

The background image shows two women in a library or office setting. The woman on the left is shown in profile, looking towards the right. The woman on the right is looking down at a laptop screen. The image is split diagonally, with the left side having a yellow tint and the right side having a blue tint.

Spotlight

Induction of beginning teachers
in Australia – What do early career
teachers say?

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There is broad agreement in the education sector around the value of induction as a support for beginning teachers, but less clarity about how to best implement it in practice. Early career teachers' perspectives on their actual induction experiences provide important feedback for the profession and an opportunity to increase the effectiveness of induction practice.

At a glance

The summary of findings:

- Evidence from early career teachers suggests induction practice could be improved
- New Guidelines from AITSL provide a framework for increasing the effectiveness of induction (aitsl.edu.au/induction).

AITSL's Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession provide a clear evidence-based outline for improving consistency and quality of induction practice in Australian schools.

Induction has proven to be an important support for beginning teachers who are expected to be proficient in their career from day one.

However, evidence of early career teachers' perspectives on induction suggests that induction could be more consistent and more effective at meeting the needs of beginning teachers. Potentially, effective induction could optimise the early career teacher's impact on students.



“The new teacher assumes full pedagogical and legal responsibility as soon as they enter the school. No other profession has such high expectations of its newest members.”

(Tynjala & Heikkinen, cited in Hay Group 2014, p8)



At a glance

Effective induction has potential benefits for:

1

The teaching profession



2

Beginning teachers



3

Student outcomes



The case for induction

Effective induction impacts positively on the teaching profession

An AITSL commissioned review of Australian and international induction literature found evidence that induction provides a critical benefit to the teaching profession. Induction contributes to a culture of professional performance and development by supporting beginning teachers to effectively translate teaching theories into teaching practice (Hay Group, 2014).

High performing education systems demonstrate a commitment to support beginning teachers to transition to full professional performance. This develops a culture of professional responsibility (TEMAG 2014).

In the United States, a critical review of 15 empirical studies of induction by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) showed benefits from induction on a range of outcomes in almost all studies. These were broadly described as:

- job satisfaction, commitment and retention
- teachers' classroom teaching practice and pedagogical methods
- student outcomes.

Effective induction impacts positively on beginning teachers

Australian and international evidence confirms that supporting graduate teachers with induction impacts positively on the new teacher.

A large scale Australian project, *The Studying the Effectiveness of Teacher Education* (The SETE study) surveyed 5000 early career teachers and 1000 principals in schools in Victoria and Queensland and found a link between higher reported access to in-school supports and graduate teachers' increased perceptions of their own preparedness and effectiveness to teach (Mayer et al, 2015).

An Australian qualitative study that followed 54 early career teachers from graduation in 2006¹ found that the quality of support early career teachers received was important in helping them cope with the demands of the job. Beginning teachers described their induction as a boost for morale and as helping to increase their knowledge. Induction was viewed by early career teachers as a 'welcome' to the profession and the school (Buchanan et al, 2013).

¹ Interviews were conducted in the first, second and fourth year of teaching – 2006, 2007 and 2009

Does effective induction impact positively on student outcomes?

There is preliminary evidence that by contributing to improved teacher efficacy, effective induction can improve student outcomes.

A direct link between induction and improved student outcomes is difficult to establish and further research is needed to confirm an impact on student outcomes in the Australian context.

However, the Ingersoll and Strong (2011) review, found that there was sufficient evidence across studies to support a finding that students of teachers who had participated in some form of induction showed higher scores on, or improvements in, academic achievement tests. A randomised control study of 415 schools and 1009 teachers found student outcomes improved, but only after two years of comprehensive induction, suggesting that length of the induction program may also be an important factor (Glazeman et al, 2010).



At a glance

School leaders were more likely than early career teachers to believe that induction is provided in their school.

Early career teachers identify opportunities for improving induction

Early career teachers and school leaders have different perceptions about induction practice

In 2016 AITSL conducted a survey of stakeholders that included responses from 1287 school leaders and 2268 teachers.

AITSL is grateful to the those who contributed their time and knowledge to this study. Teachers identified that school leaders and beginning teachers have different perceptions about the *availability* and *quality* of induction for early career teachers (AITSL 2016b).

The availability of induction

The AITSL survey found that school leaders are far more likely than early career teachers to believe that induction is being provided in their school. The responses indicated that the availability of induction is also dependent on the nature of a teacher's employment.

Of the respondents:

- 70% of school leaders reported that they had formal induction in place in their schools, while only 48% of early career teachers reported receiving a formal induction when they commenced as a beginning teacher.
- 59% of early career teachers on a permanent contract reported receiving a formal induction compared with just 17% of early career casual relief teachers

There are similar findings internationally. The Teaching and Learning International Survey 2013 (TALIS) found 70% of teachers with less than three years of experience worked in schools where principals reported access to formal induction programs. However, only around half of these teachers reported participating in such programs (OECD 2015).

Acknowledging the views of early career teachers about their induction experiences is a good starting point for improving induction practice in Australian schools.

At a glance

School leaders were more likely than early career teachers to believe that a range of induction strategies had been provided.

The range of induction strategies

School leaders were more likely than early career teachers to believe that a range of induction strategies had been provided to early career teachers.

■ School leaders

■ Early career teachers

Mentoring/coaching

91%
73%

Collaboration with colleagues

84%
66%

Classroom observation and feedback

81%
66%

Targeted professional learning opportunities

78%
55%

Allocation of time for induction

69%
61%

At a glance

School leaders and early career teachers have different perceptions about the focus of induction practice.

The focus of induction

Current induction practice may place too much emphasis on short-term orientation to the immediate school at the expense of other important content.

Effective induction should not have a single focus, but should incorporate several important areas that support transition from study to practice (AITSL 2016a).

Over 95% of both school leaders and early career teachers reported that **orientation** was included in their induction programs. School leaders were more likely to see it as the main focus.

■ School leaders ■ Early career teachers

Orientation main focus of induction

78% 58%

Early career teachers were more likely than school leaders to report that induction had not focused *at all* on some important aspects of induction such as **professional identity** and **teacher wellbeing**.

■ School leaders
■ Early career teachers

No focus on professional identity

7%
14%

No focus on teacher wellbeing

13%
31%

School leaders in one study were likely to attribute a successful transition of a beginning teacher to the induction supports provided by their school. However, when beginning teachers had difficulties in moving into teaching practice, school leaders were more likely to attribute this to inadequacies of teacher education programs or to the teacher's personal characteristics rather than the induction provided (Mayer et al, 2015).

Additional challenges for effective induction

At a glance

- Beginning teachers on short-term contracts or casual relief teaching are less likely to receive induction
- Early career teachers report a lack of consistency and availability of mentoring practice
- Quality of mentoring varies
- Only 30% of mentors responding in the AITSL survey had received training.

Short-term contracts and casual employment

Research has consistently shown that those working as casual relief teachers or in short-term contract positions receive less induction, yet this is a common way to commence in teaching (Latifoglu, 2016; Mayer et al, 2015; TEMAG 2014).

AITSL found that just 25% of first year teachers² indicated that they were employed on a permanent contract while 2 in 3 early career teachers had begun their teaching career on short-term and casual contracts.

Critically for induction practice, school leaders reported that the provision of formal induction practices to beginning teachers drops to 77% of early career teachers on short-term contracts and 45% of casual relief teachers.

Teaching in rural and remote contexts

There can be particular challenges for induction in rural schools where there may be limitations of distance, isolation, small staff and fewer resources (Sullivan & Johnson, 2012; Kline & Walker-Gibbs, 2015).

Graduate teachers working in remote and very remote schools perceived that they were less prepared for teaching than those working in cities and larger regional locations (Mayer et al, 2015, p.112).

Making mentoring more effective

Early career teachers report that mentoring/coaching is a valuable induction strategy (Mayer et al, 2015; Hudson et al, 2012). However, several studies have found that mentoring is not consistently delivered nor equally accessible to graduate teachers (Latifoglu, 2016; Mayer et al, 2015).

Mentoring programs in schools can vary from structured to informal mentoring and even to graduate teachers seeking out their own mentors for support (Kidd, Brown & Fitzallen, 2015). In some cases mentors seem to operate more as performance managers (Mayer et al, 2015).

While early career teachers in the AITSL survey who had received induction reported positive benefits from their mentor relationship, only 58% responded positively to the statement 'my mentor/coach modelled good practice'. Only 43% reported that they had regular scheduled times set aside for mentoring/coaching discussions and activities.

AITSL's survey found that only 30% of experienced teacher respondents who had provided mentoring/coaching to graduate teachers had received training in how to do so.

² Teachers in their first year of teaching after graduation n=98

At a glance

- Effective induction requires specific elements to be present
- The AITSL Guidelines provide a profession-wide framework to support more consistent induction practice (aitsl.edu.au/induction).

How can we implement more effective induction?

Agreement on what induction is

A review of induction policies in all state and territory education systems and sectors in Australia found major variation in the purpose and supports recommended for induction at the system and school level and in the measures of efficacy of induction practices (AITSL 2016c).

Unlike other professions such as nursing, there is no profession-wide, structured approach to supporting beginning teachers with induction (TEMAG 2014).

AITSL's *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession* (the Guidelines) were endorsed in 2016 by the Education Council. These Guidelines can provide a profession-wide framework to support more consistent induction practice (AITSL 2016a).

The Guidelines present 'induction' as a formal program of supports to be provided specifically to assist early career teachers to move from the *Graduate* to the *Proficient* career stage of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL 2011).

www.aitsl.edu.au/induction



At a glance

The Guidelines indicate that the three most important facts to know about effective induction are:

1

The effectiveness of induction programs increases as the range of supports and strategies provided increase.

2

Of all induction strategies, practice-focused mentoring by an expert colleague/s is particularly powerful.

3

Induction should focus on four key areas: **professional practices**, **professional identity**, **teacher wellbeing** and **orientation**.



Using the Guidelines as a signpost to effective induction

The Guidelines identify three important facts to know for effective induction.

1. Clarifying and increasing the range of supports available is important

Increasing the range of strategies and supports provided increases effectiveness of induction. Clarifying what strategies are really available in an induction program will be an integral part of ensuring effectiveness.

2. The need for practice-focused mentoring in induction

Effective induction requires a specific approach to mentoring - "practice focused mentoring". This is defined in the Guidelines as:

"A strong professional relationship that attends to the professional development of early career teachers through ongoing observation, conversations, evidence about and assessment of practices, goal-setting aligned with standards of quality teaching and technical and emotional support." (p.7)

Supporting experienced teachers to deliver practice-focused mentoring will increase the likelihood that early career teachers will have the most positive experience of induction.

3. Expanding the focus of induction so it's more than orientation to the school

Although contextual orientation is important, induction needs to include a focus on four key areas: **professional practices**, **professional identity**, **wellbeing** and **orientation**. They are briefly described below and further detailed in the Guidelines.

Professional Practices

Developing a deeper range and sophistication of skills in early career teachers

Professional Identity

Developing an understanding of good teaching and what is expected of teachers, the responsibilities and significance of teaching

Wellbeing

Developing teacher resilience, emotional wellbeing and connections with other professionals

Orientation

Formal requirements (e.g. policies and procedures) and informal ways of operating (e.g. cultural, interpersonal and administrative).

At a glance

Priorities for improving induction include aligning practice with the AITSL Guidelines and:

- increasing induction availability to all beginning teachers
- reviewing the range of supports provided
- training for teachers who provide mentoring
- ensuring the focus of induction is not only orientation.

Conclusions

AITSL's ongoing work with school leaders has shown that they recognise the importance of effective induction practice and are keen to respond to evidence about how to improve it in their schools. There is a strong interest in applying more effective induction when there is access to evidence-based information such as in the Guidelines and awareness of early career teachers' current experiences of induction.

Evidence indicates there are numerous opportunities to improve induction programs in Australia to optimise the positive impacts for beginning teacher effectiveness, schools and students.

The *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession* now provide a nationally agreed framework to contribute to a whole-of-profession approach that can improve beginning teacher efficacy and wellbeing, ultimately benefiting student learning.

Key priorities for improving induction practice include:

- making induction available to all beginning teachers, not just those on permanent contracts or in metropolitan areas;
- objective review of the range of supports and strategies provided in an induction program;
- providing support and training for experienced teachers who are mentors to ensure practice is aligned with the features of 'practice-focused mentoring' as outlined in the Guidelines; and
- critical assessment of the focus of current induction practice to ensure that an induction amounts to more than just orientation to the school.

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