Role of Educational Leaders in Supporting Beginning Teachers in Al Ain Schools in the UAE

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INTRODUCTION

Principal support of new teachers has been cited as one of the primary factors that influences both general and special education teachers' retention in the profession. However, principal leadership is a critical component of creating environments that support new teachers to meet the complex and diverse needs of their students (Correa & Wagner, 2011). Principals should work on having an effective school- based induction activities to provide all novice teachers with the induction they need.

Novice teachers may face some obstacles which might cause stress, anxiety and lack of self-assurance (Saenz-Lopez, Almagro, & Ibanez, 2011). Therefore, schools should implement an individual structured program to support the beginning.

A principal's role in the induction of novice teachers is multifaceted. Findings from several research studies, such as Andrews, Gilbert, &Martin, 2006; Correa & Wagner, 2011) suggest that building administrators who are effective in supporting novice teachers promotes a positive school climate, serves as an instructional leaders, and actively supports induction and mentoring programs.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

A beginning teacher is a person who has been hired to work in a new environment with people he/she does not know. The new appointed teacher goes through a period of transition from being a student to into becoming a teacher. In such a case, beginning teachers need supervision and support to adjust to their new roles. Moreover, being exposed to new policies, and untried materials, gives the new teachers the feeling of being lost. It is no wonder that some of the new teachers leave their jobs simply because they are left to "sink or swim" and of course many sink and leave to feel better. However, this paper highlights the importance of the principal's role in supporting novice teachers in Al-Ain in the UAE.

Research Questions

This paper answers the following questions:

1. What are the present practices of principals in Al-Ain schools in supporting their beginning teachers?
2. How can the educational leaders develop these practices to have the best induction program for their beginning teachers?
3. What needs would the new appointed teachers in Al-Ain district, have and what would they expect from an effective school-based induction program?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Around 50% of teachers who remain in education field leave their profession after five years (Evans, 2008). On the other hand, different reports indicate that 25%-50% of beginning teachers resign during their first three years of teaching

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(Voke, 2002; NCES, 1999). Other studies showed that it is within the first five years of teaching; approximately half of the teachers will leave the occupation (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Murnane et. al, 1991). Novice teachers usually face many difficulties in the profession. In a study for Veenman (1984) the perceived problems of beginning teachers were classified into eight kinds of problems; they are1) classroom discipline, 2) student motivation, 3) dealing with individual differences, 4) assessment of student work, 5) relationships with parents, 6) organization of class work, 7) inadequate instructional resources, and 8) dealing with problems of individual students. Moreover, Corbell (2008), stated that there are ten factors affect the beginning teachers' perceptions of success, such as, Mentor Support, Colleague Support, Administration Support, Classroom Management, Student Success, Instructional Resources, Assignment and Workload, Parental Contacts, Satisfaction, and Commitment. However, teachers' success can be ensured by providing them with a comprehensive, coherent professional development program (Wong, 2004).

Nothing is more important for student learning than the quality of the classroom teacher. Effective teachers manage to produce better achievement regardless of which curriculum materials, pedagogical approach, or reading program is selected (Allington, 2003). Teacher turnover usually leads to lower student achievement, and of course low student achievement leads to teacher turnover. Indeed, teaching has been characterized as an occupation with high levels of attrition or high early career turnover, especially among beginners (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Furthermore, some studies showed that most of the teachers who decided not to continue working in this career were much affected by the lack of knowledge about the school system, classroom management, dealing with the parents and many other different issues that they could not handle. As a result, it is of great importance to know that induction programs of the beginning teachers have an effective impact on their decision whether to continue teaching or to stop it. Wong stated that, what keep a good teacher are structured, sustained, intensive professional development programs. However, these programs allow new teachers to observe others, to be observed by others, and to be part of networks or study groups where all teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect each other's work (2003). Any induction program should be evaluated to check its effectiveness in meeting the needs of the new teachers. The increased focus on induction programs as an agent of reform in education has resulted in a great deal of research. Most studies, however, are outcome-based, generally used to ensure the financial support needed to continue induction programs in particular areas (Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInerney, & O'Brien, 1995). Induction is seen as the crucial phase of teacher development, which links Initial Teacher Training and in-service education for established teachers (Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, 2002, p 11). Prior to any program establishment, principals should bear in mind teachers' needs before shaping or applying any induction program.

To sum up, referring to the fact that education sector plays an important role in shaping the whole society, it is very crucial to pay attention to the main element in the educational process; the teachers who are the most important factor in maintaining high quality education (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Gless and Moil (2005) argue that nothing is more important for student learning than the quality of the teacher. Supporting teachers and providing appropriate induction program improves their teaching practices (Breaux & Wong, 2003). Induction programs save the time of teachers in discovering the right instructional practices on their own. Literature suggests that effective school-based induction programs should include the following:

- Individual structured induction program (Huling-Austin, 1992). That means to find out the real needs of each teacher.

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