Novice Teachers: Where Are They Going and Why Don't They Stay?

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Monica quit. One year of teaching was more than enough for her. She had looked forward to teaching for years and did quite well in all of her education pre-service classes. But she couldn't take it anymore. The stress was the result of everyday frustrations associated with their first year of teaching. No one seemed to understand what she was going through; no one was there to help her survive that first year. (Mandel, 2006).

Unfortunately, Monica's story is one that plays out every year in our public school system. Recent research confirms that up to half of all new teachers leave within the first five years in the profession, with almost 30% leaving within the first three years (Kelly, 2004; Maciejewski, 2007; Ingersol & Smith, 2004; Smith & Ingersol, 2004). In addition, there are a large number of teachers who are approaching retirement age and will need to be replaced in our schools. Retaining quality professionals in the field of education is becoming critical to the success of schools, yet it is also becoming increasingly difficult.

In order to provide a quality education to students, school divisions must staff their schools with highly trained teachers. However, the problem is novice teachers are continuing to leave the field because of weak socialization structures established across school divisions. Socialization plays a key role in the effectiveness of teachers; yet, most of the work that teachers do is in professional isolation, away from the support of their colleagues in the field. Until recently, education was one of the few professions which offered little support to their new members. The trend in education, as it relates to the socialization of new teachers, has been a "sink or swim" mentality (Maciejewski, 2007; Smith &

Ingersol, 2004). In order to retain the teachers that are currently being hired, school divisions and building administrators need to attend to the socialization needs of these professionals.

This study researches the socialization of new teachers in public schools in order to address the problem of teacher attrition. We want to recognize the importance of socialization and identify successful methods of socialization used to retain quality teachers. In doing so, administrators will be better able to create induction programs that will address the needs of their teachers, thereby retaining them for their divisions.

Theoretical Foundation

Socialization practices are an imperative component to the retention of high quality teachers. If educators allow the sink or swim cycle to continue, then teachers that survived the first year will create the same type of environment for incoming teachers, which will allow for the attrition rates to continue rising. To stop this cycle attention must be paid to the current induction practices and programs and improvements must be made. For example, while approximately half of all new teachers are actively participating in some type of assimilation activities, many of these are not appropriately matched to the teachers needs (Mandel, 2006). According to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs theory the basic needs of a beginning teacher would first include security, affiliation and self-esteem before any higher order need such as self-fulfillment could be reached. With strong socialization practices that are well matched to the teacher, school and division needs would allow these basic needs to be meet and the teacher to move on to higher needs. However, in some cases socialization or induction programs have not

been established or have become surface-level district orientation sessions, random workshops or introductory level training sessions. The focus of these induction activities has also shifted leaving novice teachers with questions of "how do I set up my classroom, how do I cover the entire curriculum in a short amount of time, how do I grade my students fairly or how do I incorporate parental support" (Kelley, 2004; Mandel, 2006). Without practical and applicable support new teachers are burning out at a faster rate, are unable to cope with the daily stress and pressures and eventually end up leaving the classroom as Monica did at the end of her first year of teaching (Kelly, 2004).

In the Ravenswood City School District in Palo Alto, California, the administration was experiencing a teacher turnover rate of approximately 75% (Maciejewski, 2007). In efforts to turn this around, the school division built a partnership with the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The New Teacher Center helped the school division create a new teacher induction program that turned their 75% teacher turnover rate into an 87% teacher retention rate, after only three years of implementation (Maciejewski, 2007). In addition, since the induction program has been implemented the superintendent reports that the division is also seeing large gains in student achievement through a 100-point gain on state achievement tests (Maciejewski, 2007).

The school of education at the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB) has been working with six local school divisions to provide professional growth opportunities for all teachers, novice and veteran. These activities are included in an induction program for novice teachers and are tied to a master's degree program at UCB. They include intense training of experienced teachers for working with new teachers and the university faculty provides consulting, evaluation, instruction and collaboration services to the school division (Kelley, 2004). This relationship has been in existence since 1987, and according to the

longitudinal data analyses conducted, 94% of the novice teachers that participated in this induction program are remaining in the classroom after four years (Kelley, 2004).

Both of the aforementioned induction programs were created out of a relationship that was formed between the school division and a local expert organization. These programs were individualized to meet the needs of the teachers within the school division and were not simply the implementation of a one-size-fits-all model. In Smith and Ingersoll's (2004) study of induction and mentoring programs, it was found that while there is a relationship between beginning teachers receiving support and their retention rate, the strength of that relationship depends on the type of support and the number of supports received. Therefore, as seen in the California and Colorado school divisions, the components that comprise an induction program and the number of activities that are available to new teachers are crucial to a successful socialization experience.

Tailoring Induction Programs

Induction programs must be tailored to address the true needs of the teachers within an individual school division. Each program should include components that will address the individual needs of the new teachers and be a natural fit for each school building. Simply replicating a new teacher model without careful consideration as to the needs of the teachers and school division will not provide a solution to the attrition rate. An initial evaluation must be conducted to determine what is causing teachers to leave the profession or transfer out of a specific school division. Just as one program model or collection of induction activities will not work for all schools, all teachers are not leaving the classroom for the same reason. Some teachers leave due to life circumstances such as: relocation, military transfers, raising children, care for a sick or elderly family member, or for retirement. However, as mentioned the largest number of teachers leaving the field are the novice or career beginning teachers and their reasons for departing are much different.

Commonly named reasons are: lack of instructional support, lack of emotional support, feeling of being isolated from colleagues, unrealistic expectations of what classroom environment includes, inadequate and poorly timed professional development, no support or induction program, no formative observations and feedback, ineffective school climate and culture which leads to animosity among faculty members when trying to implement new ideas (Angelle, 2006; Curtner-Smith, Hastie, & Kinchin, 2008; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Maciejewski, 2007; Mandel, 2006). In addition, some consideration must be given to unique community causes that would force a teacher to leave one school division to teach in another. For example, the cost of living within the local community in comparison with the salary scale may reveal a discrepancy that is causing teachers to look towards another system that pays more. Novice teachers beginning their first teaching experience may also experience sticker shock with additional expenses such as student loan repayment, the cost of housing and transportation, and the expense of buying teaching materials.

Taking into consideration the plethora of explanations causing teachers to leave the classroom, induction program creators must consider as many elements as possible that are discussed in current research when constructing their program. When attention to detail is not given the mentoring process can actually be detrimental to all parties involved (Ehrich, Hansford & Tennent, 2004). Components that could lead to dysfunction are "…lack of time for mentoring, poor planning of the mentoring process, unsuccessful matching of mentors and mentees, and a lack of understanding of the mentoring process" (Ehrich, Hanford & Tennent, 2004). To combat these issues, many researchers have identified effective induction activities and components by studying programs that are being utilized by school divisions that have lowered their attrition rate or traditionally have a low rate. Using the National Center for Educational Statistics' (NCES) *Schools and Staffing Survey*

(SASS), Ingersoll and Smith (2004) identified induction practices and supports had a positive effect on the retention of teachers. They found that the strongest factors or elements that influenced teacher retention were: having a mentor from the same subject area, collaborative planning time with teachers on the same grade level and subject, having common and consistent planning with other teachers, and participating in networking activities with other beginning teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Angelle (2006) conducted a study of new teachers in four middle schools located in a southern state to determine the impact that a principal's monitoring had on retention rates. Angelle found that formal and informal class visits by the principal, reflective feedback, and the principal's promotion of best instructional strategies were the most effective elements that retained teachers. Other researchers have also concluded that effective components are: personalizing mentor programs to your location and subject area, intensive mentor training and support, release time for observing experienced teachers, common time to share and develop problem solving strategies with other new teachers, just-in-time professional development with a mentor to translate theory into practice, and mentee directed information sessions and discussion (Ganser, 2002; Kelley, 2004; Maciejewski, 2007; Mandel, 2006; and Robinson, 1998).

Finally, when considering the appropriate components to include within an induction program, Ingersoll and Smith (2004) found that is it not the use of one single element that increases attrition rates. It is the bundling of multiple activities and supports to include a mentor from the same subject area as well as collaboration and collective planning with expert teachers on the same grade level and content area. The larger the number of supports included in the induction program, the lower the predicted probability will be that the new teacher will leave the classroom at the end of the first year.

Climate and Culture

There is a significant correlation between the success of the induction program and the climate and culture of a school building. If the climate and the culture of a school building do not support the induction activities of mentoring, collaborating and growing professionally, then new teachers will not be successfully socialized into the school organization. While the climate refers to the morale or attitude of the organization, the culture refers to the expectations or unwritten rules that the organization establishes as their norm behaviors (Gruenert, 2008). For example, suppose a recent college graduate arrives at their first teaching assignment with a wealth of knowledge including best instructional strategies and ground breaking practices. This teacher is eager to implement these and other ideas that have been part of the pre-service training. Once in the classroom, however, this teacher discovers that he or she needs assistance in curriculum planning, time management, and ideas for how to manage the student's behavior. However, the teachers at this school have a sink or swim mentality and do not believe in helping new teachers. Many of them have even stated that they made it on their own, so the new teachers should do the same. Being a new teacher that has the basic needs of feeling accepted, secure and confident in what they are doing and affiliation with the faculty, this person might find it difficult to continue and might eventually succumb to the daily stress and pressure. If the organizational climate and culture is not accepting and supportive of induction practices, the new teachers could continue to leave the school and possibly the field of education. On the opposing side, if the new teacher does survive the first year socialization practices in this ineffective school, it does not mean that the teacher has been socialized into an effective teacher (Angelle, 2006). One of two things will happen, the teacher will continue the sink or swim mentality and ineffective practices will be passed on to future novice teachers, or an internal struggle will occur within the novice teacher which could lead to leaving the profession (Angelle, 2006). Therefore, the quality of the culture and climate within a school building can determine whether or not the socialization experiences are going to be positive or negative and the future success of a school as a whole.

In the early part 2008, Curtner-Smith, Hastie and Kinchin's (2008) released a study involving 10 beginning teachers that had been trained in physical education teacher education programs at research universities that incorporated instruction on the Sports Education model. This model of instruction utilizes a team approach in which students are assigned to and play on teams for what is determined to be an entire season. Through this approach, teams are taught in a manner which gives the students more responsibility for the learning of various roles and allows the teacher to become the facilitator. The purpose of this study was to determine which factors would support the new teachers in implementing this instructional model and which factors did not. It was determined that the type of organizational socialization that is utilized at the school level is one factor that affects the level at which the new teacher will implement the teaching model. For example, a custodial culture is one that is more conservative and less accepting of new teaching practices and change. Whereas, an innovative culture is one in which the new teacher would be encouraged to try the new teaching model and take risks. What Curtner-Smith, Hastie and Kinchin (2008) found was that the custodial or innovative culture was a determining factor that influenced whether the new teacher would implement the Sports Education model in its full version, watered down version or not at all. If the new teacher received high-quality training in the Sports Education model and took their first teaching experience in an innovative culture, then they were more likely to attempt to use the full version of the model (Curtner-Smith *et al.*, 2008).

Therefore, culture and climate not only will determine if induction programs will be successful, but they also influence the depth of which new teachers implement curriculum models and utilize

best instructional practices. If the culture does not support innovative ideas and practices, it will eventually become easier for the new teacher to assimilate to the accepted practices instead of conflicting with their colleagues (Curtner-Smith *et al.*, 2008).

Financial and Human Resources Cost

Planning, adapting and implementing a high quality induction program for socializing new teachers can be overwhelming for a division. However, it is more cost effective to take these additional steps to meet the needs of new teachers and decrease the teacher attrition rate. As a whole, educators have not been successful to this point at customizing induction programs and significantly reducing the attrition rate. Many existing teacher induction programs are under-funded and lacking resources; while states that are funding new programs are doing so at a reduced amount, and the programs being initiated have few of the necessary components to make the program successful (Maciejewski, 2007). Creating the right induction program with bundled supports and activities can be financially expensive, some argue that socialization practices that are structured correctly can pay for themselves after the first several years of implementation. The New Teacher Center conducted a five year cost-benefit analysis of an induction program for a medium-size school district in California. They found that while there were many costs in the beginning, after five years "…the $13,000 price tag of a two-year program yields about $21,500 in benefits to the student, state, district and society…generating an $8,500 return on investment per new teacher" (Maciejewski, 2007, p. 50).

One Texas school division tried to quantify the financial cost of their large teacher turnover. They found that hundreds of millions of dollars were being spent to replace teachers that had left the classroom (Ingersoll and Smith, 2004). This study contains many flaws; however, it does reveal that ignoring the attrition rates results in poor management of the public's education money.

School boards, superintendents and administrators have been entrusted by the public to spend their money appropriately for legitimate educational expenses. What must be considered at this point is whether it is more fiscally responsible to invest in supporting new teachers through quality induction programs, or continue to spend large amounts of money on recruiting and hiring new teachers each year.

To cut some of the fiscal costs of induction programs, some school divisions have begun to build their own support programs. For example, in Columbus, Mississippi, the Columbus Municipal School District has created their own program to include summer and monthly development workshops where novice and experienced teachers work with a trained instructional leader through observations and feedback (Maciejewski, 2007). The professional development coordinator, Melinda Lowe, reports that while they are seeing some improvements, their teacher retention rate has continued to remain high due to military transfers in their community (Maciejewski, 2007). Fairfax, Virginia has also created their own induction program while fighting the high cost of living that continues to drive teachers out of their school division. This district's program is entitled Great Beginnings and includes classroom based mentoring with observations and lesson modeling done by recently retired teachers and teachers that are on childcare leave (Maciejewski, 2007). Each of these school divisions has indicated that they use some grant money to pay for induction expenses, and has learned to cut those expenses by customizing their own programs to meet the needs of the new teachers within their school divisions. Therefore, while one-size-fits-all programs are becoming increasingly expensive and budgets are continually being cut, school boards and superintendents must begin considering the needs of their teachers and the best way to spend the money they have at hand to provide quality induction support and activities.

Ignoring the attrition rate is not only fiscally expensive; it is also taxing on the organization as a whole. Within an organization where employees work as closely as teachers do, high turnover rates begin to affect morale, development of relationships among and between co-workers, and the sense of community that is important to the success of a school begins to diminish (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). On the opposing side, quality induction programs increase teacher effectiveness and, therefore, the quality of instruction that students are receiving increases. Maciejewski's (2007) research cites that on average a further analysis of student test scores has shown that first and second year teachers that have participated in an induction program have been as effective as fourth year teachers who had not participated in any program. Therefore, the school division is getting the benefits of the work, efforts and knowledge of a fourth year teacher at the first or second year teacher salary.

Conclusion

A serious problem facing public schools today is the high attrition rate of new teachers entering the field. In order to address this problem, divisions need to be prepared to create quality induction programs that meet the true needs of those teachers. Because socialization efforts play such a vital role in the success of new teachers, induction programs need to be tailored to meet the needs of individual divisions, not implemented as "one size fits all." In addition, the climate and culture of the school building are crucial elements impacting the success of induction programs. Administrators need to be aware of the socialization needs of the teachers and work to create a positive climate and culture that will support the induction of new teachers. Without these important programs, public schools will certainly continue to encounter similar attrition problems, and school divisions cannot afford to spend the financial and human resources necessary to replace teachers that leave the field.

By utilizing program evaluation tools to determine strengths and weaknesses in relation to teachers needs, divisions can concentrate their efforts on what has been successful and make changes to address the real needs of the professionals entering the field. To continue decreasing teacher attrition, induction programs need to be applied not only to meet the social and emotional needs, but curriculum needs as well. Because socialization is such an important issue, many induction programs focus their attention on meeting those needs, at some level, and many forget that new teachers also struggle with the curriculum (Mandel, 2006). Since the early 1990's the focus of induction programs has been on providing novice teachers with emotional support and insuring that they are being socialized into the culture of the school. However, with the accountability and standards movements, the focus is now shifting to the novice teacher's learning and their instructional practices (Wang, Odell & Schwille, 2008). More attention is beginning to be paid to how the novice teacher learns how to teach and the impact that the instruction has on student achievement.

While this study points out the importance of socialization for new teachers and identifies successful induction supports and activities, more research needs to be conducted in several areas of teacher induction to enhance the understanding of what divisions can do to retain teachers. Most of the studies conducted focus on teachers that participate in an induction program such as mentoring. Little research has been done that compares teachers involved in a program to teachers who are not involved in induction programs. In order to determine the true effects of selected induction activities, it is important to initiate a quasi-experimental study of the participants in an induction program to those that are not. Also, there is little information about how these socialization methods affect student performances. In a few studies, students of new teachers perform better on standardized tests than the students of veteran teachers; however, research needs to be done to determine which variable affects this difference, and if it can be attributed to a particular component of an induction program, pre-service training,

climate and culture or some other characteristic. Finally, most case studies have focused on specific programs being utilized within certain school districts, which make it difficult to generalize findings to other settings.

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