

Anatomy of success and failure: the story of three novice teachers

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Summary

This paper focuses upon describing and analysing the induction and integration of three novice teachers in their schools, and explores the emotional and social factors which influenced these processes. During their graduate year from the teacher preparatory programme, these teachers acquired teaching positions in central Israel. Using a qualitative inquiry perspective, four themes emerged: reception at school, involvement with the principal and the teaching staff, communications with pupils and developing attitude towards the profession and towards work. It seems that the integration of in-system support factors, such as the principal and teaching staff, with support elements from among the pupils, facilitated a successful induction to teaching. More attention from the school principal and emotional and professional support from the school faculty may improve novice teachers' integration and adaptation in school, consequently supporting their future professional success. Some adaptations for teacher education programmes are suggested in order to improve the induction process. Recommendations for professional and emotional support during the first year of teaching are also offered.

Keywords: induction, integration, in-system support factors

Introduction

The Israeli Ministry of Education has been concerned with the need to professionally develop schoolteachers, as a part of a broader effort to raise the

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teaching profession status in the Israeli society. Since the 1980s a process of academization has taken place, requiring all teachers to acquire a bachelor degree as a prerequisite to teaching in schools. Furthermore, in 1996 the Israeli Ministry of Education decided to expand the teachers' preparatory programmes from three to four years, in which the fourth year mainly serves as a practicum year. This practicum year (the fourth year) is valuable in order to assess whether student teachers are well prepared to serve in this important profession. During the fourth year, the student teacher serves as both a faculty member in school and, at the same time, completes his/her bachelor degree.

This fourth year poses difficulties on novice teachers as they are about to make the transition from student teachers to school faculty members. They are still student teachers at the preparatory teacher programmes, while concurrently assuming teaching positions at schools and being supervised as a prerequisite to receiving the Israeli teaching licence.

In light of these recent structural changes, this inquiry explored the difficulties and support sources of novice teachers in their first year of teaching (fourth year at the preparatory teaching programme).

Context of inquiry

The transition from student teacher in a teacher education programme to teacher in a school is sudden and dramatic (Morine-Dershimer, 1992). This transition is characterized by many difficulties, which can be influential in determining the future career of the novice teacher (Goodman, 1987; Zeichner, 1983). The existing literature offers many reasons for this situation: some systems are expecting that the novice teacher will function like a veteran; there is an inevitable clash between the idealism and attitudes imbibed in teacher training and the reality in the field (Lawson, 1989; Amir and Tamir, 1992). In the 1980s, studies reporting adjustment difficulties in the first year of work abounded. These studies focused on the difficulties and needs of the novice teacher.

Diverse programmes have been developed to induct the new teacher. These programmes attempt to relieve the novice teacher of various pressures acting upon him/her and to equip him/her with teaching skills to facilitate the induction into teaching. These programmes include guidance visits, group tutoring, time planning, teacher buddy systems, university workshops and others (Frye, 1988; McCormick, 1987; McIntyre, 1989; Napper-Owen and Phillips, 1995; Veenman, 1984; Ward, 1986; Wildeman, Niles and Magliaro, 1989). The programmes try to ease the transition between the end of the preparation process and entry into teaching, aiming to improve the quality of teaching (Everton and White, 1992).

At the same time, various education systems have begun to express an interest in the quality of teacher preparation and in teaching itself. Budgets have been allocated for conducting surveys and constructing alternative means of training, and inducting new teachers into the profession. The increased interest in teacher preparation and teacher induction has been manifested in numerous inquiries conducted in different countries (Australian Educational Council, 1990; Beazley, 1993; Carnegie Forum on Education, 1986; Eldar and Nabel, 1992; Fullan and Connelly, 1987; Holmes Group Executive Board, 1986; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1985; National Inquiry into Teacher Education, 1980; New South Wales Office of Education and Youth Affairs, 1992; Schools Council, 1990; Times Educational Supplement, 1992; Huling-Austin,

1990). Much emphasis has been on maximal exposure of the student and of the novice teacher to the reality of the school and classroom.

In addition to the development of the various induction programmes, qualitative case studies have recently appeared, aiming to explore the source of problems of novice teacher induction in school, while examining the processes the teacher undergoes in his/her own school situation. In some cases, this has involved reports of serious problems, which made the teacher want to drop out of teaching. These problems included class discipline, conflicts with superiors and/or colleagues, difficulties in coping with a large number of classes, age levels for which they were not trained, frustration stemming from the need to adapt to the school's approach and being unable to implement the advanced ideas and systems learned in the college (Amir and Tamir, 1992). Findings of other researchers added emotional difficulties, such as anxiety, fear and isolation (Fuller, 1982; Gold, 1996; McDonald, 1980; Wildeman and Niles, 1989), to the list of factors with a crucial effect on the induction and future career of the novice teacher. Most of the studies focus on two main subjects: the difficulties encountered by novice teachers and the sources of support at their disposal.

In this regard, the main difficulties cited are: mastery of administrative skills, adjusting to the school system, fitting in with the school faculty, coping with discipline and teaching problems in heterogeneous classes, planning and organizing the class, evaluations and marks, failure to develop a teaching style and communications with parents (Lortie, 1975; McDonald, 1980; Shreeve *et al.*, 1986; Ryan, 1970; Veenman, 1984; Stout, 1989).

The main sources of support for novice teachers include both in-school agents and outside sources. Within the school, the main sources of support are: colleagues from the school faculty, a colleague teaching the same subject, subject/grade coordinators, school principal, school counsellor, supervisor and psychologist. Sources outside the school are friends and parents, former cooperating teachers and teacher friends from the teacher college in which the novice studied (Amir and Tamir, 1992).

A study conducted in Israel (Lasovsky, Shrift and Harel, 1997) found that the main support for novice teachers comes from within-school instructional sources, who are perhaps more accessible both physically and interpersonally. More specifically, novice teachers are supported by peers in a comparable or more senior position, and/or by colleagues in other subjects or auxiliary professions, such as grade-level coordinators, school principal, educational counsellors, etc.

A number of processes characterize the first year of the novice teacher's work. Most novice teachers think that the transition to working in school is the most difficult part of their professional career. Nevertheless, few consider the transition to be smooth and simple (McDonald, 1980). Usually the transition is characterized and accompanied by a feeling of 'reality shock' (Muller-Föhrbrodt, Cloetta and Dann, 1978; Corcoran, 1981), which is marked by a tremendous gap between the protected and assured status of the 'student teacher' during teacher training, and the independent teacher who undertakes full professional responsibility for his/her actions. 'Reality shock' seems to be a major concern of novice teachers, including physical educators (Silverman and Ennis, 1996). 'Reality shock' is described as 'the collapse of the missionary ideals found during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of classroom life' (Veenman, 1984, p. 143). It can be the consequence of personal resources that are shaken by specific aspects of the new reality, the feeling of having chosen the wrong profession, using inappropriate educational approaches, a feeling of isolation at one's place of work, and the like.

There is no doubt that most novice teachers find themselves functioning in a new and unfamiliar environment, and some work like 'lone wolves' in the system. The reality they have entered is unique as each school offers its own individual social system and 'ecology' (Goodman, 1987; Zeichner and Gore, 1990) from which generalizations cannot be made about other schools (Fullan, 1982; Hogben and Lawson, 1984; Lacey, 1977; Odell, 1988; Veenman, 1984). Although school ecology greatly differs from one context to another, Cole (1994) asserts that school climate, school ethos and school effectiveness can serve as significant predictors of successful teachers' induction process.

There seem to be differences in how teachers adapt to the system, cope with difficulties, choose sources of support and assistance, and choose the means of 'surviving'. Novice teachers can be divided, according to their 'survival attempts', into those who 'begin easily' and those who 'begin painfully'. The difference between the 'easy' and 'painful' beginnings depends on a number of factors, including the teachers' ability to communicate with their pupils, to demonstrate appropriate pedagogical skills, to develop suitable ties with colleagues and to demonstrate enthusiasm in their teaching (Huberman, 1989).

There are also individual differences in the ability to cope with stressful situations. Coping with psychological stress is a dynamic process of interaction of a person and his/her environment. It may be that this dynamic process is what determines the continued career of the novice teacher. One of the reactions to stress is to abandon the profession or to change a place of work (Taylor and Dale, 1971; Dale, 1973). Gold (1996) argues that 'the beginning teacher's transition from student to teacher often involves a great deal of stress. Lack of self-confidence, conflicts between personal life and professional requirements, and inability to handle stress have undermined many otherwise promising teachers' (p. 562). Stroot *et al.* (1999) support this assertion and point out the necessity to address emotional concerns of novice teachers, which then allows better emphasis on instructional and managerial issues.

Hulling-Austin (1990) found that almost 30 per cent of the novice teachers in the USA, including the most talented among them, drop out of the profession during their first two years of teaching. The average dropout rate in Israel stands at about 40 per cent of the graduates after the first three years of work (Mor, 1993).

Despite differences in teachers' personalities, most undergo similar initial processes, and a number of processes can be denoted as common to them all. Undoubtedly, the complex and difficult challenges presented by the system create emotional and physical stresses, and the manner of coping with them will be an important determinant of the novices' ultimate success or failure.

Methodology

This paper forms part of a wider study, which followed graduates of a physical education teacher college during their first year of teaching, studying their difficulties and support sources. The broader inquiry project followed 34 graduates of a physical education teacher education (PETE) college in central Israel. All 34 graduates received their teaching certificate in the same year, and started their first year of teaching in elementary, middle or high school. In this work, we present the personal story of three teachers. At the end of the first year of teaching, it became apparent that one of them had succeeded, the second had

fought and survived, and the third had dropped out of teaching during the year. The paper focuses upon describing the induction and integration of the three teachers in their schools and explores the emotional and social factors which influenced these processes.

Selecting the subsample for the study

The stories of three of the 34 novice teachers are presented in this paper. Studying a number of cases jointly is actually an instrumental study extended to other cases, rather than a study of a collective: 'We may simultaneously carry on more than one case study, but each case study is a concentrated inquiry into a single case' (Stake, 1994, p. 237). However, the researchers explored whether similarities exist across the *conceptual themes* that emerged from the different case studies.

The decision to choose the three specific teachers (pseudonymous names were assigned) was made towards the end of the first teaching year. The major criterion for selection was success or failure in 'surviving the first year of teaching'. Teacher 1 – Anna – completed the first year of teaching successfully, with an outstanding evaluation from her principal and superintendent. Teacher 2 – Batia – completed the first year of teaching with some difficulties, receiving an average evaluation. Teacher 3 – Gila – completed only six months of teaching and then dropped out of teaching due to severe difficulties. Therefore, the researchers employed the purposeful sampling strategy in order to 'seek out-groups, settings and individuals, where (and for whom) the processes being studied are most likely to occur' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 202). This corresponds to Patton's (1990) assertion that 'purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study' (p. 169).

An effort was made to select subjects with similar backgrounds in other variables. All three teachers were females, single, 22–23 years old, without previous teaching experience. They had a high grade point average and high student teaching evaluations. They were accepted to college after completing their compulsory army service (two years for women). During their service, they all served in instructional capacities. The three teachers were inducted into work after their third year of studies, after receiving their Senior Certified Teachers Diploma, which allows them to teach in the Israeli educational system. All three were assigned to 'tough' schools in terms of students' behaviour, with poor facilities and equipment, and minimal support for physical education curricula. All the schools are in the centre of the country and have a disadvantaged population, and each of the classes is coeducational. All three schools had another physical education teacher on the faculty.

Researchers and context

Data for this study were collected and analysed by three teacher educators, who supervised field experiences and taught pedagogy in the teacher training college. All three researchers were tenured and had more than 20 years of experience. They were part of the induction programme team and followed the participants of the study throughout the first year of teaching. Since the three participants in this study were selected at the end of the year, researchers did not know they were about to be candidates for this particular study. However, researchers were well-acquainted with the novice teachers' social and learning background. Furthermore, the

periodical meetings and discussions strengthened the knowledge researchers had concerning the context in which the novice teachers operated.

While relationships were fully professional, researchers were committed to support the teachers and ease their induction struggle. Such ambiguous relationships of support, on the one hand, and accountability requirements and evaluation, on the other hand, are a major challenge derived by induction guidelines imposed by the Ministry of Education on all teacher training programmes in Israel (Eldar, 1996). Previous years of implementation clearly illuminated that novice teachers are seeking the teacher educators' advice. In doing that, novice teachers do not hesitate to open their records (e.g. lesson plans) for review (Eldar and Nabel, 1992).

Data collection

Written reports

Text analysis 'is not concerned with individual language items, but with the effect of repeated choices on the meaning and force of the text as a whole' (Milles, 1997, p. 149). The teachers summarized each workday in writing, following predetermined guidelines delivered to all 34 participants. At the end of each week, the teachers' reports were collected and sent to the researchers. At the end of each month, the teachers submitted a summary follow-up and progress report. These reports included a description of the processes they had experienced in the school, a professional analysis of their functioning in teaching physical education and a description of their emotional experiences.

Short meetings

Once a week, a meeting was held between the novice teacher and a researcher. At these meetings, teachers shared their recent significant episodes and thoughts, asked questions and consulted with the researchers about that week's and the next week's work. The subjects of the meetings were based on the teachers' reports during the week. Once every three weeks, a meeting was held at the school at the end of the workday. The other meetings were held at the college. Each short meeting lasted about 30 minutes.

Interviews

The teachers answered questions referring to both emotional and professional aspects. On the emotional side, the teachers were asked how they felt to be a part of the school system and about their relationship with the principal, the staff and the pupils. On professional matters, the teachers were asked questions referring to their more pressing problems during the lessons. Interviews with each teacher were conducted five times during the academic year: during the first week of teaching, towards the end of the year, and three others in between, once every two or three months. Each interview lasted approximately 50 minutes and was conducted at the college.

Data analysis

The researchers aimed at finding major themes that arose across case studies. This process seeks to identify patterns of action and interaction through cross-site analysis, which is known as 'pattern clarification' (Huberman and Miles,

1994, p. 436). Thus, generating themes was an inductive process, grounded in the various perspectives articulated by the novice teachers, as opposed to an a-priori categorization process. This inductive process involved 'identifying patterns in the data: recurring ideas, perspectives, and descriptions that depict[ed] the social world [we were] studying' (Rossman and Rallis, 1998, p. 179). The researchers made inferences by systematically identifying specific characteristics in the data gathered, searching for emerging themes, as well as teasing out anomalies and contradictions in the data (Merriam, 1988). Continuous comparison of emergent themes was conducted among the researchers. This triangulation of emergent themes among researchers established inter-rater reliability.

In order to ensure and refine the perspectives shared by the novice teachers, member checking to test the collected data was held with each teacher. In doing so, the researchers refined their tentative themes in light of the teachers' reactions and ensured accurate and plausible interpretation of the data, thus putting the teachers' perspectives at the centre of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Teachers' stories

Anna

Anna completed her high school studies near her home in the south of the country. Before entering the teacher education programmes, she worked only in jobs that came her way, with no attempt to practise teaching-related duties.

The college acceptance committee, on the basis of a personal interview, rated Anna as eminently suitable for college studies. The evaluation in her personal file from the end of the first year of studies by supervisors and other staff members was very good: 'She is a leader', indicated her direct supervisor. At the end of second year, the evaluation read: 'Very serious, authoritative in teaching, ready to cope with difficulties.' At the end of the third year, 'Her believable and authoritative approach arouses motivation among the children . . . can be enthusiastic; she lives the lesson . . . She cares.' Her final grade in teaching was 90 (out of possible 100).

Anna looked for work on her own. Getting a teaching job was important to her, both professionally and economically. She found work in an elementary school, located in a poor, urban vicinity. The principal was interested in Anna's work, and supported and encouraged her to initiate new educational programmes, while pointing out her expectations from Anna to take an active role in various school activities.

Reception by the principal and the staff

Anna was given a warm and sincere reception both by the principal and the other teachers. This experience gave Anna a good feeling from the beginning of the year:

'The reception given to me by the principal and the teaching staff in the teachers' room was very pleasant and sincere. From the first moment, I had a good feeling . . . I was presented to the principal who received me very graciously, encouraged me, went out of her way for me, and that's something I won't forget.'

Involvement with the principal and the teaching staff

Anna was supported and assisted by all those around her. The teachers and principal supported her work down the line. This backed her positive relation to teaching as a job and contributed to her efforts to improve her work and the profession's image in her school. It did not take long for her to develop a feeling of belonging to the school:

'I noted that throughout the year I received the support and encouragement of all. I had a gut feeling that the entire system was ready to go out of its way for me, and if there were obstacles along the way, they were tied to my own personality, such as shyness, etc. . . . I feel wonderful; the teachers are warm and supportive all the time.'

The good relations with the principal enabled Anna to purchase equipment in time, which facilitated her work later on:

'The principal gave me a free hand in ordering supplementary equipment and that made it much easier for me to plan my work . . . the strong backing received from the school principal enabled me to order the required equipment early on in the year . . . I got almost everything I asked for.'

Anna's good ties with the homeroom teachers (teachers who spend most time with a certain class and are held accountable for its progress) helped her, relatively quickly, to know the children and to cope with discipline problems:

'I could turn to the homeroom teacher immediately with every problem I had. In most cases, we would sit and together search for the appropriate solution. The information I received from her helped me a lot to get to know the children and how to treat each one.'

Communication with pupils

Very soon, at the beginning of the year, Anna felt that she developed good communication with the pupils, having a common language with them. She felt that pupils loved her and, as a consequence, the subject as well:

'I decided that the first thing that was important to me was to get to know the children, and to find some common language with them as fast as possible . . . In the second half of the school year, my most important reinforcement came from the pupils. I felt that they loved me. I felt that they loved the subject and, for me, this was very important.'

Anna had very little information about the school she would be teaching in, but from the moment she was accepted to work there, it was important to her to learn about the school and the pupil body. She spent time and effort in getting to know the pupils. By opening channels of communication, by collecting information from the homeroom teacher and by writing notes and comments to herself, Anna aspired to become acquainted with her pupils:

'I try to learn about the children, I make lists for myself . . . and check myself, to see how they react to me . . .'

Developing attitudes towards the profession and the work

From the beginning of the year, Anna felt positive excitement and the desire to work well and to succeed. Acknowledging the support from all those around her contributed to Anna's relating very positively to teaching as a job.

At mid-year, Anna felt satisfied with her ties with the children, and with her professional successes. Anna noted professional success as expressed in her pupils' progress in the course content and their obvious satisfaction from her lessons. All these provided her with great satisfaction from her work, and she began to think of the coming school year and to draw up a general programme of her curriculum for the coming year:

'I am very satisfied with the work. I am satisfied because I know that the pupils love the subject and me. The children have also progressed a lot in the past half-year.'

Near the end of the year, Anna initiated a meeting with the principal about her employment in the following school year and the principal's expectations from the curriculum. Anna reported great satisfaction from the teaching profession and from the great contribution of her success in work to her own self-image.

Batia

Batia completed her high school studies in the central area of the country. She worked mainly in coaching basketball (on a second-division girls' team).

The college acceptance committee evaluated her as having high motivation to teach. It was noted that she might have some difficulties with academic studies. At the end of the first year, the evaluation found her to be 'OK in studies and in teaching, but does not exhibit enough involvement'. At the end of second year, it read: 'The student has improved in her attitude to studies; good in teaching but makes no special effort.' At the end of the third year, it stated: 'Significant improvement. Very serious student, talented, accepts criticism, enthusiastic.' Her final grade in teaching was 85.

Batia sought work on her own and was accepted by a high school. Batia received no special functions in addition to regular teaching as she was subbing for a teacher on vacation. All her efforts to communicate with the teacher for whom she was subbing and to learn of the schools' instructional curriculum and student population were in vain.

Reception by the principal and the staff

No special reception was organized for Batia. The first meeting was during the school's preparatory days at the end of the summer, where she was introduced by name to the other teachers:

'The principal introduced me to the [male] teachers but not to the female teachers ... the female teachers showed no special interest in me. Not one of them came over to me.'

Involvement with the principal and the teaching staff

All of Batia's attempts to make contact with the teacher she was replacing failed. Thus, she had no prior information about the school, the student body, the faculty, and so on:

'I tried again and again to develop ties with the second [PE] teacher in the school, but to no avail . . . It seemed to me that the teacher was not willing, to cooperate and was perhaps even trying to avoid me.'

Batia felt that the school administration was less than enthusiastic about physical education. The principal did not help her to solve problems and she had to cope with them by herself. She also felt that the subject was not of great importance to the school. She felt this, among other things, when the sports-field was turned into a parking-lot for the teachers:

'I came in with a lot of energy and plans . . . However, the principal let me know that physical education was not the most important subject in the school, and that in fact there was no reason for me to turn to her with any of my problems . . . At the beginning of the year, I found out how bad the work conditions were. I was in shock when I saw that the only field available had been turned into a teachers' parking-lot . . .'

At first, Batia tried to 'interest' the principal and to inform her of the difficulties. After it was explained that there was no chance of changing the situation, she perceived that this problem was hers alone.

Considering a different perspective, Batia quickly found out that she was not alone in suffering from the decline of pupil motivation and the alarming behaviour problems:

'I understood that the absences, lateness and wandering out of class were what happened in most teachers' classes, so I couldn't get any help from them. On the other hand, it did help to allay my personal feelings of frustration a little . . . I still was not ready to give up. I put a lot of time into thinking how to make the material so interesting that the pupils would want to come and stay until the end. I realized that the pupils' unbearable behaviour was not only in my lessons, but in all the other teachers' as well . . . I understood that I had no one to talk to and that the only thing that might change things was my motivation.'

At the beginning of the year, Batia did not find time to create ties with the teaching staff, but later on, after she had organized a school field run, she felt that the teaching staff appreciated her work:

'What happened to me in the teachers' room wasn't so important to me. I was involved only in planning the professional material. After I organized the school's field-day races, and because of the large number of pupils participating, I felt that the teachers were looking at me differently and even complimenting me.'

Communication with pupils

At the beginning of the year, Batia was so deeply involved in coping with daily life in the school that she was not able to develop ties with the pupils and/or the teachers. The feeling was that she was living from day to day and was unable to afford the effort to develop ties with pupils that were not directly connected with her work in the classroom. Only in the latter part of the year did Batia cite the pupils as a support factor:

'In the middle of the second term of the year, I felt positive feedback from the pupils. I understood that most of them saw me as a friend and not as just another teacher, and this also affected their attendance at lessons . . . feelings towards the profession and the work. The first weeks of teaching were marked by high motivation, a desire to implement the great knowledge accumulated during the teacher training process, and a feeling of tremendous physical and emotional energy. Then came feelings of great disappointment, the crushing of expectations and the need to build a new set of expectations in light of the difficult reality. When I saw that many of my expectations just went down the drain, it didn't take long for me to understand that there was a tremendous chasm between my expectations and what I would find in the field.'

Developing attitudes towards the profession and the work

Until the middle of the year, Batia reported feelings of being in a struggle for survival, the desire to prove her ability, with slightly uplifted spirits following small successes, mainly in light of the interest that the pupils began to exhibit. In this period, serious doubts were evoked regarding the teaching profession, and she felt that the coming period (the second half of the year) would be crucial in deciding whether she would find her place in the profession, or at least in the specific system in which she was teaching.

At mid-year, Batia reported an increase in confidence, mainly as a consequence of knowing that the difficulties she was facing were not unique to her alone. The new set of expectations she built up, based on her analysis of the situation, helped her to develop new hope as to her chances for professional development. At the same time, she continued to report a lack of satisfaction arising from her inability to apply her professional skills during teaching hours.

Despite her difficulties, near the end of the year, Batia had no feeling of failure. She reported 'small successes', mainly following positive communication with pupils and reinforcement from the school principal during staff meetings. The way she analysed the situation helped her to derive satisfaction from her ability to overcome problems and to continue in the teaching process and achieve its goals. Batia was interested in continuing to teach. However, she was weighing the possibility of moving to another school. She reported these deliberations despite being asked to continue to teach in the same school for another year.

Gila

Gila completed her high school studies in the central area of the country. Before enrolling in the college, she was employed by a large company and felt well respected.

The college acceptance committee evaluated the student as average. The committee noted that, at this time (entering college), it was difficult to ascertain the candidate's true desire to be a teacher. At the end of the first and the second year, the teachers' evaluation of the student was very good. By the end of the third year, it stated: 'The student has good teaching ability both in practical and academic studies: quiet, likeable, stands up for her own opinions, accepted by peers.' Under 'Teacher enthusiasm', her supervisor wrote that she could improve. Her final grade in teaching was 85.

Gila made no special effort to find work. Teachers in the college suggested that

she apply for a position in an elementary school that they knew of through their ties with the school. The school was characterized by a growing number of students with special needs who were integrated into inclusive classes. Gila had to teach inclusive classes, although she had not been taught how to do so in the teacher preparatory programme. Gila encountered a new principal who valued the importance of physical education to students with special needs. However, beyond receiving information on the school's rules and regulations, she neither received professional nor emotional support with regard to teaching inclusive classes.

Reception by the principal and the staff

No special reception was organized for Gila. The first meeting was during the preparatory days at the end of the summer, when she was introduced by name, as were all other new teachers. The principal presented each of the new teachers with a few words and told them what each would teach.

Involvement with the principal and the teaching staff

Gila received no information about the school's population or teaching staff. Her professional ties with the other physical education teacher in the school were initiated only at the opening of the school year.

Gila reported that, at her first meeting with the principal, it was explained that the school had high expectations of her. Nevertheless, at the same meeting the principal indicated that Gila would have to be independent and find her own way in the school, with no help either from the principal or the homeroom teachers. Hence, Gila did not approach the principal, and at the beginning of the year did not know how to take advantage of the homeroom teachers:

'I knew that the principal expected a lot from me, but I did not feel free to discuss things with her and find out just what she meant . . . most of the time, I tried to involve her and the homeroom teachers in the problems I had. They made it clear that those were my problems, which I had to cope with alone . . . They said I was a teacher already. In the first weeks, I didn't know what was more important to me – to get along with the principal and teachers or to concentrate on the children and the lessons . . . I was in such a whirlpool of feelings that I didn't know what I should concentrate on.'

Gila's understanding was that discipline problems were dealt with by each teacher individually, in his or her own way:

'I had the feeling that the situation was bad among the other teachers as well, but that they were better at hiding it.'

Moreover, Gila did not succeed in creating ties with the homeroom teachers and other teachers on the staff. The situation deteriorated until there was an almost complete break between her and the school staff. As a result, she felt alone and isolated:

'In the teachers' room, I felt dispensable, especially when once someone asked me what I was doing there. They thought I was a pupil. At the end, I almost never went into the teachers' room.'

Communication with pupils

The pupil body was not the easiest and behaviour and discipline problems were fairly frequent. Gila noted that discipline problems were so abundant that she never succeeded in securing her status as a teacher in front of the pupils:

‘Sometimes, I had the feeling that the pupils were running the lesson and not I . . . I think I did not succeed in developing a common language with the pupils, and constantly, I felt that they were testing me.’

The special education class had only a few pupils, but because Gila had had no training for working in special education, she experienced many doubts about how to deal with the pupils:

‘Perhaps I should have used more “tricks” to cope with the problem, but I kept thinking that I had to be professional.’

Developing attitudes towards the profession and the work

At the beginning of the year, Gila was embarrassed and fearful of the unknown. She suffered from confusion and feelings of low self-confidence. Faulty communications with the principal and teachers and the high expectations laid upon her increased her anxiety about her professional functioning.

The first month was characterized by ups and downs. At times, Gila derived satisfaction from the work, and at others she felt helpless as she acknowledged her lack of professional knowledge to cope with the various problems. Gila reported efforts ‘to get matters under control’, but with no marked success. Furthermore, she felt great frustration from the lack of support from the principal:

‘I wanted to improve my performance but I felt that there was no one to hang on. The principal had no time for me and no motivation to push me forward.’

Her motivation to continue and to cope waned from day to day. She examined her role as a teacher and began to question her fitness for the teaching profession.

After three months, school became an overwhelming burden. Gila reported a lack of desire to get up in the morning for work and ‘bad vibes’ about the teaching profession in general. It should be noted that she did not blame environmental factors, but rather reconsidered her suitability and ability to succeed in this field:

‘Actually, I had always had some doubts about teaching, but now they grew. I felt that I was beaten and logic says that what we feel is what is true, so I went with my feelings . . . it was no fun getting up in the morning for work. I felt that the failure was mine, in my character.’

The combination of great emotional suffering with the inability to provide practical solutions for the professional problems she was encountering brought her to breaking-point and the decision to cease her work. Gila did not try to transfer to another school. Rather, she decided not to continue in the formal education system and to concentrate on instructing physical activity in the informal system (e.g. sports clubs, youth camps).

Discussion

The factors conducive to success and failure in induction into teaching are many and varied. It should be stressed that the data provided in this study are based on three novice teachers. It is impossible to say what would have happened had each of the three teachers we accompanied been assigned to one of the other schools. This question piques the fancy because all three teachers possessed the teaching ability required for success in teaching. This question leads us to an investigation of the various work environments and the support factors provided for the teachers.

The reception and introduction of the novice teacher to the school faculty have great importance. The teacher's first impression of the school staff (principal, teachers, etc.) is extremely important in his or her perception of the school's attitude towards physical education. Perhaps a negative perception, of contempt or disregard, reduces the teacher's motivation to function in the school, and perhaps even affects the physical educator's self-image. Taking one's first steps in a school with no assistance or support makes life difficult and arouses anxiety (Taylor and Dale, 1971; Dale, 1973). Often principals expect teachers to arrive with extensive knowledge from their training institutions and to be able to demonstrate it in the school. Principals may not be aware of the complex problems presented by the unique framework that each school represents, both with its explicit procedures and, especially, its implicit ones (Fullan, 1982; Goodman, 1987; Hogben and Lawson, 1984; Lacey, 1977; Odell, 1988; Veenman, 1984; Zeichner and Gore, 1990).

Emotional support factors vary during the year. It seems that the transition from in-system support factors, such as the principal and teaching staff, to support elements from among the pupils, indicates good integration in teaching and the acquisition of confidence in the teaching process. As soon as the reinforcing support factors stem from the pupils themselves, it can be assumed that the teacher has overcome the transition crisis and is beginning to exhibit signs of success.

Even when the teacher does not receive support from factors in the system, support from the pupils may help him/her to survive (Amir and Tamir, 1992). In such a case (Batia), the pupils strengthened the teacher's motivation and imbued her with great confidence in her work, even when support and reinforcement from the principal and colleagues were not forthcoming. The teacher's success in organizing a field-day, including the active participation of a large number of pupils, also served to raise her standing among the school staff and to provide her with great confidence.

It is important to note that Anna, who was conspicuously successful in teaching, mentioned the importance of her ties with pupils as early as the first few weeks of teaching. This indicates a focusing on the 'direct consumers' with whom lies the main source of professional and emotional reinforcement. The teacher spends most of her school hours with the pupils and they, in essence, comprise the central source for evaluating her success. Of course, we cannot compare the teachers as to how much each was involved in this process since the teaching environments in which they functioned were different. Responsibility for the induction process lies with many agents, among them the teacher, the principal, the faculty, the facilities, pupils' characteristics, and many more.

Analysis of the findings indicates the importance of emotional support. Gila reported feelings of isolation and lack of support throughout the process. These

feelings undoubtedly affected her final decision to leave teaching. It is hard to know what would have happened if she had received the same type of support as Anna. It is reasonable to suspect that such a situation would have allowed her to focus on the professional element, which was lacking. The picture of failure for Gila is especially serious because of the lack of support from the pupils as well. Such a situation does not provide any avenue for teacher improvement, as we saw with Batia. Batia was confronted with many difficulties, but her small successes with the pupils gave her the confidence to continue to cope with the difficult situation reigning in the school. The importance of positive pupil feedback can be seen most convincingly in Anna's progress throughout the year, as she was strengthened by her main consumers – the pupils. In her case, continual support also came from the principal and the staff, and this support allowed her to successfully cope with the various difficulties she encountered.

It is interesting that Anna, who integrated well and succeeded in teaching, did not report any significant deterring factors. On the other hand, Batia and Gila, who underwent much more difficult integration processes, were able to indicate quite accurately which factors and agents impeded their progress. In the interviews conducted throughout the teaching year, Batia and Gila mentioned these factors from the start. This fact is very important because it indicates the teachers' ability to analyse the various factors affecting their work.

Gila's perception of her failure focused on her character and her suitability to the profession. She did not blame outside forces. Nevertheless, an analysis of the teaching environment in which she functioned clearly indicated a total lack of support from the system for the novice teacher. Moreover, it is possible to see how the school environment played an important role in her failure.

The inadequacies revealed in analysing the factors for failure suggest a need for an individualized induction process emanating from the school staff and not dependent on outside forces. Perhaps appropriate work with Gila would have allowed her to concentrate on improving her professional work instead of focusing on personality components, which she thought prevented her success. At the same time, increased awareness by the principal and the school staff of her plight might have made them offer assistance and adjust her working conditions to help her succeed.

Batia also underwent a very difficult personal process. Like Gila, she too attributed her survival factors to personal factors. Batia had to struggle hard against the problems that existed in the school, grasping small victories, which became more frequent, and coming to terms with the difficulties which characterized her school and impeded her success. Batia was very close to throwing in the towel, but her determination and her readjustment of personal expectations (downward) allowed her to survive.

This analysis teaches us how strong the personal emotional experience of novice teachers can be (Fuller, 1982; McDonald, 1980; Wildeman and Niles, 1989). It is reasonable to assume that the formula for the novice teachers' success depends on a combination of their personality and talents along with support from the environment. It is our duty to create a comfortable and supportive professional, social and emotional environment for novice teachers in which preconceptions can be modified and emotional stress can be shared.

This professional, social and emotional environment should emerge from a supportive school culture in which members share values such as trust, cooperation, openness, intimacy and teamwork. Schein (1985, p. 6) defines culture as 'the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an

organization . . . basic taken-for-granted assumptions which fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment'. These tacit assumptions strongly influence organizational members' ways of thinking and acting. In this regard, novice teachers, in their transition from teacher education programmes to teaching in school settings, are often faced with a need to adapt to new and different sets of values and norms, causing both mental and emotional challenges.

Supported by Taylor and Dale (1971) and Dale (1973), the analysis of the findings of this study indicates that many of the difficulties in the novice teachers' adjustment process were inherent in the environment in which they functioned. All three teachers had sufficient teaching ability. Their ability to cope with environmental difficulties and their personal motivation significantly affected their survival in the teaching profession, as well as their level of satisfaction and how they perceived the teaching profession. In light of these data, it can be stated that more attention from the school principal and emotional and professional support from the school faculty is likely to improve novice teachers' integration and adaptation in school, consequently raising their probability for success.

Conclusion and recommendations

It is difficult to separate the professional and the emotional areas in the induction process of novice teachers. It is obvious that professional problems have a crucial influence on the teacher's feelings and the way in which he/she perceives the teaching profession. High levels of determination and motivation, together with assistance from various support sources, may help the teacher overcome professional problems. Professional and emotional isolation may induce a heightened feeling of frustration and may persuade the teacher not to search for alternatives to his/her professional problems.

The importance of college faculty support was clear and unequivocal. The principles underlying the ties between the college faculty and the novice teachers were based on professional friendship and avoidance of any kind of pressure to make contact. It would seem that this source of consultation, separate from the school system and representing a neutral and non-threatening element, allowed the teachers to raise problems they were afraid to bring up in school. At the same time, serious questions must be raised about activating an agent from outside the school within the school, when this agent does not participate in the school's decision-making processes. This separation is an advantage for the discretion it provides in offering support for the novice teacher, but it is definitely limited in all matters pertaining to directly solving school-related problems and in its direct influence on integration of the novice teachers in the specific school.

This study clearly indicates the importance of the pupils in the successful integration of the teacher. Thus, everything possible should be done to create positive and encouraging contact between teacher and pupils. This process can be facilitated by assigning the novice teacher classes in areas he/she masters, adjusting the class size, providing appropriate facilities, assigning classes which are relatively easy to work with, and working with the teacher along the way. Furthermore, the study illuminates the importance of concentrating on creating successful ties with the pupils, attaining curricular goals, and receiving positive feedback from the pupils and from the professional staff.

The principal, in particular, seemed to affect the novice teachers' induction into teaching. This individual appears to contribute to either a positive or

negative induction for novice teachers. Principals need to be aware of this influence and encouraged to often meet with their novice teachers, in order to ensure a smooth transition into the school. It is important that the principals communicate the expectations for the teachers' performance, and make the teacher aware of sources of support, so that any problems that may arise can be dealt with in a satisfactory manner.

The findings of this study may support the importance of colleagues in the induction and integration processes in school. It would seem that the accompanying colleague could be supportive and non-threatening but, at the same time, have a direct influence on the teaching and socialization processes in the specific school. Thus, it will be possible to support the novice teachers, assist them in applying the teaching theory they learned and, at the same time, establish supportive processes in their immediate teaching environment. One possible avenue of action is the training of supportive colleagues from among the school staff, facilitating the unique supportive and 'non-supervisory' aspect of this role. This can be supported by the organizational learning perspective, which illuminates the importance of in-school factors (teachers, administrators) as sources for learning and growth.

The teacher training process may include a process of reflectiveness in which the teacher can develop the tools for self-evaluation and follow-up of his/her development in work. If the teacher can learn to recognize the importance of the various support agents in his/her surroundings, and more than that, to communicate with them constructively, this is likely to assist a successful induction into teaching.

The great difference between the support-thwarting factors reported by the teachers emphasizes the need to draw a school 'profile', focusing on various characteristics related to the induction process of new teachers. Analysis of these elements will make it possible to assist the novice teacher in creating communications that are appropriate and constructive. It may also be possible to work with the school staff on a process of adapting the working conditions and communications, so that they will assist in successfully integrating the novice teacher.

The discussion at the end of the first working year regarding the type of work to be done in the second year is of the utmost importance (Eldar, 1996; Eldar and Nabel, 1992). Great attention should be devoted to this process in which ties may be made between what teachers did, where they succeeded in the first year and what they can do in the second. This functional tie may strengthen the teachers' professional image and encourage them to continue to invest in improving their work. Proper assistance by the principal and the accompanying colleagues can contribute much to the successful professional development of the teacher, which is influenced significantly by the first years of teaching. It is recommended that research continues, especially in this professional transition stage.

These findings strongly emphasize the importance of a supportive induction programme, at least for the first year of teaching. The staff accompanying the novice teachers must be well-versed in the complex socialization process and familiar with the various channels of supportive communication available to the novice teacher. In this regard, policy-makers should not view teachers' preparatory programmes and school settings as distinct in goals and actions. Policy-makers can budget a supportive induction programme in which teacher educators and school administrators, and teachers and newly qualified teachers, create a community of inquiry in a community of practice. This valuable school

community reflects the need to better integrate theory and practice, thinking and acting.

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