



Future Teachers Clubs and the socialization of pre-service and early career teachers, 1953–2015



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Examines the initiative known as Future Teachers Clubs.
- Addresses teacher attrition during the first five years after certification.
- Illustrates how the Clubs increased teacher recruitment and “fit” to the profession.
- Explains why the Clubs diminished in certain regions but continue today in others.
- Suggests that Future Teachers Clubs might help to slow early career teacher attrition.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 October 2015

Received in revised form

21 June 2016

Accepted 28 June 2016

Keywords:

Teacher socialization

Teacher induction

Teacher attrition

Future Teachers Clubs

ABSTRACT

Although North American universities are preparing more teachers than ever, attrition remains high in the first five years after certification, particularly in high demand subjects, in rural areas and among marginalized populations. Despite robust scholarship, historians have not contributed to the discussion. This paper examines the initiative known as “Future Teachers Clubs” (FTCs) using historical and contemporary perspectives. We explore the origins and evolution of FTCs. We outline their decline as well as where and why they have remained an important force in teacher induction. Finally, we discuss the possibilities they hold for slowing early career attrition.

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Although universities across North America are training more teachers now than ever before, teacher attrition remains high in the first five years after certification. Estimates of turnover for Canadian teachers within five years after completing a Bachelor of Education range from 30% to 40% with some specialized fields – like French Immersion – being much higher than others (Clandinin et al., 2015). Though not all countries experience consistently high attrition rates, teacher turnover has become a pressing issue for many jurisdictions (OECD, 2005). For example, in the United States, it is estimated that over 50% of early career teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Karsenti, Collin, Villeneuve, Dumouchel, & Roy, 2008; see also Mitchell, 2016 and Reborá, 2016). In Australia attrition ranges from 8% to 50% depending on numerous factors, including geographic locale (Mason & Matas,

2015). Reasons cited by early career teachers for their decisions to leave teaching range from high stress and lack of support to dissatisfaction with workload or salary (Mackenzie, Santiago, Sliwka, & Hiroyuki, 2005). These figures are also complicated by the current difficulty new teachers in some regions – such as BC – experience in finding full time work in cities where they may have support networks, forcing many to choose between remaining Teachers Teaching on Call for an extended period or moving to more rural areas where there may be more vacancies or less competition (Jay, 2012).

Whereas researchers in Sweden have recently found that some teachers who drop out within the first five years of being certified eventually re-enter the profession (Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014), policy-makers and researchers tend to agree that the social and intellectual costs of early career attrition can be high because turnover adversely affects student achievement (cf. Mason & Matas, 2015). In the United States, estimates place the financial burden of high attrition at over \$2 billion yearly (Ingersoll, 2001, 2015).

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Despite a robust literature on the challenges of new teacher recruitment, induction, and retention, surprisingly little historical scholarship has contributed to the discussion. Yet evidence exists that, historically, administrators have tackled recruitment and retention matters with creative initiatives that have been lost through the passage of time. The purpose of this paper is to examine the initiative known as “Future Teachers Clubs,” from both historical and contemporary perspectives. In particular, we address the following questions. What were Future Teachers Clubs? When and why did they originate? How did Future Teachers Clubs play out in one specific jurisdiction: British Columbia (BC)? Why have they diminished? In what contexts have the principles behind Future Teachers Clubs remained an important part of teacher preparation programs and why? Even though many North American jurisdictions initiated Future Teachers Clubs to grapple with recruitment and retention issues, few have left as intact an archive of material documenting the phenomenon as BC, Canada’s most westerly province. As a result, BC offers a valuable case from which to understand how Future Teachers Clubs operated and why they diminished in importance. This paper analyzes the history and legacy of Future Teachers Clubs and provides scholars, administrators, and teacher educators in various jurisdictions with an alternate lens from which to consider the longstanding challenges of teacher attrition.

We begin by reviewing theoretical and empirical perspectives on teacher attrition and induction. This is followed by an explanation of the methods we used for the project. Next, we explore the phenomenon known as the Future Teachers Club, an initiative that originated in the United States. We analyze the specific case of BC, where Future Teachers Clubs became a government-supported province-wide initiative in 1954. This is followed by discussion of Educators Rising, a successor to Future Teachers of America. We note that there has been virtually no research – either historical or contemporary – examining the impact of Future Teachers Clubs and affiliated initiatives to socialize teachers before entering the profession. Thus, we conclude by calling for more empirical studies in the hopes that such initiatives might help to stem the high degree of attrition experienced by teachers within their first five years of entering the profession.

1. Teacher induction: theoretical and empirical perspectives

Much of the research on teacher attrition and induction has focused on factors shaping early career teachers’ decisions to leave the profession, such as individual burnout or lack of school-level support. Recently, scholars have argued that entering the teaching profession is a process of identity negotiation that is more complex than merely assuming a new role (cf. [Clandinin et al., 2015](#)). Indeed, becoming a teacher entails a significant degree of socialization: the processes by which individuals learn to join new communities; in this case, the ways that new teachers come to manage classroom learning. The transition from pre-service teacher to in-service teacher can be difficult as individuals learn more about the realities of their profession. In order to facilitate a more supportive socialization process, many countries offer a system of induction, defined by [Greenlee and Dedeugd \(2002\)](#) as the “process of formal assistance for the beginning teacher” (p. 69). Induction programs generally assist teachers in their first year, though some countries – such as Israel – provide two-year programs ([Alhija & Fresko, 2016](#), p. 69). In Japan, beginning teachers are paired with master teachers for their first year. In addition to receiving informal support, new teachers take up to 30 days of intensive professional instruction, often delivered during overnight retreats ([Howe, 2005](#)). Elsewhere, Australian researchers have found that mentoring programs slow new teacher attrition by

enhancing their capital, including human, social, psychological and structural (cf. [Mason & Matas, 2015](#); [Moore, 2009](#)).

Working within the US, [Achinstein, Ogawa, and Spiegelman \(2004\)](#) found that three factors shape socialization: teacher background, local context, and policy including mandated curricula. Induction programs affect local context, or school culture, by creating support networks of colleagues to mentor new teachers in their transitions. Also working from the US, [Bickmore and Bickmore \(2010\)](#) found that induction programs are critical for their multifaceted approaches, which allow individuals to find an element to each program that best supports them. For example, in Israel, teacher induction programs provide new teachers with three distinct services for learning: one-on-one mentoring with a colleague in the same school, workshops given by a local university or college, and formal evaluation of new teachers ([Alhija & Fresko, 2016](#)). The most effective mentorship programs are implemented at the school level in a systematic way, are standardized across a given school district, and incorporate the whole school in order to improve school culture ([Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010](#)).

Research has found a positive correlation between supportive new teacher induction programs and increased retention of teachers in the first five years after certification ([Bertone, Chaliès, & Flavier, 2009](#); [Duffield, 2006](#); [Howe, 2005](#)). While comparative studies have shown that Canadian induction programs could be improved by placing greater emphasis on creating significant relationships between mentors and new teachers, induction programs do offer some much needed support to new teachers in Canada ([Howe, 2005](#)). The programs currently offered vary widely by province. Some are funded provincially, such as the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) in Ontario which is implemented by individual principals who make connections between new teachers and experienced mentors ([Kutsyuruba, Godden, & Tregunna, 2014](#), pp. 9–10). In New Brunswick, the Teachers Association funds a program for Anglophone teachers, founded when the provincially-funded program was cut in 2009 under budgetary constraints ([Kutsyuruba et al., 2014](#), pp. 12–13). In BC, the Ministry of Education, the British Columbia Teachers Federation [BCTF], local teachers associations, and individual school districts collaborate to offer new teachers support programs, the largest of which is a BCTF program that provides web-based resources, connects new teachers with mentors, and organizes a two-day conference for student-teachers and new teachers ([Kutsyuruba et al., 2014](#); [BCTF, 2015](#)). Though the programs are not uniform across Canada, their commonality is the value placed on mentorship as an effective way to smooth new teachers’ transitions into the field through professional support networks of more experienced coworkers.

This raises the question as to whether such initiatives may be undertaken too late – that is, once a teacher is certified and already “on the job.” What many educators do not realize is that some attempts to acculturate and induct teachers into the profession have focused on pre-service – not in-service – teachers and took the form of Future Teachers Clubs. These clubs existed to inform secondary school students about postsecondary training, about the realities of teaching, and to give students hands-on experience in the classroom to help them decide if teaching would be a suitable profession for them. These clubs rose to popularity in the United States during the early 1950s when American high schools could become members of the Future Teachers of America [FTA], an organization founded by the National Education Foundation in 1937. The FTA provided member chapters with resources and support to facilitate Future Teachers of America clubs within their schools ([Future Educators of America \[FEA\], 2014a](#)). Following the example of the FTA, clubs were soon established in BC, billed by the Department of Education as a recruitment strategy for the two Provincial Normal Schools’ teacher training programs.

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