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Trudie Steyn & Salomé Schulze

The induction of inexperienced teachers: problems and needs

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This paper reports on an investigation into the problems experienced by neophyte educators. Hypotheses were formulated, focusing on the relation between gender, age, years of teaching experience and geographical location, on the one hand, and problems experienced, on the other. Perceptions of the various existing support systems and ways in which mentors could be selected were also investigated. The most pressing problems experienced were a lack of resources and an inability to maintain discipline or implement outcomes-based education (OBE). These problems were influenced by gender, age, years of experience and the specific education system in which the neophyte teacher was employed.

Die oriëntering van beginneronderwysers: probleme en behoeftes

Die doel van hierdie artikel is om verslag te doen oor 'n ondersoek na die probleme wat beginneronderwysers ervaar. Hipoteses is geformuleer wat fokus op die verband tussen geslag, ouderdom, jare onderwyservaring en geografiese ligging enersyds en die probleme wat ondervind word, menings oor ondersteuningsmetodes en die selektering van mentors andersyds. Die belangrikste probleme waarvoor beginneronderwysers te staan kom, is 'n gebrek aan hulpbronne, die handhawing van dissipline en die implementering van uitkomsgerigte onderwys (UGO). Die probleme wat beginneronderwysers moet oorkom, word beïnvloed deur geslag, ouderdom, jare ervaring en die bepaalde onderwysstelsel waar die beginner werk.

Prof G M Steyn & Prof S Schulze, School of Education, University of South Africa, P O Box 392, Unisa 0003; E-mail: steyngm1@unisa.ac.za & schulzs@unisa.ac.za

Neophyte educators cannot produce their best work and achieve the objectives of their schools until they have adjusted to the work they are required to do and the environments in which they must work, as well as the colleagues and learners with whom they must interact. Since this adjustment can be problematic, several research publications focus on the issue, addressing the needs of such beginners, the assistance provided by means of induction programmes, the relationship between mentors and beginners and the development of teaching expertise from the perspective of the beginner.[1]

Despite the awareness that neophyte educators experience numerous problems and need support, the induction of educators has not received the attention it deserves and they are generally not effectively supported.[2] Often, they have to develop their teaching skills by trial and error. This haphazard development may take years, by which time many struggling educators have left the profession. Because of poor induction programmes, up to 50% of educators in urban schools in the USA leave the profession within three years (Black 2001: 46, Whitaker 2001: 1). The Lafourche Parish Public schools in Louisiana had an annual attrition rate of 51% before induction programmes were implemented (Wong 2002: 54). Since then the attrition rate has dropped to 15%.

In South Africa, too, the induction of neophyte educators is unsatisfactory. Studies focusing on the beginner educator indicate that British teacher-training students spend more than 60% of their time in school classrooms but in South Africa the figure is less than 10% (Dreyer 1998: 109). Dreyer therefore argues for more training time at schools in addition to formalised induction programmes for beginner educators. In a survey of 93 education managers in the Free State, only 30% reported that induction was practised in their schools (Heyns 2000: 164). Often, principals, deputy principals and heads of departments are the only presenters of such programmes; no mentors are involved. This is similar to the findings of Makgopa (1995) for Mpumalanga. Without induction programmes, South African educators entering the profession

1 Cf Bolam *et al* 1995: 247, Dowding 1998: 19, Harrison 2001: 277, Heaney 2001: 246-7, Hertzog 2002: 26, Turner 1994: 326, Whitaker 2000: 31 & 2001: 7.

2 Cf Bolam *et al* 1995: 247, Bines & Boydell 1995: 60, Freiberg 2002: 56, Gill 1998: 94, Halford 1998: 33, Jones 2002: 509, San 1999: 28, Wilkinson 1997: 48.

experience "practice shock" when confronted with the harsh reality of everyday classroom life and the cynicism of more experienced educators (Büchner 1997: 85-6). Moreover, old as well as new educators are faced with numerous challenges in the post-1994 South African education system: among other things, the implementation of outcomes-based education (OBE), the maintenance of discipline without corporal punishment and the very diverse learner population of inclusive education. Hence, the aim of this paper is twofold: to investigate the problems experienced by neophyte educators in South Africa and elsewhere and to determine their views on the best means of support. A description of the full career of an educator serves as a background to the study.

1. Theoretical framework: the career cycle of an educator

Kremer-Hayon & Fessler (1992: 36-8) and Huberman (1993: 93-118) identify different stages in the career of an educator and view educators as moving in and out of these stages in response to personal and environmental factors. Both model developers view the stages as being flexible and subject to some individual differences.

In the studies done by Kremer-Hayon & Fessler (1992: 36-7), a social systems approach was used to identify the various phases. After the pre-service period, the stages are as follows:

- Induction: the stage in which the educator experiences a reality shock and struggles to survive.
- Competency building: the stage in which educators strive to improve their teaching skills, seeking out new methods and eagerly attending workshops and conferences.
- Enthusiasm and growth: the phase in which educators, having mastered the required skills, are enthusiastic about their growth and progress as professionals, and seek new ways to enrich their teaching.
- Career frustration: the phase of disillusionment and job dissatisfaction. Teachers in this phase often ask "What is the use?" They are fatigued and some experience burnout. (This phase may even occur among neophyte educators.)

- Stability and stagnation: the stage when educators do only what is expected of them without any motivation for quality or growth.
- Career wind-down: when educators prepare to leave the profession or anticipate a career change. It may be pleasant for some and frustrating for others. Huberman (1993: 108) calls it a period of disengagement. For some it is a gradual withdrawal and a rechanneling of energies outside the school. For others it is a period of discontent with learners, administrators and parents.
- Career exit: the time of job retirement.

Similarly, Huberman (1993: 93-114) identifies career entry as characterised by excitement and the challenge of discovery, followed by five intermediate stages before retirement. These are stabilisation (a growing sense of instructional mastery and a more assertive professional autonomy); diversification and change (a period of experimentation with classroom methods and organisation, looking for new ideas and challenges); stock-taking and self-interrogation at mid-career (a period of self-questioning and reviewing of one's career, leading to increased vulnerability); serenity and affective distance (a period in which educators become more detached from learners and career ambitions, while their level of investment decreases and their teaching objectives become more modest) and conservatism (a period of increased rigidity and resistance to change). Staff induction focuses mainly on the first career stages of both the above-mentioned models.

2. Defining staff induction

A literature review reveals numerous definitions of staff induction. Some researchers view induction as a period of improvement and transition and a process in which beginners are supported in developing and demonstrating competence, particularly during their first year of teaching. This view includes an appraisal component (School Management Teams 2000: 33). Dowding (1998: 18) views induction as a positive, caring and uplifting endeavour. Teacher induction is also often viewed as orientation or information transmission (Dinham 1992: 30). Although orientation and the dissemination of information occur by means of induction programmes, the induction of educators is in fact an ongoing process, which includes formal and informal elements of socialisation

and professional development, and extends from pre-service training to commencing the teaching profession. It includes an introduction to a new set of skills and practices required but not learnt during initial training (cf Lyons 1993: 12, Dowding 1998: 18, San 1999: 19). For the purposes of this paper, induction may be seen as a school's effort to support neophyte staff in adjusting to their new work environment with the minimum disruption and as quickly as possible, so that the school's functioning may proceed effectively (Castetter 1996: 182).

The needs of both novice educators and schools form the basis of staff induction programmes. A needs analysis will identify relevant topics for development. Staff induction programmes usually include the following: school-related matters, including the school's culture, vision, mission, values, policy, financial and physical resources as well as the curricular and administrative services offered; staff-related matters, namely the school's organisational structure, work allocation, job requirements and how to maintain sound interpersonal relationships; teaching and the school's curriculum, including classroom management, learning area policies, OBE, teaching skills and related techniques; matters encompassing classroom discipline, communication with learners and dealing with learners who have behavioural problems; educator-parent relationships, including guidance on how to communicate with parents; physical and financial resources, namely, the school buildings, fixed assets such as teaching materials and equipment, the required skills in financial management, and administrative work (such as attendance registers, assessment forms and classroom stock-taking).[3]

3. Understanding neophyte educators' needs

The unrealistic optimism of beginner educators should not mislead programme planners into believing that they have the situation under control. Beginners assume new responsibilities and roles and must face various problems in the workplace (Mohr & Townsend 2001: 9). Mazibuko (1999: 596) found that educators in Swaziland referred to the first weeks as "boring", "intimidating", "difficult", "stressful" and "frightening".

3 Cf Canter & Canter 1999: 28, Dowding 1998: 18, Freiberg 2002: 57, Gill 1998: 99, Heyns 2000: 162, Martin & Baldwin 1996: 107, Whitaker 2001: 2, Wong 2002: 52.

A review of the literature indicates that seven main factors relate to the difficulties many neophyte educators face.

Beginners are confronted with the unknown, including learners, staff, the curriculum, policies, procedures, norms and traditions, both of each specific classroom and of the school. A reality shock occurs when their previous educational experiences do not adequately prepare them for the workplace.[4]

Beginner educators frequently complain about insufficient knowledge and skills. They often experience difficulty with the preparation and pacing of learning opportunities, with specific methods of learning facilitation (such as those required by OBE), with time management, assessment methods and classroom administration.[5]

Neophyte educators often experience a gap between the reality of teaching practice and their ideals. This may lead to feelings of disillusionment during their first years of teaching. Unclear or confusing expectations from principals, colleagues, parents or learners add to their disorientation and sense of inadequacy. Consequently, it is important that they should know exactly what is expected of them.[6]

New educators may also experience social isolation since many schools have already established close-knit friendship groups. Educators spend much of their day alone with learners, isolated from other adults. Consequently, a need for communication with colleagues and managers is experienced by numerous educators. Beginner educators may also become victims of conflict among staff, which may cause disillusionment.[7]

Classroom management and discipline are often cited as serious problems for beginner educators, who often feel ill-equipped to handle classroom realities. Such problems include curriculum planning as well as

4 Cf Brock & Grady 1997: 12, Gill 1998: 98, Mohr & Townsend 2001: 9, Whitaker 2001: 1-2.

5 Cf Brock & Grady 1997: 12, Capel 1998: 396-7, Dinham 1992: 31, Freiberg 2002: 57, Koetsier & Wubbels 1995: 333, Mazibuko 1999: 598, Joeger & Boettcher 2000: 104, San 1999: 28, Whitaker 2001: 4, Wilkinson 1997: 49.

6 Cf Capel 1998: 396-7, Halford 1998: 33, Heyns 2000: 161, Joeger & Boettcher 2000: 105, Koetsier & Wubbels 1995: 333, Whitaker 2001: 3, Wilkinson 1997: 49.

7 Cf Brock & Grady 1997: 15-7, Capel 1998: 405, Koeberg 1999: 90, Mohr & Townsend 2001: 9-10, Mazibuko 1999: 597, Whitaker 2001: 5.

working with learners with poor language skills, undisciplined or unmotivated learners, and learners with a wide range of abilities in one classroom.[8]

Many beginner educators complain about poor working conditions, such as having no teaching material and textbooks.[9] Koeberg's (1999: 96) study among such educators in Cape Town schools in South Africa reports that educators who have to "travel" (meet their classes in available vacant rooms) experience significant frustration.

Neophyte educators frequently feel overwhelmed by the complexity and the workload of facilitating learning. They are often given more responsibilities and extra-curricular activities than more experienced educators, the least desirable courses and the most difficult students.[10]

As a result of these problems, the new teachers experience a variety of emotions; some positive but many negative (Heyns 2000: 160). Beginners often suffer from fear, anxiety, stress and feelings of inadequacy.[11] These negative feelings may be alleviated by induction programmes. Due to the interconnectedness of the problems commonly associated with induction, it is possible to identify strategies to address more than one problem simultaneously (Mohr & Townsend 2001: 10).

4. A framework for an induction programme

There is an awareness that induction should be conducted at schools and be context specific, in order to enable neophyte educators to adjust to the specific school culture.[12] Induction comprises a set of developmental growth opportunities that address the needs of such educators. Methods of assistance include the following:

8 Cf Brock & Grady 1997: 17, Capel 1998: 396, Dinham 1992: 31, Dowding 1998: 18, Freiberg 2002: 58, Gill 1998: 98, Hertzog 2002: 26, Joeger & Boettcher 2000: 104, Koeberg 1999: 95, Martin & Baldwin 1996: 107, Mazibuko 1999: 599, Whitaker 2000: 31.

9 Cf Brock & Grady 1997: 19, Canter & Canter 1999: 28, Capel 1998: 399, Dowding 1998: 18, Joeger & Boettcher 2000: 105, Koeberg 1999: 97, Whitaker 2001: 03.

10 Cf Brock & Grady 1997: 20, Capel 1998: 399, Dowding 1998: 18, Mazibuko 1999: 59 & 594, Mohr & Townsend 2001: 10, Whitaker 2001: 3-4.

11 Cf Canter & Canter 1999: 28, Dowding 1998: 18, Joeger & Boettcher 2000: 105.

12 Cf Bines & Boydell 1995: 61, Dinham 1992: 31, Turner 1994: 339.

4.1 Orientation

During orientation, new teachers are exposed to reality. Orientation is used to provide them with essential information. This may include a tour of the school; an explanation of the beginner's duties, school policy, the vision and mission of the school, its rules, procedures and disciplinary policy; background information about the community, record-keeping, resources and school activities, and an introduction to mentors. During orientation, beginners may be introduced to colleagues, and timetables and tasks explained. Various issues may be addressed, such as administrative matters, punctuality, attendance at school activities and assemblies and the utilisation of free periods. Some of the information may be stipulated in a staff handbook, school policy file, school development plan or school prospectus.[13]

4.2 Developmental induction opportunities during the first year

Induction should be a natural continuation of this orientation process and form part of long-term continuous professional development. Unlike many support programmes that are discontinued after the first week of school, developmental induction programmes provide ongoing support for a prolonged period. Various authors identify different periods for induction. Apart from the initial orientation, Heyns (2000: 163, 164) and Dowding (1998: 19) distinguish between induction on the first day of school, in the first week of school, throughout the first term and during the remaining terms of the year. Brock & Grady's (1998: 181) study reveals discrepancies between the types of assistance which principals provided and those the educators preferred. The main difference was in the duration and comprehensiveness of induction programmes. Educators preferred a year-long induction period that included mentors. The issues addressed may include departmental and school policies, time management, classroom management and classroom observation of skilled educators.[14]

13 Cf Bolam *et al* 1995: 247, Brock & Grady 1997: 37, Dowding 1998: 19, Heyns 2000: 163, School Management Teams 2000: 48 & 51, Wilkinson 1997: 48-51, Whitaker 2001: 9.

14 Cf Dowding 1998: 19, Freiberg 2002: 56, Gill 1998: 101, Hertzog 2002: 26, Heyns 2000: 163, Martin & Baldwin 1996: 107, Whitaker 2001: 9, Wong 2002: 52.

4.3 Periodic meetings

Some authors suggest regularly scheduled meetings, covering specific important topics. At such meetings time should be provided for information and questions. Informal sessions where neophyte educators rehearse new situations in advance may be included.[15]

4.4 A support system

It is necessary to provide newcomers with a support system. This includes psychological support by means of which the personal and the professional welfare of neophyte educators may be enhanced. It also entails support in acquiring and developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the classroom situation.[16]

4.5 Support from mentors

Neophyte educators often feel left to "sink or swim" without a mentor. Mentors can offer beginners important support in facing the realities of teaching. The studies done by Bolam *et al* (1995) in England, and Bines & Boydell (1995) at Oxford reveal that the role of mentors is poorly understood. Mentors do not have clear job descriptions, adequate training or sufficient time to carry out their role well. A mentor can offer support in the following ways: acting as a soundboard, facilitating the process of gaining professional knowledge, and helping new educators to learn and understand teaching practice.[17]

Pairing new educators with mentors is a common phenomenon of induction programmes. Appropriate mentor selection and training are, however, crucial. Evidence from research suggests that mentors with supportive and empathetic personalities who provide structured programmes could be the key to a much improved induction process. According to the School Management Teams' (2000: 38) review, good

15 Cf Black 2001: 46, Capel 1998: 401, Wilkinson 1997: 50, Whitaker 2001: 7.

16 Cf Freiberg 2002: 57, Heyns 2000: 161, Jones 2002: 524, San 1999: 28, Whitaker 2001: 14.

17 Cf Bines & Boydell 1995: 59, Black 2001: 46, Freiberg 2002: 56, Halford 1998: 33, Harrison 2001: 278, Heaney 2001: 247, Heyns 2000: 163, Mohr & Townsend 2001: 10, School Management Teams 2000: 38, Stedman & Stroot 1998: 37, Whitaker 2001: 7-8.

mentors are mature, trustworthy, understanding, good listeners, experienced, good at interpersonal relations, and know how to encourage beginners. This implies that the quality of the relationship between the mentor and the beginner plays an important role (Bolam *et al* 1995: 256). Furthermore, since it is necessary for mentors to share their professional expertise, matching learning areas and grade levels can play a crucial role in effective mentoring.[18]

This information serves as background to the empirical investigation carried out in 2003.

5. Research design

The study was exploratory with a number of hypotheses directing the research: no statistically significant dependencies exist between the gender, age, years of teaching experience, geographical location, problems experienced, perceptions of appropriate methods of assisting neophyte educators and views of productive ways in which mentors should be selected.

To test the hypotheses, a survey design was implemented, using a questionnaire. In the first section, four questions determined respondents' gender, age, years of teaching experience and geographical location.

In the second section of the questionnaire problems experienced by neophyte educators were probed. These were identified from a literature review and included the following: lack of resources, disciplinary issues, implementing OBE, fear of making mistakes, dealing with learners of varying abilities, assessing learners' work, keeping up with paperwork, varying learning methods, working with learners with disabilities, determining appropriate expectations for learners, dealing with personal stress, handling angry parents, handling conflict between learners, pacing learning opportunities, feeling inadequate as a teacher, working with staff from different religious groups, finding that new ideas offered are not accepted, experiencing inter-racial problems, lack of communication between management and staff, lack of time for preparation of learning opportunities and extramural activities, general administration and supervision by senior staff.

18 Cf Bines & Boydell 1995: 58, Black 2001: 46, Brock & Grady 1997: 47, Hertzog 2002: 31-2, Quin 1994: 7, Turner 1994: 336-8, Whitaker 2000: 31 & 2001: 12.

The questionnaire provided respondents with a five-point scale from 1: "Definitely not" through 3: "Somewhat" to 5: "Definitely". To this list, respondents could also add any information they wanted.

In the third section of the questionnaire, seven possible methods of assisting neophyte educators were listed. Once again, participants were invited to add methods of assistance if they so wished.

In the last section of the questionnaire, four ways in which mentors could be selected were tabulated. Educators were invited to describe additional ways of selecting mentors.

Several neophyte educators from two local schools were asked to complete a draft of the questionnaire and indicate whether they wanted to add anything. This addressed content validity. Face validity was also addressed by means of the judgement of an expert, before the questionnaire was edited and finalised.

The respondents (neophyte educators) were a non-probability sample recruited by 194 students enrolled for a master's degree programme in human resource management during 2003. These students acted as field-workers. They were seen as an appropriate group to select the sample for the exploratory research since they came from a wide geographical area: 179 from South Africa, 14 from elsewhere in Africa (Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mauritius and Kenya) and one from Britain. Of the students, 169 (87%) spoke an African language as their mother tongue.

Each student was requested to administer the questionnaire to five purposefully selected neophyte educators (eg colleagues) as part of an assignment. The instruction was that the respondents should be in their first three years of teaching. Out of a possible total of 970, 534 (55%) completed questionnaires were returned.

6. Data analysis

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, a covariance matrix was used. The alpha reliability coefficient for the 25 scaled items of section two of the questionnaire was 0,8445. In the analysis, the two negative responses were grouped together, as were the two positive responses. This meant that results were indicated by either "Definitely not", "Somewhat" or "Definitely". Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each of the 30 variables. *Chi*-square analysis determined

whether there were significant dependencies between each of the variables (gender, age, years of teaching experience and geographical location) and views on problems experienced or possible solutions. The results appear in the tables in the next section.

7. Results and discussion of results

7.1 Biographical detail

There were some missing values. For example, only 513 of the 534 respondents indicated their gender. The known biographical details of the sample appear in Table 1.

Table 1: Biographical data of the sample

Variable	Number and percentages of respondents		
Gender	Males = 227 (42.5%)	Females = 286 (44.2%)	
Age	25 years and younger = 105 (20.2%)	26 to 29 years = 176 (33.8%)	30 + years = 239 (46%)
Years of experience	Less than 1 year = 104 (19.5%)	Between 1 and 2 years = 185 (34.6%)	Between 2 and 3 years = 233 (43.6%)
Geographical location	South Africa = 477 (89.3%)	Other parts of Africa = 39 (7.3%)	Outside Africa = 8 (1.5%)

As the table indicates, males represented 42.5% of the sample and females 44.2%. Nearly half of the sample was 30 years and older while 20.2% were 25 years and younger. In terms of teaching experience, 20% were in their first year, 35% in their second year and 44% in their third year of teaching. Most respondents (89.3%) were South African.

7.2 Problems experienced by neophyte educators

7.2.1 Most important problems

The frequencies and percentages of responses indicating that a factor "Definitely" presented a problem to neophyte educators were calculated.

Table 2 indicates the eight factors that presented most problems. All eight factors were mentioned by more than 200 of the respondents in the sample of 534. In rank order these factors were:

Table 2: Problems most frequently experienced by beginner educators

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of resources	306	57.3
Disciplinary issues	247	46.3
Implementing OBE	240	44.9
Fear of making mistakes	230	43.1
Dealing with learners of varying abilities	216	40.4
Assessing learners' work	212	39.7
Keeping up with paperwork	211	39.5
Varying learning methods	205	38.4

Table 2 indicates that the issues faced by neophyte educators were, in rank order from most to least important: lack of resources, disciplinary issues and implementing OBE (in the case of South African educators only). Inter-racial problems were least important (indicated as a definite problem by only 81 respondents). A possible reason for this could be the fact that most neophyte educators in the sample were employed at schools with black learners only.

Some of the problems listed in Table 2 (disciplinary issues, assessment methods, dealing with learners with varying abilities) had received mention earlier from authors in contexts other than South Africa. However, transformation to OBE in the South African education system may have exacerbated the problems. For effective implementation, OBE requires resources such as textbooks, laboratories, equipment and other learning materials. Many schools do not have these resources. OBE also necessitates group work, which may influence discipline since learners are encouraged to debate the issues with which they are confronted. In addition, learners with different learning abilities are active participants during learning opportunities. Uncertainty about how to handle these specific issues may give rise to a fear of making mistakes. These problems may be compounded by educators' unfamiliarity with the

continuous assessment methods required by OBE. This type of assessment increases paperwork. OBE also requires a variety of learning methods, which is complicated by the scarcity of resources.

The influence of gender, age, years of experience and geographical location on the factors that neophyte educators experienced as problems was determined by means of cross tabulations followed by chi-square analysis. Significant dependencies (and thus rejection of the null hypotheses) were found in the instances below.

7.2.2 Gender

Male and female educators differed significantly with regard to "Time required for the preparation of learning opportunities". This is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Cross-tabulation for gender and time needed for the preparation of learning opportunities

Gender	Time needed for the preparation of learning opportunities			Total
	Definitely not	Somewhat	Definitely	
Male	82 (16%)	72 (14%)	73 (14.2%)	227 (44.2%)
Female	109 (21.2%)	63 (12.3%)	114 (22.2%)	286 (55.8%)
Total	191 (37.2%)	135 (26.3%)	187 (36.5%)	513 (100%)

χ^2=6.709; df=2 ($p < 0.05$)

Table 3 indicates that female beginners had significantly more difficulty (on the 5% level) in finding enough time to prepare for learning opportunities. 22.2% indicated this as a definite problem, in comparison to 14.2% of the males. One could speculate that this may relate to the fact that female educators play more than one role — also often being housewives and carers for children. As new educators, they are relatively young and may still have small children at home. Thus, they may battle to find time for the preparation of learning opportunities. Although educators remain at school from 14:00 to 15:00 it is doubtful that all the lesson preparation of a neophyte educator can be completed during this time. Female educators in particular may therefore battle to find sufficient preparation time.

7.2.3 Age

A significant dependency (on the 1% level), and hence a rejection of the null hypothesis, was determined for "Lack of communication between management and staff, and age group", as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Cross-tabulation for age and lack of communication

Age group	Lack of communication between management and staff			Total
	Definitely not	Somewhat	Definitely	
25 years or less	32 (6.2%)	35 (6.7%)	38 (7.3%)	105 (20.2%)
26-29 years	81 (15.6%)	58 (11.2%)	37 (7.1%)	176 (33.8%)
30 years +	122 (23.5%)	61 (11.7%)	56 (10.8%)	239 (46%)
Total	235 (45.2%)	154 (29.6%)	131 (25.2%)	520 (100%)

χ^2=15.925; df=4 ($p < 0.01$)

According to Table 4, there appears to be a lack of communication between management and staff. The young educators in particular experienced this as a problem. 23.5% of the group aged 30 years and older believed that lack of communication was "definitely not" a problem as compared to 15.6% of the group aged 26 to 29 years and 6.2% of the 25-and-younger group. This indicates a need for improved communication between neophyte educators and school management. Older educators may find this less problematic as they have more confidence in approaching management when they need information.

7.2.4 Overall length of teaching experience

Significant dependencies (on the 5% or the 1% level), and therefore the rejection of null hypotheses, were found between years of teaching experience and having "disciplinary issues", problems with "handling angry parents" and "the implementation of OBE". These dependencies are depicted in Tables 5, 6 and 7.

Table 5: Cross-tabulation for teaching experience and disciplinary issues

Teaching experience	Disciplinary issues			Total
	Definitely not	Somewhat	Definitely	
Less than 1 year	32 (6.1%)	23 (4.4%)	49 (9.4%)	104 (20%)
Between 1 and 2 years	33 (6.3%)	69 (13.2%)	82 (15.7%)	184 (35.3%)
Between 2 and 3 years	43 (8.3%)	79 (15.2%)	111 (21.3%)	233 (44.7%)
Total	108 (20.7%)	171 (32.8%)	242 (46.4%	521 (100%)

χ^2=11.496; df=4 ($p < 0.05$)

Table 6: Cross-tabulation for teaching experience and handling angry parents

Teaching experience	Handling angry parents			Total
	Definitely not	Somewhat	Definitely	
Less than 1 year	51 (9.8%)	17 (3.3%)	36 (6.9%)	104 (19.9%)
Between 1 and 2 years	66 (12.6%)	49 (9.4%)	70 (13.4%)	185 (35.4%)
Between 2 and 3 years	81 (15.5%)	77 (14.8%)	75 (14.4%)	233 (44.6%)
Total	198 (37.9%)	143 (27.4%)	181 (34.7%)	522 (100%)

χ^2=12.604; df=4 ($p < 0.01$)

Table 7: Cross-tabulation for teaching experience and implementing OBE

Teaching experience	Implementing OBE			Total
	Definitely not	Somewhat	Definitely	
Less than 1 year	39 (7.6%)	23 (4.5%)	37 (7.2%)	99 (19.4%)
Between 1 and 2 years	40 (7.8%)	53 (10.4%)	90 (17.6%)	183 (35.8%)
Between 2 and 3 years	48 (9.4%)	74 (14.5%)	107 (20.9%)	229 (44.8%)
Total	127 (24.9%)	150 (29.4%)	234 (45.8%)	511 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 14.470$; $df = 4$ ($p < 0.01$)

According to Table 5, the more experienced the neophyte educators were, the more problems they had with lack of discipline: 21.3% of third-year educators viewed discipline as a problem in contrast to 15.7% of second-year and 9,4% of first-year educators. Similarly, Table 6 indicates that the more experienced neophyte educators were more likely to have difficulty in handling angry parents. While only 6.9% of first-year educators indicated this as a problem, 13.4% of second-year and 14.4% of third-year educators specified it. Table 7 illustrates a parallel pattern. Neophyte educators in their third year of teaching were more inclined than the less experienced ones to view the implementation of OBE as a problem: 7.2% of the first-year, 17.6% of the second-year and 20.9% of the third-year educators perceived it as problematic.

The pattern specified may be explained by Fessler's model (Kremer-Hayon & Fessler 1992) since the unrealistic initial optimism of neophyte educators is followed by a reality shock and a struggle to survive. In addition, a certain amount of burnout may occur over time, making educators less tolerant of conflict and problems relating to new approaches (such as OBE and the abolition of corporal punishment in South African schools). Fessler calls this career frustration.

7.2.5 Geographical location

Significant dependencies (on the 5% or the 1% level), and the rejection of the null hypotheses, were determined between geographical location and experiencing "disciplinary issues" and problems with "the pacing of

learning opportunities" and "the implementation of OBE". These are illustrated in Tables 8, 9 and 10.

Table 8: Cross-tabulation for geographical location and disciplinary issues

Geographical location	Disciplinary issues			Total
	Definitely not	Somewhat	Definitely	
South Africa	92 (17.6%)	156 (29.8%)	228 (43.6%)	476 (91%)
Other parts of Africa	14 (2.7%)	15 (2.9%)	10 (1.9%)	39 (7.5%)
Outside Africa	2 (0.4%)	1 (0.2%)	5 (1%)	8 (1.5%)
Total	108 (20.7%)	172 (32.9%)	243 (46.5%)	523 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 10.542$; $df = 4$ ($p < 0.05$)

Table 9: Cross-tabulation for geographical location and pacing learning opportunities

Geographical location	Pacing learning opportunities			Total
	Definitely not	Somewhat	Definitely	
South Africa	153 (29.2%)	165 (31,5%)	159 (30,3%)	477 (91%)
Other parts of Africa	18 (3.4%)	12 (2.3%)	9 (1.7%)	39 (7.4%)
Outside Africa	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.2%)	6 (1.1%)	8 (1.5%)
Total	172 (32.8%)	178 (34%)	174 (33.2%)	524 (100%)

χ^2=9.872; $df = 4$ ($p < 0.01$)

Table 10: Cross-tabulation for geographical location and implementing OBE

Geographical location	Implementing OBE			Total
	Definitely not	Somewhat	Definitely	
South Africa	112 (21.8%)	137 (26.7%)	228 (44.4%)	477 (93%)
Other parts of Africa	13 (2.5%)	9 (1.8%)	6 (1.2%)	28 (5.5%)
Outside Africa	2 (0.4%)	5 (1%)	1 (0.2%)	8 (1.6%)
Total	127 (24.8%)	151 (29.4%)	235 (45.8%)	513 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 14.733$; $df = 4$ ($p < 0.01$)

Tables 8, 9 and 10 indicate that significantly more neophyte educators in South Africa than in other parts of the world experience disciplinary issues as a problem (43.6% in contrast to 1.9% and 1%). In addition, the implementation of OBE and the pacing of learning opportunities (also influenced by OBE) were perceived as more problematic by South African neophyte educators (30.3% and 44.4% in contrast to 1.7%, 1.1%, 1.2% and 0.2%). This may be explained by the fact that neophyte educators in other parts of Africa (Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mauritius and Kenya) are not currently implementing radical curriculum change (such as OBE) in their schools. Similarly, the abolition of corporal punishment is relatively new in the South African education system and educators have to find new, effective ways to address disciplinary problems.

7.3 Preferred support systems

When the beginner educators were asked to indicate their preferred methods of assistance, the responses marked as "Definite" were as follows (in rank order from most to least preferred):

Table 11: Frequencies and percentages of neophyte educators' preferences for methods of assistance

Method of assistance	Frequency	Percentage
Written guidelines and policies given to new educators	354	66.3
Supportive school environment	341	63.9
Having a motivated mentor	336	62.9
An orientation course during the first semester	321	60.1
Occasional meetings during the year	294	55.1
One-year induction programme	206	38.6
Six-month induction programme	190	35.6

Table 11 shows that written guidelines and policies for new educators, a supportive school environment and the availability of a motivated mentor were the three most preferred methods of assistance for the neophyte educators in the sample. The felt need for written guidelines, mentors and a year-long induction programme confirms previous findings.[19] This indicates that the specific problems and contexts may have changed but the preference for support systems has remained similar. Neophyte educators still experience concrete support as reassuring.

7.4 Mentor selection

The availability of a mentor has been identified as an important way of supporting the neophyte educator. The following table illustrates the preferences of the educators in the sample with regard to mentor selection.

19 Cf Bolam *et al* 1995, Brock & Grady 1997, Heaney 2001, Heyns 2000, Mohr & Townsend 2001, School Management Teams 2000.

Table 12: Frequencies and percentages of neophyte educators' preferences for methods of mentor selection

Method of mentor selection	Frequency	Percentage
Matching learning area of educator and mentor	341	63.9
Matching grade level of educator and mentor	279	52.2
Considering personal attributes of mentor	228	42.7
Arbitrary (random) selection	82	15.4

Table 12 shows that neophyte educators preferred matching their subject or learning area with that of the mentor. They also indicated that their grade level could be matched to that of the mentor. In contrast, random selection of educator and mentor was not a popular choice, which confirm some previous findings (Hertzog 2002, Quin 1994, Whitaker 2001). This may be understood in the light of the fact that mentors need to give professional support and advice which are subject related. It is noteworthy that South African beginners differed significantly from beginners in other parts of the world in that they felt that the personal attributes of mentors should also be taken into consideration. This is illustrated in Table 13.

Table 13: Cross-tabulation of location and consideration of the personal attributes of a mentor

Geographical location	Consideration of personal attributes of a mentor			Total
	Definitely not	Somewhat	Definitely	
South Africa	114 (22.1%)	160 (30.9%)	196 (37.9%)	470 (90.9%)
Other parts of Africa	9 (1.7%)	5 (1%)	25 (4.8%)	39 (7.5%)
Outside Africa	1 (0.2%)	4 (0.8%)	4 (0.6%)	8 (1.5%)
Total	124 (24%)	169 (32.7%)	224 (43.3%)	517 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 10.409$; $df = 4$ ($p < 0.05$)

Significantly more South African neophyte educators indicated that the personal attributes of a mentor should be considered in mentor selection (37.9% as opposed to 4.8% and 0.6%). As indicated, the research

evidence suggests that good mentors are mature, trustworthy, understanding, good listeners, experienced, good at handling interpersonal relations and able to challenge and encourage beginners (School Management Teams 2000: 38).

8. Conclusions and recommendations

A clear understanding of the problems experienced by neophyte educators is needed. The findings of this study show the need for ongoing research to highlight current problems of neophyte educators, since these problems change as education systems are transformed. For example, many of the most pressing problems faced by the neophyte educators in this sample (lack of resources, ways of assessing learners' work, keeping up with paperwork, and varying teaching methods) were related to the (relatively new) OBE approach of the South African education system. A new disciplinary policy also causes uncertainty with regard to maintaining classroom discipline. In addition, the current policy of inclusive education requires neophyte educators to deal with learners of varying abilities in one classroom. Although these problems are certainly shared with many experienced educators, they may be assumed to be more daunting for the neophyte educator since they are additional to the normal challenges that newcomers face. Induction programmes with a focus on these issues are needed.

Induction programmes also need to include provision for time management. Female educators are particularly vulnerable in this regard. For assistance with many of the issues, second- and third-year educators could be included — for example, when addressing disciplinary problems, the handling of angry parents and the implementation of new education policies. South African beginners also require support with the pacing of learning opportunities within an OBE approach.

However, induction programmes need to be based on research which is context bound. For example, considering the language that the students speak as an indication, most educators in this sample came from relatively disadvantaged communities, lacking learning resources. Presumably neophyte educators who are teaching in more affluent communities may not lack resources for learning but may have other, more pressing problems.

Apart from induction programmes, neophyte educators need regular meetings with management, written guidelines and policies, a supportive school environment and guidance from motivated mentors. Exactly what a supportive school environment entails should be defined and become part of a school's ethos. Mentors need to be matched to educators in terms of learning area to enable them to provide the required assistance. This research has also revealed that the personal attributes of mentors can be significant to beginners. This implies a need for a flexible system in which mismatches can be changed.

The South African education system needs to attract new educators. It also needs to support neophyte educators to teach to the best of their abilities. These beginners need to be retained, so that they can keep on doing what they do best. This may be done by means of a revival of induction programmes and mentoring in schools. Ultimately the quality of education can be significantly enhanced.

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H Alt (Beplanningseenheid, UV), P Barron (Health Systems Trust, Cape Town), C J Bender (Dept Kurrikulumstudies, UP), A Bergh (Faculty of Health Sciences, UP), S J Berkhout (Dept of Education Policy Studies, US), C L Bester (Dept Bedryfsielkunde, UV), A Bezuidenhout (Sociology of Work Unit, UWits), E M Bitzer (Dept Kurrikulumstudie, US), A B Boshoff (George), L Botes (Sentrum vir Ontwikkelingsteun, UV), E Botha (Klein-Brakrivier), W J Breytenbach (Dept Politieke Wetenskap, US), S I Brokensha (Dept of English and Classical Culture, UFS), A E Carl (Dept Didaktiek, US), W Carstens (Skool vir Tale, NWU), R D Chapman (Dept of Health, Free State), D Coetzee (Fakulteit Opvoedkunde, UV), J K Coetzee (Dept of Sociology, RU), M J Crous (Dekaan: Ekonomiese en Bestuurswetenskappe, UV), D Daniels (Dept Opvoedkundige Sielkunde, US), P S Daniels (Human Ecology and Dietetics, UWC), P Daniels (Community Higher Education Services Partnership, UWC), S de Gruchy (School of Theology, UKZN), J de Klerk (Dept Opvoedingsbeleidstudies, US), W S de Villiers (Dept Bedryfsielkunde, US), J de Wet (Dept Kommunikasie en Inligtingstudie, UV), M W de Witt (Dept Primêre Skool, Unisa), J M Dreyer (Fakulteit Opvoedkunde, Unisa), K du Pisani (School for Social and Government Studies, NWU, Potchefstroom Campus), P J du Preez (Dept Plantkunde & Genetika, UV), M du Toit (Dept Psigologie, NWU), P Duvenage (Dept Filosofie, NMMU), M Edginton (School of Public Health, UWits), K Esterhuyse (Dept Sielkunde, UV), F C v N Fourie (Rector, UFS), H Friedrich-Nel (Brandhof), L Gilbert (Medical Sociology, UWits), L Gilson (NHLS), J Graaff (Dept of Sociology, UCT), S Green (Dept of Social Work, US), W Greyling (Dept Engels, UV), T Guse (Dept Sielkunde, UJ), M C Gutierrez (Institut Pasteur, Centre National de Référence des Mycobactéries, Paris, France), J Haasbroek (Dept Geskiedenis, Nasionale Museum, Bloemfontein), T Hart (HSRC, Pretoria), H Hay (Dean: Academic Development, CUT), C Herman (Dept of Educational Management and Policy Studies, UP), W L Holderness (Faculty of Education, NMMU), M Hough (Institute for Strategic Studies, UP), S Human-Vogel (Faculty of Education, UP), L Johnson (Commerce, UCT), R Kaschula (Dept of African Languages, UCT), M Kawonga (School of Public Health, UWits), J Kim (School of Public Health, UWits), H-J Knobloch (Dept of German, UJ), J Kriel

(Dept Antropologie en Ontwikkelingstudie, UP), A Kritzinger (Dept Sosiologie & Sosiale Antropologie, US), L O K Lategan (Dekaan: Navorsing, SUT), U Lehmann (School of Public Health, UWC), E Lemmer (School of Education, UNISA), F Louckx (Dept of Medical Sociology, Free University of Brussels, Belgium), W Lüdemann (Dept Musiek, US), C Maasdorp (Dept Inligting, US), E O Mashile (School of Education, Unisa), P Mayers (School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, UCT), C Meier (Dept Onderwysersopleiding, Unisa), R Mesthrie (Dept of Linguistics, UCT), N Morgan (Dept Afrikaans en Nederlands, Duits en Frans, UV), D Mulder (Dept Kommunikasie & Inligtingstudie, UV), C P H Myburgh (Fakulteit Opvoedkunde, UJ), A Naudé (Direkteur: Navorsingsfokusarea Volhoubare Sosiale Ontwikkeling, NWU, Potchefstroomkampus), E Nel (Dept of Geography, RU), H Nel (Dept Maatskaplike Werk, UJ) C Ngwena (Dept of Constitutional Law and Philosophy of Law, UFS), J A Ogude (Dept of African Literature, UWits), M A J Olivier (Dept of Postgraduate Studies, NMMU), M M Oswald (Dept Opvoedkundige Sielkunde, US), A Padarath (Health Systems Trust, Durban), L Penn-Kekana (Centre for Health Policy, UWits), P Pronyk (School of Public Health, UWits), D R Prozesky (Director: Centre for Health Science Education, UWits), S Reid (Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, UKZN), R Reyneke (Dept Maatskaplike Werk, UV), G Roodt (Dept Menslike Hulpbronbestuur, UJ), M Rossouw (Dept Filosofie, UV), G Samiselo (Harrismith), L A Sandham (School of Environment Sciences and Development, NWU, Potchefstroom Campus), P J Schutte (Skool vir Kommunikasiestudies, NWU, Potchefstroomkampus), M Seiler (Modderfontein), C Serenata (CDC South Africa), F van Z Slabbert (Johannesburg), A R Smith-Tolken (Diensleer & Gemeenskapsinteraksie, US), M L Snail (Dept of History, Unisa), J Snyman (Dept Filosofie, UJ), L Somfai (University of Budapest, Hungary), K Stacey (Dept of Communicaton and Theatre Arts, Eastern Michigan University), G M Steyn (Skool vir Opvoedkunde, Unisa), D F M Strauss (Kantoor van die Dekaan, UV), M Trumpelman (Dept of Education Studies, UJ), J van den Heever (SA Reserve Bank, Pretoria), J C van der Merwe (Dept Filosofie, UV), W J C van der Merwe (Dept Ondernemingsbestuur, UV), C S van der Waal (Dept Sosiologie en Sosiale Antropologie, US), R van Eeden (Dept of Psychology, Unisa), A A Van Niekerk (Dept Filosofie, US), L J van Niekerk (Secondary School Teacher Edu-