

**Induction of Newly Qualified Teachers in the Seychelles: Professional and Organisational Dimensions**

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Abstract

This paper presents findings from work in progress on the extent and nature of induction for NQTs in the Seychelles' schools. The research was exploratory as there was little evidence of a formal scheme of induction of NQTs in the Seychelles educational system. The management and implementation of induction was examined and NQTs' perceptions of their induction experiences were sought, thus bringing to light their socialisation process within their institution and their subsequent professional development. The research included a questionnaire survey of the NQTs, interviews of high ranking ministry officials, and case studies in which the school managers and NQTs were observed and interviewed. The data gathered were substantiated through relevant documentary analysis.

The findings revealed that the school leaders play a leading part in the induction process. Induction activities ranged from the first initial meeting between the NQT(s) and the school managers, a tour of the school premises and discussion of school policies in staff meetings.

The paper concludes that induction of newly qualified teachers is established in all schools but its implementation varies in accordance with the different approaches of school leaders.

**Introduction**

Induction and mentoring are two concepts being given a lot of attention in the education arena, notably in respect of newly qualified teachers. Education is seen as a means of developing a skilled workforce, thus facilitating economic growth. Hence, training and retaining teachers will help ensure that quality education prevails.

In this article I report on an ongoing study aiming to establish the extent and nature of how NQTs' induction and subsequent mentoring are done in the Seychelles schools. The data consists of a survey of all the 2006 NQTs. Major issues dealing with the management of the induction of NQTs will be discussed featuring the NQTs' perception of their induction programme and subsequent mentoring during their first year of teaching.

***Background of research in induction and mentoring in the Seychelles***

Some Seychellois researchers too, have examined the induction of teachers in the Seychelles. For example, Leste (1998) studied new teachers graduating from a B.Ed course, which linked the School of Education of Seychelles Polytechnic with the Centre of International Education at the University of Sussex. Leste developed an induction model which would provide support at different levels; "administrative support, collegial support and specialized support" (op cit: 19-20). The model suggested that the Ministry of Education should involve schools to devise an induction programme centrally.

Barallon, (2003), investigating the effectiveness of initial secondary teacher education and training in the Seychelles, revealed that 30% of the graduates have been inducted in their schools. Barallon added that the graduates' responses contradicted those of their senior managers who stated that all graduates are inducted when they join the school as a full time teacher.

Estico (2005) investigated the concept and practice of induction and mentoring in the Seychelles secondary schools. His findings revealed that induction at secondary level is regarded as the responsibility of the schools' Senior Management and Heads of Department (HOD).

***The National Context of the Study: The Seychelles***

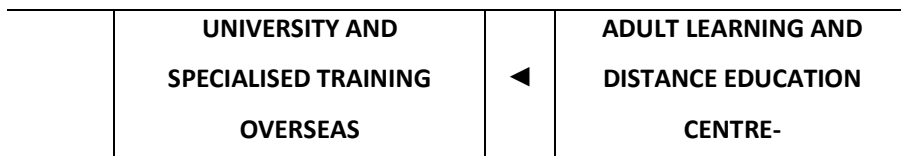
The research undertaken was carried out in the Seychelles. This section will provide a brief overview of the country's historical, socio- political, economic and educational background.

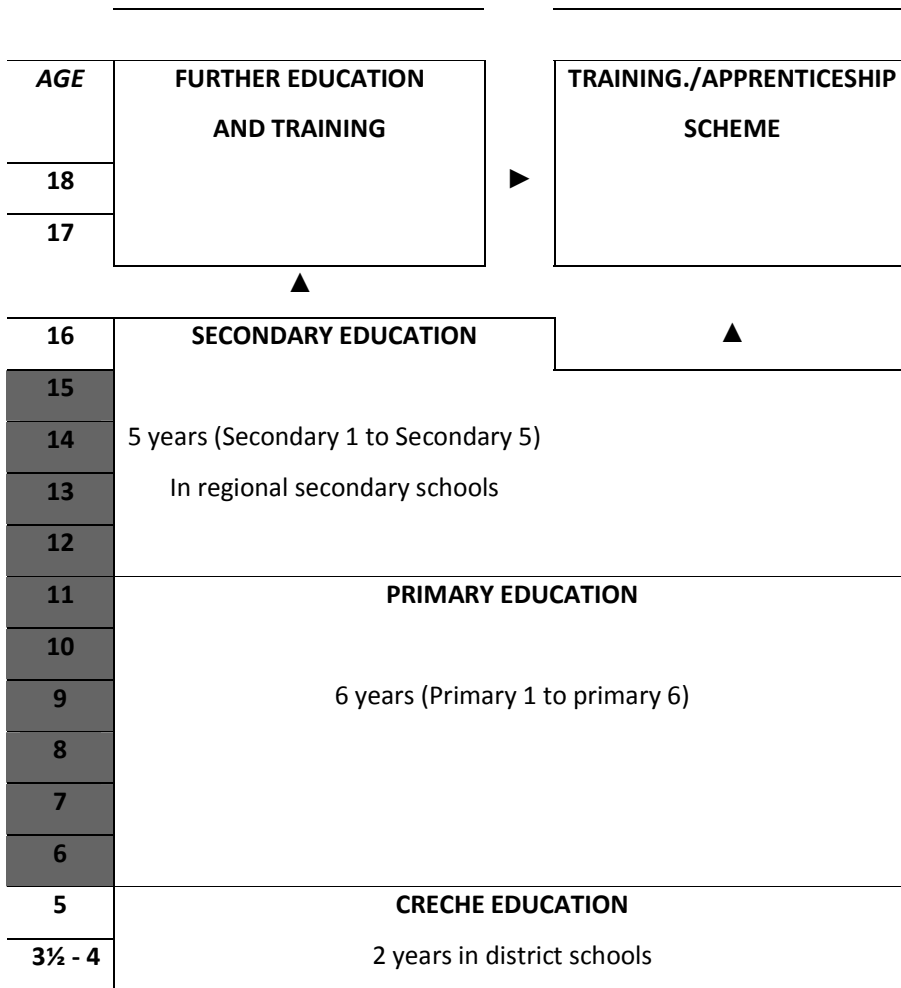
The Seychelles is an archipelago made up of 115 islands, lying 4° south of the Equator and 56° east of the Greenwich Meridian, North West of Madagascar in the Western Indian Ocean. According to the 2002 census, the total resident population is 82,500; 40,700 males and 41,800 females (MISD, 2005: 7). The population is relatively young with the median age being 29 years. The population of the Seychelles is mostly distributed on two main islands; Mahe (72,100) and Praslin (7,200). The remaining residents (3200) are located on La Digue and the Outer islands. Its inhabitants are a blend of African, European and Asian people.

There are three official languages spoken; English, French and Seychellois Kreol. Kreol is spelt with a 'K' as it is a language and not a patois. The majority of the people speak Kreol at home.

The main religions practiced are Roman Catholic and Anglican but other religions and religious sects co-exist in harmony. The Seychelles economy is made up mostly of tourism, agriculture and fisheries. Due to its size, topography and remoteness, the Seychelles consumes more than it produces and hence it imports most of its basic products.


The Seychelles education system caters for all levels of education, from pre-school or crèche levels up to post secondary institutions. Figure 1.1 illustrates the structure of the Seychelles education system.





(Adapted from Purvis, 2004:47)

**Figure 1.1 Structure of the education system**

 = Compulsory years of schooling

*Teacher training in the Seychelles*

The sole teacher training institution in the Seychelles is the National Institute of Education (NIE). Most students entering this institution come directly from secondary five (the last year of secondary). They are more or less 17 years or more and they follow a four-year primary course as a generalist in all the areas of the Seychelles national curriculum. On the other hand, those joining secondary course do so after following a two-year A' level course at the School of Advanced level Studies. The secondary course offers a two-year specialist training in subjects such as English, French, Mathematics, Personal and Social Education, Science, History and Geography (as a joint course), The Arts and Dance, and Technology Enterprise. The NIE offers part time courses in other areas such as PCGE for lecturers in post secondary institutions, leadership courses for school managers and MA course through distance education in collaboration with the University of Warwick in the UK. A Director and two assistant directors, one for Studies and the other one for Curriculum development, head the National Institute of Education.

## **Research study**

The research was guided through seven research questions, which sought to identify the ways in which NQTs were inducted in the schools, the management of the induction process and how it impacted on their socialisation and professional development. The research also aimed at exploring whether, and how, the NQTs were mentored.

The ontological aspect of the research derived from the assumption that there is little evidence of a formal scheme of induction and mentoring of NQTs in the Seychelles educational system, hence making this research exploratory. The research consisted of a survey of all the 2006 cohort of both primary and secondary new teachers and interviews with seven top ranking Ministry of Education officials. Case studies of four schools are being carried out to investigate the respondents' (school leaders and NQTs) interpretations of induction and mentoring in their respective schools. This paper presents the findings from the survey of NQTs.

## **Research findings**

A total of 61 questionnaires were administered to 31 secondary and 30 primary NQTs of the 2006 cohort. 40 questionnaires were returned (20 primary and 20 secondary) giving a 65.6% response rate (64.6 % secondary and 66.7% primary). The questionnaire had one component; closed questions through an adapted Likert Scale. The findings are grouped according to the following themes; induction process, support provided to NQTs, training and professional development, and elements of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of NQTs during their first year of teaching.

### *Induction process*

#### Headteachers' involvement

The findings depict that the Headteachers in both primary and secondary schools took the lead in greeting the NQTs. The primary respondents (75%) agreed that their headteachers were responsible for clarifying these teachers' roles but secondary respondents (70%) expressed a different view. The data also indicate that the headteachers were clear in expressing their expectations to these teachers.

#### Induction programme

60% of the Primary NQTs reported that they were given a tour of the school but 65% of the Secondary NQTs appear to have been left to discover the school facilities by themselves. Furthermore, 65% of the primary NQTs reported that they were shown copies of school policies compared to 40% in secondary. Sessions with members of the School's Senior Management Teams (SMT) is part of the induction programme for most secondary respondents (55%) but for only 40% of the primary respondents. 35% of the secondary respondents agreed that a formal system of induction exist compared with 55% in primary, suggesting that the induction process is more structured in some primary schools compared to secondary.

*Support provided to NQTs*

The majority of primary respondents (75%) say that they receive support in teaching students of all abilities, compared to only 45% in secondary. The same trend applies to planning and preparation of lessons. The data also indicate that primary NQTs are better supported in how to operate extra curricular activities and materials/resource building compared to their secondary counterparts (see figure 2 below).

**Keys:**

	<b>Key</b>	<b>Value</b>
Strongly Disagree	S. D	1
Disagree	D	2
Agree	A	3
Strongly Agree	S. A	4

	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>											
	<b>S.D</b>		<b>D</b>		<b>A</b>		<b>S. A</b>		<b>Average</b>		<b>No response</b>	
	<i>P</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>S</i>
New teachers are supported in areas of : a) teaching all ability students	15	5	10	45	60	30	15	15	2.8	1.9		5
b) planning and preparation of lessons	5	5	20	50	65	25	10	20	2.8	2.5		
c) extra curricular activities	20	10	25	60	50	20	5	10	2.4	2.3		
d) materials or resource building	20	15	20	45	55	25	5	10	2.5	1.8		5

**Figure 2: General Areas of Support for NQTs**

In the event that they experience difficulties, the findings indicate that 95% of secondary NQTs consult their HoDs and a more experienced teacher in the department while only 60% of the primary NQTs would seek the assistance of the subject coordinators with 90% consulting a more experienced teacher within the cycle/level they teach.

*Training and professional development*

Both groups (80% of the secondary and 95% of the primary NQTs) feel that their initial teacher training has equipped them with the skills needed to cope effectively in their teaching. A large majority (95% secondary and 100% primary) also feel the need for continued professional development.

*Elements of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of NQTs during first year of teaching*

Over 90% of the respondents feel satisfied with the level of respect and support provided by the staff in their school. Moreover, they are satisfied with the rapport developed with their students. Likewise, 65% of the secondary and 95% of the primary respondents agreed that their school leaders are effective. Over 50% of both primary and secondary respondents agreed that opportunities for professional growth are present. 60% of both sets of respondents most are also satisfied with the availability of resources in their schools.

Elements of dissatisfaction experienced by the respondents:

- Problems associated with classroom management (55% secondary compared to 35% primary)
- Inconsistent school management procedures to deal with discipline problems (85% secondary compared to 45% primary)
- Some experienced teachers lack motivation (80% secondary compared to 40% primary)

### **Discussion**

The findings suggest that Induction in the Seychelles is developing at different rates depending on local factors. The level of involvement of their head teachers is a critical factor in determining the success of the induction process. The evidence on their leadership qualities denotes that some school leaders are considered to be flexible and very supportive of new teachers.

Primary Heads appear to be better at ensuring that school expectations are known than their secondary counterparts. This leads one to infer that secondary schools Heads assume the HoDs will carry this task when inducting their teachers or vice versa. A meeting with the school's SMT is carried out in only 50% of the secondary schools. Schools in the Seychelles are devising their own programme and thus why a minority of secondary respondents claimed that a formal system of induction exist in the Seychelles schools compared to over 50% in primary.

Subject leadership in the Seychelles is an area of concern as evidence portrayed that middle managers especially in secondary schools may be experiencing problems in providing adequate support to the NQTs compared to their primary counterparts. Lack of support as reported by NQTs exists in areas such as in differentiated teaching, lesson planning and preparation and even resource building.

Though these problems exist, NQTs have portrayed that they are supported by more experienced teachers thus showing an element of teacher leadership in both primary and secondary schools. This element of support provides NQTs with satisfaction while classroom management, inconsistent procedures to deal with discipline problems and lack of motivation from experienced teachers are the main sources of dissatisfaction FOR most secondary NQTs and some of their primary counterparts. This denotes that, although the NQTs indicated that their school leaders are effective, a lot of improvement is needed in this area.

## Conclusion

“Effective leaders and managers of people in individual schools and colleges need to ensure that their employees’ potential is maximised at all stages of their development during their time at the institution.” (Bush and Middlewood 2005:141). An induction programme is crucial to enable the smooth running of a school where new teachers are integrated into school life and supported to reach their optimum level of expertise, thus resulting in successful teaching and learning. In order for this to happen the school leaders need to identify their training needs and articulate them. They need support in drafting and implementing their school policies, in designing an effective induction programme, evaluating its effectiveness and in areas of subject leadership. The study has revealed that induction of new teachers is variable and there is a need for all school leaders to share their induction strategies, leading to a better coordinated induction programme which will be of benefit to the country’s education system as a whole.

## References

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