

Chapter 11

TEACHER QUALITY AND STABILITY IN OMAN: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT?

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ABSTRACT

Countries around the world are struggling to improve teaching quality as teachers and teaching become a focus of global scrutiny and competitiveness. This chapter discusses teacher quality and stability in relation to induction of novice teachers. Using the case of Oman, the chapter addresses the loopholes that exist in the professional development initiatives and argues for the importance of focussing on induction as a way of improving teacher quality and stability. It establishes the importance of organized induction and continuous professional development that is based on a continuum conception and hybridity that require teacher educators to work closely with schools and the professional development apparatus to ensure a smooth transition into the profession. Teacher induction reflections are used to present an argument on the importance of involving teachers in identifying their needs upon which induction programs should be built. Based on the literature and models of high performing nations, the holistic approach to teacher development is proposed where all parties involved in the teacher's professional learning collaborate to ensure a seamless transition into the profession.

Keywords: induction, teacher stability, teacher quality, Oman, professional development, novice teachers, beginning teachers, teacher education

INTRODUCTION

The debate about who is responsible for the inadequate teachers who teach our students is as old as history itself. The Ministry of Education blames teacher preparation programs while teacher preparation programs blame the schools. So whose responsibility is it?

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Whose responsibility is it that teachers are not committed to their profession? And whose responsibility is it that the best teachers do not stay in the classroom? These and other related questions have troubled educators for a long time, and a number of studies have been conducted to investigate these questions. Thus far available literature seems to indicate that the situation is complex and that further investigation into teachers' career paths is required.

Among the research studies done to explore reasons for teacher attrition from the profession are Chapman and Lowther's (1982) model of the factors associated with job satisfaction of teachers and Chapman's (1983) conceptualization of factors associated with teacher attrition from teaching. These models posit that teachers' job satisfaction and persistence are linked to their initial commitment to teaching. Those with lower initial commitment to teaching as a career are more likely to leave teaching, and those who persist in teaching are more likely to express lower levels of job and career satisfaction. On the other hand, those who have initial commitment to teaching as a career are more likely to persist in the profession and to express higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment. Alternatively, some studies argue that the initial commitment is not enough and that the school environment has a major role in the teacher's job satisfaction and career stability. Student teachers with low commitment to teaching may become committed teachers if they are nurtured and supported through the early years of their teaching career. Conversely, those who are initially committed may end up being demoralized with low levels of professional commitment if they are not received into a nurturing and caring school environment. Fessler (in Gilbert, 2011) believes that teaching careers develop as a result of the interaction between the teacher and the workplace context. Thus, it is important to ensure that the school provides an environment that nurtures novice teachers and provides them with a clear career path.

Yet another line of research argues that it is more than one environment that impacts the novice teacher's job satisfaction. Lynn (2002) for example identifies three environments that mediate teachers' decision to persist or leave the teaching career. These environments are: the personal environment, organizational environment and career cycle. In her model of Teacher Career Cycle and Environmental Influences, Lynn (2002) posits that the teacher's career cycle has eight stages that are dynamic and flexible. She argues that teachers do not necessarily move through all these stages during their career cycle but move in and out of career stages in response to personal and organizational environmental conditions. The study concludes that since the needs of the novice teacher differ from those of the experienced teacher, professional development plans need to respond by providing support systems that assist teachers in dealing with both personal and organizational environmental issues that may likely affect their career paths negatively if left unattended. Zeichner (2010) introduces the concept of "hybridity" and the "third space" as a way of solving the disconnect between on-campus training and school related experiences. The author calls for a paradigm shift in the epistemology of teacher education programs where more inclusive ways of working with schools are sought in order to better serve teacher learning.

Goldhaber, Gross, and Player's (2010) study investigated whether public schools were keeping the best teachers and what conditions predict who stays and who goes. Specifically the researchers explored how career transitions are related to teachers' effectiveness. Based on a study of career paths of elementary school teachers in North Carolina, the study concluded that overall, the likelihood of staying in a school or in the profession increases with the teacher's effectiveness.

In 2008 OECD conducted a survey to collect evidence about how teachers perceive the learning environments in which they work, what motivates them, and how policies and practices that are put in place are actually being carried out in practice. Data were collected using the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), which was distributed to 90,000 teachers in 23 countries. In the report, the authors illustrate some ways of improving teacher quality that focus on the recruitment into the profession, teachers' professional development, teachers' evaluation and compensation, and their involvement in the reform process. They conclude that countries that have succeeded in making teaching an attractive profession have done so by raising the status of teaching, offering real career prospects, and giving teachers responsibility as professionals and leaders of reform. They also pointed out the importance of supporting teachers by adapting their needs and personal aspirations to the conditions of employment and career prospects (Martin, 2008, 2012, and Mullis, 2008, 2012).

A study conducted by the World Bank in collaboration with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) in 2009 diagnosed the status of teachers in order to establish a framework for a career path for teachers in the OECS region. The study identified a number of factors that were found to be important in attracting and retaining teachers in the profession. Among these are that an extended induction and support to novice teachers improves retention and enhances teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction. They also found that opportunities for professional development as well as opportunities for career advancement contribute immensely to teachers' stability and job satisfaction.

In a later report (2011) the OECD analysed systems of high performing nations, and their findings also indicated that the quality of preparation is an important factor; but, they also found other characteristics that were shared among the high performing nations. These characteristics are related to teacher policies, status of teachers, their recruitment, and the induction they receive upon employment. Clearly, a high positive correlation has been established between high performing nations and the care they give to the preparation and development of teachers, especially during the early years of their careers.

A comparative study of five countries with high average scores on TIMSS regarding teacher induction was completed in 2003 by Britton, Paine, Raizen, and Pimm. The researchers found that these countries shared characteristics of robust induction policies and practices. The researchers also found that despite differences in cultural values and teacher education systems, "there is universal belief that induction is important to forming teachers and their profession" (p. 62). While induction is seen as important in supporting teachers to make an effective transition from the university to school, there does not seem to be consensus over its provision in terms of its structure, duration and support given.

Effective induction goes beyond mentoring. It is a systematic framework supported by policies and coordinated among multiple providers to meet career learning needs of novice teachers. It normally involves orientation sessions, professional development courses, and school or regional workshops (The International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes, 2008). The five sites studied by Britton and others (2003), though very different in origin, considered induction to be more than just to improve teaching quality. They all aimed at broader goals of enabling beginning teachers to have a breadth of skills, knowledge and dispositions that would support high achievement in their learners and that can only be developed through guided learning organized around collaborative, supportive and problem solving environments.

Different models have been used for the induction of novice teachers, and the most successful ones have looked at induction as an on-going, school based developmental process that is centred on issues of teaching and student learning (McMahon, Forde, and Dickson 2015). This chapter uses McMahon's conception of the professional development continuum (2015) and Zeichner's (2010) conception of "hybridity" as a way of solving the disconnect between campus training and professional development experiences of novice teachers.

Teacher Education and Professional Development in Oman

Over the forty-year history of formal education in Oman, the recruitment of teachers evolved from being an open access job to being a highly selective one and from being a job that needed practically anybody who was willing to teach, to being a job that requires qualifications with highly specialized knowledge and skills.

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) is the oldest and most established higher education institution in Oman. It is the only public institution that has been given the responsibility for teacher preparation. Previously, Oman had six other teachers' colleges that prepared teachers for the Basic Education level (grades 1 to 4) while SQU prepared teachers from grades 5 upwards. The last few years however witnessed a change, as the six colleges were converted into Colleges of Applied Sciences, leaving SQU to respond to all national needs for teachers: their initial preparation as well as a good part of their in-service and professional development. Recently, three private universities have also been given approval to offer teacher preparation programs, a decision that is seen to have serious implications on the monitoring of quality and standards.

Established in 1986 with the opening of the University, the College of Education at SQU offers a bachelor degree in education through a number of programs operating under eight academic departments. Over time, the College has graduated between 500 and 600 teachers a year who are then usually directly employed by the Ministry of Education to teach in government schools. Graduates of these programs are normally considered to be better prepared than those graduating from other programs.

Upon entry into the University, teacher candidates have always been required to enrol in the Foundation Program, which typically takes between one semester and two years. While in it, they must attain a specified level of English language proficiency before they start their academic programs in the College. The teacher preparation program they then entered focused mainly on exposing candidates to content knowledge and basic skills required for teaching. Historically, student teaching of only about 150 hours was considered sufficient exposure to the classroom and the profession. Once graduated, candidates were expected to be ready to teach and the College carried no further responsibility towards its graduates.

The Ministry of education on the other hand assumed that the graduates of the teacher education program at SQU were well prepared and, therefore, required minimal professional development (Ministry of Education and the World Bank, 2012). Thus novice teachers were received in schools without any formal mandatory induction program. While induction guidelines were sent to schools, no serious monitoring was done to ensure that every new graduate was received in a nurturing environment where a career path was clear and where a mentor was assigned to consult and support the novice through the thorny initial phase of his or her career.

This gives reason for concern. Paris, (2010) explains that research from USA, Canada, UK and Australia suggests that widespread induction failure and high attrition rates in the teaching profession are endemic in many countries and are therefore of international significance. SQU attracts the academically strongest students in the country, and unlike many countries in the world, the College of Education is among the most popular destinations of high achieving students, especially females. To be accepted in the teacher education program, the candidate is subjected to a rigorous selection procedure. However, while data collected in a 2012 study by Chapman, Al Barwani, Al Maawali and Greene showed that students were very satisfied with their pre-service teacher preparation program, they were ambivalent about their career paths. Further analysis of the data showed high attrition rates into non-teaching jobs and to teaching jobs outside of education (Chapman, Al Barwani, Al Maawali, 2013).

Using Oman as an example and building on qualitative data previously collected, this chapter addresses the issue of instability of Omani teachers who have graduated from Sultan Qaboos University. Specifically, the chapter addresses the transition of new teachers from the teacher education program to the schools and the gap that exists between the teacher preparation program, initial teaching experience, and the professional development programs offered to novice teachers. The chapter attempts to identify the reasons behind teachers' professional instability by analyzing the novice SQU teacher education graduates' reflections regarding their initial encounters in schools, their experiences as new teachers, and mentoring and guidance received. Additionally, this paper presents an argument for the extended and collaborative role of colleges of teacher education beyond pre-service education.

Teacher Quality Concerns in Oman

As TIMSS, PISA and PIRLS assessment results put nations on the public space and school performance is compared internationally, teacher preparation and teacher education have become increasingly vulnerable to external as well as internal scrutiny and regulation (McMahon et al., 2015). In Oman, the focus on teachers is seen as the solution to Oman's unsatisfactory performance in these international assessments.

The Omani educational system has often been described as being massive, unprecedented and unparalleled compared to other countries (World Bank in Ministry of Education 2006). This is mainly because of the visionary leadership that has transported the country from stagnation to development, and from tradition to modernity. The system of education, which started in 1970 with only three schools enrolling 900 boys, has developed into a massive system of education with over 1,000 schools enrolling over 600,000 male and female students with a total of 43,000 teachers—the majority of whom are Omanis (Ministry of Education and World Bank 2012). Typical of countries that experience rapid growth in their education systems, Oman experienced a decline in the quality of its graduates as the system continued to rapidly expand. As enrolments in schools grew faster, the provision of qualified teachers became a challenge and issues of quality began to be seriously discussed at the national level.

In 1998 the Omani education system underwent a major reform as a result of an economic reform process, 'Vision 2020' (Ministry of National Economy, 1995). The main thrust of this reform was on human resource development, and as a result, a huge budget was allocated to the Ministry of Education. The Basic Education reform that followed was

expected to further modernize the school system and bring about an overall improvement in the quality of school performance. The teacher was given a lot of attention through consistent professional development programs. Unfortunately, this action did not result in the anticipated achievement in student outcomes (Martin, 2008, 2012 and Mullis, 2008, 2012).

Considerable evidence seems to suggest that low student performance is due in large part to the limited professional capacity of teachers (Chapman et al., 2012). Thus, in the last several years, the issue of teacher quality has begun to occupy a prominent place in the Ministry of Education's agenda, and a number of initiatives have been launched to improve the status of the teaching profession. A recent report by the Ministry of Education and the World Bank (2012) identified three key areas of focus. These are: (1) Teacher provision: to ensure that there is an adequate supply of teachers in all specializations, (2) Teacher preparation: to ensure that the programs attract and select the most talented and motivated candidates and prepare them through high quality teacher education, and (3) Teacher support and management: to ensure that teachers are supported with appropriate induction and in-service training together with appropriate supervision and management. An analysis of these elements today reveals that while the first element is more or less achieved (Ministry of Education, 2012), and the second element may be realized as the College of Education continues to pursue continuous improvement through international accreditation of its programs, it appears that induction and professional development of teachers have not as yet received as much attention as they deserve (Ministry of Education and World Bank, 2012).

Among the initiatives implemented by the Ministry to ensure that the best teachers enter the profession is the introduction of an employment examination that is administered to all candidates applying for teaching positions. Only those who get a passing mark are allowed to enter the classrooms. While this is a giant step towards quality assurance, there is little guaranteeing that those who do not initially qualify could not enter the profession through the 'back door.' Another important initiative is the development of an ambitious strategic plan that addresses issues related to school performance and teacher quality. Yet another important initiative is the Education Law focusing on teachers' rights and responsibilities, career ladder and mobility, professionalism, and other teacher related concerns, which has been presented to the Omani Cabinet for approval. Coupled with this, the government directed that a state of the art Specialized Centre for Professional Training of Teachers, which attends to all teachers' professional development needs, be developed. Put together, these efforts may well result in improved teacher standards. However, as McMahon et al. (2015) argue, such initiatives need to be coordinated as a single continuous process in order for them to have an impact on overall teacher quality.

Raising Teacher Education Standards through International Accreditation

An initiative that is likely to make a major impact to the quality of teachers in Oman is the decision made in 2009 by the College of Education to pursue international accreditation. As a way of ensuring that the graduates of the SQU teacher education programs possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to satisfy international standards, a decision was made to pursue international accreditation through the US National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), now called Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). This brave move required that the College of Education revisit

all its programs and align them with international standards of best practice promoted by the Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs) and the accrediting body. As a result, more rigorous admission standards had to be set, and an assessment system had to be established to collect data on candidates' performance as they go through different phases of the program.

The most significant change that can be observed in the new degree plans is the radical increase in the number of hours that teacher candidates have in the schools and classrooms. This is done in two ways. First, the teaching practice period has been increased from 150 hours to approximately 420 hours during teacher education students' final semester in programs. Second, earlier exposures to classrooms have been embedded into different courses that students take prior to the teaching practice period. It is anticipated that this increased exposure to classrooms will better prepare candidates for the tasks and responsibilities that they will face in their new jobs.

However, the accreditation process does not seem to pay a lot of attention to the issue of the stability of our teachers once they graduate. A recent collection of data suggests that further work needs to be done to organize candidates' experience once they actually take teaching jobs. It seems critical that the teacher education program extends its responsibility of coordinating with the schools to ensure a smooth transition into the profession.

Induction of Omani Teachers

Prior to 2009, induction in most schools took the form of senior teachers familiarizing new teachers with school rules, regulations and procedures. The induction period was mandated for all novice teachers although its application was generally left to the discretion of the school.

The Ministry's new induction program is expected to be compulsory for all new teachers. It would involve two-week courses delivered in three blocks conducted at the new Specialized Centre for Professional Training of Teachers. The program entails exposing novice teachers to more specialized content knowledge as well as exposing them to new pedagogy and new technologies. The program specifically focuses on teaching practices and policies, administrative rules and regulations, work ethics, the assessment system, curriculum content and analysis, preparing educational media and classroom activities, new pedagogies, and relations between teachers, students and administration. The program also guides novice teachers on how they could access further education opportunities available to them.

While the new program mentioned above appears to be comprehensive, one notes that it is mainly a top-down process focusing largely on what the Ministry believes novice teachers need. Similarly, it does not address the mentoring aspect of induction, nor does it expect the school to play a significant role in the induction process. Coordination between teacher preparation programs and subsequent professional development initiatives are also absent in the conceptualization of this new program.

The Missing Link

In an attempt to identify what is missing in the mentoring and induction processes in our schools, a group of SQU teacher education graduates registered in a Masters program (n=14)

were asked to reflect on their experience in the first year of teaching in their schools. A Moodle platform was used to initiate a forum discussion on the topic, and a focus group discussion was conducted with 10 of the teachers who volunteered to participate. Teachers were asked to focus their discussion on the following questions: (1) Were you exposed to a formal induction program at the national, regional or school level? (2) How were you received in your new school, and who took the responsibility of showing you around and introducing you to the school facilities? (3) Did the Principal formally introduce you to other teachers and school supporting staff? (4) Did anybody help you prepare your lesson plans, give you feedback on them and/or help you prepare teaching materials? (5) Did anybody observe your teaching and give you feedback and guidance? (6) How do you describe your first experience in the school? (7) If you were given a task of mentoring a novice teacher, what would you have done? (8) Did your professors at the University play any role during your first year of teaching?

The focus group discussion focused mainly on the importance of the role of the teacher education programs in induction and elicited teachers' ideas regarding ways that teacher education programs could support the school in the induction process.

Reflections were collected and analyzed qualitatively by each question. To answer the first question of whether any sort of induction program was provided upon employment, the responses were more to the negative; 50 percent of the respondents revealed that as soon as they walked into the school they were given a teaching schedule, and as one of them puts it, "I went to class a blank page not knowing anything about the school or my duties." About 29 percent of them indicated that some sort of orientation was provided, and this varied between one and three days. Twenty-one percent said there was an orientation program organized for them both at the regional training centre and the school. These responses seem to be consistent with research done in less robust systems of education (Flores and Ferreira, 2009, Paris, 2010, and Fry, 2010) This research shows that these novice teachers were not exposed to a specific system of orientation, mentoring, and continuous teacher learning.

To answer the question of how were they received and who was responsible for showing them around the school, the answers were that either the school principal briefly received them and gave them the timetable, or it was the senior teacher alone who welcomed them to the department, introduced them to colleagues, and showed them around. On two occasions only were the novice teachers received by the principal, the senior teacher and other teachers. It appears that in most schools the senior teacher takes the biggest responsibility. One of the teachers said that there was no one to show her around; she just discovered things by herself.

Regarding the question of whether anybody helped them to prepare lesson plans, give them feedback, and/or helped them prepare teaching materials, only one of the respondents said that everyone offered to help. It appears that only one of the teachers had an overall positive experience and seemed to have received a lot of support in her first year.

To answer the question whether anybody observed their teaching and gave them feedback, the majority (71 percent) indicated that nobody gave them any feedback on their teaching while 21 percent said that the supervisor gave them useful feedback. Only one teacher said that she received feedback from the senior teacher, supervisor and peers.

When asked to describe their experience in their first year of teaching, statements like "It was a struggle," "I was lost and frustrated with too many things to do," "I felt anxious and frustrated," and "I was lost and confused" were used by most of the teachers. Two teachers, however, did have positive experiences and described their experiences as being "a great

experience as I was surrounded by people who were very supportive” and “it was a memorable experience.”

With regards to what they would have done had they been given a task of mentoring a novice teacher, all teachers said they would have a comprehensive plan that included workshops and training on topics such as the school curriculum, assessment system, lesson plans, teaching methods, reflection on teaching, administrative rules, teachers’ multiple responsibilities and classroom management. Others added that they would include model lessons and peer observations. An ice breaker or introductory session was considered to be important as a way of welcoming novice teachers. Similarly, regular meetings to discuss students’ problems and to raise issues and concerns were also considered to be important. Other things mentioned were to expose the novice teacher to professional development opportunities available and show them ways that they could access these opportunities. They also indicated that they would conduct workshops and training sessions based on what novice teachers actually need.

When asked if University professors played any role during their first year, all respondents said that none of their professors were involved in their learning after graduation. One teacher indicated that he felt like an orphan and wished he could consult his university professors on issues. Another one stated that she wished that the university faculty could check on them and make sure that what they learned at the university was relevant. “This way they can modify the courses to suit the actual requirements in the field.”

A problem raised in teachers’ reflections that seemed to be common among all respondents is the full teaching schedule that they are given on their first day of teaching (normally between 22 to 30 lessons per week). This teaching load seems to contradict the current thinking on teacher learning, which suggests that novice teachers should be initiated into the profession gradually so as to allow them space and time to acquire new knowledge and experience in the field (Fry, 2010; Howe, 2008).

Another common complaint among the young teachers regarded administrative responsibilities for which they were not trained. It seems that it is common practice to burden novice teachers with administrative responsibilities, which adds to their frustration and stress. On this, literature suggests that teacher preparation programs should expose candidates to the multiple roles that they will have as teachers. It is seen in the responses that some of the schools gave novice teachers a choice of administrative responsibilities that they would like to take, while others simply assigned those roles without giving the teachers a choice. Finally, most respondents complained that even though they were trained to teach one level, the schools asked them to teach classes at different levels for which they were not prepared. This was seen to be a challenge and a source of great frustration to novice teachers.

The focus group discussion that was conducted focused on the role played by the teacher education program in the induction process. While the respondents confirmed that it was non-existent at present, they all wished that their university professors would be there for them when they needed to vent or needed somebody to consult. The important concern for these teachers is that they need non-judgemental feedback from somebody they trust. This, they considered to be critical for both the novice teacher and their professional development. They all thought that it was important that the teacher education program knows the relevance of its courses in order to better serve its future candidates. Similarly, they saw the university as the producer of knowledge so its faculty would be better positioned to offer workshops and seminars on the most current research on pedagogy and teacher learning.

In summary, teachers recognized the importance of collaboration between the school and the teacher education program in ensuring the stability and quality of the novice teachers.

CONCLUSION

The current international focus on teacher quality has resulted in significant shifts in the conceptualization of how teachers are prepared and developed throughout their teaching careers. A number of studies have proposed new thinking that involves the redesign of teacher education programs, continuous professional learning, new partnership arrangements between teacher educators and the schools, and collaborative professional development at the school setting. These and other such initiatives seem to focus on the holistic approach to teacher development where all parties involved in the teachers' professional learning collaborate to ensure a seamless transition into the profession.

In a nutshell what research seems to indicate is a need for teacher education programs that prepare effective teachers followed by an organized induction period that would reduce the culture shock, stress, and sense of alienation. This should be built on an organized mentoring system (Greiman, 2007) that would alleviate novice teachers' myriad issues as they struggle both instructionally and psychologically during the initial years of teaching and would build instead, positive attitudes towards the profession. This needs to be followed by continuous professional development programs that respond to both institutional and personal needs of teachers (Lynn, 2002). It appears that these four components are essential for the quality, commitment and stability of teachers in the profession. McMahon et al. (2015) extend this argument pointing to the importance of thinking of a teaching career as a journey rather than a destination, and career progression as developmental with a teacher becoming more proficient, accomplished, and expert over time. The authors perceive the continuum model as having two phases; the initial phase, which is basically initial teacher education, and a second phase that encompasses continuous professional development. This is seen in the context of renewed partnerships, which acknowledges the school as a legitimate site of professional learning.

In order to ensure the quality and stability of novice teachers, the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes cautions that:

A comprehensive induction will demand the well-coordinated efforts of multiple and complimentary providers with clearly articulated roles and purposes. Given the challenges in supporting this important transition, induction support and activities may need to last for an extended period of time: the greater the degree of customization possible, the greater the benefits (p. 64)

Zeichner's hybridity (2010) becomes useful as we conceptualize how teacher education programs and schools could collaborate in the preparation as well as in the development of novice teachers' professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Zeichner (2010) explains that "the third space comes from Hybridity theory which recognizes that individuals draw on multiple discourses to make sense of the world" (p. 486). He explains that his use of the hybrid spaces is concerned with bringing together school and university-based teacher educators, and practitioner and academic knowledge, in new ways to enhance the learning of

prospective teachers. “Third space involves a rejection of binaries such as practitioner and academic knowledge, and theory and practice, and involves the integration of what is often seen as competing discourses in new ways”(p. 486). While this conception was intended for pre-service field training, this paper suggests its use in both pre- service and during the induction period.

To solve the challenge of teacher quality and instability, Oman needs to find ways of retaining its best teachers. Having robust teacher preparation programs that include extensive field experiences will probably go a long way towards solving the problem. However, while this gives confidence to the teacher candidate, it does not eliminate the complexities of the early years of teaching. For those who are less confident and have less support, frustration and depression may ultimately drive them from the classroom. Therefore the hybridity conception will not only ensure that the programs prepare teachers for the real contexts in which they will work, but it will also ensure that there is consistent and on-going communication, feedback, consultation, and sharing between teacher education programs and schools that have employed graduates of such programs. This collaboration ought to be followed by planned teacher learning that will continue throughout the career cycle of the teacher. The combination of the professional development continuum model and the hybridity conception requires that a new continuous improvement model be developed. Such a model would include all parties involved in teachers’ professional learning and it will clearly define the roles and processes that would give support to novice teachers as they progress onward in their journey towards becoming effective practitioners.

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