

Principled induction and mentoring of new teachers

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The need to provide appropriate support and learning opportunities for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) has long been recognized (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Feiman- Nemsler, 2001). Challenges on a global scale in teacher recruitment and retention have intensified international consensus about the need for sustained learning opportunities and improved conditions for new teachers, to support their needs as 'novices' and enhance the quality of their practice (Cater, 2017; Sutchter *et al.*, 2016; OECD, 2011). The learning and development of new teachers is crucial to their efficacy and retention, and core to this is the quality of induction and mentoring.

However, studies have shown the challenges of achieving effective mentoring and induction on a national scale (Hobson *et al.*, 2009); adequate time and professional learning to enable mentors to support the induction of new teachers as agentive professionals is frequently under- estimated (Daly and Milton, 2017).

In times of increasing policy intervention around the entitlements of new teachers, we examine how principled induction and mentoring can be achieved at scale in the context of variable, powerful school cultures. Harnessing the professional capital within schools has been argued to be essential to optimizing the learning potential of a school for both its teachers and pupils (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). This relies on conditions that enable all members of school communities to benefit from their collective knowledge and experience, to forge new insights and practices.

Understanding induction and mentoring

The distinction between induction and mentoring needs to be clarified; they are not interchangeable terms:

Induction has been defined as the entire system of policy, resources, professional development opportunities, guidance, and support provided to anyone starting in a new role, in this case NQTs (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), whereas mentoring more precisely relates to guidance and support provided by one or more experienced colleagues to the new teacher. So defined, mentoring is a component of induction (Bullough, 2012).

(Langdon *et al.*, 2014,93)

An extensive review of literature conducted by Langdon *et al.* (2012) identified twelve principles underpinning effective induction and mentoring, linked to three core ‘assumptions’ that characterize the learning and development of new teachers.

The first assumption is that, at national policy level, there is a commitment to the professional learning of new teachers and related resourcing. Second, leadership has a significant impact on the effective realization of policy within school cultures for the induction and mentoring of new teachers. School cultures are greatly influenced by leaders, who have long been recognized as catalysts in mediating and shaping the enactment of national policy. Third, mentors are capable of mentoring in that they are able to engage in co-constructive enquiry-based mentoring activities, termed as ‘educative’. This does not suggest that a uniform ‘practice’ of mentoring is desirable. Rather, educative mentoring of new teachers comprises numerous practices that support mentors’ own learning.

The principles, outlined in Table 1, go beyond ‘survival’ and enculturation into particular school environments (Britton *et al.*, 2003), and instead relate to long-term learning goals for new teachers. They support educative goals for teachers’ learning that can develop practice for both mentors and mentees, supported by national policy and resource. They indicate a shift away from what Stanulis and Brondyk (2013) have called ‘buddy’ mentoring and emphasize teacher learning as an enquiry practice that is achieved through mutual endeavour between mentor and mentee (Norman and Feiman-Nemser, 2005; Langdon and Ward, 2015).

Mentors undertake a role as teacher-educator, going beyond passing on advice about practical teaching as a more experienced ‘expert’. The mentor is positioned as a co-learner who is able to co-construct knowledge and understanding about teaching that can lead to the development of altered beliefs and practices for both mentor and mentee about pupils’ learning and about the role of the teacher.

Table 1. Twelve principles for induction and mentoring

1	There is coordination at the national, state, or regional levels with regard to the policies and standards for induction and mentoring programs and for resource allocations associated with those programs.
2	The assessment standards and policy guidelines for induction and mentoring and the expectations associated with each are consistently and effectively communicated.
3	There are standards that guide the evaluation of NQTs.
4	Career-long learning and development is promoted by coordination between pre-service teacher education, induction and mentoring programs, and continuing professional development opportunities.
5	Effective leadership is foundational to NQTs’ induction.
6	Models of quality teaching are present and observed within the school environment.
7	Work conditions are adapted to the NQT’s novice status.

8	Collaborative and collegial school cultures support NQT learning and development.
9	Mentors in the school-based induction and mentoring program are willing and prepared to support the learning and development of NQTs.
10	NQTs' professional identity and their beliefs about learning and teaching are influenced by the experiences within and culture of the school environment.
11	NQTs are encouraged to make pedagogical and professional choices and to act on those choices as a means of building their sense of efficacy.
12	Because learning is always situated, the classroom becomes the primary site for the learning and development of both NQTs and their students.

Source: Langdon *et al.*, 2012, p.401.

Such principles indicate aspirational goals for mentoring. Talbot *et al.* (2018) have cautioned that educative mentoring that is transformational of learning and teaching for *all* those involved requires sufficient space and time to develop a 'complex set of pedagogical tools' that can support an enquiry stance, including critical reading of research, self-auditing and the development of 'dialogic mentoring' (p.51). Peiser *et al.* (2018), in exploring the challenges of realizing principled goals for mentoring set out by national policy frameworks, suggest that the challenge for teachers to learn is greater than in other professions – teaching, they argue, relies on a less clearly defined body of knowledge, in which the links between practical and theoretical knowledge are 'more tenuous' (p.10). Professional knowledge for teachers is subject to 'alternative logics' (Hordern, 2016) that are influenced by policymaking and personal beliefs and, crucially, the shared practices within schools that help determine what is relevant for teachers to know and do. The realization of educative mentoring goals based on principles of enquiry, collegiality and mutually constructed learning may therefore be elusive even where there is relatively generous resourcing and policy support.

The complexity of schools

The complexity of schools is indicated in the principles (Table 1) quoted from Langdon *et al.* (2012). National, regional and local education policymaking help to shape the conditions within schools for new teachers to learn effectively (European Commission, 2015). Schools act within wider ecologies (Godfrey and Brown, 2018), in which forms of collaboration within and between schools are related to external stakeholders such as local authorities or universities who can support the mobilization and orchestration of diverse resources. Policy, linked to resource, influences extensively what is enacted as induction and mentoring by members of a school community and some aspects of induction and mentoring are affected by factors outside as well as within the school.

Interactions between individuals therefore take place within conditions that are constituted by the school system, classrooms, external players and the policy environment, which together shape values, understandings and practices, and inform the dialogue that takes place among stakeholders. From a socio-cultural perspective, numerous studies have indicated that school contexts impact extensively on the interactions among stakeholders, enacted through what Wenger (1998, 162) termed 'relations of practice'. These interactions effectively constitute the learning and development of all members of school communities, a theoretical perspective that informs extensive research into teachers' professional learning (for example, Cordingley, 2008; Flores and

Day, 2006).

These dynamic relations create the potential for inconsistencies between policymaking and implementation, identified by Jones (2011) as ‘the inability of policy-makers to reach as far as the operational level of education – schools and their classrooms’ (p.760). Individual school contexts create variability and can have a major impact on the quality of induction and mentoring (Bubb and Earley, 2007), especially because school leaders exert considerable influence on schools as sites of professional learning, influencing the interactions that take place, both overtly and covertly (Timperley *et al.*, 2008). They shape the conditions that mediate the organizational culture of the school, the interpretation and implementation of policy and how the needs of new teachers are addressed. In essence, within the wider ecologies that influence school cultures, the school leader is vital to the relations that contribute to induction and mentoring.

Schools thus provide complex environments for the learning and development of new teachers. Wenger *et al.* (2002) argue that schools reflect the affordances of communities of practice, by which they are dynamic and constantly evolving, constructed by their participants’ interactions in contexts of internal and external policy change. These are the conditions in which induction and mentoring take place and in which the realization of educative mentoring becomes possible but is by no means a necessary consequence. School communities of comprise interactions that are *non-linear* (between mentor, teacher, other teachers etc.) and *multi-layered* (interactions between the school system, individuals, classrooms, the community and the policy environment).

Achieving principled mentoring and induction

Achieving principled mentoring and induction therefore involves addressing multiple factors. The greatest challenge is for policy to lend support to leaders, encouraging them to harness the ‘professional capital’ within complex school cultures: learning within a community, fostering an enquiry perspective for teachers’ as well as pupils’ learning, and achieving genuinely dialogic discourse among professionals within and beyond ‘mentoring’ relationships.

For induction and mentoring to have a positive impact it needs to be premised on *all* stakeholders in the school community being learners – including leaders. Expectations need to be explicit, aimed at harnessing the capacity of all to participate on a range of formal and informal levels.

Professional development for mentors needs to be mandatory and to support access to external perspectives. Leaders too need supportive professional learning to lead change in schools and to re-orient their perceptions of themselves as learners alongside their NQTs and mentors. The relationship between national policy, school contexts and leadership is highly complex; it requires the reduction of pressures on schools brought about by policy agendas that are antithetical to or distracting from a sustained investment in teachers (all teachers) learning within school communities.

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