



## Socialization of new teachers: Does induction matter?☆

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### ABSTRACT

The present paper focuses on new teachers' satisfaction with their first year of teaching from the perspective of socialization. The relationship between satisfaction with socialization and teacher background, school environment, placement, and induction variables was examined. Data were collected from 243 Israeli beginning teachers by means of questionnaire. Results indicated that satisfaction during the induction year was moderately high. Hierarchical regression analysis showed five significant predictor variables: ecological support from mentor, help from the principal, assistance from other colleagues, workload, and having already completed teaching training. Support from mentors and school colleagues had the greatest impact on new teachers' assimilation.

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### 1. Introduction

Teachers' socialization refers to the process by which the individual becomes a participating member of the community of teachers (Zeichner & Gore, 1989). This process is characterized by the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and norms of both the teaching profession and the local school community. In other words, becoming a teacher involves professional development as well as organizational assimilation (Brunton, 2007). Successful socialization results in more competent teachers who are committed to remaining on the job (e.g., Hudson & Beutel, 2007; Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). Research findings indicate that many new teachers leave the profession after only a few years, many of them because they failed to become sufficiently assimilated (Dewert, Babinski, & Jones, 2003; Johnson, 2004; Wong, 2004). In order to optimize the socialization process, induction programs have been widely implemented (e.g., Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yuskos, 1999; Ingersoll, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Wong, 2004). These programs vary across countries as well as within countries (Howe, 2006; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997; Wayne, Young, & Fleischman, 2005; Wong et al., 2005). Variation expresses itself in duration, program components, funding sources, operation, target population, intensity, and comprehensiveness. For example, in Japan, Israel, and many U.S. states and Canadian provinces new teacher induction is one year, obligatory, systematic, and centrally operated, whereas in Hong

Kong SAR, existing programs are neither centrally organized nor mandated and in Germany and France new teachers participate in induction programs over a two year period. The differences among programs reflect different cultural, social, geopolitical, and economic contexts. However, all induction programs share a common goal and that is to provide new teachers with a gradual acculturation into the teaching profession (Howe, 2006; Stool & Thant, 2002).

The purpose of the present study is to examine the unique contribution of an induction program to predicting new teachers' satisfaction with their socialization in the school.

#### 1.1. Factors fostering socialization

According to Achinstein, Ogawa, and Spiegelman (2004), research has identified three factors that shape the socialization process: teacher background, local context, and state policy environment. *Teacher background* includes gender, race, and personal histories and can influence teacher socialization by forming teachers' worldviews, affecting where they chose to work, and influencing their contact with students. Moreover, teachers' prior experiences in educational frameworks are interrelated with their perceptions of teachers and teaching (e.g., Achinstein et al., 2004; Lortie, 1975).

With respect to *local context*, socialization can be influenced by the professional culture of the school and/or community. New teachers' professional beliefs, values, and practices can be greatly affected by the instructional and organizational culture of the professional community that they encounter at their workplace. Aspects of local context include school variables and teacher placement characteristics. In a recent study of new teachers in Chicago, Wechsler, Caspary, Humphrey and Matsko (2010) have concluded

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that the school context exerts the greatest influence on beginning teachers' success. Empirical research into the socialization of pre-service teachers has confirmed the importance of the *school* in teacher socialization. For example, in one study by Su (1992) it was found that student teaching, cooperating teachers, school pupils, and school teachers were more influential in shaping the educational beliefs and values of new teachers as compared to the teacher training curriculum, college faculty, family, and significant others. Another important school variable includes the school environment, which is shaped by principal leadership, an ethos of collaborative practice, and a supportive milieu that have been shown to facilitate teacher assimilation (e.g., Angelle, 2002; Johnson, 2004; Schonfeld, 2001; Su, 1992).

Successful socialization has also been found to be facilitated by suitable *placement* of teachers in the school system (e.g., Ingersoll, 2003; Liu, 2005). Placement variables, such as in-field teaching, permanent-track positions, and sufficient number of hours in school, are more likely to promote assimilation by increasing the likelihood of the new teacher's involvement in school.

One of the effects of *state policy environment* on teachers' socialization can be found in state curriculum and instructional policies that mandate how certain subjects are to be taught in the schools (Achinstein et al., 2004). New teachers are prone to adopt such instructional policies that specify curricular materials, pedagogy, and standards. In addition, state policies can deal directly with how teachers begin their careers and how they assimilate into the profession and thereby influence socialization. In many places state policy manifests itself in induction programs for new teachers. Such policies often determine the length of induction, funding of induction activities, definition of the target population, and the implications of participating in induction for licensing new teachers (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997).

### 1.2. New teacher induction programs

Induction programs are designed to deal directly with teacher socialization. Teacher induction programs offer assistance, guidance, and support to new teachers. Although the most common component of induction programs is mentoring (Ingersoll, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Wong, 2004), other components include orientation, workshops, distribution of written materials, classroom observation, and reduced workloads. Implementation of induction activities is often a joint venture of the school, the regional or national educational authorities, and academic teacher training institutions.

The need for induction programs derives from the difficulties encountered by new teachers in their transition from being students of teaching to teachers of students (e.g., Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Veenman, 1984). The induction phase of becoming a teacher has been depicted as a complex interaction of personal and situational factors through which new teachers negotiate professional and organizational socialization (Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1985). This phase in their professional development is not just about anxiety, stress, and frustration, rather it is an important learning stage in which they expand their content-specific repertoire of teaching strategies, acquire important practical knowledge related to students, curricula, workplace norms, and school policies, test their beliefs and ideas about teaching, and mold their professional identity (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Wayne et al., 2005).

Although induction programs have become widespread around the world, their impact on teacher socialization is still not fully clear. Research has tended to concentrate on the impact of induction on teacher retention, as well as on mentoring as a critical element for developing effective instructional skills among new teachers (e.g., Fletcher & Barret, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Rippon & Martin, 2003; Villar & Strong, 2007). Structured, sustained, comprehensive,

and seriously monitored programs have been found to be most effective (Wong et al., 2005). Beginning teachers who are given multiple supports are less likely to move to other schools and less likely to leave teaching (e.g., Johnson, Clift, & Klecka, 2002; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Moreover, data exist which show that induction programs can contribute to high levels of professional growth (e.g., Fletcher & Barret, 2004; Kelley, 2004).

The present study, which focuses on the relationship between new teachers' satisfaction with their socialization into the school and various induction, school context, and personal variables, will add to this body of knowledge.

## 2. Research context

The study was part of a comprehensive evaluation study of the national teacher induction program in Israel. After a 4-year trial on a small scale, the Israeli induction program was gradually introduced over a period of several years and, since 2003, successful completion of the one-year program has been a prerequisite for obtaining a permanent teaching license. It was initiated as part of a general undertaking to increase the professional status of teachers as well as to reduce the "reality shock" of entry into the profession (Israeli Ministry of Education, 1999). The program is financed and operated by the Israeli Ministry of Education with the cooperation of the higher education institutions and the public school system. The program was originally intended for new teachers who had already completed pre-service training. In practice many education students begin teaching during their last year of training and simultaneously take part in the induction program.

The three major components of the induction program are 1) individual mentoring by a colleague in the same school, 2) a weekly or bi-weekly workshop given by a teacher training department at one of the universities or colleges, and 3) formal evaluation of teaching for formative (professional development) and summative (licensing) purposes. Mentors are required to be veteran teachers who have experience teaching the same grade levels and subjects taught by the new teachers. Their task is to familiarize the new teachers with school norms and procedures, help them adapt to the school culture, assist them with instructional planning and classroom management issues, and provide feedback on their teaching based on observation of lessons. In theory, the school principal is expected to assign a suitable mentor to the new teacher. However, many new teachers have to recruit a mentor on their own.

The induction workshops operate as reflective practice groups aimed at assisting new teachers in analyzing and thinking about their experiences on the job while connecting theory and practice, and at providing them with a supportive professional environment. Workshop leaders are staff members at a teacher training institution and workshop groups generally number 15 participants.

The third component of the induction program is evaluation. Formative evaluation of new teachers' performance is required in mid-January, while summative evaluation is conducted towards the end of the school year. This component was not included in the present study. The study focused on variables related to mentorship and the induction workshop, in view of the fact that these components embody the program's main support frameworks for the new teachers and are explicitly intended to aid the socialization process.

## 3. Method

In order to examine the relationships among the research variables a correlational design was employed, using hierarchical linear regression. The criterion variable was satisfaction from socialization at school and the predictor variables included personal, school context, and induction variables.

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