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INDUCTION OF WOMEN BEGINNER TEACHERS AT TWO SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The quest of beginner teachers becoming experienced teachers remains a major issue within the educational terrain. Induction experience(s) of beginner teachers particularly women in selected community secondary schools in South Africa was the focus of this research. In this research, the problems that women beginner teachers face at some selected schools, as well as the types of induction programmes used to support them, as they grappled with the problems, were explored. A qualitative research approach involving semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation was used in the collection of the requisite data. A sample comprising two community secondary schools and four women beginner teachers were selected to take part in the research. To make meaning of the data which were collected, inductive analysis of the data was conducted. Communities of Practice was used as the theory that underpinned the research findings reported in this paper. Based on the data analysis and the communities of practice theory that served as the framework, the paper among other findings reports that induction programmes used in sampled/selected schools were highly ineffective in supporting the women beginner teachers to overcome the problems revealed. The research contributes to the body of knowledge on the lived experiences of beginner teachers at the beginning of their teaching career and provides recommendations on classroom management and dealing with ill-disciplined learners.
Keywords: beginner teacher; community practice; education leadership; teachers' induction; women teacher.

Introduction

Community schools are typical examples of township schools in South Africa. UNESCO (2011) reveals that there are more women teachers at secondary schools in South Africa. Some of these teachers are beginner teachers who are also known as novice teachers. Beginner teachers are those teachers who are either participating in programmes of initial teacher preparation (ITP) or those in their first three years of teaching as qualified teachers (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). The primary objective of the study whose findings are reported here was to investigate how women beginner teachers at two community secondary schools in Tembisa, South Africa were being inducted in their pursuit of becoming experienced teachers. By experienced teachers, we mean experienced and professionally qualified teachers who have been teaching for five years or more. This research sought to ascertain types of problems women beginner teachers face at community secondary schools and as well as certain induction programmes used to support women beginner teachers to accomplish objectives of the study.

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Background

The induction of beginner teachers at schools is crucial, particularly because of the many problems that they encounter daily. According to Steyn and Van Niekerk (2012), the potential problem areas for beginner teachers include reality shock, inadequate knowledge and skills base, confusing and vague stakeholder expectations, isolation from adults, classroom management problems, lack of resources, and increased workload.

An awareness of the problems experienced by beginner teachers and addressing their needs may help to solve teachers' attrition problems (Howe, 2006) and ensure quality teaching in a rapidly changing teaching environment (Steyn, 2004). One way to address the needs of women beginner teachers is through induction (Dube, 2008; Killeavy, 2006; Wong, 2004). Induction may be broadly characterised as professional education and development tailored for teachers in their first and second years of teaching (Olebe, 2005). Induction is vital for women beginner teachers because, from the time they enter the profession, they assume full-scale and full-time responsibilities that are similar to those of their more experienced colleagues (Magudu, 2014). These responsibilities often mean that women beginner teachers have to develop their teaching skills through trial and error (Steyn & Schulze, 2005). Nevertheless, it would appear that "although the need for help is recognised, formal programmes for the induction of beginner teachers are not being implemented on a large scale" (Veenman, 1984, p. 165). As Steyn and Schulze (2005) argue, despite the awareness that beginner teachers experience numerous problems and require support, the induction of these beginner teachers has not received the attention it deserves globally.

Scholarship Review

Problems Beginner Teachers Experience

From the first day of teaching, the beginner teacher bears the same responsibilities as a teacher of 40 years of service (Veenman, 1984). Moreover, "these beginner teachers often receive the most problematic assignments, the most difficult classes, and the fewest resources" (Brock & Grady, 2007, p. 3). This has given rise to teaching being criticised as an occupation that "cannibalises its young" and in which the initiation of new teachers is akin to a "sink or swim," "trial by fire" or "boot camp" experience (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

If support to overcome challenges faced by beginner teachers is not forthcoming, this may as well lead to problems with morale and premature career changes on the part of the beginner teachers (Cobbold, 2007). Those beginner teachers who have no career option other than teaching are often forced to develop a "survival kit" and a set of "coping strategies" to deal with the problems they encounter (Flores & Ferreira, 2009). Unfortunately, dealing with problems in this way may not be a solution; instead, it may result in more hardships for beginner teachers (McCaan & Johannessen, 2004).

Following the problems discussed above, literature reveals that many trained teachers exit the profession early in their careers (see Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In other words, these beginner teachers become dissatisfied with the outcomes of their work and decide that they are unsuited to teaching and eventually leave the profession (Cooper & Stewart, 2009). It is well documented that a high percentage of beginner teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching as they grapple with and succumb to the challenges caused by several stressors (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Cooper & Stewart, 2009).

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Induction of Beginner Teachers

Farnsworth and Higham (2012) suggested that induction entails teaching and learning focused on supporting young people into a profession or trade, or at least giving them a chance to experience the trade or profession sufficiently to make informed career decisions. Furthermore, Pare and Le Maistre (2006) reminded us that the task of induction is generally given to experienced practitioners who supervise and manage the gradual transformation of beginners into effective professionals. It is therefore vital that teachers especially beginner teachers are guided and supported through an induction programme which provides them with opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills (Dube, 2008). An induction programme "ensures that new teachers have a mentor and a reduced teaching load and they are given time to observe other teachers, interact with colleagues, and respond to the guidance offered by the mentor who, in many cases, reviews their practice and recommends strategies to improve the quality of their classroom interactions" (Howe, 2006, p. 292). The concept of induction based on reading of the researchers refers to a process whereby beginner teachers acquire the cultural, social and practical knowledge associated with the teaching profession and the school community. Steyn and Schulze (2005) described induction as both a period of improvement and transition and a process during which beginner teachers are supported in developing and demonstrating competence, particularly during their first year of teaching.

Since teacher quality is the most important factor in the teaching and learning process, induction must become widely accepted as a critical element in teacher education and development (Brady, Hebert, Barnish, Kohmstedt, & Welsh, 2011). Following this, the researchers concur with Killeavy (2006) that induction offers opportunities for new teachers to become habituated to learning from the beginning and to be afforded opportunities to consult and collaborate with their colleagues, therefore enabling them to engage collectively in the teaching profession. With the offerings induction brings to teachers, they can develop and refine skills that are either lacking or require improvement. However, "a more realistic goal for induction is to provide the support and assistance necessary to develop the beginner teachers who enter the profession and to assist them to acquire the requisite abilities and personal attributes to become successful teachers" (Huling-Austin, 1986, p. 3). Induction at schools brings with it benefits which, among others, "include attracting better candidates, reduced attrition, improved job satisfaction, and enhanced professional development" (Howe, 2006: 287).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that informed the research is based on Wenger's (1998) social learning theory of communities of practice (CoP). Wenger (1998) defined CoP as a group of people who are mutually engaged in a joint enterprise and who share a common repertoire – sets of routines, tools, symbols, stories and other resources for engagement in their work. "In the school setting, CoP exists at every level from beginner teachers to principals" (Bouchamma & Michaud, 2011, p. 407). Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the theory of CoP after conducting a study on situated learning which focused on apprenticeship programmes. "Much of the learning in apprenticeship programmes happened during informal gatherings where the participants interacted with each other, shared stories about their experiences and beginners consulted openly with experts" (Li, Grimshaw, Nielsen, et al., 2009, p. 4).

The theory of CoPs has, in recent times, provided a useful perspective on knowledge and learning as a growing number of people and organisations in various sectors are focusing on CoPs as a key to improving their performance. For example, in schools, the application of CoPs has been primarily in the context of staff development, particularly teacher training (Bouchamma & Michaud, 2011). Nevertheless, as noted, from the work of Wenger, McDermott

and Snyder (2002), the success of CoP depends too much on personal passion for coercion to be effective. "As a social theory of learning, CoP must integrate the components necessary to characterise social participation as a process of learning and of knowing" (Wenger, 1998, p.4). These components include meaning, community, practice, and identity. CoPs meaning relates to the acquiring of knowledge through experience (Bouchamma & Michaud, 2011). Therefore, for any meaning to be achieved in a community, there should be participation (Magudu, 2014). Therefore, women beginner teachers in a school may make meaning of what happens in their classrooms by actively participating in activities and by always interacting with their more experienced colleagues.

Negotiating the meaning of individuals' experiences of membership in social communities builds an identity. Identity refers to one's construction of a trajectory that integrates the past and the future into the meaning of the present (Jorgensen & Keller, 2008, p.532). Developing a teaching identity requires that women beginner teachers engage in the practices of the school in collaboration with other members of the community and to share the common repertoire (Correa, Martínez-Arbelaiz & Aberasturi-Apraiz, 2015). The crux of the matter is that, as beginners participate in the social practices of the community with other members, especially the elderly or experienced ones, they gradually take on the practices and become part of the community. Killeavy (2006) reported that when beginner teachers in the school interact with other teachers to form networks, hear multiple perspectives, receive helpful feedback, and understand their roles and responsibilities toward the school, as well as toward the profession, only then it can be said that they function as a community.

Research Methodology

Research Approach

The qualitative research approach was used in the collection and analysis of the data. Within the qualitative approach, a phenomenological case study design was used. This enabled the researchers to investigate the induction challenges and experiences of women beginner teachers at the two selected/sampled community secondary schools.

Research Instruments

Semi-structured interviews and observation of participants served as data collection methods. Interviews provided the researchers with in-depth information on the participants' experiences and viewpoints regarding the induction of beginner teachers. The observation technique used was semi-structured. The observation was used because it provided direct evidence on what leaders including leaders to be like beginner teachers did (see Bush, 2017). In as far as observation was concerned, researchers made time during the school days with the permission of the Department of Basic Education and the schools' management as well as participants to observe the participants in their workplaces. The researchers observed the following, namely, classroom management, working conditions, the availability of resources, knowledge of the curriculum and planning and presentation of lessons and, lastly, the support provided by various role players (principals, mentors and fellow teachers).

Sample/Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. Four women beginner teachers (two from each school) from two secondary schools in Tembisa community or township, South Africa were selected. However, three eventually participated based on the

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decline of one teacher who gave no reason. The women beginner teachers were selected based on their period of employment at their respective schools (ranging from three months to three years). In this research, both beginner teachers and schools are identified by pseudonyms.

Data Analysis

Obtained data were analysed using inductive data analysis. Inductive analysis is the process by which qualitative researchers analyse and construct meaning from the data, starting with specific data and ending with categories and patterns (See McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 367). The inductive process of this research comprised of six steps. The researchers started the process with the organisation of the collected data which, was made possible through transcribing of interview data. The second step was basically reading through the data severally. The researchers did this in order to understand the overall meanings of the responses of participants. The second step was followed with a detailed analysis process being the third step. At this point, the researchers arranged collected data into categories. Step 4 was concerned with development of themes. These themes emerged from the categorises. These themes constituted the major findings of the study. Following the emergence of the themes, step 5 commenced with decision on how to present the themes to reflect the findings or research results. The researchers settled for a narrative format of presentation. At the final step (step 6), the researchers were concerned about the interpretation of data. The researchers interpreted the data vis – a – vis the themes in order to capture the essence of the responses obtained from the participants. The interpretation was based on researchers' understanding of the research phenomenon given reviewed literature and the theoretical framework. In all the steps, common issues in order words, themes that are same as those from interview responses of participants were taken into consideration.

Research Results

The findings are categorised into two main subheadings, that is, problems women beginner teachers faced at sampled schools and induction of beginner teachers at sampled schools.

Problems Women Beginner Teachers Face

The research found that the problems women beginner teachers faced at the sampled schools included reality shock, overcrowding and learner misbehaviour, dealing with unsupportive parents and vulnerable learners and inadequate resources.

Reality Shock

When beginner teachers started teaching at the sampled secondary schools, they experienced many challenges. Given these challenges, their prior expectations about teaching immediately turned into a reality shock. This was highlighted by the women beginner teachers who indicated that teaching was not as simple as they had previously believed. *"When I was at school as a child, everyone said that teaching was simple but I now realise that it is not simple at all. It was kind of a shock for me to see learners talk and behave so badly in my presence"* (Beginner teacher A2). For most beginner teachers, the first six months at the school were torturous and very difficult to accept. They were deeply shocked by the situation at school. "*It was horrible. I wanted to die. I just wanted to quit. I experienced how brutal this profession could be and how awful people can be in terms of not supporting you as a new teacher. Some*

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teachers are pretty mean, like, they could be very mean. I end up not asking for help. Even Heads of Departments (HoDs) could not assist me when I was facing problems" (Beginner teacher A1).

Overcrowding and Learner Behaviour

The women beginner teachers in the sample cited overcrowding as one of the major problems they experienced at the sampled schools. An emotional Beginner teacher A3 had the following to say about the overcrowding in the classroom:

> *"I think classroom overcrowding is the biggest challenge in South Africa. I think the Department of Education is aware that the biggest challenge in ordinary public schools is the large numbers of learners in the classrooms. For example, now I have 60 learners in Grade 10. You give 60 learners homework, how are you going to mark all of the*m? *Not only that but also managing an overcrowded classroom is a nightmare. Like, you can't discipline or manage a class with more than 60 learners. That's too much for any teacher to handle".*

During the observation, the challenges these beginner teachers were facing was witnessed. Apart from the fact that the classrooms were overcrowded, the majority of the learners in these classrooms were adolescents. From the beginner teachers' point of views, teaching adolescents exacerbated the problems of ill behaviour in the classrooms. One teacher commented as follows:

> *"They are hyper, they have a lot of energy and they make a lot of noise. It is very difficult to handle adolescent learners in the classroom. They are tough. Even if you give them punishment, sometimes, it doesn't make any difference. There are some days when you get tired and you just let it go. You just allow them to do whatever, because disciplining them each day does not produce the intended results"* (Beginner teacher A1).

Undoubtedly, teaching large classes resulted in the beginner teachers experiencing difficulties in controlling the learners. When the researchers visited Beginner teacher A2's class at school X, it was revealed that one of the worst forms of learner misbehaviour with several learners in the classroom was to show little respect for the teacher. Even in presence of the researchers, they continued playing and making noise. The best way in which to describe the lesson was there was no order in the classroom. Learners left and came back into the classroom as they wished. In trying to exert her authority, the beginner teacher sent five learners out of the classroom for misbehaving. To amazement of the researchers, the learners walked out of the classroom appearing to be unconcerned about the punishment. They were in a jovial mood. They even invited other classmates to join them. While outside, they continued talking to their friends through the windows. Although the teacher pretended that nothing was happening and continued teaching, the researchers noticed the anger and frustration building upon her face. In the end, she became so overwhelmed by the whole ordeal that she lost control of the class and abruptly stopped teaching, and walked out of the classroom.

Dealing with Unsupportive Parents and Vulnerable Learners

In addition to their difficulties in managing overcrowded classrooms and dealing with ill-disciplined learners, participants also had to deal with unsupportive parents and vulnerable learners. It appeared that the parents did not really care about what their children were doing at schools.

According to the verbatim quote from the interviews, the beginner teachers viewed the parents as uncooperative when it came to school matters. Not only did the parents refuse to

attend meetings, but it was also very difficult to get hold of them when the need arose. "*In most cases, when the learner has a problem we struggle to get hold of the parent. You give a letter to the learner to hand it over to the parents, they will never even bother to come and hear what the problem is*" (Beginner teacher A3). Such pleas to the parents clearly signal that the beginner teachers were aware that they could not solve the learners' problems on their own and that they needed to work closely with the parents if they were to succeed.

In addition to the lack of parental support, the beginner teachers also had to deal with the issue of handling vulnerable learners. Given the high crime and poverty levels in the townships, it was unavoidable that the two schools sampled may be confronted with the issue of having to deal with vulnerable learners.

> "*In township schools, we have learners whose living conditions are not ideal. They come from poor households. Some are physically and sexually abused by people who must take care of them. Some of them have children or siblings to take care of. So, even though the person is in the classroom she is not listening to you because she is worried about what the child is going to eat or wear*" (Beginner teacher A3).

It is very difficult for beginner teachers to deal with vulnerable learners. In the study findings reported in this paper, participants became emotionally overwhelmed by the vulnerability of some of the learners they taught. Close to tears, Beginner teacher A2 expressed her feelings about the vulnerability of the learners in the following way:

> "*I am an emotional person. So when I see a kid who is struggling like they don't have food, clothes and so on, breaks my heart. I look at things that they might be experiencing at home like physical abuse, sexual abuse, whatever. Like they let you know certain things and you just want to breakdown and cry. It's tough to see these kids suffering and you know there is nothing you can do about it.*"

Inadequate resources

During the data collection, the researchers heard and saw how the issue of inadequate resources at the two schools affected beginner teachers. As a result of inadequate resources in her classroom, Beginner teacher A1 unsurprisingly expressed her anger as follows:

> "*Lack of resources drives me crazy because I have to use other means to teach. And I also have to like pick up equipment from one place to another. That causes things to get broken and lost on the way. I have a skeleton system in my office and every time I go to the Grade 10 class I have to carry it with me. After finishing with the lesson I have to take it back to the office because someone may need it. There is only one skeleton system for all Grade 10s, which is rather bizarre. So, if the other teacher wants to use it she must wait for me to finish my lesson. What I have discovered is that resources in lower grades are scarce. We don't have smart boards like in other grade levels. It's really bad to be a new teacher here.*"

From observation, resources such as laptops and smart boards were provided only in higher grades (Grades 11 and 12). Unfortunately, all the sampled participants taught learners in the lower grades (Grades 8, 9 and 10) which had very few resources.

> "*As beginner teachers, we are not allowed to teach higher grades like Grade 12. They think we are not cognitively equipped to teach Grade 12 learners and will make them fail. The disadvantage of teaching in these lower grades is that resources are not enough to conduct quality teaching*" (Beginner teacher A2).

Induction of Beginner Teachers at Sampled Schools

It is clear from the data collected that there was some form of induction at the two schools sampled. However, it appeared that this induction was conducted in a rather haphazard way. The induction programmes involved at sampled schools include orientation workshop, mentoring and peer support.

Orientation Workshop

It was clear from the interviews conducted with participants that the orientation workshop played a very important role in supporting the new teachers at the schools. Every participant had gone through an orientation before they started teaching. The following verbatim quote attests to this assertion:

> *"On my first day at school, I reported to the principal's office where I was told what to do. I was then taken to the HoD who orientated me with school work and showed me the surroundings. During orientation I was given teaching materials, shown the classrooms, and introduced to the teaching staff and the learners. In addition, I was shown the staff members on the organogram, whom I should report to at all times. After that, I was introduced to the learners and I started teaching. No teacher could help me with new things in the classroom. I have to say that orientation happened very quickly and with no clear mandate. After introducing me to the learners I was left alone in the classroom. I did not know what to do as I was still new in the field. Worse more I could not teach that day because I was still looking for accommodation. No one asked if I had accommodation and whether I was prepared to teach. It was tough for me"* (Beginner teacher A2).

On the first day of her arrival at the school Beginner teacher A3 experienced the following:

> *"The reception was friendly. The principal introduced me to the staff. I was taken to the HoD who would assist me with all the things I needed. The HoD took me around the school and gave me stationary that I would use during teaching. I was then introduced to my class where I commenced teaching. The whole of this process took half a day. It was difficult for me to teach the first day because I was not prepared. I have to say that being left alone in the classroom with no assistance was hectic for me. I was expecting to have a mentor with me for at least a week so that he/she could show me things, it wasn't the case. So, I was on my own, figuring out where to begin."*

Mentoring

From observation, there was very little evidence that the participants were being mentored. Beginner teacher A1 described her mentoring as follows:

> *"I remember when I came to the school I knew some of the things such as Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), the syllabus and the subject content. Nevertheless, for some of the things I needed to be mentored by someone. Unfortunately, for me, mentoring was conducted haphazardly. My HoD cared less about me. When it was time to help me she was busy with her things. What I can say is that if there was any mentoring, it happened during those first hours of my arrival."*

The last sentence in the verbatim quote indicates that the mentoring had not lasted for long. In other words, it had ceased when there was still much the beginner teacher needed to learn. The researchers think this is the reason why they did not observe any beginner teacher being assisted by a mentor during visits to the research sites. The researchers opine that they may have been mentored before their arrival at the sites. However, considering that one of

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the beginner teachers had only been at the school for five months, the researchers wonder if she had developed to a point where she no longer needed the services of the mentor. The researchers felt, from their interaction with her, that she still needed some assistance if she were to succeed in teaching. It appeared that some of the beginner teachers and even the principals confused the class visits meant for performance appraisal with mentoring. The following comment resonates with this idea:

> *"As part of mentoring, the HoDs come and visit our classrooms to observe how we teach the learners. They must visit, particularly when it comes to Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS). I think they must observe us. They write a report and give you feedback. With that feedback, you must come up with developmental strategies – how you will develop and how you are going to improve on some of the things they found deviated"* (Beginner teacher A2).

However, according to the researchers' understanding, this was not mentoring as every teacher, whether new or established, has to undergo a staff performance appraisal.
This is what Beginner teacher A3 said regarding class visits based on performance appraisal:

> *"We have IQMS. IQMS is a formal programme which must be done every year if I am not mistaken. There is even a timetable. The HoD comes and visits me. He records whatever and tells me to sign here or sign there. He then tells me about a few things I am doing well, and some that I need to improve on. That's it and he tells me to complete an IQMS book. After completing the book, I hand it over to him. So, IQMS to me is like a fruitless exercise. Many people complete the IQMS book so that they get that yearly 1% pay progression."*

In other words, being visited by the HoD or any other established teacher for appraisal does not constitute mentoring.

Peer Support

One of the things noticed during the observation was the extent to which the beginner teachers were helping each other. On many occasions at school Y, the researchers found participants and other beginner teachers sitting around the table in their office, deliberating on issues that affected them and discussing how each of them was handling a particular subject or class. Every time the researchers arrived in that office, they could sense an atmosphere of collegiality and friendliness. The researchers do not know whether this set up was coincidental or a deliberate strategy on the part of the school management to ensure that beginner teachers worked under the same roof. If this was indeed the strategy, then it was working very well.

In interview with sampled beginner teachers, they praised the support they received from their fellow beginner teachers at the two schools. *"We mentor each other as new teachers. Like, you can see for yourself that there are many new teachers at this school. So we help each other, especially when we are marking"* (Beginner teacher A1). In praising fellow beginner teachers for their support, Beginner teacher A2 said the following:

> *"My colleagues – I mean, the beginner teachers. I have a colleague who is teaching Grade 8 and I am teaching Grade 9. That lady helped me a lot. Another one who helped me with classroom issues is this guy – the science teacher. He is really good."*

Apart from discussing classroom issues together, some of the beginner teachers had experienced support through their participation in extracurricular activities. Participating in activities such as sport, music or any social gathering helped the beginner teachers to move away from the classroom battles to new arenas where they could refresh themselves.

"When I arrived here I was a netball coach. It was very nice as I was able to forge relationships with other teachers. As I played netball with the kids, I was able to refresh my mind" (Beginner teacher A3).

Discussion

Regardless of their energy and excitement, participants had been shocked at the sheer number of problems they had encountered at the sampled schools. These problems included reality shock, overcrowding and learner misbehaviour, dealing with unsupportive parents and vulnerable learners, and inadequate resources. Based on the empirical findings concerning the literature review and theoretical framework, these problems are discussed as follows:

Reality Shock

It is clear from these findings that, given the many challenges that the participants had encountered, their prior reasons for and expectations about joining the teaching profession had been transformed into a reality shock as previous studies of Steyn (2004) and Magudu (2014) suggest. The participants had, without a doubt, been amazed, that is, shocked at the poor infrastructure, the misbehaviour of the learners, and even the attitude of some staff members at the schools. The majority of these beginner teachers had typically spent at least 17 years of their lives at school studying, and had probably become teachers because they enjoyed learning and because schools had been comfortable places for them.

Nevertheless, when they had entered this familiar world as teachers, they had been shocked at the strangeness and discomfort they had experienced. This revelation concurs with Dube's (2008) finding that the school, a familiar place for teachers as trainees eventually becomes strange and a place of discomfort in their early years of teaching. In essence, the comfort of being a learner at school and the luxury of being a student at university had been turned upside down and, when they had started actual teaching, they had realised the challenges that come with being a teacher. According to Sabar (2004), as beginner teachers start with actual teaching in the field, they begin to realise that the reality of teaching is different from the theoretical courses learned at the university. In short, the participants were shocked at how their expectations about teaching during their training were not a true reflection of what is actually happening at schools.

Before joining the profession, participants had thought that teaching would be relatively easy with just minor glitches. However, they soon realised, after being in the classroom that teaching involved much of which they had not been aware. This finding resonates with Steyn and Schulze's (2005) study which highlight that beginner teachers at schools are confronted with the unknown. Participants had been unaware of the bumpy road and the impending roadblocks they would encounter when they embarked on their teaching journey. Therefore, they had succumbed to pressure and were considering leaving their respective schools to work somewhere else. This corroborates with Cooper and Stewart's (2009) research which shows a high percentage of beginner teachers leaving the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching as they grapple with and succumb to the challenges arising from the number of stressors they encounter.

Overcrowding and Learner Misbehaviour

Participants in this paper viewed overcrowding as the biggest problem facing community schools. Some of the beginner teachers were teaching up to 60 learners in the classroom which is not ideal in normal circumstances. The problem with overcrowding was that it did not only

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increased the teacher's workload, but it also often led to learner misbehaviour in the classroom. According to Steyn and Schulze (2005), most beginner teachers often feel ill-equipped when faced with classroom realities such as learner misbehaviour. The learner misbehaviour at the sampled schools was probably such a pressing issue because teachers were dealing with adolescent learners who were often hyperactive, energetic and noisy. Beginner teacher A1 even admitted that there were some days when she would become so tired of dealing with the learners that she would just give up on them. Brock and Grady (2007) claimed that when the enthusiasm and efforts of the beginner teacher are met with disruptive learner behaviour, their enthusiasm wanes.

Evidently, there is no doubt that overcrowding placed a huge strain on participants given the difficulties they often faced in managing a large group of learners in the classroom. Mazibuko (1999) believes that, because of overcrowding, beginner teachers often spend considerable time dealing with classroom problems, instead of actually teaching. The researchers observed that overcrowding was resulting in the participants having problems in effectively monitoring and supervising the learners, both inside and outside of the classroom. This lack of proper monitoring and supervision then resulted in learners doing as they pleased and, unfortunately; this usually led to bad behaviour. The time participants spent on solving classroom problems meant that teaching and learning were negatively affected. During observation at school X, researchers witnessed a beginner teacher who spent almost half an hour trying to discipline a group of unruly learners.

Dealing With Unsupportive Parents and Vulnerable Learners

It was found that having to deal with unsupportive parents and vulnerable learners appeared to be one of the major challenges the participants faced. It was also found that the majority of the parents at both schools seemed to care very little about their children's doings at school. This is consistent with Van Zyl's (2013) writing which revealed that the majority of parents had not been involved in anything relating to the formal education of their children. Regrettably, it would appear that for some reason, most of the problems concerning parents involved participants. Unlike experienced teachers, beginner teachers struggled to discipline the learners and thus they often looked to management and parents for help. Unfortunately, most of the parents seemed to ignore the beginner teachers' requests.

In addition to the lack of parental support, the participants also experienced problems of having to deal with vulnerable learners in the schools. Beginner teacher A3's revelation attests to this assertion. She notes that some of her learners were physically and sexually abused by the people who should have been taking care of them while some of them, whatever their ages, were taking care of their siblings because they were orphans.

Inadequate Resources

It was found that the non-availability of resources was one of the biggest challenges faced by participants. It was clear from our observation that the two schools lacked an adequate number of classrooms, laboratories, desks, sports facilities, and other essential resources. Sedibe (2011) and Potokri (2014) warned that if schools have to function with no or inadequate resources, there is the likelihood of ineffective teaching and learning, therefore leading to the poor academic performance of the students. During the interviews, participants had numerous complaints about the teaching and learning resources at the two schools. They were unhappy about the lack of apparatus in the laboratories which led to teachers having to scramble around for the most basic equipment during their teaching. For example, Beginner teacher A1 had been frustrated to learn that the entire science department had only one skeleton system for

demonstration purposes in the classrooms. This situation meant that teachers had to postpone lessons because another teacher was using the skeleton system. In general, the participants were dissatisfied with the failure of the schools to provide them with the most basic resources that would have made teaching and learning easier.

However, the lack of resources at the sampled schools confirmed what Sedibe (2011) had found in her study on the "inequality of access to resources in previously disadvantaged high schools in South Africa". Sedibe discovered that most of the learners in these schools were not supplied with free textbooks and other resources from the government, thereby forcing the teachers to photocopy notes for the learners while some learners even resorted to buying the textbooks themselves.

Induction Programme

Findings reported in this paper indicated that the induction of participants was not well organised at both schools and was, in fact, wholly inadequate. It is important to highlight that, although the support for the participants at sampled schools was not well planned and coordinated, some programmes had all the characteristics of an induction programme. This was based on the researchers' interaction with the participants who had demonstrated that they knew very little about induction and yet they had been able to tell us about some of the programmes at the schools that had some characteristics of an induction programme. These programmes or activities included an orientation workshop, mentoring, and peer support.

Orientation Workshop

All the participants agreed that, on their arrival at the schools, they had gone through an orientation workshop. When beginner teachers arrived on their first day, they usually reported to the principal's office where they were briefed about the school and what was expected from them as teachers. After the briefing with the principal, the beginner teachers were introduced to the staff members at the school and then taken to the appropriate HoDs who would, in turn, orientate them on the school surroundings. The HoDs also provided them with stationery and introduced then to the relevant classes. This is consistent with one of the principles of CoPs theory according to which becoming a member of the community of practice requires access to a wide range of on-going activities, old hands and other members of the community as well as being provided with information, resources and opportunities for participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Unless something unusual occurred, the orientation described above usually lasted half a day. The orientation was short, hurriedly done and with no clear direction. In most cases, after being introduced to the learners, the participants were left on their own to decide what they should do in the classroom. Unfortunately, at this point, they were not ready to teach for a variety of reasons. Participants, although professionally qualified, still required preparation on the subject content before standing in front of the learners.

Mentoring

Based on the researchers' observation, there was very little mentoring taking place at the sampled schools. Even though mentoring is such a very important component of the induction process, the indications were that it was not having much of an impact on the participants' professional development. It was understanding of the researchers that the mentors at both schools were carrying out their duties as they saw fit because there was no guiding policy for induction or mentoring. There were no clear aims and timeframes for mentoring and as a result, those appointed to mentor did it in their way.

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Furthermore, the participants in this paper thought that mentoring involved the experienced teacher visiting a beginner teacher in the classroom. However, such visits happened primarily during the performance appraisal of the beginner teacher using an IQMS tool. During the performance appraisal, the experienced teacher observed the beginner teacher's teaching and other classroom activities. The established teacher was given an IQMS booklet in which he/she recorded the strengths and weaknesses of the beginner teacher. The experienced teacher then discussed those areas in which the beginner teacher was performing well and those that required improvement. This engagement between the established teacher and the beginner teacher comprised, essentially the work of forming communities of practice (see Wenger, 1998).

Besides, the researchers discovered that the principals were not fully involved in the induction process of beginner teachers. It appeared that their main function was to welcome the beginner teachers and then pass the responsibility over to the HoDs. This description is in line with Wong's (2004) argument. Wong argued that the role of the principal has been reduced to that of someone who assigns experienced teachers to beginner teachers and then never oversees the process to ascertain whether the new teachers are successful and the learners are achieving. During interview with the participants, they all assumed that HoDs were their mentors. Nevertheless, this paper found no evidence that the HoDs had undergone mentorship training and were, therefore, qualified to support participants. For a mentoring programme to be effective, the mentors must receive training and are released from their regular teaching duties (Berry, 2001 in Wilkinson, 2009).

Peer Support

Peer support emerged as one of the most common forms of induction at sampled schools. Since there was no formal induction policy at either of the schools, the beginner teachers tend to rally behind each other to navigate through their problems. Daily, beginner teachers sat, ate and planned together. In this way, they were able to discuss and share their experiences as new teachers at the school. It was for this reason that one of the schools in the sample (school Y) had designated an office specifically for beginner teachers. This office was an ideal venue for beginner teachers to relax and refuel after an exhausting period in the classroom. Most importantly, it was a venue where the participants and other beginner teachers planned and strategized their next moves. This cooperation between the participants – beginner teachers resonates with CoP theory in which Wenger et al. (2002) claimed that the members in a community of practice use each other as sounding boards, build on each other's ideas, and provide a filtering mechanism with which to deal with "knowledge overload." Such collegial sharing simplified the daily procedures for the beginner teachers and saved them from having to learn strictly by trial and error (Weasmer & Woods, 2000).

However, regardless of the merits of the collegial sharing between the participants, it is cautioned that having an office strictly for beginner teachers may be a disadvantage in that the beginners became separated from their experienced counterparts. Such a separation contradicts the principle in CoPs theory which recommends that there must be shared participation between the old and the new members of the community when confronting an issue. Lave and Wenger (1991) maintain that shared participation represents the stage at which the old and the new, the known and the unknown, the established and the hopeful, act out their differences and discover their commonalities, manifest their fear of one another, and come to terms with their need for one another.

Conclusions

Women beginner teachers faced several challenges at secondary schools given participants' experience(s) at the two sampled community secondary schools. These challenges included reality shock, overcrowding and learner misbehaviour, dealing with unsupportive parents and vulnerable learners and inadequate resources. However, despite the many challenges, this paper clearly showed that the induction programmes consisting of orientation workshop, mentoring, and peer support at sampled schools were highly ineffective to support women beginner teachers. In other words, these programmes failed to live up to expectation because the programmes were poorly implemented. The poor implementation of induction programmes at sampled schools points to issues of leadership at the school particularly on the part of the principals. Principals' leadership role(s) in the induction of women teachers given their numbers in schools should, therefore, be explored in future research.

Equipped with findings, the researchers argue that teachers' attrition/retention at sampled schools and any other secondary school regardless where it is situated, will experience a problem if the same induction challenges and experience as participants suffer in sampled schools prevail. School principals must be involved and committed to induction programmes. By doing so, they will be able to lead as well monitor the induction process and encourage beginner teachers to deeply develop their interest for the teaching profession, stay put and grow rather than quit for other professions as some of the participants herein contemplate. In the light of this, we stress that the induction of teachers should not be seen as a 'once-off exercise or practice' as the narratives of participants in this paper imply but a 'continuous practice' otherwise they will fail in terms of induction expectations as in the case of sampled schools herein.

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