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## **TOWARD AN AGENDA FOR HELPING THE BEGINNING TEACHER: PERCEPTIONS OF CONCERNS AND BEST HELP STRATEGIES**

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The first years of teaching are tough; and that is no secret. Hundreds of studies from the past few decades, to present day, investigating the topics of reality shock, beginning teacher stress and burnout, and beginning teacher socialisation all testify to the early life of new teachers being as Kevin Ryan (1986) described it “the most turbulent, difficult, perplexing, frustrating, and painful one in a young teacher’s life” (p. 3). The literature on beginning teachers abounds with identification of the difficulties of transition into teaching and the need for guidance and teacher induction support.

### **Research Review**

The transition from a student teacher to a teacher of students is a challenging and difficult journey that can take the novice through a whole odyssey of roller-coaster emotions, confusions, frustrations and a kind of reality shock. Veenman (1984) explained this phenomenon as “a collapse of the missionary ideals formed during training by the harsh and rude reality of everyday classroom life” (p.143). This reality shock seems to arise, in part, from a lack of preparation for many of the difficulties and demands of teaching and an inability to transfer skills and concepts mastered at pre-service into the classroom (Corcoran, 1981; Gaede, 1978; Gordan, 1991). Ryan et al. (1980) identified several other areas of difficulty for first-year teachers. These areas include personal life adjustment, teachers’ expectations and perceptions of teaching, the strains of daily interactions, and the teaching assignment itself. The researchers concluded that these difficulties lead to intense strain, fatigue, depression and subsequently, for many, exit from the profession. Meanwhile the administration and parents expect demonstrations of expertise comparable to those of a seasoned veteran (Howey and Bents, 1979). According to Brock and Grady (1995), “Teaching is one of the few careers in which the least experienced members face the greatest challenges and the most responsibilities” (p.11). Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has also become more demonstrably complex than it has ever been because of the challenges from the mega-trends in technology, economic globalisation and social-political life. Beginning teachers in this era of rapid change are required to wear many hats and take up expanded roles and responsibilities that may relate to teaching, curriculum changes, educational innovations, student learning experiences, professional development, working with parents and interacting with the community (Cheng, 2000).

Beginning teachers report feeling overwhelmed and isolated (Camp and Heath-Camp, 1991; Lieberman and Miller, 1994) and feeling inadequate as teachers (Ryan, 1986; Veenman, 1984).

Consequently, new teachers develop a survival mentality, and they learn they have to swim very quickly or sink (Bush, 1983). Research shows little professional growth occurs in the initial years of teaching (Howey and Bents, 1979; Langana, 1970; Shulman and Colbert, 1988; Zumwalt, 1984). Without support and guidance, beginning teachers have been found to adopt "coping survival strategies" which can actually prevent effective instruction from happening and unassisted beginners are also likely to develop negative teaching behaviours). Other beginning teachers become disillusioned and quit teaching after the first year (Gordon, 1991).

### **Purpose of the Study**

What does all these point to? It points to the fact that beginning teachers need to be given appropriate help and given it soonest. Encouragingly, this urgent need has been recognised internationally and the movement toward induction programmes for beginning teacher has grown dramatically since the 80s. In Singapore too, enrichment programmes for graduating trainee teachers have been organised, induction programmes have been implemented, mentors assigned, in-service workshops delivered, the Teachers' Network set up to complement the induction efforts of individual schools, and a variety of other strategies put in place. According to Schlechty (1985), the purpose of induction is to "develop in new members those skills, forms of knowledge, attitudes and values that are necessary to effectively carry out their occupational roles". However, the basis on which many of the induction activities were designed and implemented seemed to originate, not so much from beginning teachers themselves, but from policy makers and administrators. It could be argued that the beginning teacher's initial experience in the schools is far more complex than many of the induction activities would suggest. To better guide the beginning teachers' professional development and to ensure that there is a good match between the needs of these new teachers and the induction support they receive; one needs to understand more deeply their world and the complex system of values, attitudes and beliefs that guide them in coping with their first years in the profession.

The purpose of this study was then, to seek a deeper understanding of the concerns and problems beginning teachers have, to carefully study existing assistance and support strategies available to them, to hear the beginning teachers' voices on what best facilitates the solution to their concerns, and to determine whether induction activities are meeting their instructional and personal needs under current conditions.

### **Methodology**

The complexity of the issues under study required the use of a multi-phase, multi-methodology research design and so this research was conducted in 2 phases.

During the first phase of the study, perceptions regarding beginning teacher concerns and problems were investigated from an ipsative perspective through the use of Q-methodology. A total of 120 teachers participated in a Q-sort that produced four exemplificatory accounts of the concerns of beginning teachers. A sub-sample of 12 teachers who correlated highly on the factors identified were also involved in oral reflection interviews.

In the second phase of the study, a survey instrument, The Beginning Teacher Induction Questionnaire (BTIQ) was developed and used with 207 first-year beginning teachers to gather

data regarding: 1) the nature of help from schools, Teachers' Network and teacher training to cope with beginning teachers' concerns; 2) availability and value of different types of assistance; and 3) value of mentor and other support sources.

### **Results and Discussion of the Q-Methodology Phase of the Study**

The Q-methodology section of the study presented four significant accounts of responses on the concerns and problems of beginning teachers. The four factors were analysed, interpreted and labelled as:

Factor I - Doing the Professional Job Well: The Doer-Concerns - expresses the viewpoint that beginning teachers' primary concerns are about being good and effective teachers.

Factor II - Work and Role Overload: The Juggler Concerns - focuses on beginning teachers' struggles to cope with the overload of tasks and roles responsibilities associated with the job of teaching.

Factor III - Recognition and Support: The Seeker Concerns - is based upon the beginning teachers' perceptions of a lack of affirmation, recognition and support of their abilities.

Factor IV - Image, Autonomy and Valuation: The Performer Concerns – expresses the beginning teachers' discomfort with the school ethos, and the pressures placed on them to fulfil high performance requirements for themselves and their students.

#### **Account One: Doing the Professional Job Well – The Do-er concerns**

Beginning teachers are summarily concerned about doing the professional job well and being competent and effective teachers. This is translated into concerns with their classroom organisation and management skills; concerns about discipline and class control, about student motivation, and about the teaching skills and competencies that best serve to improve student academic performance. With competent management and instructional skills; accompanied by the ability and a sincere desire to facilitate effective student learning, beginning teachers feel that they should have no other major concerns arising. They are therefore not overly concerned about extrinsic rewards of the job. Administration, working conditions, and interpersonal related issues are also non-concerns with them. Beginning teachers, in this viewpoint believe in the value of what they do as teachers, and they find teaching to be a meaningful and worthwhile job.

#### **Account Two: Work and Role Overload – The Juggler Concerns**

Coping with role complexity and the numerous responsibilities associated with work of teaching is a major source of concern. The multiple tasks beginning teachers have to perform and the time pressures from working constantly under deadlines and conditions of overload and constant change, create a great deal of emotional, mental and physical stress. With such workload pressures, they can hardly find the time to be concerned about mastery of their teaching skills, or about best methods for effective instruction. Not knowing how things are done and how other teachers do them too does not help in their struggles to cope. Concerns with coping with role and

workload demands are exacerbated by apprehensions arising from feelings that parents, public, colleagues and superiors are constantly scrutinising and assessing what they do, and expecting so much from them. How well beginning teachers cope with the job demands and expectations is felt to directly affect perceptions of their performance and creates further anxiety about the teacher ranking process and about getting favourable evaluations of their teaching. Beginning teachers are very much concerned too about the encroachment of the job on their personal lives.

#### Account Three: Recognition and Support – The Seeker Concerns

Recognition, support, and affirmation of their teaching competency and efforts are the primary concerns. They worry that the lack of access to role models and the inadequacy of appropriate and adequate support and feedback from their superiors may constrain their professional development and their ability to do a good job. Work overload and multiplicity and complexity of tasks and role responsibilities are recognised as stresses on the job, but beginning teachers are nevertheless driven to give of their best efforts, but if their superiors do not share their expectations or affirm their efforts, they feel disappointed, frustrated, or even abandoned. They are concerned that they are not recognised in their teacher-authority role and respected as autonomous professionals, with the capability and authority to make decisions and judgements of practice. Concerns with student performance and concerns with instructional competencies are coloured by how these affect their own, and the leadership's perception of their adequacy and competency as teachers. Their concerns about adequacy of content knowledge for the subjects they teach, about motivating students to learn, and about their teaching skills also translates into concerns with student performance. They thus, have high expectation levels of accomplishment for their students, and themselves as teachers. They strive for goal attainment, and those goals are set by ideas of hard work, determination, and hope of recognition by leadership. However, they feel constrained by and are concerned about the lack of assurance, affirmation, recognition, and support of their abilities, competencies, accomplishments, and their growth in the profession.

#### Account Four: Image, Autonomy and Valuation – The Performer Concerns

Beginning teachers are rather uncomfortable with the apparent high level of stress created particularly by the corporate culture working conditions in the schools. Their concerns arise because conditions of work and the organizational ethos of the school place excessive pressures on the beginning teachers to fulfil high performance requirements. In the first place, beginning teachers find that they have to make great efforts to cope with the heavy demands of the job; and are concerned about how to best fulfil the many assigned tasks and responsibilities to an acceptable degree. The “machinery” of school with its many formal procedures, the work overloading with extensive expectations of work, the large number of routine operations, and having to deal with copious and often repetitive clerical, report-writing, record-keeping and administrative paperwork is seen as bothersome. Beginning teachers are concerned that in this organizational culture of performance, there is a low degree of regard for them as autonomous professionals. They are permitted minimal input into decisions that affect them and they feel powerless to effect change. They are concerned about the lack of regard for their opinions, and feel that they are not treated as professional equals. They feel devalued. Further, beginning teachers are perturbed that there seems to be a general image crisis; that teachers themselves and

the general public hold low value perceptions about the teaching profession. That teaching has taken the tone of a business enterprise with accountability solely by performance, is especially distressing to the beginning teacher. The combination of performance measures, written documents, and recording of accountability, is seen as the central focus of all types of education action in schools, and altogether disturbing to the beginning teacher. Beginning teachers are very much concerned about their instructional competencies for facilitating student learning. They are especially concerned about their ability to improve student academic performance and meet student performance targets. These concerns arise from a need to do the job up to the expected standards, within the result-oriented culture of the school. Beginning teachers are concerned that their work performance is deemed acceptable only if they teach well, as defined and laid down by result and performance expectations. They are concerned about exhibiting the observable behaviors that would facilitate the perceived desired performance outcomes of the school. Being 'policed' and closely monitored by their superiors is taken as part and parcel of beginning teacher life, but beginning teachers do not particularly appreciate the tone and the workings of the monitoring process. They are concerned about the lack of feedback from the Principal, VP, and the Head of Departments on their performance and feel very vulnerable to their evaluative comments. They are concerned especially about the teacher ranking process and about getting a favorable evaluation on their teaching. The school ethos places excessive pressures on the beginning teachers to fulfil high performance requirements, and beginning teachers, who are at the same time, struggling with competence, respect and identity, are concerned about how to meet such expectations adequately within the constraints of the bureaucratic conditions of work in the school.

Reflected within the four accounts are expressions of the commonly cited litany of perceived beginning teacher problems of classroom discipline, motivating unmotivated students, dealing with student differences, work overload, instructional concerns, so often cited in the literature. However the diversity of the accounts indicates that beginning teacher problems are not as simple as mere itemising of difficulties. The accounts have instead provided a rich mosaic that gave consideration to the context and characteristics that contribute to a better understanding of how people and the environment in which they operate affect beginning teacher's perceptions of their problems. Each account identified is clearly predicated upon beginning teachers' interaction of thought, beliefs, actions and feelings as they encounter the complex adaptation into their professional roles during the first year of teaching. The expressed concerns do suggest that an extensive, yet individualised and personalised induction support experience may be beneficial to the beginning teachers, and those of us delivering pre-service education might find it useful, therefore to consider the meanings of "survival" concerns in the preparation of teachers for the realities of school

### **The Beginning Teacher Induction Phase of the Study**

#### **Method**

The sample for this phase of the study was 207 beginning teachers who had completed at least one full year of school teaching experience, and at the point of administration of the Beginning Teacher Induction Questionnaire (BTIQ), were just going into their second year of teaching in a primary or a secondary school. Both qualitative and quantitative data were obtained from this

phase of the research. The quantitative data were coded and analyses performed on the data using (SPSS X).

Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the responses on the availability and frequency of different types of assistance and support offered to beginning teachers. Frequencies were ranked and the quantitative data were used to identify specific factors regarding similarities or differences in perceived support practices and their availability.

Beginning teachers were asked to rate the perceived value and usefulness of twenty-five different types of assistance strategies. The data were examined by obtaining means and standard deviations for the overall participant responses and according to participant gender, participant age, school level teaching, school type, and participant teacher training programme. Within each variable, the means for the perceived value of assistance strategies in the 25 areas were ranked from 1 to 25, from “most useful” to “least useful”.

The qualitative data from the open-ended questions were used to provide insights regarding perceptions of best help, the value of mentors, and the types and value of other support strategies that may have been made available to the beginning teachers. The response structure of the open-ended questions allowed the participants maximum freedom in revealing personal thoughts and opinions about various aspects of induction. The descriptive responses were inductively analysed. Participants’ responses were first carefully read and re-read to identify common themes and categories. When the final categories were identified, the responses were coded according to these categories. The number and percentages of participant responses in each category were calculated with percentages based on the total number of responses. When categories were identified for each of the questions, the researcher and another fellow educator each independently coded selections from the participants’ responses to the questions and then exchanged these to establish inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater reliability figures for the coded, open-ended questions were in the range of 82% to 94%.

## Findings on Schools and Teachers’ Network Support to Cope with Concerns

### Teachers’ Network Support

Beginning teachers in this study generally felt that there was much that the schools and Teacher’s Network could have done to alleviate some of their concerns and make the transition into their new roles easier. There was wide variation in beginning teachers “wished-fors” but despite the diversity there was a clear pattern that could be synthesised into the five categories of support.

#### ◆ Personnel Support

Beginning teachers in this study voiced loudly their need for well-structure mentoring schemes, schools that would facilitate activities that encourage collegial support, leadership that is more accepting, receptive and actively supportive. The call from the Beginning teachers in this study suggests the value of beginning teachers in different and important ways.

#### ◆ Workload Assignment Support

Beginning teachers appealed to schools to advocate the 80% workload concession for beginning teachers. This off-loading of normal responsibilities in their first year would give the needed time and opportunity to adjust to the demands of school and engage in more learning to teach.

◆ On-going Professional Development

Beginning teachers asked that schools and Teachers' Network provide them with necessary workshops for personal and professional development, but lamented that support efforts tend to deliver everything to beginning teachers prior and at the start of school and then promptly forget about them. The call is for schools and induction programme planners to make the effort to track their emerging needs and offer professional development interventions at appropriate times.

◆ Feedback and Evaluation

Beginning teachers expressed extreme concerns about the evaluation process of teachers in schools. They asked for more time, more empathy, more allowance for mistakes, more autonomy and more transparency in the evaluation process. Experiences quoted by the beginning teachers revealed the need to separate the induction assistance offered to beginning teachers from the formal evaluation of their performance in schools. Beginning teachers appreciate the beneficial feedback they receive from clinical support teachers as long as these friendly critics are not in the formal evaluative role. Schools must find ways to facilitate beginning teachers receiving feedback and seeking help without fears and thus there may be a case for using university faculty and retired teachers to observe and help with feedback.

◆ Teachers' Network Support

Beginning teachers valued teachers network co-ordinating and providing relevant professional workshops and seminars that would help increase their knowledge base and skills. Teachers' Network was asked to intensify their counselling and consultation services, and to serve as an avenue for beginning teachers' voices to be heard.

### Findings on Teacher Training Preparation to Cope with Concerns

Beginning teachers' responses to the open-ended enquiry as to what NIE (The teacher training Institution) could have done to better prepare them for their transition into the schools suggested that there were elements in the pre-service programme that in their view needed improvement, and these fell into five major themes.

◆ Programme and Curriculum

The NIE graduates felt that the programme should have been more practical and rigorous, and that they should have been given more "academic cultural capital" and more guidance on how to translate theory into practice. Suggestions were made that projects and learning tasks, for example, should be practice-focused and that they should be relevant and user-friendly for adaptation for use in schools.

They further indicated a desire that the curriculum reflect more the real world of teaching, the what, the how, and the who the teacher has to engage with in the school. Instructional content, for example, needs to reflect what is taught. They want real life content; school syllabus focussed discussions, and explorations of issues dealing with actual school curriculum.

Beginning teachers also felt that they had not been adequately prepared to teach real students, students with learning difficulties and those who are unmotivated and reluctant. Beginning teachers indicated that teaching strategies and learning picked up at the NIE were often simply dropped or needed to be re-defined when they experienced the realities of the school.

◆ Practicum

Beginning teachers in general valued the field- based experience for its usefulness in introducing them to a wide range of teaching competencies, but also pointed out some problems and limitations. They recommended an extended period of practicum so to have a deeper understanding of all the responsibilities and duties of teachers. They indicated hope for better scheduling of practicum such that it does not coincide with the school's continual assessment period and offers adequate opportunities to observe experienced teachers, and that practicum commitments should include some CCA duties, a greater range and variety in learning to teach experiences and a full workload for a period of time towards the end to orientate the trainees to the real world of work of teachers.

◆ Faculty

The need for university faculty to be in direct and regular contact with teaching in the schools was frequently mentioned by the beginning teachers as a means to maintain relevance and credibility. Contact between the faculty, practitioners and beginning teachers in the schools should be increased and suggestions were even made that lecturers should team teach in with trainees during the practicum. Other respondents stressed the importance of faculty serving as resource persons and role models, reflecting enthusiasm, creativity, expertise and professionalism in their teaching roles.

◆ Reality Gap

Respondents expressed concern for a need to bridge the gap between pre-service training and initial teaching experience. To pre-empt reality shock, beginning teachers felt that NIE should not paint too idealistic a picture of teaching and learning in Singapore schools, in terms of the kind of "real" students out in the field and the constraints in schools they have not been warned about. It was further suggested that a broader instructional base be provided by drawing from practitioners in the schools to share their experience and expertise. NIE was asked to introduce a module in the programme that would help trainees understand teacher professionalism and teacher development issues.

◆ NIE-MOE-SCHOOL Link

The beginning teachers expressed a wish that there should be a seamless transition and continuing relationship with the NIE even after their first appointment into the schools. Some suggested that all trainees be assigned faculty mentors that they could continue a consultative relationship with during their first year in the field or that their NIE supervisors continue to support or make periodic visits during their first year to monitor their progress. It was suggested that NIE and MOE take on the responsibility of jointly disseminating information on best practice.

Findings on the Types and Extent of Support Available to Beginning Teachers

On the BTIQ, the beginning teachers were asked to indicate with a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ response whether they had the opportunity to experience a range of 25 commonly made available support strategies. Highlighted here are the 8 most and the 8 least available support strategies the beginning teachers have access to (see Table 1).

Overwhelmingly, all beginning teachers (207) participated in formal sharing experiences in the schools. The second most frequently received form of support by the teachers was in the form of observations by Principals and Heads of Department. Schools were also attentive to providing beginning teachers with orientation to personnel, information on school policies, information on syllabus and schemes of work, and teacher work review processes. 75% of all beginning teachers in the study indicated knowledge of and access to teacher’s network and 74% knew how to avail themselves to teaching resources in the schools.

The support strategies that were least experienced by beginning teachers were information on teacher roles and responsibilities, and concessions in workload and fewer outside classroom responsibilities. Only 33.3 % of all beginning teachers were given concessions in their workload and only 30.9% had a reduction in non-teaching duties in the initial period. Mentor teacher support was made available to only 48.3% of the beginning teachers. A worthy note is that analysis revealed significant differences between the primary school teachers and the secondary school teachers in receiving support from their schools. Secondary school teachers reported substantially more support in the forms of concessions in work allocation (Sec-45%; Pr-24%) and reduction in classroom duties (Sec-40% ; Pr-24%) in the initial period.

Table 1  
Availability of Various Types of Support and Assistance to Beginning Teachers

<u>Most Available :</u>	Yes Responses	<u>Least Available :</u>	Yes Responses
Formal sharing sessions	100%	Roles and Responsibilities	24%
P,VP, HOD Observation	92%	Fewer outside class duties	30%
Orientation to Personnel	83%	Concessions in workload	33%
Policies/Expectations	74%	Informal peer coaching	37%
Syllabi and SIOs	82%	Working with parents	42%
Teacher work review	76%	Exam related knowledge	43%
Teachers’ Network	75%	Formal mentor support	48%
Teaching Resources	74%	Observe senior teachers	50%

#### Findings on the Perceived Value of The Different Types of Assistance and Support Available to Beginning Teachers

Participants were also asked to rate the usefulness of the support strategies on a 5-pt Likert scale with 1 being least useful and 5 being most useful. Patterns of perceived usefulness of support practices were surprisingly congruent across all beginning teachers, regardless of gender, age, teacher training experience, school level and school type. The most highly valued forms of assistance to the beginning teachers are concessions in workload and the allocation of fewer duties in the initial transition period. Ironically however, only 33% of all beginning teachers in this study indicated that they had received some concessions during the first year and only 31% had the experience of a reduction in classroom duties(see Table 2). Support strategies that were

more interactive, such as peer coaching, observation of experienced teachers, observations by senior management, and mentor support were perceived to be the most useful set of induction practices, but ironically, these again tended to be the less available.

The support strategies that were perceived to be less useful tended to be more “impersonal” such as seminars and workshops on service conditions, orientation to school programmes, publications, and computer linkage to Teachers’ Network. The responses from the beginning teachers, nevertheless, indicated that any effort made to orient them to the culture of the workplace and to ease adaptation to the social system of the school setting was appreciated. The expressions of the beginning teachers in this study were congruent with the literature on teacher socialisation on what constitutes valuable induction support. Simply, the preferred mode of support is interpersonal rather than instructional.

Table 2  
Beginning Teacher Means and Rankings for Value of Different Types of Support

<b>Most Valued :</b>		<b>Least Valued :</b>	
Fewer outside class duties	4.06	Service conditions	2.98
Concessions in workload	4.00	Teachers’ Network	2.99
Informal peer coaching	3.95	Publications/Newsletters	3.16
Observe senior teachers	3.90	Roles/ Responsibilities	3.18
P, VP,HOD observation	3.81	School /Dept Programmes	3.38
Syllabi and SIOs	3.78	Organisational structure	3.39
Formal mentor support	3.77	Exam related knowledge	3.40
Orientation to Personnel	3.73	Classroom Management	3.43

### Findings on the Value of Mentoring

Beginning teachers generally valued the mentor arrangement. They reported appreciation of help with instructional skills, information on school policies and procedures, pupil and classroom management, curriculum and lesson planning, and ‘buffering’ from making too many mistakes on the job. Most of all they valued the psychological support of “somebody standing by”. Mentors were also credited with helping beginning teachers by affirming them and providing them with moral and emotional support.

Effectiveness of the mentoring arrangement was however reported to be constrained by interference from mentors’ other school responsibilities, constraints on time for interaction, poor mentor selection, mismatch, and a lack in mentor commitment, skills, and understanding of the mentoring role.

### Implications and Recommendations

When the study was first begun, the intent was to gain a deeper understanding of the problems of beginning teachers, and to examine their perceptions about ways in which they might best be helped, but as the study unfolded it became clear that the implications of what these teachers were saying were not limited to just induction practices alone, but to pre-service education,

policy making and other practitioners, and therefore a sharing now of some implications of the findings of this study

### Implications and Recommendations for Teacher Education

#### ◆ Need to Know How To Adapt Theory to Practice

Teachers in the study have supported Veenman's assertion that to expect practice to be deduced from theory is a mistaken belief. Beginning teachers in the study felt that they could have been better prepared for their teacher roles if they knew how to translate their theoretical learning from teacher training to actual instructional and managerial behaviours. The cry is for more opportunities during training to learn practical applications of theories in simulated class experiences, case studies and similar experiences. As suggested by one of the beginning teachers, one way the teacher education programme could be improved was for trainee to independently or with faculty carry out research projects related to a variety of teaching situations in the school. Course instructions could create assignments that link content of their courses with application in the real classroom. Knowledge is to be linked constantly to application.

#### ◆ Preparation in the Know-hows of Teaching and Non-teaching tasks

The frustration and anxiety created by feeling unprepared for the routines of teaching and non-teaching responsibilities and the effort to deal with these matters, interfered with the ability of the beginning teachers to reflect on their teaching, to improve on their teaching and to expand on their professional knowledge. The suggestion is that BT will better able to begin their practice as reflective practitioners if they have the security of knowing how to deliver effective lessons and at least have the basic skills of class management and organisation for learning. The BTS in the study were not suggesting that NIE should have given them a magic tool kit of prescriptions they could use in solving first year difficulties but that NIE should have given them relevant knowledge and skills that could be adapted and used.. The teacher education programme should provide experiences that are context embedded and that all learning experiences must be related to the real and authentic school situation.

#### ◆ Need to Spend As Much Time As Possible in a Variety of

Trainees need opportunities to observe different teaching styles, to interact with students of different abilities and motivations, and to see how teachers cope with their multiple roles. To alleviate reality shock trainee teachers could be made more aware of the wider aspects of school life during their practicum. Beginning teachers in this study had suggested the practicum build into its structure expanded roles, teaching experiences with students of diverse abilities, some experience in the conduct of Co-curricular activities, and greater familiarisation to the routine duties of teachers

#### ◆ Experience of Working with Master

The suggestion from the findings of the study is that novices value the expertise of exemplary, experienced teachers. Those beginning teachers who were fortunate enough to have the guidance of coop-teachers whom they felt secure and comfortable, and whom they saw as role models, entered teaching feeling more confident and more open to reflective teaching behaviours. Student teaching should have a bi-level agenda, the first consisting of the how-tos of teaching

and the second, more vital, the development of reflective teaching behaviours. Careful consideration should then be given by NIE and the schools as to how best to meet this bi-level agenda.

### Implications and Recommendations for Schools

◆ **Frequent, Non-evaluative, Specific and Formative Feedback.**

New teachers need to know if they are doing it right, if they measure up and if there were things they could do better. Confidence is built when beginning teachers' efforts are recognised and acknowledged especially during the survival stages of learning to teach when they are filled with self-doubts. They should have access to people whom they can trust, whom they deem competent and is able to give constructive feedback. Mentor teachers and insightful peers may be deemed most suitable. Release time and a reduced workload in the initial period. Beginning teachers need release time, to learn to teach, to plan lessons, to develop teaching resources, to learn about their roles and responsibilities, to conference with mentors and peers, to acquire further knowledge and skills, and to observe competent teachers in their classrooms. Principals need to remember that pushing beginning teachers to work harder and longer because they are deemed young and innovative can be counter productive and give support to the criticism that our is a profession that eats its young.

◆ **Opportunities to Observe Other Teachers.**

Observing other teachers help the BT learn about different teaching styles, critique and affirm his beliefs about instructional practices and consider alternative ways of doing things.

◆ **A School Climate that is Conducive to Professional Growth.**

When schools create a climate where collaboration is, where teachers, veteran and novice are encouraged to share and problem solve their teaching dilemmas, professional development and ease of transition of beginning teachers is greatly enhanced.

◆ **To be Empowered to be Creative and Innovative.**

Schools make an active agenda of recognising and maximizing beginning teacher effort. Beginning teachers need to be given adequate autonomy to carry out their jobs, and the freedom and flexibility to discover professional decisions, and explore innovative approaches to teaching.

◆ **Ongoing Assistance and Support from Peers and Colleagues.**

Beginning teachers need someone in their schools, preferably teaching the same grade level or content area and is easily accessible to help and support them. They should be able to provide guidance, help with problem-solving, discuss experiences, coach, and most importantly provide the emotional support so necessary for he first year teacher.

◆ **Recognition for a Job Well Done.**

The teachers in the study view praise and recognition as a positive influencing factor to their sense of success and well-being in their first year of service. Whenever possible, principals,

Heads of Department and experienced teachers should commend specific professional accomplishments of beginning teachers.

◆ Knowledge of What is Expected of Them.

Beginning teachers need to know what is expected of them in terms of their classroom performance, their functioning as staff, and the kinds of support to expect and not expect. They need to know whose expectations they have to meet and whom they can have expectations of. Beginning teachers also need to be given a clear and comfortable understanding of the evaluation process and where they stand in the process.

◆ Help with Managing Student Behaviour.

Schools must ensure that every beginning teacher has a reasonable opportunity to develop proficiency in instruction by assuring them assistance in classroom management because pupils mismanagement can be a major hindrance to effective teaching and learning. Principals and colleagues must support the beginning teachers by working with them to set and consistently enforce clear standards of student conduct.

### Implications and Recommendations for Induction Programme Planners

◆ Use Information on Beginning Teachers Concerns as the Basis for Planning Assistance.

In order to provide the best possible assistance during the first year of teaching, beginning teachers' concerns should be well understood by principals, mentors, teacher educators, and programme developers at Teachers' Network. Newly trained teachers need responsive structured support and guidance during their early years in the profession. It was indicative from this study that few schools have a systematic approach to induction and the desired conditions of lightened workloads, dedicated mentors, and responsive school-based induction remains just that-conditions of desire. Leadership and staff in schools must ensure that these do not remain just unfulfilled promises.

◆ Ensure Support that is Early and Timely.

Beginning teachers should be able to find available help from a variety of sources during the early weeks of their first entry into the profession. Assigned mentors and buddy teachers should be at hand to ease the trauma of entry into teaching, and others in the whole school community must be ready and willing to step into provide support when appropriate, not waiting to be asked.

◆ Address Both the Professional and Personal Needs of the Beginning Teachers.

Professional concerns such as classroom management, instructional concerns, and concerns about roles and responsibilities are usually given first focus in induction support, but personal concerns such as self-doubts, managing relationships, coping with reality shock and balancing home and school demands must be given due focus.

The diverse needs of the doers, the jugglers, the seekers and the performers indicated in this study point to the logic of individualizing and personalizing beginning teacher support

◆ Awareness of Success Factors and Obstacles in Mentoring.

Principals, mentors, and beginning teachers themselves need to be aware that time, the simple reassuring sense of mentor being there, supporting school structures, adequate mentor training, clear role definition, and the selection of mentors by mentees may be factors enhancing mentor-mentee relationships. Similarly they should be apprised that interfering responsibilities, time constraints, differences in beliefs, deficiency in mentor skills, lack of trust, and mentor-mentee mismatch could impair mentoring effectiveness. Mentor programmes cannot be left to chance and must be formalised and systematically planned. Schools must attempt to provide the mentor and mentee with shared preparation time and principals should consider matching beginning teachers and mentors who are in the same grade, discipline, and share somewhat similar ideologies.

◆ Ensure Beginning Teachers Receive On-going Support

Beginning teachers need help and support in identifying the most useful and productive staff development opportunities available and to help keep their professional development activities focused. Induction programme planners should consider adopting an individually guided beginning teacher development model to guide the design of programmes for the professional development of beginning teachers. One example of such a model is that advocated by Sparks and Lousks –Horsley. This model assumes that individuals can best judge their own needs and that they are capable of self-direction and self-initiated learning. This suggests a learning approach and consists of different phases.

- Identification of need
- Development of plan to meet the need
- Learning activity
- Assessment of whether the learning meets the identified need.

Such programmes can empower teachers to address their own problems, create a sense of professionalism and provide for intellectual stimulation

### **Conclusion**

We have had the opportunity to hear the voices about their concerns, about what they want, and what they need help with in the initial years. What remains to be done is forging appropriate links between their concerns and support systems to alleviate them; links which must account for the multiplicity of teaching variables and the diversity of individuals we mean to help, and links which require all stakeholders to engage in collaborative efforts that will support the professional development of beginning teachers fulfil their potential as educators, and help their students become better learners. There has been much done but there is more to do and much of it promising and exciting. Few aspects of teacher education can be more satisfying than nurturing new members of our professional community, and fewer endeavour have greater pay-offs in transforming school culture, increasing student achievement and building people.

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