

# Challenges of Beginning Teachers and Prerequisite Support to retain and Sustain them in the Profession

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**Abstract :** This paper is an endeavor to discuss the issues and difficulties faced by novice school teachers starting out their teaching career and profession. The beginning years of school teachers are like sink or swim and they face physiologically, psychologically and often culturally difficult situations to go ahead and handle especially in culturally, geographically, and demographically diverse societies as India has and present time which is the age of technology and knowledge explosion. Now only subject mastery is not enough to deal with teaching but it needs expertise in various fields as management, administration, decision making, policy making, pedagogy, scientific and technical knowledge, educational psychology, guidance and counseling, educational philosophy, educational sociology, prevailing national and global educational system and its history, knowledge about working condition, environment, culture, history and aims and objectives of the institution as well as society, demography and culture of that region and background of their students and a lot more. Therefore, beginning years are difficult and crucial for novice teachers to handle and retain and sustain in the profession. That is why attrition rate of teachers are more than other professions as engineering, medicine, management, administration, policy making and tourism etc. It may not be surprising to anyone that new teachers often speak of just struggling to survive during their initial years of teaching. The paper focuses on the role of induction and mentoring in supporting new teachers retaining and helping them sustain in the profession. Researchers have proven that support and help in initial periods of teaching have always played a positive role in sustaining and retaining novice teachers in the profession.

**Index Terms:-** Teacher Induction, Mentoring, Attrition, Retention, Profession, Novice Teacher, Teaching Career, Challenges

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching is one of the most difficult tasks and challenging professions especially when teachers are less in number and not having mastery over subject, pedagogy, management, administration and so on, because of poor functions of pre-service training and education. Consequently, beginning teachers are in the most pivotal year of their careers. Their experiences associated with the transition from student to first year teacher influence their teaching effectiveness and longevity in the profession. New teachers soon after beginning the career thrown in at the deep end and teachers' attrition and dropouts especially in private institutions are alarming to the whole system. Starting out in teaching is indeed scary for most new teachers (Roehrig, Pressley, & Talotta, 2002). As it is well known, new teachers assume similar responsibilities to those who have been teaching for years, and they have to get up to speed quickly (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). As Bubb (2007, p. 1) notes, "The first year is the most formative period in a teacher's career and support is crucial if they are to develop the competencies, confidence and attitudes that will keep them happy and successful in the job." New teacher attrition causes concern in many jurisdictions and despite comparatively generous funding for induction in New Zealand, United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, with around 37 percent of all new teachers leaving the teaching profession after three years (Elvidge, 2002). India's education system is more developed than these above state countries. Moreover, data is not available which can show and state the attrition rate of teachers. Surveys are also not available which tells to what extent teachers leave their profession within first three years of career. Teacher induction is now recognized as important, both in retaining beginning teachers and in establishing strong foundations for quality teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Kelley, 2004; OECD, 2005; Youngs, 2002). The United States and New Zealand can be seen as pioneers as their attempts with mentoring started already in the 1970s, although the activities did not increase in extent until the 1990s. Since the 1980s interest in supporting new teachers has increased all over the world.

## CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

The struggle of newly recruited teachers in starting and in the beginning period of their profession is currently a well-known fact in world. Research shows that there are numerous unexpected and difficult situations for teachers come to handle that their teacher education (pre-service training) does not always prepare them for. Feiman Nemser asserts that “no matter what initial preparation they receive, teachers are never fully prepared for classroom realities and responsibilities associated with meeting the needs of a rapidly growing, increasingly diverse student population”. She continues arguing that new teachers are expected to do their work as effectively as their older colleagues at school, regardless of the many elements in the profession that are unknown, i.e. pupils, curriculum and school culture etc. As Ducharme and Ducharme suggest; “Veteran teachers often confront problems that they have not seen before; Beginning teachers are almost always encountering problems they have never seen before.” In a way, new teachers have several jobs: “to teach and to learn to teach” and to develop “from a student of teaching to teacher of students”. This is an extended and complicated process. The situation is paradoxical as the newly recruited teachers need to display skills and abilities they do not yet have, while the only way to gain them is to do what they do have not yet completely understood. In addition, some researchers show that newly recruited teachers mostly face the situation where they are given the most difficult class, including a higher number of students with disrupting behaviors in comparison to their more experienced colleagues. Researchers revealed the challenging situation when teachers start out in their teaching profession as a reality shock, transition shock, and culture shock or praxis shock. Moreover, various researchers identify the beginning period as crucial as a time of survival and discovery, adaptation and learning.

Newly recruited teachers mostly have been left alone without any or little help and support to handle the new situation and survive and sustain in the profession. This “sink or swim approach” can be seen as fateful, because initial years are a decisive period for development and growth as a teacher. Teacher quality is one of the most, significant factors in students’ achievement and their educational improvement. When a novice entrant joins an organization, he/she is an utter stranger to the co-workers, workplace and work environment etc. As such, he/she may feel insecure, shy and nervous. The first few days may be all anxious and disturbing ones for the novice entrant. Particularly when a novice entrant comes from rural area or different culture, he/she finds himself/herself completely at sea in an industrial town and city and different cultural community and people. It mostly happens in multi cultural and diverse societies and countries as India. Croasmun, Hampton and Herrmann demonstrated that teachers who are beginning their career are more than two times more likely to leave the teaching profession than teachers with more experience. Moreover, 15% of teachers in their second year and 10% of teachers in their third year on the job are reported to leave the profession. According to Ingersoll, Ingersoll and Ingersoll & May there is relatively high turnover in the teaching profession compared to many other occupations and professions, such as lawyers, engineers, architects, professors, pharmacists and nurses. For instance, Ingersoll established that 15.7% of teachers leave the education profession, compared to other professionals who leave at a rate of 11.9% at the formative stage of their work. Gaytan also noted a trend of teachers leaving the profession at higher rates in the first, second and third year on the job. This implies that teachers are more likely to leave their jobs compared to other professions hence need for induction and orientation programme to reverse the turnover trend. Studies have shown that teaching has relatively high turnover compared to many other occupations and professions, such as lawyers, engineers, architects, professors, pharmacists and nurses and teacher turnover is especially high in the first years on the job. Several studies have calculated that between 40 and 50 percent of new teachers leave within the first five years of entry into teaching. Recent research has also documented that one of the negative consequences of these high levels of turnover in teaching is their link to the teacher shortages that seem to plague schools perennially. Studies have shown that school staffing problems are to a significant extent a result of a revolving door where large numbers of teachers depart teaching long before retirement.

## THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER INDUCTION

Teacher induction is the process where newly recruited teachers are taken through activities that help them get conversant with the operations of an institution and organization. Teacher induction is the support and guidance provided to novice teachers and school administrators in the early stages of their careers. Induction encompasses orientation to the workplace, socialization, mentoring, and guidance provided to beginning teachers through various practices. In the teaching profession it involves newly recruited teachers being initiated in the teaching profession by being taken through an orientation process where they familiarize themselves with the operation of the institution. According to Smith and Ingersoll most new teacher support involves a novice working with an experienced teacher or mentor. Researches on mentor-based support of new teachers have focused on its relationship to instruction and collegiality also argued that mentor-based induction helps new teachers learn

school's norms, working with colleagues, interacting with students, how long to work, and how to teach. Feimen Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko's review suggested that induction can be defined as having one of three primary meanings: (a) a phase in teacher development that occurs during the first year of teaching and focuses on novices' concerns and problems of practice; (b) a time of movement from teacher preparation to practicing teacher that emphasizes the people and the place where the new teacher is inducted, a meaning that is steeped in the socialization literature and (c) a formal program.

The definitions of induction can be summed up with these key terms: planned, process, and support. Implicitly, the definitions suggest that induction: (a) is responsive to all parties, (b) includes a host of approaches, and (c) is maintained over time. In educational institutions that are responsive to students that foster relationships and that support teacher learning, induction has a greater chance of succeeding. Teacher induction provides a bridge between teacher preparation and practice that supports the distinct learning needs of new teachers during their initial years of teaching. Within induction research and conceptual work, three frameworks influence the way an induction program is designed. First, induction is often viewed as a transitional phase in teacher development between pre-service and in-service professional growth during which novice teachers are evolving from students of teaching to teachers of students. According to Ingersoll and Smith (2004), one component of a teacher induction involves a guidance program for new teachers during their transition into teaching career. Induction grounded in the view that induction is a support in transitional stage of teacher developmental activities such as setting up classrooms or initiating classroom management routines. Second, induction is often perceived as a process of socialization in which new teachers acclimate to school where powerful school cultural norms often motivate new teachers to adapt to the status quo of schooling. Induction focused on socialization, emphasizes the development of skills that help new comers feel like they fit into the teacher culture. Induction for socialization emphasizes orientation and other induction activities that stress new teachers' acclimation to the school climate. Finally, induction is frequently viewed as a coherent, comprehensive system of intensive support, professional development, and formative assessment for new teachers lasting from first one to three years.

#### Major components of induction

I	Pre-school year workshop	Vi	Portfolio, video
Ii	Welcome center	Vii	Demonstration classrooms
Iii	Tour, bus	Viii	Administrative support
Iv	Networks, study groups	Ix	Learning circles
V	Mentors, facilitators, coaches	X	Orientation

#### THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER MENTORING

Another one of the important pieces in the induction is the concept of mentoring. The term mentoring is frequently used interchangeably with the term induction, because mentoring has been the dominant form of teacher induction in the world from the last two and three decades. However, distinguishing between mentoring and induction is crucial, because these two terms are not synonymous. Research has described that high quality induction programs that incorporate a mentoring have the ability to improve teacher quality, job satisfaction, commitment, teacher retention, and student achievement. Teachers are twice as likely to stay and sustain in the teaching profession if they participate in an induction program that comprises trained mentors. Brewster and Railsback found ideally that mentoring programs should be developed around the needs of the people being served by the program. Novice teachers often feel isolated during their beginning few years of career, which leads them to drop out of the profession. Mentoring allows them to feel connected in the profession and to avoid isolation which has been seen an effective way of retaining teachers.

Guyton & Hildago suggest that the culture, environment and context of the school can affect the mentoring process of novice teachers. Claycomb suggests that mentors may have to help new teachers in acknowledging and dealing with the issues and challenges posed by teaching students from poverty that often need that their teachers advocate for them socially, academically, and emotionally. Tillman also concurs that "teacher mentors in urban schools may also be called upon to help new teachers reflect on and understand the unique histories and experiences and the varied learning styles and needs of students from various racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups." According to Tillman, teachers typically teach children who may not be motivated and who likely lack parental and family support, in schools where resources may not be

available, and where instruction may not follow the traditional methods. Tillman acknowledges the role of the teacher mentor, but also describes that the role of the administration in terms of the mentoring process requires careful examination and evaluation. She argues that the role of the school administration in facilitating the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers is not well-documented and preserved. While Ganser believes that the role of the administration in the mentoring process of new teachers should be a passive one and that the teacher mentor should play the predominant role, researchers such as Brock & Hope have argued that the school administration should also be proactive in the mentoring process.

### **SUPPORTING BEGINNING TEACHERS RETAIN AND SUSTAIN IN THE PROFESSION**

Usually it is seen that experienced teachers have a high level of content knowledge of subject along with instructional and management strategies in comparison to new teachers. Briggs (2011) indicated that, with time and experience, new teachers can be competent enough in required areas. However, during the teachers' early years of career, students may feel something they lack academically and in classroom management etc. Learning and student achievement suffer when students have new teachers each year as a result of teacher attrition (NCTAF, 2003; Ravitch, 2007). With new teacher attrition, schools are continuously rebuilding their teaching staff while the teacher quality gap grows larger (Carroll, 2007). Marzano (2003) indicated that new teacher attrition adversely affects the student achievement. The literature and researches support the fact that new teachers having a strong classroom management foundation, who are professionally supported in the beginning of teaching career through strong professional development, orientation, mentoring and induction programs, are much more likely to remain in the teaching profession. Moreover retention has been shown to have a direct connection to increased student achievement. The primary objective of Teacher Induction is to facilitate teachers' professional development during their first two or three years of teaching (induction period). As a result of this process, new teachers can be better to promote student achievement in a culturally diverse environment by successfully implementing the aims, goals, objectives, policies, procedures, and research-based best practices required by the school education system.

In addition to descriptive studies of the content of induction programs, there have been numerous evaluative studies examining the effects related to induction, particularly mentoring and orientation on various teacher outcomes. These outcome measures typically fall into two categories: teacher attitudes (e.g., teacher's job satisfaction, efficacy, and commitment) and teacher retention or turnover. A number of studies provide support for the hypothesis that well-conceived and well-implemented teacher mentoring and induction programs are successful in increasing the job satisfaction, efficacy and retention of new teachers. There are, however, important limitations to the existing empirical research on the effects of teacher induction and mentoring programs. First, the majority of these empirical studies are program evaluations that collected data on outcomes solely from those who had participated in the particular programs being assessed. Such studies can provide valuable feedback to both providers and participants of such programs. However, unless a study collects similar outcome data from both participants and non-participants in a program, it cannot provide unambiguous conclusions about the value added (or not) of that program. In other words, to establish whether participants perform differently than non-participants, it is important to compare the outcomes across both groups.

New teachers often feel isolated during their first few years and that leads them to drop out of the profession. Mentoring allows them to feel a connection to the profession and to avoid isolation which has shown to be an effective way of retaining teachers. Richard M. Ingersoll and Thomas M. Smith (2004) indicate that beginning teachers who were provided with multiple supports, were less likely to move to other schools and profession and less likely to leave the teaching occupation altogether after their first year. Collaboration with other teachers on instructional matters reduces the likelihood of beginning teacher and platform for such collaboration is created through induction and mentoring. Marnie Thompson, Pamela Paek, Laura Goean and Eva Ponte (2005) say that induction and mentoring programs for new teachers are gaining in popularity as a tool to slow down new teacher turnover, strengthen teacher practice, and improve student learning. Marie Cameron, Susan Lovett, and Jennifer Garvey Berger (2007) wrote that when beginning teachers were inducted into such collegial cultures they were less likely to leave their schools, and almost without exception they reported satisfaction with their decisions to opt teaching as profession, deriving personal and professional fulfillment from that sense of belonging to a spirited learning community. They continue saying that many of inducted teachers want to play a part in supporting the learning of other new teachers to ensure that they are even better supported.

Studies indicate that beginning teachers particularly report that one of the main factors and reasons behind their decisions to leave teaching profession is a lack of adequate support from the school department and administration. These are the kinds of occupational ills that effective employee mentoring and induction programs seek to address. The recent studies in USA have shown that the percentage of beginning

teachers who report that they participated in some induction program in their first year of teaching has steadily increased over the past two decades from about 40 percent in 1990 to almost 80 percent by 2008. The theory behind induction holds that teaching is complex work, pre-employment teacher preparation is rarely sufficient to provide all of the knowledge and skills necessary to successful teaching and a significant portion can only be acquired while on the job. Hence, this perspective continues and there is a necessary role for schools in providing an environment where novices can learn the required skills and survive and succeed as teachers. The goal of these support programs as induction and mentoring is to improve the performance and retention of beginning teachers. That is to both enhance and prevent the loss of teachers' human capital with the ultimate aim of improving the growth and learning of students.

## CONCLUSION

Based on above detailed discussion it can be concluded that teaching is one the most challenging profession and needs continuous input especially in present scenario and at the time of globalization. On the one hand it is the time of technology and knowledge explosion and on the other hand it is time of expertise and mastery and specialization in a specific and particular area of the subject and the field. Teaching is such a profession where only subject expertise and mastery is not enough but it needs continuous professional development and training to cater the growing needs of the society. This profession requires the most intelligent and experts but unfortunately till date it could not attract such people. Because of poor functioning of pre-service training and education, beginning teachers are in the most pivotal year of their career, and the experiences associated with the transition from student to first year teacher influence their teaching effectiveness and longevity in the profession. It is also being noted that a trend of teachers leaving the profession at higher rates in the first, second and third year on the job. This implies that teachers are more likely to leave their jobs compared to other professions hence need for induction and mentoring programmes to reverse the turnover trend. It is seen that teacher quality, recruitment, retention and induction have received renewed attention during the past decade both in research as well as in policy documents. Studies have revealed and proved that support to novice teachers in the beginning, plays a key role in retaining the in the profession. Hence, the goal of these support programs as induction and mentoring is to improve the performance and retention of beginning teachers. That is to both enhance and prevent the loss of teachers' human capital with the ultimate aim of improving the growth and learning of students. Studies have shown that these programmes have been successful in retaining and sustaining novice teachers in the profession, in spite of all difficulties and critical circumstances they face and encounter in the beginning of their career of teaching.

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