2005) defines mentoring:

Mentoring is most commonly used as a verb or adjective, because it describes what mentors do. A mentor is a single person, whose basic function is to help a new teacher. Mentoring is not induction; it is a component of the induction process (p. 43).

Odell (2006) suggests that mentoring is “typically associated with having experienced teachers work with novice teachers to help ease the novices’ transition from a university student learning to teach to full-time teacher in the classroom” (p. 203). The term “mentor” can be defined differently depending upon the school or district involved. It can be as simple as a friend on the faculty who acts as a guide; but it may be as complex as one who is trained to support novice teachers on a full-time basis. Mentoring, unfortunately, can be little more than an insolated event, and may be designed to support questions of survival only (Johnson, 2003; Wong, 2005). This low level of support is considered to be the least effective induction paradigm.

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) reports in *Tapping the Potential: Retaining and Developing High-Quality New Teachers*, “while mentoring is the most widely practiced component of induction, mentoring by itself is not enough to retain and develop teachers. Mentoring programs vary widely and may do little more than ask mentors to check in with new teachers a few times a semester to chat” (p.12). Bennetts (2001) and Little (1990) report there is little evidence to support specific mentoring practices; however, Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) posit that “current research does not provide definitive evidence that it doesn’t keep new teachers from leaving the profession but there is enough

promise to warrant further investigation” (p. 15). Mentoring in the context of a well-structured induction program similar to 21st Century Learning Communities can be effective.

21st Century Learning Communities

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (August 2005) paper *Induction Into Learning Communities* describes 21st Century learning communities which should be the foundation of induction programs. Kardos *et al.* (2001) found that past induction paradigms did not support beginning teachers’ needs, because they were intermittent in implementation and were not comprehensive enough to affect change or provide support. Using a deficit remediation-based approach, new teachers were mentored to address weaknesses or needs for a period of one year. The primary purpose of these programs was to orient beginning teachers to the culture of the school and district. Mentoring was the primary induction activity, using untrained, volunteer mentors. In addition, beginning teachers frequently had the same load as the veteran teachers. (NCTAF, 2005).

In contrast, learning communities as described by the Commission embody the following framework: (1) induction should be a stage in a continuum of teacher development; (2) induction should support entry into a learning community; (3) mentoring is a useful component of induction, but only one element of a comprehensive induction system; (4) external networks supported by online technologies can add value; and (5) induction is a good investment. “**Table 1: Systemic Teacher Induction and the Evolution of 21st Century Learning Communities**” (NCTAF, 2005, p 5), presents induction in the 21st century as critical to the teaching and learning cycle. It describes a theoretical framework that embraces professional communities with shared expertise: “Novice teachers have gaps in skills and knowledge, but also in areas of expertise; they learn alongside experienced teachers in a community of learners that is continually evolving” (NCTAF, 2005, p. 5). This model highlights the need for external supports in the form of social networks, institutions of higher education and online networking as well.

Furthermore, using a team-based, collaborative model, induction programs ordinarily provide common planning time, with clear expectations for mentors and beginning teachers, addressing the

most frequently cited new teachers' needs (Veenman, 1984; Gordon & Maxey, 2000). Finally, mentors are comprehensively trained on an ongoing basis to support new teachers. (NCTAF, 2005). This is the conceptual framework that will be used to develop a teacher induction model in a Christian school context which will include mentor training, spiritual formation, faith and learning integration, and collaborative relationships among school, mentors, universities, and on-line support sites.

New Teachers' Needs

Critical to understanding the rationale underlying most induction and mentoring programs is the acknowledgement that the needs of the new teacher must be met in order to encourage retention and the membership in learning communities. The underlying premise for most programmatic goals within induction programs is that new teachers require support, and therefore programs should address these needs in a systematic way. Veenman's (1984) widely cited meta-analysis lists the eight most frequently cited problems for beginning teachers in rank order: (1) classroom discipline, (2) motivating students, (3) dealing with individual differences, (4) assessing students' work, (5) relationships with parents, (6) organization of class work, (7) insufficient materials and supplies and (8) dealing with the problems of individual students (p. 160).

Extending Veenman's research, Gordon and Maxey (2000, p. 6) identified critical needs for new teachers as well. Their list included the following:

1. Managing the classroom
2. Acquiring information about the school system
3. Obtaining instructional resources and materials
4. Planning, organizing and managing instruction as well as other professional responsibilities
5. Assessing students and evaluating student progress
6. Motivating students
7. Using effective teaching methods
8. Dealing with individual students' needs, interests, abilities and problems
9. Communicating with colleagues, including administrators, supervisors and other teachers

10. Communicating with parents

11. Adjusting to the teaching environment and role

12. Receiving emotional support

New teachers must assume two roles – teacher and learner – according to Wildman, Niles, Maglairo and McLaughlin (1989). This is challenging even for a seasoned professional. Johnson and Kardos (2002) state that “what new teachers want in their induction is experienced colleagues who will take their daily dilemmas seriously, watch them teach and provide feedback, help them develop instructional strategies, model skills teaching and share insights about students' work and lives” (p. 13). To illustrate this further, Killeavy (2001) determined that new teachers frequently return to traditional teaching strategies and focus on classroom management issues instead. They are unable to concentrate on curricular and pedagogical issues until management concerns are addressed. They need seasoned professionals to help address management concerns which will allow them to concentrate on pedagogy and curriculum.

Therefore, when developing new induction programs it is very important to consider these two roles, as well as the new teachers' needs cataloged above. New teachers who are Christian need the assistance outlined above as well; however, these new teachers need discipleship and relationship with Christian mentors who can share and guide them using their God-given resources and wisdom.

Mentors' Roles, Characteristics and Training

There are many examples of mentoring relationships in scripture: Jesus and his disciples; Paul and Timothy; Naomi and Ruth; and Moses and Joshua, to name a few. These pairs demonstrate how they embraced their roles to fulfill the Lord's purposes. Specifically, the relationship of Moses and Joshua highlights several critical tasks of effective mentors: (1) task delegation (Exodus 17:9); (2) collegial relationship (Exodus 3:11); (3) mutual trust (Exodus 24:12-13); (4) increased responsibility and leadership (Numbers 13:16); (5) public affirmation (Deuteronomy 31:7-8); and (6) assumption of leadership role when Moses died (Numbers 27:15-23) (Jones, *et al.*, 2004).

A Christ-centered mentor is a follower of Christ who helps another person reach important spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical/social goals (Faith-Centered Mentoring and More). Teacher mentors

are godly “teachers of teachers” who should be veteran teachers with strong interpersonal skills. They should have experience with coaching and facilitating groups. In addition, they should have keen observational skills, excellent communication skills, patience, enthusiasm, and love of all kinds of learning (Moir, 2005; Turley, Powers, Nakai, 2006). Mentors should be selected for spiritual maturity, skill in content, pedagogy, and ability to coach and work with other teachers (NCTAF, 2005).

These veteran professionals progress through stages as they transition in their roles as mentors. Casey & Claunch (2005, p.100) propose five stages of mentor growth: (1) predisposition; (2) disequilibrium; (3) transition; (4) confidence; and (5) efficacy. These stages reveal that as mentors become “teachers of teachers,” they themselves experience somewhat similar transitions as their protégés. Mentors and protégés progress developmentally through the mentoring cycle. This is an important factor to consider when planning staff development for the “mentors of mentors” as well (Casey & Claunch, 2005).

According to the Center for Teaching Quality (n.d.), “Mentoring is a formal coaching relationship in which an experienced teacher gives guidance, support and feedback to a new teacher. High quality mentor programs fully train mentors, pair first and second year teachers with mentors in similar grade and subject area and provide release time and common planning time for mentors and mentees”. Mentors should be trained to encourage effectiveness and maximum productivity (Casey & Claunch, 2005; Moir, 2005; Sweeny, 2005), and the training should be “ongoing and extensive” (NCTAF, 2005, p. 5). Sweeny (2005) contends training must: (1) train mentors in how to most effectively use the mentoring time they can give; (2) provide sufficient time for guided, coached practice of essential mentoring strategies; (3) be provided at a time when mentors are ready to learn what the training offers; and (4) include sufficient time for follow up support and problem-solving activities, in both individual and group contexts (p. 131). In conclusion, new teacher and veteran teacher training should be continuous and needs-based to address teaching, management, and contextual classroom issues.

Induction Program Exemplars

Twenty-first century induction programs encourage the development of learning communities which go beyond mentoring, by offering extensive multi-level supports such as professional communities, staff development, and continuous assessment (NCTAF, 2005). The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF, 2005) presents five existing models and programs which encourage the development of learning communities in **Table 2**. These contain the elements cited by Horn et al. (2002) critical to effective induction programs: orientation, professional development, program evaluation, follow-up, and mentoring, and are typical of the twenty first century programs described by NCTAF. Programs such as the California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) and the Connecticut Beginning Educator Support and Training Programs (BEST) are presented in **Table 2** which are the most frequently researched for new teacher retention rates and student outcomes.

The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) of Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) and the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) collaborated to offer to teachers employed by ACSI-affiliated schools located from Fresno, California northwards to the Oregon border the opportunity to participate in an induction program provided by the SCOE. ACSI members pay the SCOE a fee (\$1,742 in 2004) for each participating teacher, per year, for the two years of the program. This fee is half of what is paid by the public schools; the remaining balance owed to SCOE is waived. The passage of SB 2042 (2001) mandated that the BTSA or other formalized induction programs are now part of the credentialing process for California. Private schools have to develop their own programs, or their teachers would have to teach for a year in the public school to become certified. The relationship between ACSI and SCOE is indicative of a professional and collaborative effort and commitment to the development of highly-qualified teachers.

In order for these broadly based programs to be successful and typify 21st century programs, they must adopt a “systems-thinking” (Portner, 2005, p. 76) mind-set which embraces both internal and external relationships. Considering the programs described in **Table 2**, the relationships between

districts, schools, mentors, protégés, and external communities are apparent. Portner (2005) also describes how all of the systems' components must be a part of the decision-making process and are interdependent. "Systems-thinking" encourages circular feedback rather than linear cause-and-effect decision-making and problem-solving. One-way decision-making prevents schools, mentors, and new teachers from seeing the bigger picture of teacher support. "Systems-thinking" also requires that the participants at all levels must be committed to "collaborative-doing" (Portner, p. 78). They are doing this when they are:

"(1) developing, monitoring and adjusting their induction and mentoring policies and procedures; (2) interacting directly with new teachers to supplement the efforts of mentors; and (3) supporting mentors and new teachers by providing them with time, facilities, and materials" (p. 78). In a Christian school setting, "systems-thinking" would extend to social networking, thus enhancing community. Finally, Portner states emphatically that in order for induction programs to thrive there must be "committed-leading" (p. 80) by those who share the vision, but they must encourage others to share the vision as well.

Finally, in the context of "systems-thinking" and examining new teacher induction as an overlapping series of relationships and decision-making, Odell and Huling (2000) in the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) National Commission on Professional Development and Support of Novice Teachers cite six dimensions of quality mentoring programs that are interdependent:

1. Program Purpose and Rationale. This is the most critical dimension as it impacts planning, implementation and evaluation of the induction program.
2. Mentor Selection and Mentor/Novice Matching: Careful attention should be given to matching within grade and subject area if possible. Mentors should be veteran teachers who possess strong pedagogical and interpersonal skills.
3. Mentor Teacher Preparation and Development: This should be continuous and needs based.
4. Mentor Roles and Practices: These should be defined by the system.

5. Program Administration, Implementation and Evaluation: All parties on the administrative team (school administrator, mentor, university personnel) should participate.
6. School, District, and University Cultures and Responsibilities: These should be clearly defined and modified when necessary.

Twenty-first Century Christian School Learning Communities

The research cited above for 21st century learning communities (NCTAF, 2005) is designed to support the development of a *theoretical* induction model appropriate for Christian schools. This model uses the 21st Century Learning Community Model described on **Table 1** as its conceptual paradigm. The online support community, Tapped In 2, (n.d.) will be included. Tapped In 2, used by Azuza Pacific as well as other schools and universities, is an online support tool for teachers, teacher educators, library/media specialists, tech coordinators, tech facilitators and administrators. Bull, Bull & Kajder (2004) describes Tapped In 2 as an "effective response to teacher needs for support, community and idea sharing within a virtual space that is both efficient and intuitive" (p. 35). This will extend support for the beginning teacher to other professionals as well.

Overall Design

Induction is mandatory for new teachers with mentoring being only one part of the support model. Systems-thinking (Portner, 2005) will be encouraged. The support team consists of a mentor teacher, university-level support and school administrator.

Theoretical Framework

The professional school community will support and learn from the new teachers. The induction process is considered to be reciprocal in nature with both the induction team and the new teachers learning from each other in a Christian context.

Length of Induction Program

The mandatory induction period will last for two years.

Responsible Parties

An induction team consisting of the school administrator, the university-based induction coordinator, and the mentor will be responsible for

goal setting, program development, mentor training and selection, implementation and evaluation.

Mentoring Framework

Mentoring from the veteran teacher is one part of the induction system. The new teacher and mentor will function as a team. An online support network, Tapped In 2, will provide one dimension of support for both the new and veteran teacher as well.

Responsibilities and expectations will be clearly defined.

Mentor Training

University personnel emphasizing a Christian worldview as well as faith and learning integration will provide extensive training and support for the mentors. Activities such as retreats and social events will be planned to encourage community as well. Tapped In 2 will extend support to the online community.

Teaching Observations

Opportunities for observation by the mentor teacher as well as the new teacher will be provided. These must be planned for in advance. Mentors/protégés will be given time for conferencing and reflection. Observations of the new teacher will not be evaluative in nature.

Assessment and Evaluation

New teacher self-assessment is continuous, reflective and is part of the learning cycle. Formal evaluation will be conducted by the school administrator quarterly for the first year and twice during the second year. University personnel will support the learning community by evaluating the program through highlighting strengths. Recommendations for improvement will be developed collaboratively by the team. These will support “systems-thinking” and “collaborative-doing” in the professional development of the new teacher.

Workload

Mentors and new teachers should not be expected to complete extra non-instructional tasks during the induction years. Extra time should be allowed for observations, planning and reflection, if at all possible.

Teaching Assignments

The new teacher should be placed in assignments, if possible, that are not as challenging or would require advanced teaching skills.

External Support

University and online supports will extend the learning community beyond the school.

Impact

The new teacher will become a member of a Christian learning community that is professional and which promotes faith and learning integration, improved teacher quality, and enhanced student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Twenty-first century learning communities as described above would be an appropriate framework to support the induction of novice Christian school teachers as they reach important spiritual, physical and social goals. New teachers will no longer be solo practitioners who are left to their own resources to survive their first year’s teaching, and who leave the profession after several years. They will be supported by a faith-filled learning community as they grow into competent and skilled Christian school teachers.

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