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A DISTRICT BEGINNER TEACHER INDUCTION INITIATIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE PRESSURE AND SUPPORT CONTESTATION

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper is to explore an approach to beginner teacher induction in a Johannesburg, South Africa education district's induction programme. It focuses on how the idea of beginner teacher induction is conceptualised by examining the district induction programme's teaching form and foci. Data were collected through interviews with four district officials coordinating and facilitating the district's teacher induction programme. While it is apparent that beginner teacher induction is being prioritised due to the pressing need for South African teacher professional development initiatives to work more towards developing and strengthening a repertoire of sound instructional practices. Findings indicate that current teacher induction practices offered by the selected district are somewhat misaligned with this imperative. The teaching form and foci of the districts' induction programme reveals serious contestation as pressure to perform is exerted rather than supporting teachers early in their careers. The activities therein are evidently more focused on familiarising beginner teachers with legal frameworks that govern and regulate their duties as members of the public service. Although the district induction programme has an overarching aim of developing beginner teachers' pedagogical practices, upon implementation, the emphasis is on accountability and pressure at the expense of developmental support and capacity building.

Keywords: *Induction; beginner teachers; district; pressure; support; teacher professional development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

There is consensus in the literature that amongst many others, poor teacher quality is one of the most significant factors contributing to poor educational quality in the South African public schooling system (Christie, Harley & Penny, 2004; De Clercq, 2008; Maistry, 2008). The concerns with teacher quality include poor comprehension of subject matter knowledge, limited pedagogical content knowledge and ineffective instructional practices (DeClercq & Shalem, 2014). More so, challenges with various teacher knowledges are pronounced among beginning teachers due to lack

of experience. Largely from a deficit approach, there is substantial literature indicating that beginning teachers face many challenges as they begin their careers (Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Steyn, 2004). There is also consensus in the literature that initial teacher education does not fully prepare beginner teachers for classroom realities and other school demands (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Wong, 2002). Induction, therefore, is mainly conceived as a way of providing guidance and support for new entrants to the profession. In other education systems, it is a fully-fledged support structure that stretches up to three years (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

While multiple programmes are being pursued to develop South African teachers to enact effective pedagogies, another dialogue running parallel to these teacher professional development initiatives is taking centre-stage: beginner teacher induction. There is growing concern for inducting and professionally developing beginning teachers as they enter the profession. A recent BRIDGE (2016) resource indicated that government, in addition to the plans outlined in the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011–2025, is commissioning several research institutions to chart ways for context-appropriate and cost-effective induction frameworks for young teacher graduates.

In this paper, I analyse the nature of induction support made available for beginner teachers within a selected South African local education district's induction programme. Literature indicates that, traditionally, local education district officials, instead of providing teachers with developmental support, tend to exert pressure on teachers by focusing on monitoring and evaluating teacher's work (Batwini & Diko, 2011; Chinsamy, 2002; Narsee, 2006). In view of this conundrum, this paper interrogates how the idea of beginning teacher induction is understood as enacted by four district officials coordinating and facilitating this programme in the selected district.

Although vast literature is available on the role of local education districts in supporting instructional improvement (Anderson, 2003; Batwini & Diko, 2011; Chinsamy, 2002), less, however, is known about their role in the South African education context, particularly their role regarding supporting beginner teachers. I have, thus, selected a South African district that has begun implementing a beginner teacher induction initiative with the aim of inquiring into the organisational form of this induction programme as well as the nature of teacher knowledge being foregrounded.

The main rationale for conducting this inquiry is that little is known about the practice of formally inducting beginner teachers in the South African public schooling context. As a new phenomenon, understanding the district's role in beginner teacher induction in South Africa is of utmost importance. Understanding how this new practice of beginner teacher induction is being conceptualised by the selected local education district is also important for several reasons. Firstly, it is somewhat worrisome that multiple potentially transformative teacher development ideas in the past have failed to yield gainful results at the hands of local education district officials (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Chinsamy, 2002). This paper, therefore, will provide the much-needed insights about the role of districts in as far as beginner teacher induction is concerned, especially given that it is a new phenomenon in the South African public schooling context.

Secondly, insights from this paper will provide stakeholders a lens from which to view beginner teacher induction in the South African context at its formative stage. Induction programme design, coordination and implementation pitfalls could be identified and much-needed intervention strategies can be built into current and ongoing discussions among stakeholders about the formulation of a context-specific induction framework for the South African public schooling context. Thirdly, while utilising Barber and Phillip's (2000) concepts of pressure and support, this study will interrogate current practices with the view to better understand the role as well as the limitations of district-driven beginner teacher induction and possibly develop insights for in-service early career teacher professional development at large.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With the overall aim of understanding early initiatives of beginner teacher induction in South Africa, this paper seeks to address the following questions:

- How is the selected district conceptualising the idea of beginner teacher induction? What are the districts' key purposes in inducting beginner teachers?
- What is the form and content of their induction programme?

The following section of this paper presents the theoretical lens underpinning this study and the methodological approaches that were followed in data generation and analysis. I then discuss international and local approaches to beginner teacher induction as well as illuminate on the role of local education district officials and literature that forms the basis for this study. I conclude with a discussion of the findings.

3. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Existing literature broadly identifies three key purposes of beginning teacher induction, namely: (i) to enhance beginner teachers' effectiveness by strengthening their pedagogical practices; (ii) to socialise beginner teachers into the profession and (iii) to combat the problem of early attrition and retain beginner teachers into the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Maringe & Prew, 2015; Wong, 2002). This paper analyses the selected district's induction programme's key purposes in terms of its form and content. This analysis largely drew from Barber and Phillips' (2000) perspective of combining developmental support and accountability pressure to effect rapid progress and high performance in an education system. They argue that "gentle pressure relentlessly applied and serious support intentionally delivered" (Barber & Phillips, 2000: 280) creates opportunities for improving teaching and learning in schools. The fusion of a pressure and support framework was useful in exploring how the selected district is approaching induction. In addition, it allowed for a consideration of the implications on beginning teachers in the absence of a balanced fusion of pressure and support.

A case study of a Johannesburg local education district was selected where four district officials directly involved in the coordination and facilitation of the district's beginner teacher induction programme were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Data from the transcripts of these interviews formed the basis for analysing how induction is being conceptualised. The raw empirical data was analysed using Miles, Huberman and Suldana's (2013) interactive model to data analysis which facilitated the selection, abstraction and sorting of chunks from the data that related to the study's guiding questions.

4. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

4.1 Purposes of beginner teacher induction

A general finding, and in some cases a hypothesis, in induction literature is that the aim of a well-conceived and well-implemented induction programme is to improve the way new teachers teach, to ease them into the school system, to attain early job satisfaction and consequently influence their decision to stay in the profession (Wong, 2002). In their summary of induction literature, Maringe and Prew (2015) identify four main purposes of teacher induction namely: to enhance teacher effectiveness and learner results; to strengthen pedagogical practices and particularly their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK); to socialise new entrants into the profession and finally induction serves to retain teachers into the profession.

Literature convincingly shows that among many other purposes, induction is used to enhance the effectiveness of new teachers who are generally conceived to be less effective in the practical delivery of content knowledge, classroom management and the promotion of effective learning. Substantial evidence (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Wong, 2002) indicates that effective teachers are those who are able to create meaningful learning experiences for learners and produce good learner outcomes, irrespective of the challenging contextual circumstances such as large class sizes, anomalous learner diversity and inadequate learner and teacher support material (LTSM). In order to facilitate development of new teachers into effective new practitioners, induction has been used as a process to train and support new teachers' improvement into more capable effective practitioners (Wong, 2002).

Regarding the focus of induction, it is well established in the literature that the majority of beginner teachers need support to strengthen their pedagogical and instructional strategies and techniques. Many beginner teachers have little understanding of the structures of the subject matter and the different ways of representing this subject matter to learners in comprehensible and appropriately paced and sequenced ways as well as a nuanced understanding of what makes the learning of specific content knowledge easy or difficult (Shulman, 1986). Limited pedagogical content knowledge has considerable and enduring negative effects on the quality of teaching and learning. This position is perhaps the most elaborate in literature as there is agreement that what teachers do in the classroom to deliver school knowledge has the greatest impact on student learning (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Wong, Britton & Ganser, 2005). The ultimate purpose of a teacher professional development initiative is to get teachers to teach more effectively with better pedagogical content knowledge to ensure learner success and achievement. This may explain why many educational systems have ascribed to induction programmes that target the improvement of new teachers' instructional practices, particularly helping them to link theory and practice in order to achieve better learning experiences and outcomes for learners (Wong *et al.,* 2005).

Induction programmes have also considered the emotional and affective elements of beginner teachers' experiences and much has been done to ensure that beginner teachers are smoothly socialised into the new working environment (Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Socialisation, as a key focus of an induction programme, ensures that beginner teachers are integrated into the school community where they are able to access meaningful interactions that contribute to their well-being as people in an organisation. In other words, the socialisation of beginner teachers into the organisational framework is equally important as supporting their actual teaching practice (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

4.2 Approaches to beginner teacher induction

There is a wide spectrum of teacher induction models depending on the circumstances under which the different models are adopted as well as the form(s) of knowledge they foreground. Circumstances and factors such as context, culture, organisational systems and the needs and capacities of the participants and administers involved greatly influence the substance and form of induction approaches (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Breaux & Wong, 2003).

Although there are great variances in the form and features of beginner teacher induction, commonalities on the nature, content, duration and the mode of administration and organisation of programmes can be identified. Most induction programmes are formalised in structure and about a year in duration (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). They are mostly in-service programmes, administered by the district or school and cover content regarding pedagogical knowledge and practice (Breaux & Wong, 2003; CDE, 2017). Programmes generally include orientation, workshops, seminars, conferences and frequent new teacher meetings with opportunities to relay and relate experiences (Wong *et al.,* 2005; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; CDE, 2017). A variety of methods are used, most commonly: mentorship from external and internal mentors where observation, supervision, assessment and feedback on practice are foregrounded. In contrast, many programmes, especially in the African context, are ad hoc in nature where the support and guidance provided is less structured often leading to beginner teachers devising their own survival strategies (Indoshi, 2003; CDE, 2017).

4.3 The role of school districts

The role of the district is widely debated in the literature (Anderson, 2003; Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Murphy & Hallinger, 2001; Spillane, 2002). The debates are particularly on the role of the district in as far as improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Many scholars share the view that districts are largely political and organisational structures that were invented to support the implementation of specific government programmes (Corcoran, Fuhrman & Belcher, 2001). According to Anderson (2003), some critics argue that districts serve bureaucratic and compliance purposes and are less effective when it comes to facilitating the implementation of programmes that are designed to improve teaching and learning in schools. Other scholars, however, argue that districts play a pivotal and active policy-shaping role of interpreting and mediating government policy interventions for implementation in schools (Spillane, 2002; Roberts, 2012).

A study of the role of district officials in Canada reported a major paradigm shift in learner achievement as soon as districts that were previously emphasising governance and leadership redirected their focus to improving instruction and learner achievement by mobilising themselves and their resources to support instructionally-focused professional learning for teachers (Anderson, 2003) In other words, districts serve a mediating role between the state and the schools and rather than using that role to regulate the work of teachers, schools benefit more if more efforts were directed towards activities that support and improve teachers' instructional practices. To date, the role of the district in influencing classroom instructional decisions and practices, which are at the heart of teaching and learning, remains controversial and yet to be affirmed (Anderson, 2003).

4.4 Teacher professional development and the role of the district in South Africa

While the South African teacher development policy landscape foregrounds mentoring and visible support for beginning teachers, the implementation of such policy mandates remain patchy and obscure as many new entrants are barely supported and left to devise their own survival strategies (Steyn, 2004; Deacon, 2015). The DoE, as is articulated in the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (NPFTED), acknowledges the need for beginning teacher induction and condemns "the practice of launching novice teachers into employment without explicit on-site induction" (DoE, 2005:10). In its "Teachers for the future" (2006), the DoE mandated that "practical internship" through participating in a formal induction and/or mentoring programmes at the local district or school site should be a prerequisite for all new teachers.

According to Chinsamy (2002), provincial departments of education (PDEs), through their local district offices, supported by circuit offices, have, among others, the responsibility of assisting teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their institutions mainly through their district Teacher Development Unit (TDU). The TDU is in direct contact with schools and provides ongoing teacher professional development and capacity building by conducting training workshops and seminars on various curriculum issues, on-site classroom visits and lesson observation. At the same time, however, the PDE exerts pressure on local districts to ensure that schools deliver quality teaching and learning. Local districts, in turn, discharge accountability pressure on school management and teachers to ensure they achieve the standards and expectations set by the PDE. The effectiveness of the local district has, therefore, been questioned and considered controversial due to its conflicting roles of being the same instrument that offers pressure and support. Traditionally, South African districts are known to effect bureaucratic teacher accountability that is compliance orientated, judgemental, intimidating and threatening to most teachers and often resulting in no positive impact on teachers' practices (De Clercq, 2008). According to Bush and Glover (2014), this constitutes managerialist values characterised by rigid planning set on competence and compliance.

5. FINDINGS

The findings presented in this section address the research questions: How is the idea of beginning teacher induction conceptualised in the selected district? What is the district's key purpose in inducting beginning teachers? What is the form and content of the district's induction programme?

The beginner teacher induction programme is run by the Curriculum Implementation section which has the responsibility and accountability of the induction deliverables and execute these functions through its TDU, formerly known as Human Resource Development (HRD). As is depicted by its former name and its current name, the TDU's primary role is to coordinate the professional development of human resources, i.e., the teachers in the district schools. As part of the capacity building, the district came up with an initiative to induct beginner teachers

with a particular focus on Funza Lushaka[1] bursary recipients. TDU organised elements to be covered in the induction plan, drove the alignment of all other departments to the key focus areas in the induction and determined its implementation. While TDU focused on aspects related the role of the teacher in the teaching and learning imperative, they called on the input of the Transversal Human Resource Services (THRS) and Dispute Management department to cover aspects that govern the work of teachers as Public Service (PS)[2] employees.

The participating district officials explained their approach to induction as follows:

> We identify the new teachers via the HR and then we invite those teachers for induction workshops. We also normally target the Funza Lushakas at the beginning of the year in January, the weekend after schools open. For now, its only workshops for all recently hired teachers in the district (TDU official 1).

> We start with a 2-hour session where we take them through the conditions of service in the office. Here we have an HR person present what is due to them in terms of HR and finance and then as the TDU, we take them through the work ethics as stipulated in the SACE document. We then allow discussion and where they are not clear they ask questions. We also take them through what we call the Predictability Framework, a curriculum management framework where we look at what is the role of the teacher in curriculum delivery and the role of the HOD [3] because they report to the HOD (TDU official 2).

According to the TDU officials, the induction sessions were held in the form of workshops where they take new teachers through the conditions of service as well as spell out what is required of them as teachers. It also appears from the above statements that the district specifically targeted new teacher graduates who were beneficiaries of the Funza Lushaka bursary scheme. It also appears that these teachers were coerced to attend and in explaining this, one official mentioned that:

> We place Funza Lushaka teachers in our schools and so it is our mandate that we follow them up and provide this induction support. Besides, Funza Lushaka is government funding and those new teacher graduates are simply obliged to undergo this training and development because we basically oversee their welfare in the district (THRS official).

In further explaining their approach to induction, other officials elaborated saying:

> …we support in terms of capacitating them with the do's and don'ts in the teaching profession because we've realised that since they only have theory and no experience in the workplace, they find themselves in difficult situations. Most end up being the most vulnerable in terms of being charged so we are there to take them through the legislative framework, that is the act that they are appointed under and then we give them their rights

1 Funza Lushaka is a bursary allocation launched in 2007 for South African students who desire a career in teaching. The bursary covers full cost to complete a full teaching qualification in an area of national priority e.g., Maths, Sciences, Technology etc. Recipients of these bursaries are required to teach at a public school for the same number of years that they have received the bursary. Qualified recipients of the bursary can request placement in a province of their choice, but it is the PDE concerned that will determine whether a suitable post is available (DBE, http://www.funzalushaka.doe.gov.za/).

2 Public Service employees are persons who are employed (a) in posts on the establishment of departments; and (b) additional to the establishment of departments (Section 8 of the Public Service Act 103 of 1994 as amended).

3 District officials refer to school heads of departments as HODs and this was quoted verbatim. Elsewhere in the text I refer to these HODs as heads of departments as they are referred to in the Personnel Administrative Measures (RSA, 2016).

> in the workplace and then also we give them the disciplinary code and procedures so that they can know what types of misconduct they are not supposed to commit (DM official).

The emphasis in the above quotes, however, is evidently on ensuring that beginning teachers understand the statutes of being a public servant. Issues to do with curriculum management and classroom instruction are raised but seem to be underplayed and another district official corroborated this saying:

> We have seen that we have to spend more time explaining to new teachers our expectations and the dire consequences that follow if those expectations are not met (THRS official).

When asked about how they came to structure their induction sessions, it was clear that district officials understood teacher induction as a procedure to prevent new teachers from becoming problematic teachers and ensure that they perform accordingly. The following extracts illustrate how the district officials came to select content covered in the induction sessions and their general understanding of the key purpose of induction:

> Most of our activities are informed by what the principals say. We pay attention to the problems raised by the principals and we address them in our sessions with the new teachers (TDU official 2).

> We get cases from the principals, issues that are reported to us by the principals and the main challenges are issues of sexual assault and then corporal punishment. New teachers find themselves in a fix where they cannot engage with the learners. Many teachers are appearing on our database, male teachers especially are the ones who are experiencing problems in terms of having relationships with the learners. Having them on our database, we decided as labour relations that we need to train them and capacitate them…it's not even a question of corporal punishment, it is assault simply because of the rage that is happening in the classroom they end up slapping the learner. So, theirs is more of assault than corporal punishment so that is why we saw it fit that we need to take them through what is considered acts of misconduct and how they will be charged accordingly (DM official).

District officials perceived induction as an intervention strategy to deal with unacceptable conduct of beginner teachers in schools. Thus, the induction workshops were conducted to curb the risks that beginner teachers could potentially pose to the learners, heads of departments and principals as well as many other stakeholders in the schooling community. As a result, the induction sessions were inundated by legal framework documents used as points of reference when discussing different issues of how teachers are expected to conduct themselves. This explains the incorporation of the DM unit into the programme with the mandate to cover aspects such as grievance procedures, acts of misconduct and disciplinary code and procedures and all labour relations legislative frameworks that teachers are employed under. One official explained:

> The Grievance Procedures component explains the steps that beginning teachers can take in cases where there is conflict in the workplace especially where they have been violated. This was deemed necessary because most new educators do not know that there are structures in place to protect them. I refer them to Chapter G of the PAM document when I discuss the grievance procedures. I also explain in much detail all acts of misconduct according to section 17 and 18 of the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998. Acts of serious misconduct such as corruption in examinations, sexual relationships with learners, possession of illegal intoxicating substances and serious assault result in immediate dismissal and acts of less serious misconduct such as

> negligently mismanaging finances or accepting compensation in cash or otherwise from learners or the public result in the issuing of written warnings. All these acts of misconduct are included in the induction as it was important to alert new educators of the possible pitfalls in the profession as well as the procedures that we take as DM in charging them (DM official).

While the Grievance Procedures session provided beginner teachers with important information on how to raise their concerns with the authorities, emphasis was placed on how they are charged in the event of violating stipulated codes of conduct. The DM official further explained:

> The Management of Employee Discipline by Supervisors, Principals and Managers Circular 01/2016 is the main reference legislative framework to explain the disciplinary code and procedures but we employ a number of legislative frameworks to execute our role. When we charge educators, we don't solely use the Employment of Educators Act, the SACE code of conduct comes into play, so does the PAM document, Circular 65…all of these. It was necessary for us to bring various legislative frameworks to their attention so that they can be on the know so that whatever they are doing they do it knowing what the consequences are… they will be dismissed and scrapped out of the profession (DM official).

To further highlight the concern regarding beginner teachers' conduct in schools, the labour relations discussions were complemented by TDU sessions on classroom management. As was indicated by the DM official earlier, most principals in the district schools indicated that one of the major challenges identified was beginner teachers failing to effectively manage their classrooms. Challenges cited included struggling with creating conducive learning environments, developing clear rules and instructions and especially, devising and implementing consistent strategies to deal with learner misbehaviour. District officials specifically expressed their concern about beginner teachers' classroom management skills:

> Funza Lushaka teachers are facing serious difficulties with respect to handling their classrooms. Many end up administering corporal punishment which is not permissible in any South African school… we take teachers through the SACE code of professional ethics and the seven roles of the educator as outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators (TDU official 1).

In addition to classroom management, the professional ethics discussion extended to discussing the seven roles and responsibilities of the teacher and these were explained with reference to the PAM document as well as the Norms and Standards for Educators. The seven roles include being a learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist, interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials, learning mediator, assessor of learning and of learners, leader, administrator and manager, scholar, researcher and life-long learner, and performing community, citizenship and pastoral roles. It is important to note that the district official in the above quote emphasises district expectations over how a discussion of these roles and responsibilities would be helpful to the beginner teachers' practice.

Additionally, district officials demonstrate their focus on compliance by emphasising the regulations on working hours as outlined in the PAM document and the teacher appraisal Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) process. One district official said:

> We also go into details about the working hours, that is 7 hours/day[4] which translates to 1800 hours per annum so that they don't fight with their HODs or supervisors in schools when they are told to leave the school at 3:00pm. We also have expectations outside the formal school day, 80 hours of PD per annum so we also make that clear… We also realised that when we talk about working hours, we should briefly explain the IQMS process because it's often misunderstood by new educators. Our facilitators explain all the documents i.e., what is the collective agreement, lesson observation, self-evaluation, pre-evaluation, post-evaluation and a personal growth plan (THRS official).

The findings from the districts' approach show that beginner teacher induction is conceived as a capacity building programme and the district officials believe that their offering launches beginner teachers into the profession with more ease. A more careful analysis of the data, however, shows that what is enacted reveals that beginner teachers are perceived to be troublesome and lack practical understanding of the legal frameworks of the profession. Their support, thus, leans more towards corrective procedures meant to prevent the recurrence of various problems caused by beginner teachers in schools as well as ensuring understanding the frameworks that govern the work of teachers.

The findings also reveal that the role of the district regarding teacher professional development in the South African context is contentious. According to the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996) sub-section 16(3), the principal of a school is responsible for the professional management of a school, which includes professional development of teachers. In addition, the Personnel Administrative Measures (RSA, 2016) explicitly indicate that support to beginner teachers is one of the principals' functions together with the deputy-principals, departmental heads, master teachers and senior teachers. Thus, a district's direct involvement in the introduction of teacher professional development programmes for beginner teachers may be viewed as interference with the functions of the school principal and his or her management team. These findings point towards one important factor that needs to be thoroughly explicated if ever there is going to be meaningful district-driven beginner teacher induction in South Africa, namely, the capability and suitability of district officials to provide developmental support to beginning teachers, or any other teacher at whatever stage of their career, aimed at improving teaching and learning.

6. DISCUSSION

Drawing from the perspectives and practices of the four district officials, this study reveals three conceptions that will continue to pose enduring challenges to any district-driven teacher induction and development programme in South Africa. Firstly, the district used the training model where workshops were the main vehicle for beginner teachers' induction. These workshops were conducted at a district venue outside of the school and the district officials assumed the role of the experts. Such off-site teacher development activities have been hailed for strengths such as being effective platforms for the dissemination of information and creating opportunities for teachers to develop intellectual communities for sharing practice outside of their schools (Maistry, 2008). However, context-removed teacher professional development activities have been seriously critiqued for failing to prioritise the knowledge areas teachers needed for effective professional practice and failing to situate knowledge in the context of practice (Christie *et al*., 2005; De Clercq & Shalem, 2014).

4 Over and above the 7 hours, teachers are required to be at school and work an additional 2 hours per day, thus, 9 hours/day. The additional 2 hours is for preparation of lessons, marking and assessments and extra-mural activities (RSA, 2016).

Secondly, the district seemed to have a limited understanding of beginner teacher's needs; hence, derived their induction focus from complaints raised about beginner teachers. Such a limited conceptualisation resulted in an approach that prioritised governance and ensuring compliance with legal statutes thereby backgrounding the important role of influencing classroom instructional decisions and practices (Anderson, 2003). This is consistent with managerialism that Bush and Glover (2014) describe as an approach that places emphasis on competence in functions, tasks and behaviours thereby underplaying activities that improve teaching and learning.

Thirdly, the structure and role of the district as an instrument for pressure and support, unless resolved, will constantly create contestation where teacher development in South Africa is concerned. The local education districts in South Africa operate within confines of the mandates stipulated in their roles and responsibilities as stated in the Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (RSA, 2013). According to section 20.2 of this policy, the district, among many other duties, has the responsibility of supporting schools through "providing an enabling environment and organising provision and support for the professional development of managers, educators and administrative staff members". The following section (20.3) articulates the districts' oversight and accountability roles, which include "accounting to the PDE for the performance of education institutions in the district". In other words, while the district must support schools by building their capacity through various professional development activities, it exerts accountability pressure on schools to ensure they perform to the satisfaction of the PDE. This duality has been an enduring tension that conflates the effectiveness of the district as it struggles to establish a balance between supporting and ensuring accountability in schools (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Narsee, 2006).

This study highlights existing doubts about the capability and suitability of the district to provide teachers with developmental support. Although there were activities that focused on developing beginner teachers' teaching related practices, the evidence overwhelmingly show that the induction programmes were emphasising compliance. Because of this monitoring and supervisory aptitude, most district related interventions have not been previously well received in schools (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Narsee, 2006).

There is, however, sufficient evidence in the literature showing how pressure and support by the district are necessary for continuous school improvement (Chinsamy, 2002). What is essential is establishing and maintaining a balance between the amounts of support provided and pressure applied in order to ensure rapid progress and high performance (Barber & Phillips, 2000). Education districts in South Africa have, unfortunately, been found wanting in respect of well proportioning these two as they tend to filter any task assigned to them through its roles and responsibilities filter, especially the oversight and accountability one.

7. CONCLUSION

While it may be popular for district officials to be key instruments in teacher professional development initiatives, this may be a time to seriously question whether they are the best agents for effective beginning teacher induction implementation in South African public schools. The programmatic induction offerings of the district discussed in this paper largely shows that the dual responsibility to support and monitor teachers creates serious contestation within the district. This challenge is exacerbated by little understanding of new teachers' needs and

what teacher development is all about for new teachers. As a result, developmental support is limited and induction sessions are reduced to information sharing sessions that further demonstrate the districts' accountability mandate. If new teacher induction at the district level is going to meaningfully contribute to beginner teachers' skill set of what they can use within their respective classrooms, careful consideration of the role of the district is something that should be tabled for intense discussion. Briefly, where induction is driven by monitoring, supervisory and pressure exerting imperatives, beginner teachers are less likely to grow their professional skills.

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