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'Policies on the Induction of new teachers'

This note provides an overview of a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) in which experts from several European countries exchanged ideas on policies for the induction of beginning teachers, and summarises the main policy conclusions. The ideas contained herein do not constitute EU policy.

Policy Context

- 1 The issue of induction (early career support) for new teachers is of particular concern in a context of shortages of teaching skills and high attrition rates (a large number of teachers leaving the profession within a few years of having joined it).
- 2 The European Commission Communication *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education* (2007)¹ noted that, where they exist, support measures for new teachers are still relatively unsystematic and emerging rather than well embedded.

“As regards new teachers, only half of the countries in Europe offer new teachers any systematic kind of support (e.g. induction, training, mentoring) in their first years of teaching. Explicit frameworks to assist teachers who experience difficulties in performing their duties adequately exist in only one third of countries.”

1 COM(2007) 392 final. 3.8.2007

- 3 In their response to the Commission's Communication, Ministers of Education² agreed in 2007 to make the teaching profession a more attractive career choice, and to improve the quality of teacher education and to provide initial education, early career support (induction) and further professional development that is coordinated, coherent, adequately resourced and quality assured. Teachers should have sufficient incentives throughout their careers to review their learning needs and to acquire new knowledge, skills and competence. They noted, inter alia, that:

“In order to enable teacher education systems to meet those challenges, better coordination is required between the various strands of teacher education - from initial education, through additional early career support (‘induction’³) to in-service professional development.”

- 4 They agreed to endeavour to ensure that teachers:
- have access to effective early career support programmes at the start of their career;
 - have access to adequate mentoring support throughout their careers;
 - are encouraged and supported throughout their careers to review their learning needs and to acquire new knowledge, skills and competence through formal, informal and non-formal learning, including exchanges and placements abroad.
- 5 The European Parliament on 23 September 2008 adopted a report⁴ on Improving the Quality of Teacher Education which, amongst other things:

“Urges that particular attention be paid to new teachers’ initial induction; encourages the development of support networks and mentoring programmes, through which teachers of proven experience and capacity can play a key role in new colleagues’ training, passing on knowledge acquired throughout successful careers, promoting team-learning and helping to tackle drop-out rates among new recruits; believes that by working and learning together, teachers can help improve a school’s performance and overall learning environment;...”

The PLA process

- 6 The Estonian Ministry of Education, together with Tallinn University, hosted the PLA in Tallinn from 26 to 30 October 2008.
- 7 21 people representing 9 Member States (AT, CY, DE, EE, ES, HU, NL, PT, SE) took part in the PLA. Representatives came from Ministries or (regional) government agencies, Teacher Education institutions or Trade Unions.

2 Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 15 November 2007, on improving the quality of teacher education (Official Journal 2007/C 300/07 of 12.12.2007)

3 'Induction' refers to the process in some Member States whereby newly qualified teachers during their first years of employment are provided with the additional support (e.g. through mentoring, training, advice) which they need to take on their new role within the school and the profession; it thus forms a bridge between initial teacher education and actual professional practice.

4 Report on improving the quality of teacher education (2008/2068(INI)) ; Committee on Culture and Education: Rapporteur: Maria Badia i Cutchet

- 8 The overall objective of the PLA was to derive policy conclusions and recommendations to help Member States to develop their policies on the induction of beginning teachers. The PLA provided participants with an opportunity to learn from other countries' policies and practice, and to reflect critically on the current arrangements in their own countries with a view to making appropriate modifications.
- 9 The PLA explored in detail the advantages of structured Induction programmes, the links between Induction, initial teacher education and continuing professional development, the common features of successful programmes, the roles of key stakeholders and conditions for the successful implementation of such programmes.
- 10 Preparatory material was circulated prior to the event by the host country and the Commission. The theoretical background to induction was outlined in a paper by Eve Eisenschmidt⁵. Available data on induction systems from Eurydice were provided⁷. Participants were asked to provide a pen-portrait of induction arrangements in the respective Member States. This approach worked well and ensured that the PLA could focus on analysing issues rather than describing systems and processes. Documentation relating to the PLA, including preparatory material, the programme, presentations, further reading and some pictures can be accessed at <http://www.tlu.ee/pla>.
- 11 Estonian input was provided by a number of stakeholders including beginning teachers, university and school-based mentors and school leaders.
- 12 The programme included attendance at part of an international conference entitled 'The beginning teacher in Northern Europe: challenges and possibilities', organised by Tallinn University for 'Newly Qualified Teachers in Northern Europe – Research and Development Network', as well as school visits.
- 13 Some participants agreed to act as facilitators/ chairs for one day of the PLA each. As on previous occasions, this worked well.
- 14 In addition to a detailed examination of the Estonian model of induction, presentations were received on early career support programmes in **Scotland, Germany and Cyprus**⁸.

Issues in induction

- 15 Comparison and contrasting of these different policies enabled participants to elucidate a number of key issues and questions concerning induction.
- 16 It became clear that the concept of induction is understood and implemented differently in different cultures and national contexts; for example, it is sometimes confused with periods of teaching practice, or with programmes of on-the-job training for new teachers. Furthermore, the structure of initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) affects the way in which different aspects of the induction process are, or are not, integrated in different countries. Where they exist, induction programmes may be

^{5, 7, 8} This can be downloaded from this page:
<http://www.tlu.ee/?LangID=1&CatID=3496&ArtID=2735&action=article>

voluntary or compulsory, localised or nationwide; they are sometimes but not always linked with procedures to judge a candidate's suitability to enter the teaching profession (probationary period); conversely, not all probationary periods include induction.

- 17 Similarly, as regards the concept of 'mentoring' it was agreed that the mentoring of student teachers and the mentoring of new teachers in induction are distinct (the former implying an unequal relationship between mentor and student, the latter implying an equal relationship between two members of the same profession); they need to be carefully distinguished from each other, and require different types of training for mentors.
- 18 It was agreed that induction has a pivotal role in the continuum of teacher lifelong learning, being able to relate back to ITE and prepare teachers for career-long CPD.
- 19 A good induction programme can establish in new teachers positive behaviours and attitudes regarding lifelong learning and reflective practice.
- 20 Local context and objectives will determine, for example,
 - whether or not an Induction policy should include formal assessment of the beginning teacher,
 - whether it should be associated with formal accreditation;
 - whether induction should be seen exclusively as providing support and perhaps additional development or training during teachers' first years in the profession, or, at the other extreme, as a qualifying process through which all potential entrants into the teaching profession have to pass successfully (which implies a summative assessment at the end of the induction period).
- 21 The impact of an induction policy extends far beyond the beginning teachers. The effect of having both beginning teachers and trained mentors in a school – each of which can be seen as agents for change - can be a catalyst for the further development of the school as a learning community, and for increasing the school's collective learning potential. It can enhance teaching quality and pupil learning. The selection and training of experienced teachers as mentors can offer them further career prospects, and capitalise upon their expertise.
- 22 In instituting a new induction policy, an appropriate balance needs to be found between 'top-down' regulation and bottom-up approaches.

Policy Conclusions

Definition

- 23 The following working definition was proposed:

Induction is the period at the beginning of a teacher's career in which beginning teachers, having completed their period of initial teacher education, first assume full professional responsibility for learners (as opposed to engage in practical teaching experience). During this period, which normally lasts from one to three years, beginning

teachers receive additional support, for example a reduced timetable, observation and/or mentoring.

24 Induction comprises these main elements:

- Personal support (to help the new teacher develop his / her identity as a teacher)
- Social support (to assist in becoming a member of the school and professional community)
- Professional support (on pedagogy, didactics, subject, etc)
- Emotional support

The benefits of induction policies

25 The PLA came to the conclusion that a systematic programme of induction should be seen as both an entitlement and an obligation for new teachers.

26 Participants articulated the following reasons for introducing an induction system.

27 For the beginning teacher, it was seen to:

- provide invaluable support at a crucial stage of their career as they move from being students to being teachers in the classroom;
- support acculturation and socialisation into the teaching profession;
- support teacher learning which is fundamentally different from that taking place during initial teacher education.
- support personal /emotional growth.

28 For the education system as a whole, a systematic programme of induction for all beginning teachers can

- combat drop out of newly qualified teachers (thereby saving money and improving the efficiency of Teacher Education systems);
- foster a culture of lifelong learning, professional development;
- develop agency in teachers as professionals responsible for leading learning;
- support the development of desirable habits and behaviours in teachers.
- ensure the consistency and quality of support for new teachers;
- contribute to quality assurance and the enhancement of teaching and learning in schools;
- contribute to school development, school improvement, leadership (of learning) and the culture of schools as learning communities;
- foster partnership and cooperation between stakeholders (e.g. schools, Teacher Education Institutions);
- bridge the (perceived) gap between theory and practice in initial teacher education.

Induction as support mechanism

29 Participants deemed it important for effective Induction programmes to include the following types of support for new teachers:

- personal support (to help develop identity as a teacher);
- social support (to become member of the school and professional community);
- professional support (pedagogy, didactics, subject);
- emotional support.

Essential elements of an Induction programme

30 The following were considered to be important components of an induction programme, from a beginning teacher's perspective:

- a system of **mentoring**, (individual and group); access to subject specialist mentors is seen to be of particular importance;
- a **peer** system (including opportunities to network within and across schools);
- an **expert** system: access to external advice; access to relevant knowledge bases, e.g. through seminars/ courses, support materials, resources and guidelines;
- a **self-reflection** system: opportunities and frameworks for beginning teachers to reflect on their own learning at a meta level; this might include a recording system, e.g. the use of portfolios, observation of and feedback on teaching, team-teaching, diaries etc.

Conditions for success

31 Participants also defined the following key conditions for successful induction policies:

- Induction needs to be seen as part of a continuum: building on ITE and feeding into CPD. This means in practice that there need to be effective links and strong communication between the providers of these different elements; this requires these actors to share a common language about teacher qualities. It requires each stage on the continuum to include activities appropriate to that stage, and an avoidance of duplication.
- There is a need for clear roles and responsibilities to be defined - and owned - by all stakeholders. The key actors in induction policies include:
 - New teachers
 - Mentors
 - School leaders
 - Teacher educators
 - Ministry and/or local authority
 - Unions/ professional bodies/ steering boards.
- Induction requires investment of adequate financial and time resources. Especially

important is that beginning teachers and mentors have a reduced teaching timetable to allow time for the mentoring process to be undertaken seriously. For mentors there could also be incentives and recognition of their additional responsibilities, such as through a responsibility allowance.

- Close co-operation across the various of phases of initial training and professional development based on mutual trust between all concerned is essential.
 - The learning environment in the new teacher's school needs to be supportive and recognize diverse needs. This includes a focus on collaboration, leadership of learning, the promotion of a learning environment conducive to learning as well as a view of beginning teachers as an asset to schools. Support to new teachers could include, for example, not allocating the most challenging groups to new teachers, as well as a reduced teaching timetable, etc;
 - It is important to ensure the qualities and competence of all the actors, e.g. appropriate training of and qualifications for teacher educators and mentors and the involvement of expert teachers. The competences and commitment of school leaders are especially important for successful induction policies.
- 32 Regular review and evaluation of induction policies and provision is considered to be essential. One criterion for a quality Induction system is the level of commitment shown by all stakeholders to the development of evidence-informed practice, i.e. the desire to monitor the effectiveness of the system and, where necessary and appropriate, improve it. Induction programmes can be a valuable source of feedback to initial Teacher Education providers, and of information to providers of CPD.

Policy Questions

- 33 In the light of all the induction systems reviewed, participants noted that the following kinds of policy questions were likely to arise during the establishment of a new induction policy or programme:
- how to ensure that all schools have the opportunity to take part in induction programmes;
 - how to ensure consistency of implementation across schools;
 - how to involve beginning teachers as much as possible in the design and evaluation of the programme;
 - how to keep the administrative burden for all parties manageable;
 - how to ensure ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of relationships between stakeholders (e.g. effective co-operation between programme leaders and mentors in schools);
 - how to foster awareness and ownership of the programme by all stakeholders, in particular school leaders;
 - whether to make mentor training available to all staff and not just to prospective mentors, with a view to raising awareness about the needs of beginning teachers across the entire school;

- how to provide paid non-teaching time during which mentors and beginning teachers can work together; minimise reliance on the goodwill of participants;
- whether detailed regulations and guidelines are conducive and/or necessary;
- how to ensure the clearest possible articulation of the induction system with initial teacher education and continuing professional development; and to ensure that each builds on the previous stage;
- how to ensure appropriate resourcing.