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# TEACHER INDUCTION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

GREG CHATLAIN

*Saskatoon Catholic School Division*

BRIAN NOONAN

*University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon*

*The purpose of this study was to examine the induction process for beginning teachers in Catholic schools. Data were collected from 100 teachers using a survey that addressed teachers' level of confidence in the pedagogical, religious, and managerial dimensions of teaching. The results of the study indicated that the induction experiences of beginning teachers in Catholic schools were similar to those of beginning teachers elsewhere. However, there is a need for the development and implementation of a systematic process of teacher induction that consciously meets the needs in the religious dimension for beginning teachers.*

## INTRODUCTION

Entering the teaching profession is marked by an initial period of challenges and opportunities for both new teachers and the jurisdiction that hired them. How school, diocesan, and school district personnel respond to these challenges and opportunities can have long-lasting effects on the teachers' ability to teach effectively (Robinson, 1998). It is through this concerted effort by teachers and others that a new teacher will not just survive the first years, but will establish the foundation for an effective teaching career.

Beginning teachers experience many challenges as they embark upon their new career. They must learn the culture of their new workplace (Brock & Grady, 1997; Schlechty, 1985), and transfer their teaching knowledge gained through teacher preparation into practice in the classroom (Weiss, 1999). They must grapple with professional issues such as student discipline, classroom management, student assessment, and parent involvement, and deal with individual differences and mainstreamed students (Brock & Grady, 1998; Veenman, 1984). In principle, schools and school leaders need to view the induction period for new teachers as opportunities to help them become competent and effective teachers, as well as to help retain them in the pro-

fession. Within the first 5 years, 30% to 40% of beginning teachers leave the profession (Punshon, 1996). Systematic, well-planned induction programs in the beginning years of teaching may be one way to develop and retain new teachers.

Although there are differing definitions and conceptions of induction, for the purpose of this study induction is defined as the stage in the career cycle of a teacher that begins when a teacher starts his or her career and may continue until the teacher becomes professionally competent (Huling-Austin, 1992). During this period, beginning teachers improve their effectiveness in the classroom, become socialized into the culture of the school, and work through many challenges associated with the demands of teaching. These dimensions of teaching are often categorized as the pedagogical (teaching, learning) dimension and the managerial (organizational, classroom management) dimension.

Induction literature has employed a variety of research methods designed to understand the complex induction process. Veenman (1984) conducted a meta-analysis of existing research spanning the years of 1960 to 1984. Of the 83 studies examined, most studies employed a questionnaire that used the rating scale method with respondents rating the degree to which a problem was encountered using a point scale. The next most common method was interviews followed by studies using both a questionnaire and an interview. Since Veenman's study, researchers have continued to employ similar methods. Studies report using surveys that have participants rate their perceptions (Scott, 1997; Varah, Theune, & Parker, 1986), rank sources of support received (Brock, 1988; Odell, 1986), as well as conduct individual interviews and focus groups (Hoffman, Edwards, O'Neal, Barnes, & Paulissen, 1986; Varah et al., 1986). Others have used various teacher effectiveness observation templates designed to measure teacher effectiveness and thus induction programming effectiveness (Colbert & Wolff, 1992; Hoffman et al., 1986).

Existing research on induction has been based on beginning teachers in non-denominational schools; the experiences of new teachers in Canadian Catholic schools have been overlooked. Presumably, researchers and administrators have assumed that skills and attitude development and the support required for new teachers in a Catholic school are similar to those in a public school. Brock (1988), in one of the few studies involving Catholic schools, focused on the unique dimensions of teacher induction. Brock found that Catholic school teachers face challenges similar to their public school counterparts in terms of the pedagogical and managerial aspects of teaching. However, the unique nature and mission of Catholic education create a setting significantly different from that of a public school.

The unique and different setting in which Catholic education is delivered means that there is also a religious dimension, in addition to the pedagogical and managerial dimensions, that must be accounted for in teacher induction.

Specifically this means that in addition to the typical concerns related to pedagogy and classroom management, attention must be paid to the spiritual and religious aspects of education. It is clear that an important role of Catholic schools is to address moral and ethical perspectives, doctrinal understanding, faith development, and commitment to a Catholic worldview. Indeed the Church has recognized the need for religious education for teachers in Catholic schools: "Everything possible must be done to ensure that Catholic schools have adequately trained religion teachers; it is a vital necessity and a legitimate expectation" (Congregation for Catholic Education [CCE], 1988, §97). The Church warns that not only is it important to have trained staff but "an unprepared teacher can do a great deal of harm" (§97).

In addition to religious education, the Church places a great deal of responsibility for accomplishing the mission of Catholic education on the shoulders of teachers: "For it is the lay teachers...who will substantially determine whether or not a school realizes its aims" (CCE, 1982, §1). It is not possible to have a faith-based education, without faith-based educators. The Church underscores this point: "Prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers.... If this is not present, then there is little left which can make the school Catholic" (CCE, 1988, §26). These are great responsibilities placed on teachers by the Church. These responsibilities emphasize the vital importance of a useful and effective induction process for new teachers and how research can help improve current practices in Catholic schools.

Teachers new to a Catholic school must adapt to the distinctiveness of the role of a Catholic school teacher, and as Brock (1988) pointed out, they "must teach the required academic subjects and relate to faculty, parents, students, and administrators with a criterion for excellence that is quite different than his or her counterpart in a public school" (p. 2). Excellence is measured using a different, though not necessarily a more demanding standard, than that of public school teachers.

Although some current teacher induction research can help guide school leaders, it offers limited guidance to help plan induction programs for Catholic schools. The purpose of this study was therefore to examine the nature of the induction process as experienced by new teachers in Catholic schools. Specifically the study addressed the following questions:

- What are the induction experiences of new teachers in Catholic schools?
- To what extent does the number of years of teaching experience affect new teachers' level of confidence in the pedagogical, religious, and managerial dimensions of teaching in a Catholic school?
- What sources of support do new teachers require during the induction period?

For the purpose of this study, a new teacher is defined as one who is in his or her first 5 years of teaching.

## METHODOLOGY

### DATA COLLECTION

The study was conducted in a mid-sized, urban Western Canadian Catholic school jurisdiction that has traditionally employed a relatively large proportion of beginning teachers. The jurisdiction, publicly supported under Canadian law that provides for Catholic separate schools, is currently comprised of 41 elementary and secondary schools, with an 850 member teaching staff. Due to fairly rapid enrollment growth, 55 teachers, on average, were hired in each of the past 5 years.

Earlier teacher induction studies such as Brock's (1988) examined challenges facing first-year teachers, however research suggests that the induction period extends past the first year of teaching. Therefore, this study used a cross-sectional design for the first 5 years of teaching to examine teacher induction over time. The sample included all teachers who were new to the profession (e.g., no previous teaching experience) within the preceding 5 years. One hundred seventeen teachers were identified by the number of completed years of teaching (e.g., Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, and Year 5). Teachers in their first year of teaching were not part of the study. The number of teachers in each of the groups ranged from 12 teachers in Year 4 to 34 teachers in Year 1. In addition, a random sample of teachers ( $n = 25$ ) with 8 to 10 years of teaching experience was selected. This group of teachers served as a control group who had experienced an induction process and were continuing in their teaching career. In total, 142 subjects were identified in the six categories of teachers.

A questionnaire based upon one used by Brock (1988) was used to collect data. The questionnaire had been used with Catholic school teachers in the United States and was found to have relatively high internal consistency (Cronbach's coefficient alpha 0.86). Modifications were made to adapt the instrument to the Canadian Catholic schools' context and to update the questions regarding beginning teacher needs. The questionnaire was organized into three sections. Section A collected demographic information regarding participants' gender, age, type of school attended as a student, and grade level taught. Section B sought information regarding participants' level of confidence in three dimensions of teaching – pedagogical, religious, and managerial – and included 26 items, based on those three dimensions. Section C included 15 items related to beginning teachers' perceived sources of support from others during the induction period.

The teachers' level of confidence was measured using a four-point Likert

scale, similar to that used by Brock (1988). Four points on the scale ranged from 1 (*very confident*) to 4 (*quite unsure*) with a fifth category (*not applicable*). However, if the item was not applicable to the respondent's teaching position the item was not included in the data analysis. The section on support for new teachers asked the respondents to rank the 15 sources of support that had been identified by Brock. In addition to the fixed response items, the survey included three open-ended questions, which solicited comments on sources of support and methods of assistance provided for teachers during the induction period.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The survey data were analyzed in several stages using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 10.05. First, demographic information was produced based on responses to the first section of the questionnaire. Second, the survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics for each of the survey items for each of the six teacher groups. Means and standard deviations were computed for each of the teacher groups for each of the three dimensions of teacher induction: pedagogical, religious, and managerial. This provided information comparing teacher perceptions of the three dimensions of induction among teachers with different levels of teaching experience. To examine differences among the six groups a series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted on each item in each of the three dimensions using years of experience as the independent variable. Third, the 15 potential sources of support for new teachers were ranked by each group based on the *helpful* and *very helpful* categories from the survey. Fourth, the three open-ended questions were summarized, coded, and categorized into themes that reflected teachers' views on sources of support for new teachers in Catholic schools.

## **RESULTS**

### **STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

One hundred (70.4%) of 142 questionnaires were returned for analysis; of the respondents, 59% were female and 41% male. Seventy-three teachers taught in kindergarten through Grade 8; 26 teachers taught in high schools. The number of respondents for the six groups of teachers ranged from 9 teachers for Year 2 to 29 teachers for Year 3 (Table 1).

Table 1  
*Demographic Information (N = 100)*

Grade level	Years of experience						Total
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 8-10	
K-8	15	6	22	7	10	13	73
9-12	9	3	7	2	1	4	26
Total	24	9	29	9	11	18	99*

*Note.* \*One respondent did not indicate teaching level.

Descriptive statistics were computed for each item on each of the three dimensions of induction (pedagogical, religious, and managerial). To examine differences among the six groups of teachers, analyses of variance were conducted for each of the 26 items in the three dimensions. The following is a summary of the results of the statistical analysis for each of the three dimensions. The scale used 1 as the measure of greatest confidence and 4 as the lowest level of confidence (i.e., *quite unsure*).

**Pedagogical dimension.** The pedagogical dimension included 8 items related to the craft of teaching such as instructional planning, discipline, and classroom teaching. Results of the ANOVA (see Table 2) showed that the differences among the 6 groups were statistically significant for two elements, planning instruction ( $F = 3.27, p < .05$ ) and classroom discipline ( $F = 2.93, p < .05$ ). More experienced teachers (Year 5, Year 8-10) reported higher levels of confidence for those two elements of the pedagogical dimension.

Table 2

*ANOVA of Differences in Levels of Confidence Among Groups – Pedagogical Dimension*

Pedagogical dimension	<i>F</i> ratio	<i>p</i>
*Planning instruction	3.27	.01
*Classroom discipline	2.93	.02
Motivating students	1.84	.11
Evaluating students	1.03	.41
Individualizing instruction	.33	.89
Working with L.D.	1.80	.12
Working with gifted	1.42	.22
Mainstreaming	.80	.56

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Religious dimension.** Table 3 presents the results of the ANOVAs, which demonstrated that there were statistically significant results among the six groups for two elements, preparing liturgies ( $F = 3.20, p < .01$ ) and preparing for sacraments ( $F = 2.65, p < .05$ ). For each of those elements more experienced teachers reported higher levels of confidence than did less experienced teachers.

Table 3

*ANOVA of Differences in Levels of Confidence Among Groups – Religious Dimension*

Religious dimension	<i>F</i> ratio	<i>p</i>
Teaching religion	1.49	.20
**Preparing liturgies	3.20	.00
Incorporating Catholic values	.93	.47
Accepting goals of Catholic education	1.64	.16
Teaching sexuality	.53	.76
Modeling Catholic values	1.29	.27
*Preparing for sacraments	2.65	.03
Teaching non-Catholics	1.74	.13
Teaching pro-life issues	1.45	.21

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Managerial dimension.** The ANOVA for this dimension (see Table 4) showed that there was a statistically significant difference among the six groups on only one element, understanding procedures and policies ( $F = 6.56, p < .01$ ). Year 4 and Year 8-10 teachers reported higher levels of confidence on that element than did the other four groups

Table 4

*ANOVA of Differences in Levels of Confidence Among Groups – Managerial Dimension*

Managerial dimension	<i>F</i> ratio	<i>p</i>
Managing stress	1.03	.40
Maintaining enough energy	.96	.45
**Understanding procedures and policies	6.56	.00
Understanding referral procedures	1.16	.34
Maintaining positive relationships with parents	1.31	.26
Conferencing/reporting with parents	.93	.47
Maintaining relationships with other staff	1.83	.11
Balancing curricular and extra-curricular demands	.67	.65

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

The last section of the survey addressed teachers' perceived sources of professional and personal support during the induction period. Brock (1988) and others have noted that successful induction involves some such forms of support (formal or informal) for beginning teachers. Support in this case means guidance for beginning teachers to help reduce attrition, to socialize teachers, and to improve the effectiveness of new teachers. To explore how beginning teachers experienced these types of support in the induction process, teachers were asked to rank 15 generally accepted sources of support. The sources were ranked on a scale from *very helpful* to *not helpful at all*. Table 5 shows how each of the six categories of teachers ranked the 15 sources of support for beginning teachers. Some of the sources were personal or school based experiences such as informal meetings with colleagues. Other sources were more formal processes such as supervision by the principal. The rankings were obtained by combining responses to the *very helpful* and *somewhat helpful* categories in Part C of the survey.

The results show there was general agreement among the six groups of teachers with respect to the most preferred forms of support during the induction period. Informal interactions with other teachers or principals and formal meetings with principals provided the greatest level of support for all groups of teachers. Superintendent evaluations were seen as important



sources of support for Year 1 to 3 teachers, but much less so by teachers in Year 4 and beyond. On the contrary, observing other teachers was seen as a source of support for more experienced teachers but less so for newer teachers. All groups viewed other forms of professional interaction, such as conventions, in-service opportunities, staff meetings, or mentor relationships, as only moderate sources of support. With respect to the religious dimension, neither personal religious support nor formal religious training was seen as important sources of support by any of the six groups of teachers.

Table 5

*Rank Order of Very Helpful and Somewhat Helpful Sources of Support for Beginning Teachers*

Source of support	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 8-10
Assigned mentor	13	15	12	9	11	15
In-service	9	3	11	6	9	5
Personal meeting with the principal	4	4	3	7	4	4
Supervision by the principal	15	11	13	13	13	13
Informal meetings with the principal	2	2	2	2	2	1
Informal meetings with teachers	1	1	1	1	1	2
Staff meetings	11	7	4	10	6	8
Conventions	8	6	7	12	12	10
Consultant meetings	5	10	10	3	8	9
Grade-level meetings	6	12	8	4	7	6
Observing other teachers	10	8	6	5	3	3
Superintendent evaluation	3	5	5	15	10	14
Religious support	7	13	9	8	5	7
Personal support	12	14	15	14	14	11
Religion classes	14	9	14	11	15	12

In summary, the results of the analysis showed that the level of confi-

dence of teachers on the three dimensions of induction varied over the 5-year induction period. Analysis of the survey data revealed considerable variability both within groups and between the groups across the dimensions. Nonetheless, these data present a pattern in teachers' reported levels of confidence during the induction period.

## **OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

Responses to the three open-ended questions were summarized and general themes identified for each question. Question One asked participants to identify challenges that new teachers face during the induction period. The general themes included: (a) resource availability (creating, finding, and gathering resources); (b) managing the workload in the time allotted; (c) balancing one's personal and professional life; (d) working with learning assistance teachers and teacher assistants; (e) a sense of obligation to do everything and never say "no"; (f) diversity within the classroom; (g) parents (the extremes of harassment and child neglect); and (h) Catholicism's counter-cultural perspective.

Question Two asked new teachers to identify any other sources of support that were not mentioned in the survey. Sources of support are those people or processes that helped teachers develop confidence in their pedagogical, religious, or managerial skills. The themes included: (a) parish support and involvement; (b) team teaching; (c) materials from experienced teachers; (d) spiritual retreats; and (e) the support of family and friends who are teachers. Question Three asked participants to comment on any methods of support that would have been beneficial to them. This provided information on teachers' perceptions of the professional support they would have found useful in the induction process but did not experience. The categories of responses included: (a) a mentorship program; (b) principal support; (c) grade level meetings (either at school or division level); (d) resource sharing; (e) team teaching; (f) a clear layout of applicable policies and procedures; (g) a chance to observe experienced teachers; (h) class supervision; (i) consistency in the first years; and (j) help to pay costs of their teacher training.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results provide a profile of the induction process for new teachers in Catholic schools as measured by teachers' level of confidence in the pedagogical, religious, and managerial dimensions of teaching. In general, where differences exist there are specific elements of the dimension in which beginning teachers report lower levels of confidence. As expected, more experienced teachers (Year 4 and beyond) reported greater levels of confidence than teachers with fewer years of teaching. The induction experiences of Catholic school teachers in this study were similar in many ways to the

induction experiences reported in the literature (Huling-Austin, 1992, Varah et al., 1986; Veenman, 1984). However, the results here suggest that the induction process may be longer than is often assumed. Teachers in this study were typically in their fourth or fifth year of teaching before they achieved a somewhat stable level of confidence with their teaching. The results also showed that the induction process is not necessarily a linear one (i.e., improving from year to year). For example, teachers in their second year of teaching reported higher levels of confidence than teachers in their third year of teaching. It is not clear what causes this decrease in confidence in the induction process, but it points out the importance of support for induction past the first year or so of teaching. More research is needed on this aspect of the induction process.

Although there were not great differences among the three dimensions, beginning teachers identified several aspects of the religious dimension as concerns, especially those related to the practical aspect of religious education (preparing for liturgies and sacraments, teaching religion classes). Beginning teachers seemed less concerned about the moral or philosophical issues of the religious dimension (Catholic values, character education, sexual ethics).

With respect to the pedagogical and managerial dimension there were some aspects that seemed to pose difficulties for all beginning teachers. Planning instruction, classroom discipline, and understanding procedures and policies were the three areas where there were significant differences between beginning and more experienced teachers. Interestingly, some beginning teachers (Year 1) were most confident with the managerial dimension of teaching.

The cross-sectional survey data provided a profile of the induction process for teachers in the first 5 years of teaching. However, it should be noted that this study was exploratory in that some of the teacher groups were quite small and the survey was a self-report instrument. Future studies will need to use considerably larger samples and, for more valid and reliable results, should consider a longitudinal study, although such studies are much more difficult to manage than are cross-sectional studies.

The responses to the open-ended questions provided information on teacher induction that was complementary to the survey data. Teachers in this study were self-directed during their induction as no formal induction process was in place. In their quest for guidance, new teachers solicited support from a number of different sources; however, informal connections with experienced teachers and the principal provided the greatest support.

According to the results of this study, induction should take into account that many challenges still face teachers after their third year of teaching. One might assume that Year 3 teachers' abilities may be stronger; however, their

level of confidence did not differ appreciably from Year 1 participants. Why this may be so is a question for further research on teacher induction in Catholic schools.

Recent induction research offers relevant guidance for a model of induction for Catholic school teachers. As new Catholic school teachers in this study face similar challenges in the craft of teaching as is described in the literature, this research-based guidance may help. However, the religious dimension is not included in most of the current research; therefore, appropriate adjustments must be made. For example, as participants seem to “catch” the faith, opportunities to encounter it would have to be consciously incorporated into any suggestions taken from the research.

Support for new teachers in the religious dimension has not been explored in the research. The most significant source of support was simply observation of the environment, indicating that teacher roles and duties in Catholic education truly are being caught. The data suggested that teachers eventually seem to understand their role and duties, but that this came only through experience; however, Schlechty (1985) emphasized that it was critical to intentionally pass foundational values to new teachers, pointing out that one of the goals of induction was to transmit the values and norms of the culture to new members. However, more than a hand-off of foundational values is needed in the case of Catholic education. Leaving something as foundational as role definition to be transmitted by the culture may not be advisable given the results of other studies of teacher induction.

All Catholic school teachers, as new members in the community of Catholic learning, presumably share Catholic beliefs or are at least not hostile to them. It is assumed that new teachers in Catholic schools have an understanding of the core values and religious beliefs that guide education. What may be different is that the new teachers must learn how the beliefs and values of the faith apply in a classroom setting. For example, a new teacher’s philosophy of education may have been greatly influenced by the secular undergraduate preparation; this secular perspective on education may be vastly different than what is espoused in Catholic education. Religious values must be internalized differently than social values, and these values cannot be simply handed on to new members. Support for the transition from Catholic person to Catholic school teacher is something that is not discussed in the literature.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study have addressed a number of specific elements of what the literature reported as the induction process for new teachers. The results provided a research-based foundation for beginning to understand the

induction process as experienced by Catholic school teachers and elements necessary for a successful induction program for new Catholic school teachers. Specifically the focus was on the pedagogical, religious, and managerial dimensions of teaching; however, more information is needed to better understand how teachers develop their skills, particularly in the religious dimension. A follow-up study based on the results of this study but using interviews with teachers and others might help explain how a formal, well-designed induction process might better serve the professional and personal development of new teachers in Catholic schools. As well, the small number of teachers in some of the teacher groups raises questions as to the generalizability of the study, and it is recommended that further studies be conducted with larger teacher groups.

The foundation and structure of Catholic education, including its goals, values, attitudes, and examples, are provided by the faith. The faith expects that teachers in a Catholic school are not to view their work as a job, but rather as a vocation (Hotek, 1999). The Catholic dimension cannot be an add-on; rather, it is to be seamlessly incorporated into the entire school day. Catholic school teachers are to be the heart of the school (Hotek, 1999); they are to teach by what they are (Shimabukuro, 1999). New teachers, who receive their training largely in secular post-secondary institutions, face these added challenges with little or no preparation. If new teachers are not equipped to fulfill their role as the heart of the school, then the ability of the Catholic school to fulfill its mission will be compromised and the distinctive nature of Catholic schools may be placed in doubt.

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*Greg Chatlain is a principal with the Saskatoon Catholic School Division. Brian Noonan is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Dr. Brian Noonan, University of Saskatchewan, 28 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, SK, S7N 0X1, Canada.*