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The induction process of novice teachers in primary schools: Experiences of school management teams

Abstract

The need for induction is to prepare newly appointed teachers for the classroom and to adapt to the school's environment and culture. Schools approach teacher induction differently. The argument of this study is that support systems should be in place to improve the calibre of work produced by novice teachers if they are to carry out their responsibilities as best they can. This qualitative study explored how quintile one to three primary Schools' Management Teams members experience the implementation of the induction process of novice teachers. This study employed the TPI-Theory of induction. Nine SMT members from three quintiles one to three primary schools were purposively selected. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed employing thematic analysis technique. The findings reveal that the induction for novice teachers was not effectively implemented by SMTs due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of how induction for novice teachers should be implemented. Furthermore, challenges such as inadequate time for induction activities, work overload, interruptions due to other administrative activities, unscheduled workshops, and meetings, and attending to disciplinary matters concerning learners and staff, contribute towards poor implementation of the induction process of novice teachers. The study recommended that well-coordinated induction programmes for novice teachers should be filtered down to school the level where is needed. Furthermore, District officials should monitor the induction process of novice teachers.

Keywords: Attrition, induction, novice teachers, professional development, teacher training,

1. Introduction

Effective induction programmes can help new teachers become self-directed educators (Kadel, 2023). To perform effectively, novice teachers in primary schools require structured induction. However, Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2018), assert that scholars have not yet been able to provide a convincing identification of the features of effective induction programmes. Various South African studies conducted distinctively on the challenges of Departmental Heads revealed little or no induction for newly appointed DHs (Mthethwa, 2016). This might have an impact on how the Departmental Heads are practising induction for novice



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teachers in their schools. Studies reveal that most novice teachers quit within the first five years of entry into the profession (Ingersoll, 2012) due to burdensome workloads, lack of support from leadership, absence of learning opportunities, poor working conditions, lack of job-satisfaction, inadequate provision of learning materials, and learner-indiscipline. Rees (2016) adds that the difficulties experienced by novice teachers in schools include a lack of guidance on lesson preparation, managing unruly learners, applying various methods of teaching, as well as parental apathy in their children's school activities.

The transition from university to the professional life of a novice teacher is difficult, hence the need for them to be inducted in all areas of teaching-learning such as lesson-planning, methods of teaching, and understanding of their personal, social, and professional needs. After graduation, many of the new recruits are not accustomed to the realities of the arduous demands of the teaching profession; for example, the behaviour of learners in schools changed in the 20th century, which has a negative impact on teaching-learning processes, hence the alarming attrition rate. Casperson and Raaen (2014) discovered that teachers talk of a 'reality shock' in their first few years of teaching - this is due to the inability to cope with the demands of what is expected of a novice teacher (Harmsen, *et al.*, 2018).

Seemingly novice teachers leave the teaching profession within few years after employment. According to Bower and Carroll (2017), one per cent (1%) of novice teachers are stressed and need clinical support. With the right structures of support and professional development in place, induction programmes may increase the confidence of the early career teacher. Beltman, Mansfield, and Price (2011) and Moore (2016) suggest different ways of assisting novice teachers in developing the knowledge and skills needed in the teaching profession to reduce attrition. One such strategy is the induction process; hence, this study aimed to contribute to the knowledge regarding the understanding of how SMTs experience the induction of novice teachers.

2. Research questions that guide the study

The following research question and sub-questions informed the structure of the research investigation:

- What are the experiences of the school management team in the induction process of novice teachers?
- Sub-questions
- What are the challenges experienced by the SMTs during the induction process of novice teachers in primary schools?
- What strategies do SMTs suggest overcoming challenges in the induction process for novice teachers?

3. Literature review

According to Shanks, Tonna, Krojgaard, Paaske, Robson, and Bjerkholt (2022), numerous research has confirmed the need of providing induction to novice teachers throughout the first few years of teaching. The importance of teacher induction is widely acknowledged by the major players in South Africa, and the government has made it a clear policy goal to start the process (Mahome & Mphahlele, 2023). Teacher induction programmes help novice teachers to be more confident, qualified, abled, and up-to-date teachers in their profession (Kadel, 2023). Novice teachers enter the school setting with many expectations, some realistic,

and some unrealistic. Feelings of isolation, a perceived inconsistency between imagined expectations and classroom reality, as well as lack of support and guidance were identified as key concerns (Kim & Cho, 2014). A study by Mamba (2020) revealed that novice teachers undergo little or no induction where they are employed. Kadenge (2021) sadly noted that South African education districts have been found to fall short in terms of balancing novice teacher induction. The shortcomings also reflect what is taking place at school level regarding the induction of novice teachers. Furthermore, some novice educators are allocated subjects for which they are not specialist, and poor induction or lack thereof makes the situation worse.

Miles and Knipe (2018) reveal in their studies that the transition from student to novice teacher can be problematic. However, Pillay (2016) contends that the type and quality of support they receive will determine how long they continue in the profession. This situation leads to an unstable and unproductive environment for the teaching and learning process at schools. Newly appointed or novice teachers sometimes work in troublesome and unmanageable classroom environments and are not able to cope with the arduous demands of the teaching profession. Classroom management is one of the biggest issues that novice teachers face suggesting that training needs to be provided in this regard. Novice teachers are learning from their experiences, including the challenges in their teaching journey, and trying to use their problem-solving abilities, which are based on either their own strategies developed over time, or their repertoire acquired during school practicum, to find solutions for their difficult times (Çakmak, *et al.*, 2018). Pillay (2016) suggests that novice teachers' inexperience makes identifying students' needs a difficult process.

Training and support of novice teachers in the early years of their careers may reduce the attrition of the teachers from the profession (Henry, *et al.*, 2011). Induction is not peculiar to novice teachers only - in all professions, newly appointed employees are inducted and trained to do the work effectively. Peterson (2017) indicates that in South Africa, novice teachers experience challenges in performing their duties due to a lack of experience, which is sometimes exacerbated by the absence of a school policy on induction. According to job descriptions of post-level one teachers in the Personnel Administrative Measures [PAM] (DoE, 2016) document, novice teachers are also required to engage in administrative duties, teaching, extra and co-curricular duties, as well as interaction and communication with all stakeholders. The PAM document (DoE, 2016) further states that teachers' participation in professional development activities must improve teaching, learning, and management skills in education outside the classroom. All the above responsibilities make novice teachers overwhelmed and frustrated when they must juggle all these activities without support from experienced staff members. This results in fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, and a feeling of inadequacy – often referred to as reality shock (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). In sum, the literature provides a general picture of the challenges novice teachers in various countries face during their first years of teaching.

In Saudi Arabia, novice teachers learn by trial and error, and this has a negative impact on teachers' and learners' performance. These teachers graduated without proper training which was evident when they became frustrated when managing learners when presenting their lessons in the classroom. Giraldo (2014) found that professional development programmes are ineffective unless we consider the novice teacher's philosophies, needs, experiences and challenges. Pillay (2016) advises that professional development programmes should fulfil the novice teacher's personal needs to develop a sense of satisfaction to improve a positive work ethic. The next section will discuss the conceptual framework that underpinned the study.

4. Research gap

According to Kothari (2014), a research gap is a problem or research question that has not been answered adequately. The literature review indicates that different countries including South Africa are ensuring that induction of novice teachers is given a priority. However, most studies concentrated on the impact of induction novice teachers as well as the challenges associated with implementing induction programmes in schools. What is lacking in the research are the experiences of SMT members in implementing the induction process on novice teachers. Furthermore, most of the research is not backed by pertinent theories, therefore it is difficult to understand how SMTs experience the induction of novice teachers.

5. Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by the TPI-Theory of induction. This theory aims to clarify how an organisation organises its socialising process, often known as induction or onboarding (Maruhi, 2018). This describes how employees pick up the behaviours, information, and abilities necessary to contribute to the organisation effectively. According to the TPI theory, for the new employees to execute their duties well, they must acquire both theoretical (T) and practical (P) abilities. For new employees to fit in, they must also meet their demands for interaction (I), which is crucial (Adam, 2010). According to Bauer and Erdogan (2011), if this idea realised, it supports the induction procedure used to integrate novice employees into the organisation. According to this theory, once properly inducted, employees will strive for excellence and accomplish the organisation's goals (Maruhi, 2018). In the context of this study, SMTs shared their experiences on how they practised induction on the novice teachers in their schools.

The dependent variables in this study include theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, and novice teachers' integration at work, while the independent variable is effective induction. The conceptual framework model of the research is shown in Figure 1 below.

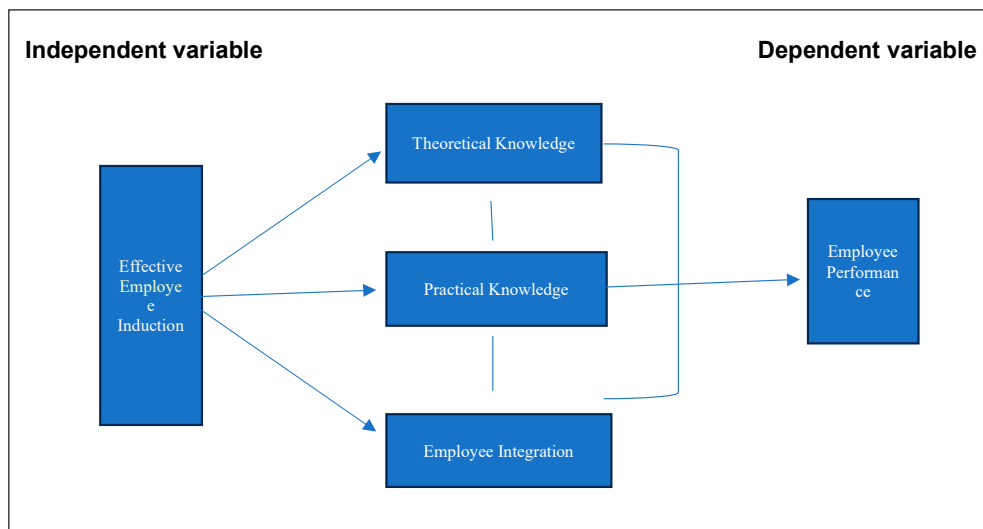


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework model adapted from Mchete, 2019.

6. Methodology

A qualitative research approach was employed to attain firsthand in the research setting to achieve the objectives of the study (Neuman, 2011) and to interpret and understand the participants' experiences with the induction process of novice teachers in primary schools (Babbie & Mouton, 2015). According to Fouche, Strydom, and Roestenburg (2021), the use of a qualitative research approach also aids in obtaining a detailed description of the phenomenon as reported by the participants. The interaction between the researcher and the participants provided a clear understanding of how the induction process for novice teachers is implemented. An interpretive paradigm was employed in the study. The interpretive paradigm assumes that human knowledge is the result of the actor's social interactions and attempts to understand the significance of an event by situating it within a particular social context (Cohen, *et al.*, 2018). This study employed a case study research design as it was deemed appropriate to obtain an in-depth and multi-faceted understanding of SMTs' real-life experiences (Crowe *et al.*, 2011). Purposive sampling was used to select the nine participants from the three primary schools in quintiles one to three in the Johannesburg Central District of Gauteng Province.

6.1 Ethical consideration

The researchers considered participants' rights throughout the process of the study. Researchers obtain approval to conduct research from the Gauteng Department of Education. Consent was obtained from the principals of the participating schools and SMT members. Before data were collected, the aims and purpose of the study were clearly explained to the participants. The researchers informed the participants that participation in the study was voluntary and that the study was for research purposes only.

6.2 Data collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with nine participants from three primary schools in the Johannesburg Central District in Gauteng Province. Employing semi-structured interviews in this study allowed the researchers to explore the experiences of SMT members about the induction process for novice teachers. The interview sessions were conducted, and participants' responses were audio recorded. The audio-recorded responses were later transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. The findings' credibility was enhanced through member checking (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). To achieve this, the researchers returned the transcribed data to the participants to ensure accuracy and resonance with their experiences as this exercise allowed the participants to interact with and contribute to the interview and the interpreted data.

6.3 Sampling

Three quintiles one to three primary schools (one school per quintile) in the Johannesburg Central District of Gauteng Province were purposively sampled to explore the experiences of SMT members on the induction of novice teachers. Niewenhuis (2014) describes purposive sampling as selecting participants because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study. Purposive sampling allowed for the selection of nine SMT members from three primary schools in quintiles one to three who provide rich data. The schools were purposively selected based on the number of novice teachers employed. The selection of the SMT members was based on their experience of more than ten years as SMT members. These criteria played a role in obtaining rich data. According to Bertram

(2023), there are studies that show that novice teachers feel unprepared for their first years of teaching and the consequent reality shock of being in schools. Therefore, the study targeted primary schools with novice teachers who have been appointed between one month and three years.

6.4 Data analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2014) describe thematic analysis as a process of identifying and/or interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within a data set. To understand and interpret participants' responses better, their words and actions were interpreted in the form of codes that emerged from the data, while keeping the study's research question in mind. Therefore, thematic analysis was deemed appropriate because it assisted in analysing and understanding the SMTs' experiences with novice teachers' induction. The data were arranged according to relevant themes pertaining to SMT experiences concerning the induction of novice teachers in primary schools. We merged the codes to form categories, and then the categories were formed into themes. We kept detailed notes about the development of concepts, categories and themes, such that each theme was aligned with the research questions. The second and third researchers transcribed the transcripts and undertook the coding and categorising the findings, which are presented in themes. The research question and the conceptual framework also guided the researchers in systematically analysing data to sort it according to themes. Direct quotations from the participants will be presented as part of the analysis.

7. Findings

To understand the experiences of SMT members on the induction process of novice teachers, the findings are presented in three themes that emerged from the data and are informed by the theoretical framework. These themes are informed by the SMT members' own induction experiences, managing the induction process, and challenges SMT members face in the induction process.

7.1 SMT members' own induction experiences

When principals were asked if they were inducted before taking up their positions, all indicated that they attended the induction process conducted months after they assumed the principal position. Hence, SMT members felt that they also needed to be inducted on how to conduct induction processes. Also, SMT members indicated that it would have been more beneficial if they were inducted before assuming their SMT position and duties. Moreover, they articulated that induction should be a continuous development process because of the frequent changes in education. The following excerpts indicate the views of the principals:

PP1: *I went for the induction process, albeit after I had taken this position. I think I went through the process six months after my appointment. I believe it should have been much better if I had received this kind of training prior to me assuming the position.*

PP2: *I was inducted by the Department of Education for four days, and that was after assuming with my duties as a principal. I believe that if it was a planned induction, it should have occurred before I started as a principal.*

PP3: *I wouldn't regard it as induction, to me it was like a workshop because it was done four months after I started my job as a principal, and I was only inducted for four days.*

The deputy principals and the HoDs, when asked if they were inducted, all had mixed reactions to the question. All deputy principals and departmental heads indicated that they neither received formal induction from their principals nor the DoE. When asked if they were inducted when first taking up their position, one deputy principal and one HoD responded:

DPP1: *Yes, but not clearly an induction process because I was introduced to the staff and then given an office, after that, I had to find my way.*

DHP2: *Yes, but not clearly induction as such because. I had to observe the experienced teachers in the school and other HoDs on how they do things; there was no mentoring and coaching.*

From the above responses, it was confirmed that there was no structured induction for SMT members. This finding implies that SMT members are not inducted when taking up their positions; hence they are not confident in what they are doing, especially regarding inducting novice teachers. Lebea, Kemi, Adu and Edu (2016) confirm that SMT members are often not trained to induct novice teachers, which was supported by Kaniaru and Koech (2018), who reiterated the lack of capacity in SMT members to carry out their duties and recommended that they should be properly trained on induction processes.

This study found that the SMT members experience challenges in effectively implementing the induction process due to the lack of skills and training. This implies that SMT members must be trained to induct novice teachers. Since this is a limiting factor in developing beginner teachers, Daly, and Milton (2017) suggest that adequate time and professional learning workshops enable SMTs to become capacitated to induct novice teachers.

7.2 Managing the induction process

The study's findings reveal that there was no specific procedure for carrying out induction programmes. In exploring the induction process by SMT members, we gathered what their roles and responsibilities entail in the induction process. All the SMT members that were interviewed showed no indication of collaboration amongst them concerning induction processes. All principals stated that it is the responsibility of the immediate supervisor (HoD) to induct the novice teacher. Principals indicated their responsibility was to induct newly appointed deputy principals, while deputy principals should induct newly appointed HoDs. However, according to the PAM document (DoE, 2009), it is the role and responsibility of the principal, the deputy principal and the HODs to support newly appointed or inexperienced teachers. As such, SMTs should make it their responsibility to induct novice teachers. This finding revealed the consistency in literature, which indicated that there is confusion in the roles and responsibilities amongst SMTs (DBE, 2011). Support of inexperienced educators should be a collective responsibility of all SMT members in a school and induction processes should be planned and not implemented in an ad hoc manner.

The responses below bear testimony to SMTs' understanding of the policy on induction:

PP1: *... basically in terms of day-to-day management, we look at policies that are there, policies that govern educators; for example. The Educators Employment Act 76 of 1998 as amended, the SACE Code of Conduct that stipulates what are the dos and don'ts for the educators, and we introduce them to the organogram of the school*

DPP1: *... in this school the SMT manages the induction process by making it the responsibility of the immediate senior to induct the novice teacher; for example, if the novice teacher is in the Foundation Phase, it is the responsibility of the Foundation Phase Departmental Head to induct the teacher.*

HODP1: *In this school, when we have a new teacher, that teacher is given to the HOD. It is the responsibility of the HOD to assist the newly appointed teacher to find his/her way into how the school operates.*

HODP2: *I have never seen the SMT members inducting newly appointed teachers in this school. What happens is that when new teacher arrives, the principal or any delegated SMT member introduces the teacher to the staff.*

The above responses reveal the obscurity and ambiguity of the roles and responsibilities of SMT members. This situation reveals that there is no effective implementation of induction by SMT members and as a result, novice teachers experience social, emotional and professional anxiety. Mamba (2020) indicates that this lack of support experienced by novice teachers can result in relationship challenges.

7.3 Challenges faced by SMT members in the induction process

All participants agreed that they encounter difficulties implementing the induction process for novice teachers. Challenges emerged from planning, organising, leadership, and controlling the induction process. These were derived from the four basic management principles. The responses below articulate SMTs' challenges:

PP1: *No formal training. Basically, you get a new staff member - maybe it's the beginning of the year, but you sometimes get a new staff member during the year.*

DPP1: *The confusion on the planning of induction for novice teachers was evident from my experience. I would say as SMT members we lack skills and competence of drawing up the school's induction policy properly. The reason might be because we do not have guideline or policy from the Department of Education which leads to us not doing induction properly.*

DPP2: *The big challenge I can say I experienced is limited time for supporting novice teachers. I also think we lack skills and competence of doing the induction properly. The reason might be because we do not have guidelines or policy from the department of education then this leads to us not doing induction properly. Our workload is too much, we hardly get time to sit and plan for induction as SMT members collectively. Then this results in no planning or poor planning of induction.*

DPP1: *We do not have a formal organisational structure for induction. This is how induction is done in this school: the immediate supervisor is the one to take an active role in inducting the newly appointed staff member.*

PP1: *Organising is not cohesion as it should be, because the principal will indicate or introduce the novice teacher. No cohesive structure that deals with the induction process is framed.*

From the above evidence, it can be deduced that SMT members are not trained or supported and do not have a policy or guidelines to follow concerning the induction process of novice teachers. One of the challenges of induction reported by Leboea, Kemi, Adu and Emmanuel (2016) is that SMTs are often not trained to do induction and recommend that they should be reskilled. Mestry (2017) affirms that this is because they are not trained in instructional leadership and few in-service training programmes are available for SMTs. A lack of training and guidelines to be followed in the induction process results in SMT members using their own discretion when inducting novice teachers.

Although the results of this study were formulated using a few of the Johannesburg Central District primary schools, it is generally accepted that the lack of training for SMT members leads to the challenges they experience in conducting induction. In some countries such as Germany, Austria, Sweden, Estonia, Romania, and Croatia SMTs have policies that assist them in effectively implementing novice teachers' induction process. In these countries, the induction policies are developed by the states, and it is mandatory that SMT members should be trained on how to induct novice teachers.

Although SMTs hold curriculum delivery meetings with novice teachers, there are no follow-up meetings to get feedback if the strategies discussed are working. The participants interviewed indicated that they do understand that novice teachers should be inducted; hence they have curriculum meetings where they share best practices to circumvent challenges. However, there is an absence of induction management plans, and time constraints therefore prevent induction meetings.

8. Discussion

Research has shown that induction improves both employee and organisational performance (Mchete, 2019; Kabenei, 2014; Nghaamwa, 2017; & Ogallo, 2018). Many findings emerged from the data collected from SMT members in the Johannesburg Central District primary schools and each finding will be discussed below. It was uncovered that SMT members are overwhelmed with unrealistic workload demands; as a result, they do not have enough time to induct novice teachers. The data collected from the participants confirmed that there were challenges faced during the implementation of the induction process.

The following challenges were identified: inadequate time for induction activities; work overload; interruptions due to other administrative activities; unscheduled workshops and meetings and managing disciplinary matters concerning learners and staff. Moreover, the lack of induction policies or guidelines from the school or the DoE stifled the smooth implementation of the induction process as each SMT member was adopting an *ad hoc* approach induction programme.

The inconsistency in applying induction principles and procedures to assist and support beginner teachers led to induction being ineffective. The TPI-Theory of induction advocates for employees to attain both theoretical (T) and practical (P) to meet the demands for interaction (I) to execute their duties effectively. These findings indicate that novice teachers did not receive adequate induction to integrate well into their jobs. This might suggest that novice teachers were left to their devices to sink or swim. This is in line with the findings by Talley (2017) that induction is seldom organised for novice teachers.

Unsurprisingly, SMT members felt that they also needed to be inducted on how to conduct induction processes.

The findings indicate that lack of proper planning for activities like induction for novice teachers make novice teachers resort to trial and error. This mode of learning is a fertile ground that leads to more mistakes from the novice teachers due to lack of support. Furthermore, it appears that multiple activities that SMTs are faced with make it a challenge for them to dedicate time and space for induction. In addition, SMT members themselves require workshops and training on how to conduct effective induction. This is supported by Ntsoane (2017) who

posits that SMT's not having the requisite skills to induct novice teachers. The Department of Education advocates for induction of novice teachers, however, induction programmes lack adequate direction and it is poorly presented at school level where it is mostly needed. This study brought to light that if SMT members were inducted before assuming their duties, they would have been better prepared to induct novice teachers. The study recommends that well-coordinated induction programmes for novice teachers should be filtered down to school level in a continuous basis.

9. Conclusion

The study exposed that SMT members do not effectively manage and control the induction process and that most of them are diffident about how it should be implemented. This is exacerbated by SMT members not working as a team when implementing the induction process; instead, they sidestep it by transferring this duty onto the immediate supervisor (or an experienced teacher); hence SMT members displayed a sense of 'insubordination' by not exercising their roles and responsibilities as advised by the DoE. It is envisaged that this current study will be a revelation for SMTs and the DoE officials to eliminate all challenges that affect the smooth implementation of induction processes concerning beginner teachers so that the school develops holistically to uplift academic performance.

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