

TEACHER INDUCTION: AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT AT THE START OF TEACHERS' CAREERS

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1. Introduction

The large majority of beginning teachers experience their first year of service as problematic and stressful. They are confronted with unexpected problems and situations with which they find it difficult to cope [1]. Many of them experience their first year of teaching as a 'reality shock'. All in all, many beginners feel inadequately prepared for their jobs as teacher and tend to blame their initial training for this. However, the matter is more complex. Apart from acquiring a coherent whole of knowledge, insights, repertoire of actions [2], attitudes and values (competence), becoming a teacher has elements of building a self-image, of *I-as-a-teacher* and of learning to use oneself as an instrument. Because both the competence and the self-image as acquired during initial training are strongly related to that context, beginning teachers have to specify, refine, deepen, or to reframe and/or adjust both their competence and image of *I-as-a-teacher* during their first years of service. Reports about the experiences of beginning teachers throughout the world show that the first year of teaching is not an easy one. During induction most beginners (with some exceptions) experience that they are left to fend for themselves. They rarely find support or help from colleagues (mentors) or from the school management, and if they do find support, it is mostly inadequate and of little help (Hulin-Austin, 1990). As a consequence, many beginners feel

they fail to meet the expectations of their pupils, the parents, colleagues, and management and drop-out [3]. During the last decade we have observed increasing attention for the professional development of beginning teachers and in that context renewed attention for teacher induction and the role of the mentor. Although the term development connotes internally guided rather than externally imposed changes, professional development is considered to be the result of a learning process which is directed at acquiring *a coherent whole of knowledge, insights, attitudes and repertoire that a teacher needs for the everyday practice of the profession* - often referred to as a teacher's professional knowledge base (Vonk, 1991). In essence, teacher development is self-directed development; i.e., teachers have to develop their own individual style of teaching. In a number of studies (Burke, 1987; Levine, 1989; Vonk, 1992b; Burden, 1990; Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1993) the different phases in teacher professional development have been investigated.

This article concerns a study of two important issues in the professional lives of beginning teachers: first, the phenomenon of teacher induction, i.e. the way schools take care of newly appointed teachers; and second, the support a school as organization can provide for beginning teachers to help them induct smoothly into their job as teachers, i.e. mentoring beginning teachers. This study draws on our own research on the professional development of beginning teachers (Vonk, 1984; 1991, 1994b), on the training of mentors (Vonk, 1992; 1994a, 1995b), and on the study of recent literature on these topics.

2. *Teacher induction*

The concept



We define *teacher induction* as the phase in a teacher's career in which the transition from student-teacher to self-directing professional takes place. It concerns the first two stages in the process of teacher professional development after initial training: the *threshold phase* and the *phase of growing into the profession* (Vonk,



1991, 65). Teacher induction can be best understood as part of the continuum of the process of teacher professional development (see Figure 1).

Initial teacher training (pre-professional phase) is aimed at developing teachers' starting competence, which is the basis of student teachers' performance during initial training and of the image of *I-as-a-teacher*. Both this performance and the self-image are strongly context related (teacher training and school practice) and not transferable to new situations. Induction is the period (about five years) in teachers' career in which (s)he moves from novice to full professional (threshold phase and the phase of growing into the profession). During this period beginners continue to develop their professional identity (*I-as-a-teacher*), their repertoire of actions, contextually useful knowledge, attitudes, and values by reframing, extending, specifying, deepening, or even adjusting the self-image and repertoire acquired during initial training, and so to structure their self-directed professional development. We view teacher induction from a developmental perspective (Glassberg, 1979, Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1983).

The importance of systemic teacher induction both for beginners and schools is that it contributes to avoiding unnecessary tension and (future) malfunctioning. A good start definitely influences a teacher's abilities and willingness to develop in a positive direction. From studies on teacher professional development we know that teachers who were left to fend for themselves in their first years of teaching tend to develop a strongly 'survival oriented' repertoire of actions, sometimes indicated as 'survival kit'. This

results from a 'trial and error' approach, from pressure brought on by circumstances and is most often inflexible in nature. Because of time constraints beginners hardly find time for reflection and if they do, they lack a solid *orientation base* [4]: they do not know what to reflect on. As a consequence, such a repertoire offers very few points of contact for expansion and further development. Changes in that repertoire demand great effort on the part of those teachers because it could again lead to class control problems, which is something that those teachers definitely wish to avoid (Vonk, Schras, 1987).

Practices

Growing attention for systemic teacher induction has led to the development of a variety of induction programmes in schools. The number of participating schools, however, is limited. In many schools teacher induction is still not part of their culture. If we take a closer look at induction practices in schools, two types of activities can be distinguished:

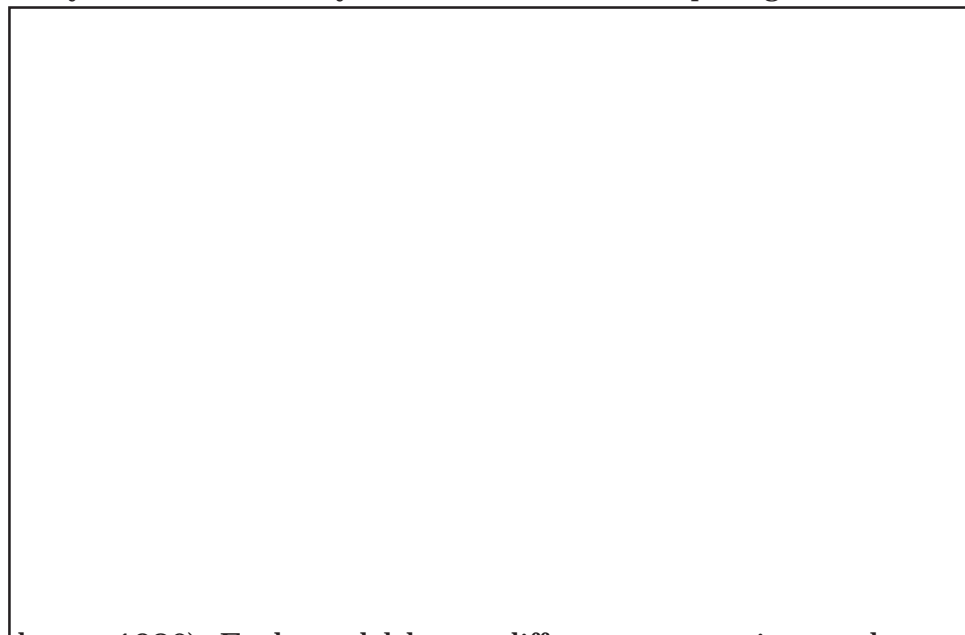
- a. *to take care of*, i.e. the more formal introduction of the beginning teachers to the school, such as (i) providing clearly written information about the school, its culture and traditions, the rules, the curriculum, the teaching methodologies practised, the material provisions such as teaching aids, textbooks, and more general background information about the students; (ii) introduction to the colleagues and other staff.
- b. *to support*, i.e. provisions aimed at helping beginners to develop professionally, such as (i) the appointment of a mentor; (ii) the availability of a support plan and the adjustment of the teaching load in order to facilitate effective guidance by the mentor; (iii) to facilitate the participation in a peer network and in in-service courses for beginners.

Most schools, but not all, take care of new colleagues. Planned support in the form of guidance by a trained mentor, however, is rare. A proper induction programme is aimed at meeting the needs of a beginning teacher, and, therefore, has to be highly individualized. Systematic guidance during the first year of service can help beginners to tackle the problems they meet effectively, and so to establish a basis for further professional development (Letvin, 1992).

In our view teacher induction is inextricably linked with 'good educational leadership' in schools [5]. Moreover, good educational leadership is crucial for the development of more autonomous high

quality schools, in which teachers and pupils feel respected and recognized as valuable human beings. Because we consider teachers as autonomous self-directing professionals [6], we do not see the responsibility for this leadership function restricted primarily to the position of school management, but as a function of the school as a whole (Glickman, 1990). Everybody in the school organization can be challenged to participate in that responsibility. The school management's major task is to facilitate and monitor proper execution of this function. In this context, effective induction of teachers in a school depends heavily on the extent to which the educational leadership function is implemented in that particular school. Because beginning teachers are most in need of direct and personal assistance, the existence of a well organized system of induction is crucial in this context.

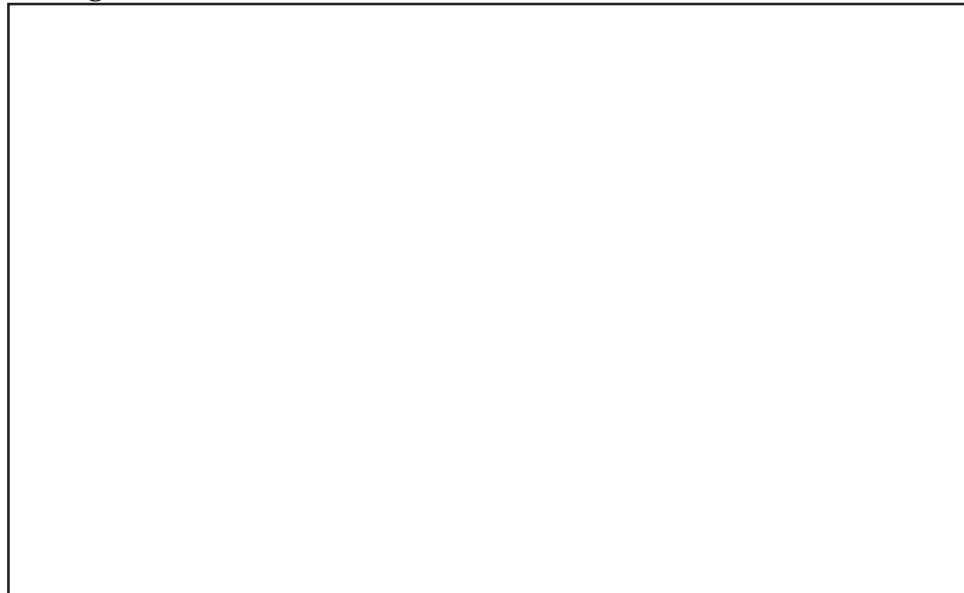
Based on our own research in the Netherlands and on a study of literature on induction programmes in Western Europe, basically four models of support during induction can be distinguished: the swim-or-sink model, the collegial model, the mandatory competency model, and finally the formalized mentor-protégée model (An-



draws, 1986). Each model has a different perspective on the process of beginning teachers' professional development, and therefore emphasizes different elements for which it offers assistance to beginning teachers. In Table I we related the emphasis put on these

different elements to the three dimensions in the problems beginning teachers experience during their first year of teaching (see Figure 2). The *swim-or-sink model*

of teacher induction, which is still most the common in schools, sees professional development as a teacher's own responsibility. It is a *laissez faire* approach that involves minimal or no beginning teacher - peer interaction at all. The beginning teacher has to prove to be able to teach before being accepted by his peers. This model is often experienced as a *rite of passage*. The *collegial model* has the same starting point, but relies on an unstructured and informal relationship with a peer. In the context of this relationship the peer offers some assistance, mainly with respect to classroom management and teaching methods, however, only when the beginner asks for such assistance. The *mandatory competency model* is based on a formalized «beginner - experienced peer» relationship, and on the assumption that there is such a thing as of a set of teacher-independent effective classroom teaching skills as can found in many competency based programmes. The beginner - peer relation is hierarchical, i.e. the peer who is regarded as the expert more or less prescribes in what direction the beginner has to develop, and the beginner is expected to behave accordingly. In this model the major emphasis is on teaching methods and classroom management and, as far as related to these two, on elements of



pedagogical content knowledge. The last model is the *formalized mentor protegee model*. This model presupposes the existence of trained mentors who are capable of helping beginning teachers to structure and monitor their professional learning processes and to help them become autonomous and self-directing professionals. The central focus is the professional development of the individual beginning teacher. All elements from the three dimensions in beginning teachers professional development (see Section 3) can be issue of assistance.

Because we consider supporting the professional development of beginning teachers a basic element of teacher induction, we adopted the mentor-protegee model as the basis for our studies on mentoring beginning teachers. In the following section we will give a brief overview of the main characteristics of the process of beginning teachers' professional development during their first year of teaching (threshold phase).

3. *Dimensions in beginning teachers' professional development*

During their first year of teaching new teachers are primarily concerned with survival and familiarizing themselves with the various aspects of a teacher's role. Another concern is the recognition of their role as educator both by themselves - *I-as-a-teacher* - and by their students, colleagues and the school management. For the development of effective induction interventions it is important to be familiar with and to have an understanding of both the nature and the origins of the problems beginning teachers experience in their professional development. Our analysis of problems (Vonk, 1984, 1994a) resulted in the distinction of three dimensions: the personal dimension, the knowledge and skills dimension, and finally the ecological dimension (see Figure 2). We regard these dimensions as interrelated and learning processes in all three dimensions are basic to the process of professional development of teachers.

The personal dimension

Becoming a teacher has elements of developing a professional identity - *I-as-a-teacher*. Many beginners experience the transition from the student-learner role to identification with the teacher role as problematic and stressful; in particular the younger new teachers because they are still in the stage of transition from adolescence to adulthood. During the threshold phase they not only learn

about the profession but also about themselves as persons. E.g. how they behave under great stress; how they cope with the variety of responsibilities towards students, parent, colleagues and school management; how they cope with their own emotions and those of their students; how well the teacher role fits them; and the like.

During our research we observed that becoming a teacher means reaching maturity under high pressure for some new teachers. This aspect of teacher induction is, except in those that take a developmental stance, a neglected area in most studies on this topic.

Professional knowledge and skills dimension

The professional knowledge and skills a beginning teacher has to develop has three sub-dimensions: pedagogical content knowledge, classroom management skills and teaching skills.

Pedagogical content knowledge. Generally novices have an elaborate academic background and, because of that, they do not expect to meet problems with subject matter. Quite soon, however, they experience that they do not master their subjects at 'school' level [7]. Shulman (1986), who introduced the concept *pedagogical content knowledge*, initiated a number of studies concerning the changes in novices' understanding of the subject knowledge they teach. These studies show that beginners have major problems in translating their academic knowledge into school knowledge in such a way that it enables the learners to understand the concepts and conceptual structures that are the foundation of the discipline and the strategies used to develop new knowledge. As a consequence, beginners have to *reframe* their subject knowledge base. Many of them spend considerable time during their first two years of service on re-learning the subject matter (Vonk, 1984). In order to teach a subject, a teacher needs both breadth and depth of professional knowledge, i.e. a rich factual knowledge base with many interconnections which represents a much more thorough understanding than one achieves as a learner. We regard pedagogical content knowledge as the integration of pedagogy and content knowledge. It is this pedagogical content knowledge that distinguishes the veteran teacher from the novice. Induction interventions aimed at improving the quality of a novice's teaching should focus primarily on broadening beginning teachers' pedagogical content knowledge.

Classroom management skills. Research has shown that most beginning teachers have poor classroom management skills, i.e., they

are not able to organize their lessons in such a way that an *on-task* working climate emerges and can be maintained effectively. They have problems with reacting adequately to unrest and discipline problems, because they have no overview of what is happening in the class and lack an adequate set of classroom rules; if they have established such a set of rules, they do not know how to maintain it, and they do not know how to deal effectively with those students who break those rules (sanctions).

In his studies on the ecology of the classroom Doyle (1979, 1986) describes classroom teaching as a situation which is characterized by multi-dimensionality, simultaneity, immediacy, unpredictability, publicness and history. The main problem for beginning teachers is how to manage a group in such a complex environment. A mentor has to consider in what way (s)he can help, support and advise a beginner to function properly under these stressful conditions. Basic to good classroom management is the development of skills to monitor a class effectively. The ability to monitor effectively is based on two important teacher qualities: *focal attention* and *classroom knowledge* (Doyle, 1979). Focal attention is that (limited) part of teachers' information processing system that allows them to select important information [8] during classroom teaching and to react to it consciously. Beginners have to learn to direct their (focal) attention to that part of the information, coming from the class as a group, that is important to keep their students on-task. This part of teachers' repertoire has to be routinized in particular. To achieve this it is important for beginners to develop a conceptual framework of their classes as soon as possible, i.e., what kind of reactions they may expect from each student on teacher's actions, which students do well and which do not, who is cooperative and who is not, etcetera. Classroom knowledge is a prerequisite for effectiveness in focal attention, and therefore for good classroom management.

Teaching skills. At the start of the threshold phase beginning teachers experience numerous problems with ordinary classroom teaching. Although they have learned a number of teaching strategies, both in theory and school-practice, they still seem to lack effective classroom teaching skills, such as: the skills to structure the teaching-learning environment in order to tackle the time-on-task problem, to vary the learning activities which last a limited amount of time, to monitor individual students' progress, etcetera.

Ecological dimension

As argued before, the development of both the self-image of

I-as-a-teacher and a teacher's repertoire of actions are highly influenced by the context in which they are acquired. So to say, beginning teachers develop professionally in a particular school context. They have to adapt to an existing school or departmental culture, and to the beliefs that exist in that school/department about the aims of education and about 'good teaching', appropriate teacher performance, teacher-pupil relationships and the like. That process of adaptation is often referred to as teacher socialization [9]. If we take a closer look at the situation of beginning teachers in schools, it can be characterized by confrontations with:

- *New responsibilities*: from the first day and the first lesson on beginners are responsible for the classes they teach. These responsibilities are exactly the same as those of teachers who have been teaching for twenty years.
- *A school environment in which various teaching cultures exist*: each school, each department has its written and unwritten rules, and one is supposed to adhere to these rules (Hargreaves, 1992). However, beginners are not familiar with either the written or the unwritten rules of the game in their new school, they usually discover them by painful surprise. These rules are so obvious to the existing staff that nobody bothers to explain them in advance.
- *Expectations concerning the way in which one functions*: colleagues, school management, pupils or students and parents, all have their expectations about the new teacher. Beginning teachers are expected to meet these expectations. The problem, however, is that most beginners do not have the slightest idea what these expectations are, and if they do, they do not know how to cope with them.

The above mentioned confrontations compel a beginner to *reorient* him/herself with regard to his/her image of *I-as-a-teacher*. Apart from that, many novices have to make a change from identifying themselves with the student role to that of the teacher role. This reorientation and the resulting role change are combined with feelings of uncertainty and stress. Furthermore, the organization and physical resources of a school, and perhaps more significantly the beliefs that are not only held and valued within the institution (written rule pattern) but have become embedded within its many taken-for-granted practices (unwritten rules), inevitably exert a powerful influence on the new teacher (Calderhead, 1993). In particular in situations in which beginners do not receive any support,

they experience the first months of their induction rather as a *rite of passage* than a valuable learning experience.

Conclusively, the whole situation in which the beginning teacher operates can be characterized as a *difficult control situation*. For beginning teachers who have several different classes it is problematic to act adequately under those circumstances. At the same time, it appears that the concept of the teacher's role they developed during initial teacher education scarcely offers them a basis for tackling the difficult control situation (Vonk 1984, 11-14 y 109).

4. *The concept of mentoring*

The last two years, under growing pressure to develop more school-based initial teacher education programmes and resulting from a growing interest in teacher induction, a number of books on mentoring have appeared (E.g. Wilkin, 1992; DeBolt, 1992; Vonk, 1992; McIntyre *et al*, 1993; Caldwell & Carter, 1993; Tomlinson, 1995; and Kerry & Shelton Mayes, 1995). The majority of these books are collections of papers in which different concepts of mentoring are presented. Most concepts consider mentoring as a method for transferring practical knowledge to teacher trainees or beginning teachers. We, however, define mentoring as 'a dynamic, reciprocal relationship in a work environment between an advanced career incumbent (mentor) and a beginner (protegee) aimed at promoting the career development of both' (Healy & Welchert, 1990). Beginning teachers' interest in the relation is the help they receive from an expert in acquiring a professional identity - the image of *I-as-a-teacher* - and in their development from novice to self-developing professional. Mentors' interest in this relationship is that, in order to be able to help beginning teachers effectively, they have to reflect continuously on their own repertoire of actions. The latter nearly always results in improvement of that repertoire. Apart from that, in particular for older teachers, the mentoring relationship means practising 'generativity'[10]. Essential in this definition, however, is the reciprocity. The mentoring relationship contributes to the professional development of both participants, i.e. it promotes the quality of their professional practice.

Apart from being a qualified teacher with excellent classroom management skills, an expert in the subject (s)he teaches and in the subject methodology concerned, a good mentor has to have the following personal qualities: open-mindedness, reflectiveness, fle-

xibility, listening skills, empathy, creativity and a helping attitude. Those responsible for mentoring beginning teachers must meet a number of prerequisites.

The first is a *knowledge base*. Mentors need to understand the nature of the process of professional development of beginning teachers, the nature of problems beginners experience and what the causes of those problems are, and finally, they have to have insight into the essentials of the teacher's professional learning process. The second is an *interpersonal skills base*. Mentors must master a wide range of interpersonal behaviours and know how these behaviours affect their protegees, and what type of behaviour is appropriate in what situation. Third, mentors must master a wide range of *technical skills*, such as, counselling, observing, providing feedback, providing instruction, evaluating.

It will be clear that mentors have to be carefully selected: not all teachers meet the prerequisites mentioned above or have the abilities to develop them. After selection they will still need substantial training to be able to act effectively as a mentor.

Mentor roles and technical skills

Before analyzing the skills a mentor has to master, we will first analyze the various aspects of the mentor role. The setting of that role is like counseling: the aim of mentoring is to help beginning teachers to develop their own professional identity and to master the necessary knowledge and skills. Therefore a mentor can be seen as a 'skilled helper' (Egan, 1986). Apart from the counseling setting in which all activities take place, we distinguish four sub-roles for a mentor: observer, instructor, provider of feedback and finally evaluator (Turney *et al*, 1982). To all sub-roles a set of skills is related. In the next section the various aspects of the mentor role are analyzed and connected with the skills required to act as a mentor in an effective way.

Mentors in their role as counsellors

An analysis of the role of a mentor as a counsellor, leads to the distinction of four aspects:

1. Creating an open and safe relationship between the beginner and her(him)self, in which experiences, feelings, concerns and problems can be openly discussed: showing interest, listening, accepting.
2. Helping beginners to gain insight into the origins of the problems they experience (guided reflection) and helping them

to find appropriate solutions for those problems: clarifying, inviting exploration, stimulating problem solving.

3. Stimulating beginners to develop a positive self-concept and a clear view on the profession: stimulating a positive self-concept, awareness of one's situation, guiding reorientation.
4. Helping beginners to develop strategies to deal with problematic and stressful events: recognizing stress, coping with stress and emotions, problem solving.

Mentors in their role as observers

Classroom observation is crucial for effective mentoring. In order to execute this part of his/her role properly, a mentor has to master elementary skills related to observation, such as being able:

1. To define in negotiation with the beginning teachers what will be observed: to make a proper selection, to define the precise behaviour concerned.
2. To collect and record data: to develop an observation scheme, to observe, to sort out and interpret the data.
3. To analyze the data and to report: to make a draft analysis, to consider alternatives considering individual qualities and circumstances, making a report for feedback.

Mentors in their role as providers of feedback

Because not all feedback can be based on observation by the mentor, other methods such as recall-discussions and student questionnaires can be used to collect information. Most discussions on lessons, however, will be based only on the beginning teacher's own report. In the context of this role it is important for the mentor to develop skills related to:

1. Discussions on lessons: recall-discussions, recognizing problems, giving appropriate feedback.
2. Helping beginners to analyze their own behaviour: mirroring teacher behaviour, processing data with respect to the teacher's acting in the classroom, stimulating reflection and self-evaluation.
3. Thinking along with beginners about solutions for their problems: analyzing teacher problems, advising about solutions.

Mentors in their role as instructors

Every beginner expects to receive that specific information from his mentor (s)he can use for solving the problems (s)he experiences. The mentor should be aware, however, that expert solutions will not work with beginners because they neither have the necessary class-room knowledge nor the routines on which those solutions are based. Instead they should offer:

1. Knowledge, ideas and examples that are related to the beginner's learning needs: identification of the learning needs, transformation of one's own ideas to the beginner's level, instruction skills.
2. Help in analyzing the beginner's own ideas and teaching behaviour: questioning, prompting, confronting with the professional knowledge base.
3. Encouragement towards reflection and self-evaluation: mapping problems, analyzing origins of the problems, offering strategies for problem solving.

Mentors in their role as evaluators

At the end of every session both the process and the product will be evaluated, i.e. the question will be raised whether the objectives have been met and whether the discussion as such was an appropriate means to arrive at those objectives. Apart from that, a summary of those evaluative reports is a good means to inform beginners about where they stand in the process of professional development. By the end of the year every mentor has to inform his/her protegee(s) what (s)he thinks of their professional abilities and perspective and to advice them whether to stop or to continue. This, in particular, has to be done with great care. Therefore, mentors need to master the following skills:

1. Communicating with beginners: explaining criteria and procedures of evaluation, creating a positive climate in which evaluation will be regarded as inducement for making further progress.
2. Collecting and interpreting evaluation data: sorting out evaluation data and considering their reliability, considering contextual influence, summarizing the findings.
3. Assessing and reporting: giving an assessment based on the available data, writing the evaluation report, discussing the report with the teacher concerned.

7. Conclusion

In many European countries the need for improving the quality of teaching and for raising the status of the teaching profession has been increasingly discussed at the governmental level. Concern for the professional development of teachers has to become essential in staff policy in schools, and in that context concern for beginning teachers in particular is no less than a test-case for the professionalism of those who develop the policy in question. An effective way to model this concern is to establish an induction programme in schools which is based on a mentor-protégé relationship. The mentoring relationship, however, is a very sensitive issue - it is based on mutual trust. Therefore, a clear distinction has to be made between those who are involved in the summative evaluation of the (beginning) teacher - i.e. school management, and those involved in the formative evaluation - i.e. the mentor. Preferably, mentors should obtain a status similar to school counsellors.

This issue of teacher induction is becoming urgent, in particular if we look at the trend in some European countries to replace initial teacher education by training on the job. At first sight this might seem effective because it removes the theory-practice gap, but without a solid professional knowledge base for teachers and without trained mentors to guide them, this system will not result in the improvement of teaching on the longer term. On the contrary, it will produce inflexible teachers who are not able to adapt to future innovations and who are not proper professionals.

Our view on teachers as self-directing professionals places teachers at the centre of the process of improving the quality of teaching. From this perspective on the teacher's role we have tried to map out the basic knowledge and skills for mentors in this chapter, based on our own research into the professional development of beginning teachers and on a review of relevant literature, in order to help to develop effective induction programmes in schools.

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NOTES

[1] See for an overview of the problems experienced by beginning teachers:

VEENMAN, 1984; VONK, 1984; KAGAN, 1992.

- [2] *Action* is defined as a special category of behaviour: it is intentional and controlled by thought processes. Actions are considered as interpreted patterns of behaviour which are hierarchical in nature (HOFER, 1986).
- [3] OOMS (1991) reported that in the Netherlands, throughout the eighties, up to 60% of the beginning teachers have dropped out during their first three years of service.
- [4] *Orientation base* is defined as: a conceptual framework related to a repertoire of actions which is based on an integrated whole of theoretical knowledge and practical experiences.
- [5] See for a more elaborate vision on educational leadership in schools: HODGKINSON (1991), Chap. 6.
- [6] See for a more elaborate description of teachers as professionals: VONK (1995a) and SERGIOVANNI & STARRATT (1993, 48).
- [7] For a detailed overview of problems on this issue as reported by novices, see VONK (1984, 110-112).
- [8] Important in the sense: related to the continuity of students' on-task performance, and of making progress (BROWN & McINTYRE, 1988).
- [9] For an overview of literature on 'teacher socialization', see: ZEICHNER & GORE (1990).
- [10] LEVINE (1989, 62), quotes ERIKSON: «Generativity is primarily the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation or whatever in a given case may become the absorbing object of a parental kind of responsibility».

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SUMARIO: LA INICIACION DEL PROFESOR: UN ELEMENTO ESENCIAL AL COMIENZO DE LA CARRERA DOCENTE.

Las investigaciones realizadas sobre los inicios en la profesión docente, señalan el dato de que una mayoría de los profesores principiantes vive su primer año de trabajo en la enseñanza como una experiencia problemática y estresante.

Durante el primer año los profesores van a desarrollar su propia identidad profesional: un autoconcepto sobre cómo soy yo como profesor, y, al mismo tiempo