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## **Beginning teacher induction in secondary schools: A best practice case study**

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Beginning teacher induction is becoming an increasingly popular process in acculturating teachers to their new careers. The problems that teachers face early in their careers are well known, and effective and ongoing induction is one of the foremost practices for alleviating the pressures that teachers face early in their careers. While induction practices have become more common in recent years, there are still no mandated structures for inducting teachers into the profession throughout Australia. In a collective case study of six different programs in independent schools in Sydney, Australia, the author showcases one case in particular that illustrated best practice when matched against other well-known, successful international programs. In the current article the induction program is viewed in light of best practice internationally, and best practice criteria that have been ascertained from a selection of local, national and international reports and an international review of induction programs. The article showcases what best practice looks like from the perspective of the teachers who have undertaken the program and the school leadership who implemented the program.

### **Introduction**

The current paper is part of a series of papers on induction in independent schools in NSW, Australia (Kearney, 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2015; 2016). The larger study examined a number of programs across the state to ascertain the nature of induction programs for beginning teachers in independent schools. Independent schools were chosen, as they have no bureaucratic hierarchy and therefore no standardised plan for the induction of beginning teachers. Although examples of successful induction abound in the literature, there are few articles that highlight not only the quality of the program, but also present the program from multiple points of view.

In the present article one program is exemplified as a pillar of best practice, not only from the teachers' points of view, but also when compared to other such programs highlighted in the literature. The effects of successful programs have been reported upon (see Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) and a previous article by the author has also highlighted the impacts and effects of inadequate induction on new teachers (see Kearney, 2016). What makes the current article different is that it provides an example that can be followed or modified to fit the contexts of other schools. By reviewing and analysing this program the challenges and opportunities of beginning teacher induction start to become apparent. While the induction program depicted in this article may not suit every school context, the explication of that program can showcase and illustrate facets of successful induction that can be replicated, with some modification for contextual variation, in other contexts.

## Background

Induction programs have received much attention over the past two decades as one of the most effective practices in acculturating new teachers to their new profession (Jensen, 2010; Serpell, 2000; Wojnowski, Bellamy & Cooke, 2003). In New South Wales in particular, the Department of Education (DE), Regional Catholic Education Offices (CEO) and some private schools have adopted particular criteria for beginning teacher induction and training. The policies and guidelines that govern many of these criteria, specifically in government schools and the Catholic Diocesan sector, are aligned with recommended practice in the current literature; however, as there is no governing body for the independent sector of schooling, what happens to new teachers within that sector is at the discretion of the school.

The level of scrutiny of induction programs in all schooling sectors presents a challenging situation in the execution of induction programs at the school level (Kearney, 2013); a situation that may have serious consequences for sustaining a quality-teaching workforce nationally (Kearney, 2014a). While the NSW DE and the various Catholic Education Offices may have structures in place to enforce policies, independent schools, which account for more than 15.5% of students and almost 20% of teachers and is the fastest growing school sector in the country (ISCA, 2010, 2011), do not. Independent schools are autonomous and therefore their programs are not subject to the same scrutiny as other systems of schools. The recommendations made by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) in 2002 and subsequent recommendations by the New South Wales Institute of Teachers (2005) (now the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards, BOSTES), states that all beginning teachers should undergo an induction process that includes mentoring and ongoing support. Unfortunately these recommendations have culminated in minimal action, which has not produced the desired effect (Kearney, 2013).

The nature of independent schooling in Australia requires definition and further exploration to contextualise the current paper. Independent schooling is the fastest growing sector in Australia. While fewer than 5% of students were educated in independent schools in 1980s, they now account for more than 15% of all students (ISCA, 2011). Independent schools' share of enrolments has grown at a rate of almost six times that of the government sector (or 290,000 students), compared with public sector growth (51,000 students since 1985) (ISCA, 2011). By way of example, in 1970, 78% of students were educated in the public sector. The sector then lost 3% of their market share by 1980 and another 5% by 1990 (ISCA, 2011). By 2010, the public schooling sector was down to just over 65% market share and the number of government schools decreased by over 130 schools in the same period (Gonski, Boston, Greiner, Lawrence, Scales & Tannock, 2011). As a result of the growth of the independent sector at the expense of government schools, there can be no doubt that the independent schooling sector in Australia is an integral component in the foundation of Australian education. While not the biggest or the best necessarily, this sector provides a diversity of educational opportunities to Australians from all walks of life.

The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) is the national advocate for independent schooling, and each state has an Association of Independent Schools (AIS), which advocates for independent schools within its state or territory. The AIS has state roles and responsibilities and provides services, unlike the ISCA, whose main purpose is advocacy. In NSW, there are 449 registered independent schools (AIS, n.d.) which constitutes an 85% increase over the past 20 years, and is by far the largest sector of independent schools in the country, accounting for 15.6% of all students in NSW (AIS, n.d.).

One initiative of the AIS that directly correlates to induction is teacher accreditation, which is the core business of the BOSTES at the mandatory level of *Proficiency*. There are, however, two non-compulsory levels of higher accreditation offered by the BOSTES: *Highly accomplished* and *Lead*. Certain independent schools choose to have their own accreditation at the higher levels, rather than using the BOSTES accreditation. The NSW AIS (n.d.) explains this on their website:

Teacher accreditation in NSW independent schools takes a number of different forms depending on the type of industrial agreement in place and a range of other factors. In all instances, new teachers [those who commenced after October 2004 or are returning after an absence of five years or more] must be registered with BOSTES. Teachers can be recognised and, where relevant, remunerated by gaining accreditation through the BOSTES and/or the Independent Schools Teacher Accreditation Authority.

In addition to the AIS in each state there is also the Independent Education Union (IEU), which advocates on behalf of teachers who work in independent schools. The IEU supports formal, structured induction that provides support at both system and school levels, and their policy on the induction of beginning teachers is very much aligned with best practice models and the elements of effective induction, identified in the literature review.

In general, school induction programs should provide a variety of forms of assistance to the beginning teacher which supplement the beginning teacher's background knowledge with information of a specific kind relating to the school and its community, which capitalise on the beginning teacher's previous training, and assist him/her to deal in a practical way with classroom management, curriculum planning, teaching method, and other facets such as administration procedures of the beginning teacher's teaching (IEU, 2005)

The advocacy for induction by the IEU has been one of their biggest campaigns since the inception of the NSWIT in 2004 and mandatory teacher accreditation; while relatively unsuccessful at attaining sector-wide compliance on these issues, the IEU is resolute in their position on beginning teacher induction (IEU, n.d.).

The nature of independent schooling in Australia is a complex system that, despite a lack of government oversight, is outperforming other school sectors. To understand the necessity to conduct research in the independent sector, a contextual awareness of the multifarious nature of these schools must be appreciated and accepted.

## Literature review

The varying nature and perception of induction make the design of universal programs difficult. The multifarious variables between institutions, sectors, regional versus metropolitan schools and an array of other contextual variables make common programs unfeasible. What can help in this space is a common understanding of the term induction, especially in differentiating the term from commonly used synonyms, such as mentoring or orientation. While mentoring and orientation are common synonyms for induction (Fulton, Yoon & Lee, 2005; Wong, 2004) they are misused in this context. Similarly, beginning teacher induction needs to be conceptualised as differing from induction of a new employee to the same profession (Kearney, 2014b). A common definition for the induction of new teachers has been put forward as: the primary phase in a continuum of professional development leading to the teacher's full integration into a professional community of practice and continuing professional learning throughout their career (Kearney, 2013). The definition, whilst long, provides a comprehensive understanding of the integration of induction as a phase in a teacher's career, rather than as a finite intervention for new teachers, either to a school or to the profession.

Teachers who are entering a new profession for the first time can be nervous and, by some accounts, underprepared for the challenges of teaching on their own. There are few careers where new professionals are faced with the same responsibilities as their more experienced counterparts (Halford, 1998). Neophyte teachers are often given extra duties and more difficult classes, even at a time where they are still getting accustomed to the nuances of their new career (Kearney, 2014b). Seminal work on the study of induction programs for beginning teachers by McDonald (1982) found:

[O]n the problem of beginning teachers the results are uniform and almost identical irrespective of the empirical method used to ascertain them, the quality of the design and analysis in particular studies, the decade when the study was done, and even the country where the study was done. This near universal agreement is either a close estimate of the true state of affairs or a widespread delusion. (p.10)

There is no doubt that induction programs and specific focus on the nuances of new teachers starting their careers has gained wider attention since the time McDonald made this observation; however, the problems that beginning teachers face in a time of greater accountability for both teachers and school systems does not seem to have eased those pressures. Recently, there has been a resurgence in literature identifying induction as a form of professional development to build skills and to arrest teacher attrition rates (Helms-Lorenz, van der Grift & Maulana, 2017), which first gained prominence in the early 2000s (see Ingersoll & Smith, 2004) and more recently in Australia (Kearney, 2014). While the evidence still remains inconclusive as the actual effect of induction cannot be directly correlated to attrition rates, the evidence suggests that there is a correlation (Kearney, 2014a; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017).

What is known is that in the past decade, new teachers have cited inadequate mentoring and supervision, lack of support in behaviour management, excessive responsibilities and

failure to recognise and reward professional growth in their early years as common concerns (Hudson, 2012; McCormack 2005; Ramsey 2000). The available evidence on induction in Australia, the United States and internationally, shows considerable inconsistencies in the quality and availability of effective induction programs (Gujarati; 2012; Ingersoll, 2012; Kearney, 2016; 2014b; Long, et al., 2012). The available evidence suggests that these pressures could be eased by adequate and effective beginning teacher induction (AITSL, 2016; Haynes, 2014)

In a national review by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) (2002), which sought to: “Improve the preparation and support of beginning teachers by identifying their needs, and by identifying principles and practices that are effective in assisting them to make the transition from initial training to teaching in schools” (p.9), the Australian Government recognised the need for effective and ongoing induction for all beginning teachers, but failed to go as far as to mandate them. Analyses of studies by DEST (2002), NSWIT (2005) and the Australian Education Union (AEU) (2008) concluded that despite the recommendations by various government authorities, the rhetoric of the importance of induction programs does not match the reality of what is happening in many schools.

The research around induction is comprehensive and more recent literature continues to confirm that effective induction for neophytes is one of the best ways to help beginning teachers in the early years of their careers. Previous research by the author has described the characteristics of effective beginning teacher induction in the Australian context (Kearney, 2014b); proposed a new way to conceptualise beginning teacher induction, (Kearney, 2015); described the effects of inadequate induction on neophyte teachers (Kearney, 2016); and, looked at the effect of attrition of beginning teachers on the teacher workforce Australia-wide (Kearney, 2014a). The current article continues to view induction through various lenses to provide the reader and educational institutions with a research basis for the implementation of effective programs. What follows here is a case study of an induction program that is not only perceived as effective from the school’s and teachers’ points of view, but also meets many of the benchmarks set by international programs that have been cited in the literature as being effective (see table 1).

## **Methodology**

The case study that follows was part of a larger study that examined induction programs in schools throughout NSW, Australia "(Kearney, 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2015; 2016). The purpose of that project was to ascertain the nature of induction programs in various schools and schooling sectors in the state, to see if there was a common thread and/or any type of congruency in those programs. The project utilised a framework of organisational socialisation by which to view the process of beginning teacher induction. By utilising a practice that was and is prominent in other sectors of business and organisations more generally, it was hoped that schools would recognise the benefits of induction for neophytes as in investment in human resources, rather than as a drain on their budget. This conceptualisation of induction as organisational socialisation (see

Kearney, 2015) allowed for the project to extend beyond schools and allow educational leaders to view the idea more broadly.

The methods used within the collective case study to gather data included surveys, interviews and the collection of supporting documentation and policies related to induction that were either specific to that school or the schooling sector, more broadly. A secondary aim of the study was the hope to find at least one outstanding program that could become a 'model' for others to follow. This is not to say that induction programs should be standardised or uniform throughout the state, but rather that having a model of best practice could provide a platform by which other schools and/or schooling sectors could build upon or create programs that meet their contextual needs.

The research process occurred across three phases: firstly, a survey was sent to over 100 schools throughout NSW to determine how many would self-report as having a teacher induction program. Once they self-selected, the school would be contacted to see if they would agree to take part in the study. This was more difficult than expected. Many schools seemed unsure that their induction would meet the criteria of the study, despite the fact that the study had no criteria for what an induction program should include or how it should be conceptualised. The intent of having the schools self-select was that any school that believed they had an induction program could participate in the study. Because induction is conceptualised and defined quite differently across schools, there was no exclusion criteria for any school that self-identified as having a beginning teacher induction program. This process was undertaken through an online survey. If schools self-identified as having an induction program, they were eligible to participate in the research.

Upon self-identifying as a school with a beginning teacher induction program the administrator of the program was contacted and interviewed and subsequently asked to invite teachers in the school who had participated in the program to be interviewed. The interviews were extensive and open-ended, each lasting over an hour. In the case reported here (Case 5), five separate teacher interviews were conducted and one administrator was interviewed. There was a great deal of congruency between all the teachers' stories about their induction and the administrator's conception and description of the program, which helped with validation. What is presented here are summaries of the interpreted narratives (Creswell, 2007) to present the teachers' collective experience. While individual quotes and anecdotes are sometimes used, the intention of this article is not to present the teachers' experience, but rather present the program as an exemplar of best practice, utilising the teachers' experiences and international best practice as the justification and evidence of the program's effectiveness.

## **Results: Case 5**

The case that follows is a large co-educational independent Catholic secondary school in the outer suburbs of Sydney with approximately 1500 to 2000 students. The foundation of the school is based on the values of a learning community, whereby all members of the school community learn from one another. Of note is that in recent years there has been a shift in the governance of the school: the religious order that owned and ran the school



transferred their power to a company limited by guarantee. The principal of the school now delegates power to the board for all areas of responsibility within the school. The principles of the school's educational policies are entrenched in the teachings of the gospel, and are in keeping with the traditions on which it was founded.

### **Administrator**

The interview with the administrator lasted over an hour and provided a wealth of information about the school, their induction program, and the impetus for the introduction of that program. The administrator was recently appointed to their new role, which oversees teacher induction processes. The first point of action in changing the school's 'old' induction program was to differentiate the processes of orientation and induction. The school ensured that all teachers new to the school received an "induction of sorts" which provided an orientation to the school community and the vision and mission of the school. They also introduced a beginning teacher induction program that was specifically designed to meet the needs of new teachers entering the profession for the first time to "properly induct" all new teachers "according to the NSWIT definition of induction, and our interpretation of that induction." The beginning teacher induction program at the school was described as a "forward thinking program". The program also includes an induction/orientation day with the regional CEO, which provides an orientation to Catholic education.

The components of the induction at the school are entrenched in the ethos of the school and reflected in school policies. The policies regarding new teachers to the school and those specific to beginning teachers include: New Scheme Teacher (NST) Induction (New Scheme Teacher is the term used for beginning teachers who started in the profession after 1 October 2004 in NSW, Australia); New Staff Orientation; Schedule for New Staff Induction; Professional Development of Teachers; and a Statement on Release Time for NSTs and Supervisors. The program offers the provision of a mentor. The mentors assigned are Key Learning Area (KLA) or discipline specific. In other words, if the beginning teacher teaches history and English, the mentor would also, where possible, teach history and English. All mentor teachers have at least five years of teaching experience, but most appointed mentors at the school have over ten years of experience. The school offers two periods per week release time for beginning teachers and a 0.9 teaching load for beginning teacher mentors. The program is mandatory for all beginning teachers, but any teacher in the school can get similar support from a mentor, if they choose. Release time however, is reserved for beginning teachers and teachers who are nominated by their manager to receive extra support.

The induction program lasts for two years, which is not dependent on accreditation. Even teachers who reach full accreditation at Proficiency level continue with the program for the full two years. Each teacher who goes through the program has an exit interview, where they are able to discuss and talk about both the challenges of accreditation and the suitability of the program to meet their needs over the course of the first two years of employment. Any shortcomings reported during this interview are then addressed and changes are made in the following year's program:

We feel that the only way we can meet the needs of our beginning teachers NSTs is by listening to what they need. I would say that we have implemented at least three to four additional support structures since I have taken on this role and all of those new initiatives came from the surveys we received. It's the only way to ensure quality from our teachers.

He goes on to say:

We value teachers here at [name of school omitted], whether new to the profession, new to the school, or whether they've been here for 10 to 20 years.... They are all important to us and we need to ensure that we take care of them, to get the best out of them, and subsequently our students.

The induction program includes structured observations of lessons. The mentor is responsible for observing two lessons per term for the first two years and the beginning teacher is required to observe more experienced teachers' lessons two times per term. In addition to observations, mentors and beginning teachers meet at least weekly, during the first year, to discuss any issues or problems. The beginning teachers also meet with the administrator of the program twice yearly to "check in and ensure everything is running smoothly... it is my job to ensure they understand that the two free periods each week should be devoted to three things: observations, meeting with their mentors, and their accreditation portfolios. Everything else should be done during their normal planning periods."

The program administrator is happy with the organisation of the program and although would like to be more involved, does not have the time. One point of improvement that was noted in the interview included closer supervision of the mentors: "The school is doing everything it can to ensure the smooth transition of these teachers ... sometimes the procedures and policies in place just aren't followed and that's when things start to unravel." A specific success of the program is that teachers tend to stay at the school longer than other similar schools, which according to the administrator, have higher rates of teacher turnover.

## **Teachers**

The teachers interviewed at the school were all in their second year of teaching and the second year of the induction program; the school did not hire any new teachers in the year prior to the interview, which is why all of the beginning teachers were in their second year.

The teachers found that the provision of a mentor was the most critical and useful aspect of the program at the school. Conversely, they found that the mandatory CEO induction days were the least relevant aspect of the induction program at the school. One teacher articulated this sentiment well:

We are not part of the CEO so I'm not sure why we had to go. Some of the stuff was okay, but most of the day was not relevant to us; my time could have been spent more productively.

Although these teachers all described their induction experiences in different ways and emphasised different facets of the program they thought were useful, all reported that the support they received from their mentors and other teachers was imperative in making them into better teachers. One teacher commented that, “without [name withheld] I wouldn’t have survived. She was my rock! Anytime I needed anything, which was there to help – not to hold my hand, but to help me through the difficult times.” Another teacher added,

the time we had to meet with the mentors that was the time I learned the most. The time was vital, but without the mentor groups, I’m not sure I would have known what to do with that extra time.

Next to mentoring and staff support the teachers all agreed that the structured time release from classes was a vital aspect of the program. Although that release time was supposed to be spent with the mentor or on the accreditation portfolio, one of the teachers found that the time was useful for other things:

It was useful for planning and catching up on all the stuff you need to do during that first year, you know. It was also great to have those opportunities to observe and be observed and then debrief with your mentor. I don’t know how you fit all that in if you’re on a full [teaching] load.

Another teacher had similar sentiments when asked how she spent her free periods:

Well I know we are supposed to be doing the institute stuff, but there is so much other stuff we have to do as well. I’m much more focused on accreditation this year, but last year you needed all that extra time just to do your normal teaching stuff.

Another teacher felt that the school-based orientation days at the beginning of the year were quite useful in understanding the day-to-day workings of the school, but found that the orientation lacked any specificity to beginning teachers. He thought that what was most necessary for both orientation and beginning teacher induction was more KLA (subject) specific components that deal specifically with teaching and learning:

All this accreditation stuff is okay, I mean I get it and I know it's important, but my job is to teach and I think it needs to deal more with what is really going on in the classroom. When there is all this paperwork that doesn't deal with what's important it becomes separate from teaching.

This sentiment correlates with what the other teachers had to say with regard to the accreditation requirements. While they understood the importance of it, they all felt that in the first year of teaching, it was hard enough to teach and ensure students are learning, without the added encumbrance of the accreditation portfolio. This idea was articulated by a teacher who said that the portfolio was, “lengthy, complicated and burdensome” especially when coupled with, “the difficulty of being a first year teacher.”

In addition to the support they received from their mentors and other teachers, the beginning teachers reported that the program encouraged them to pursue external

professional development, seminars and meetings specific to beginning teachers. Two teachers remarked that the induction program was the first phase of the professional development policy at the school and noted this as one of the success factors of the program. Another teacher commented that it was a “seamless transition from the induction process to fully-fledged teacher because you go straight from the first phase of professional development into the second; that's just the way it works here.”

All five teachers praised the resources they were given in their first few days at the school. The policies and procedures laid out in those documents supported their transition from teacher education students to professionals and outlined expectations of the school and what they could expect in return:

The booklet [the administrator] gave to all of us at the start of the year was such a huge help and relief. I know some of my friends who work in other schools got nothing; I don't know how they survived. We were provided with everything: policies, expectations, procedures ... It was all so helpful; whenever there was an issue you could look back on those policies and find out what to do.

When asked a simple question about how they would rate the induction program out of five, all but one gave it 5/5, with one rating it 4. At the end of the interview I asked each teacher if there was anything they would like to add, only one teacher had a comment at that point:

I think the program is crucial for all new teachers to remain in the profession, but you can't confuse the accreditation process with induction to the profession, otherwise you risk doing both insufficiently. They are both essential, but need to be separate.

### **Comparison of Case 5**

Tables 1 and 2 rate the induction program presented in this paper against the characteristics for effective induction and elements of international best practice induction programs (Kearney, 2014b). The characteristics of effective induction were deduced by examining a number of significant papers: international reports (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009; Fulton et al, 2005; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997; OECD, 2011); Australian national reports (DEST, 2002, 2003); an international review of induction programs (Howe, 2006); a review of induction in the U.S. (Serpell, 2000); two empirical studies (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wood & Stanulis, 2009); and a report of state-level induction practices in New South Wales (NSW DET, 2004).

International best practice induction was conducted in much the same way, by examining those international programs that were most prominent and showcased in the literature, these included: Japan (Fulton et al., 2005; Howe, 2006; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997; Pain & Schwille, 2010; Wong et al., 2005), Germany (Howe, 2006; Pain & Schwille, 2010), New Zealand (Howe, 2006; Langdon, 2011; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997; Pain & Schwille, 2010; Wong et al., 2005), Switzerland (Fulton et al., 2005; Howe, 2006; Pain & Schwille, 2010; Wong et al., 2005), China (Fulton et al., 2005; Pain & Schwille, 2010; Wong et al.,

2005), France (Fulton et al., 2005; Pain & Schwille, 2010; Wong et al., 2005), Canada (Cherubini, 2007; Ministry of Education (Ontario), 2008; Pain & Schwille, 2010) and two programs in the United States: California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) in California (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Fulton et al., 2005; Howe, 2006; Pultorak & Lange, 2010; Strong, 2005) and, the Beginning Educator Support and Training Program (BEST) in Connecticut (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Fulton et al., 2005; Howe, 2006; Wong, 2004).

Table 1: Characteristics of effective induction: Case 5

Components of effective induction	Case 5
Orientation	
• To the profession	X
• To the school	X
Provision of a mentor	
• Mentor training	X
• Time release/reduced teaching for mentor	X
Collaboration	
• With beginning teachers	X
• With more experienced colleagues	X
• Team teaching	X
Structured observations	X
Reduced teaching load and/or release time	X
Interaction with university	
Intense workplace learning	
Socialisation process	
Focus on reflection	X
Provides resources / information	X
Beginning teacher seminars / meetings	X
Promotes lifelong learning	X
Evaluates the teacher	X
Evaluates the program	X
Professional discussions / communication	X
Professional support / networking	X
Professional development program	X

## Discussion

This program was a standout amongst the many programs that were part of the larger research project. The aspects that stood out and that relate to international best practice were: the provision of subject-specific mentors; reduced teaching load, for both the beginning teacher and the mentor; and, the evaluation of the program each year by teachers who undergo the program, which has led to modifications to the program. The annual evaluation of the program is also useful in dealing with future changes to the

accreditation process and allows the programs to be adaptable to the changing requirements of government and the changing needs of teachers.

Table 2: Best practice induction: Case 5

Components of best practice	Case 5
Mandated program	X
Length of program	2 yrs
Responsibility	School / CEO
Provision of a mentor	
• Mentor training	X
• Mentor remuneration	-
• Mentor time release/ reduced teaching	X
Collaboration	
• With beginning teachers	X
• With more experienced colleagues	X
• Team teaching	-
Structured observations	X
Reduced teaching load and/or release time	X (10% reduction)
Interaction with university	-
Intense workplace learning	-
Socialisation process	-
Focus on reflection	X
Beginning teacher seminars / meetings	X
Promotes lifelong learning	X
Professional discussions / communication	X
Assessment and evaluation of teacher	X
Assessment and evaluation of program	X
Professional support / networking	X
Professional development program	X
Cost / funding	Not available
Funding derivation	School
Overall goals	Acculturation to the school within the Catholic ethos

The induction program is centred on the Catholic ethos and the pastoral role with regard to both teachers and students. The needs of teachers drive the induction processes in this case and are further supported by numerous policies that outline the expectations and supports available for beginning teachers at the school. The beginning teachers all agreed that it was the support structures that were most pivotal in ensuring their success; not only in becoming accredited teachers, but in helping them become better practitioners.

The two main facets of support were the provision of a mentor and release time for both the beginning teacher and the mentor. A reduced teaching load for both the teacher and

the mentor was pivotal in the success of the program from the teachers' perspective and one that illustrates institutional commitment to the program. Arguably, the mentor plays the most significant role in any induction program (Matters, 2002). By appointing a mentor who was a subject-specific experienced teacher, but who was also not the beginning teachers' line-manager, the teachers felt that they could ask for help if and when needed. In addition, because both were given time for meetings and observations neither felt as if they were a burden to the other, which allowed for genuine mentor-mentee relationships to develop.

The policies to support teachers at the school are impressive, especially when weighed against the standard set by other schools in the broader research. The school has a policy for new staff orientation; a policy on NST induction; a schedule for NST induction, which provides a comprehensive timeline for NSTs to follow throughout the induction and accreditation process; a separate statement on release time, which explains the rationale for release time for NSTs and how this time is meant to be utilised; and finally, a policy on the professional development of teachers as a continuum starting with induction. These policies provide a comprehensive understanding of the induction process and how that process fits in with the school's vision. An examination of the policies and the procedures in this case is reflective of the three stages of induction encouraged by the DEST almost 15 years ago, which recommended: orientation, establishment and development. According to DEST (2002), inductees can expect: "orientation to the profession and/or the organisation; personal and professional support; and, opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes essential for effective teaching" (2002, p.11).

The policy on orientation provides new teachers with a "systematic introduction of new employees to their job, their new colleagues and [the school]. It needs to make them feel welcomed by [the school] and staff; and it needs to familiarise them with [the school] culture" ([school] New Staff Orientation Policy, 2008). In the establishment phase the policy on NST induction states that: "Induction should be seen as the initial professional phase of ongoing professional development of all teachers at the [the school]. Hence this induction should be planned and systematically implemented over one year" [school] New Scheme Teachers Induction Policy, 2008). Finally, the policy on professional development states that, "Professional Development builds on induction or orientation because it is future oriented and is aimed at the needs of: teachers as individuals, academic departments and the College as a Learning Community" ([school] Draft Policy on the Professional Development of Teachers, 2011).

One anomaly that was found was in the timeline expected for accreditation and the length of the induction program. While the administrator reported that the induction process is meant to be completed within two years and that teachers would continue to be supported for two years, regardless of whether they completed the accreditation process sooner, the policies were not as clear. The New Scheme Teacher Induction Policy states that, "induction should be planned and systematically implemented over one year," and the statement on Release Time for Supervisors, Mentors and New Scheme Teachers reports that, "[school] expects accreditation to be completed over a 12 to 18 month period."

While the inconsistency in timeframes reported by different policies may indicate that when these policies were developed there was some confusion over the time necessary for beginning teachers to complete the accreditation process and how long the induction program would be, when asked about this, the administrator stood by what was reported in the interview and said that the policies were still catching up to current practice: “The rule of thumb was that teachers finish the accreditation in two years and get the full school support over that time. This is what was established from some of those earlier evaluations by teachers who had participated in the program.”

In fairness, all school policies are in effect for five years and then scheduled for review, which means that the two policies referred to are not due for review for another couple of years; however, when queried again about the policies and about the review cycle, the administrator was unperturbed: “it’s about what we say and do and what we expect from our teachers that matters; not what the policies say.”

Over the course of this research, I became sceptical in accepting what administrators told me about their programs, because in many instances, it contrasted starkly with what the teachers were reporting; however, at this school the general principle of pastoral care for both staff and students seemed to prevail. The teachers had very high praise for the school and their induction program. At the time of interview, as mentioned, all five teachers who were interviewed had been teaching for between one and two years and none had completed their accreditation process, and all were still reaping the benefits of the induction program.

## **Conclusion**

It is difficult to make assertions about a program cited as best practice and what constitutes best practice. In the case presented, the triangulation of data from the administrator, the teachers and the document review all correlated, for the most part, so that what is presented is an accurate illustration of induction at that school. It is this correlation between the three that makes this program successful.

Developing and implementing beginning teacher induction programs that meet standards of international best practice can be seen as an unreachable goal for many schools; however, what this paper has tried to illustrate is that the elements that make programs successful are not necessarily those which cost the most money. While the case presented here emphasised the time release of teachers, which could be seen as a major cost, the aspect that the beginning teachers found most helpful was the provision of a subject-specific mentor who was not their direct manager. In addition, the program sought to understand the specific and unique needs of teachers entering a new career for the first time and trying to develop specific support mechanisms to ease their transition into the profession. These supports take many different forms and need to be context specific to the school and the teacher; however, many schools’ induction programs, if they have them, are not meeting the needs of neophyte teachers beginning their teaching profession.



In mid-July 2016 the national body that accredits teaching programs and develops the frameworks and standards for accrediting new teachers in Australia, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), released *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession*, which has been endorsed by all the state and territory Ministers for Education in Australia and “set out a nationally consistent approach to ensure quality induction and support for beginning teachers as they navigate their first years in the profession” (AITSL, n.d.). This is a great initiative in attempting to get a nationally consistent approach to induction; however, it is yet to be seen how effective the guidelines will be. As the literature review presented revealed since 2002 the Australian Government has been pushing and encouraging induction programs for all beginning teachers, yet the practices across the country are inconsistent and are not meeting the needs of those teachers (Kearney, 2013).

There is evidence to suggest that induction for new teachers can be outstanding, if and when schools appreciate the premise of induction as intended by DEST (2002), NSWIT (2005), the IEU and now AITSL (2016). However, the question must be asked whether encouragement and the creation of guidelines will work to improve the nature of beginning teacher induction in Australia? National guidelines for teacher induction are a step in the right direction, but ultimately it comes down to schools and systems to ensure teachers are getting the supports they need to have successful careers. When schools implement induction programs with a clear intention of providing support and guidance to their neophytes to better acculturate them to the school and the teaching profession, rather than as a mandate from a bureaucratic institution that they feel is an imposition on their independence, only then will the induction they provide have the requisite positive effect on the careers of their beginning teachers. Through a comparison with international best practice it is evident that it is possible for independent schools, with the requisite resources and knowledge, to implement programs that can match or exceed those standards set by international best practice.

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