

The Lack of Induction Programs in Denmark

Lisbeth Lunde Frederiksen

VIA University College, Denmark

Åse Bonde

Education Policy Department of the Danish Union of Teachers, Denmark

Abstract: The purpose of the article is to present the development of induction support for newly qualified teachers in Denmark over the last 10 years. The article underlines that there currently might be incipient shifts in the political ecosystem of education by referring to a teacher commission that was appointed to provide recommendations for rules for new working hours for teachers in Denmark and to the latest recommendations from a commission whose task was to evaluate the Danish Teacher Training Program. Both commissions call attention to newly qualified teachers and to bridging the gap from teacher education to the teaching profession. The article briefly explains the situation today by referring to a nationwide survey study of how schools receive newly qualified teachers. The study was carried out by the Counseling and Mentoring Research Program at VIA University College. One of the research questions was “How and to what extent are newly qualified teachers in Denmark supported during the first year of their professional work?” The study concludes that support of newly qualified teachers is very arbitrary and unsustainable.

Keywords: newly qualified teacher, teacher support, teacher induction, mentor, teacher retention

Introduction

In Denmark, teacher education is a 4 year, 240 ECTS program, including 3 practice modules, each consisting of 10 ECTS, where the student teachers make plans for and carry out teaching in groups of usually 3–4

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fellow students. It is a common expectation of politicians and some school leaders that from day one, a newly qualified teacher should be capable of acting competently as a teacher with reference to the aims of the Danish *folkeskole* (municipal combined primary and lower secondary school). It is expected from the start that the teacher is able to carry out skilled teaching and perform as a professional teacher.

As a starting point, school principals assign the same tasks to the newly qualified teacher as to very experienced teachers and newly qualified teachers are given full responsibility for their teaching, including the responsibility for what we in Denmark call “class teacher function”, which involves responsibility for collaboration between the school and the pupils’ parents, and responsibility for the children’s well-being at school. In recent years, this understanding has been accentuated by New Public Management affected control concept (Pedersen, 2004), which has meant that teacher education now is governed by fully-specified goals for competence, skills and knowledge for all parts of the education (Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet, 2019).

Strong professional identity with capability for professional judgment

Every day a teacher, individually and in collaboration with colleagues, has to balance their teaching between a variety of demands, wishes and needs in relation to school and to being a teacher. It is a big challenge, not least for a newly qualified teacher, because the teaching profession, among other things, is characterized by working in situations that in many ways are unpredictable and uncertain. To handle that kind of unpredictability implies an ability to carry out professional judgment, which cannot be worked out in terms of clearly-defined rules of what to do or conclude in specific situations. It involves sensitive attention and reflection, experience in distinguishing between essentials and nonessentials, assessment of the consequences of an action, and being able to take necessary measures in difficult situations (Grimen & Grimen, 2008; Pahuus, 2009). Furthermore, it involves development of a strong professional identity. In other words, it is the way the teacher understands him/herself as a

professional, i.e. reflections about his/her own characteristics, values and attitudes, ethical guidelines, skills and competencies, that constitutes him/her as a good teacher.

Such skills are developed in close interaction with practice, experiences in practice, and from first-hand experiences acquired after graduation as a teacher. In short, it will shape the process of becoming a professional teacher if the process is supported by reflections and dialogue with experienced professionals in induction programs (a system that uses a variety of coordinated measures tailored to novices and the general educational system) including mentoring during the first years (Tonna, Bjerkholt, & Holland, 2017).

What is induction?

Induction can be seen in terms of four broad categories: a *process* for learning, a particular *period* of time, a specific *phase* of teaching and a *system* (Isenberg et al., 2009).

Most researchers like to call induction a process for learning, not just support and orientation for teachers starting out in the profession, although this could also be a part of induction. But induction is more than personal support, more than socialization into a culture and a system. It is, first of all, a *process of continuing professional learning*. It is also a *particular period* early in the teacher's career, and a *specific period* in the teacher-development continuum. In addition, it is a *specific phase in teaching*; a phase where the teachers have to make the difficult transition from student to teacher, face concrete challenges in practice, begin to construct a personal practice, and develop a personal professional identity. This phase is strongly connected to what comes before and what comes after. Ingersoll & Strong describe induction programs as "a bridge from student of teaching to teacher of student" (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 203). Furthermore, it should be seen as a *system* that can be characterized by complexity, interconnectedness, variety, coordination, and dynamics: "A system, that uses a variety of coordinated means, tailored to the novices and the general educational system and that is embedded in social and political cultures of the nations the program inhabits" (Isenberg et al., 2009).

No national policy

However, in Denmark, there is neither a system nor a national policy concerning induction. Denmark has a long tradition for local and highly informal support schemes for newly qualified teachers. Both initial teacher education programs and school programs are managed, as mentioned above, by national, centrally-defined measures for quality and objectives described in terms of competence. It is up to the local level, i.e. the municipalities, schools and teacher educators, to take responsibility for fulfilling the defined measures – how to fulfill these at the local level. Central authorities have put in place measures to monitor and evaluate teaching. Hence, education and school (in a way) are, at the same time, managed in a centralized and a decentralized way (cf. Svensson & Svensson, 2008), which offers both possibilities and challenges. As a consequence, the support for newly qualified teachers is very arbitrary and varies from one municipality to another and even from school to school.

As municipalities rarely choose to form policies on teacher induction for their schools, it is left to the local principals to decide if, and to what extent, they want to provide teacher induction. The current picture is that newly qualified teachers, as mentioned above, get far less support than they need and, furthermore, many also lack a basic formalized introduction, for instance, to the teaching policy of the municipality and the educational focal points of the local school.

When the question about induction programs and mentoring for teachers arises, the following question is often raised among politicians: “Why do teachers need this when, for example, nurses and lawyers don’t need it? It must be the teacher education that is not good enough.” However, at the same time, the complexity of teacher work seems to be increasing: diversity in the classroom is increasing and teachers experience complex school legislation, such as requirements for registering absenteeism for bilingual students, requirements for use of digital platforms, reports and inclusion. Collaboration with pupils’ parents is more complex, perhaps because teachers in some school districts are not as well educated as parents, while in other areas the challenges in families are greater than just a few years ago. Furthermore, there are demands

and desires for dialogic teaching and a recognizable learning culture, and a demand for varied forms of teaching and for attentive and empathetic teachers with energy.

A short historic view

During the period 2000–2013, local mentor programs became widespread in several places in the country. Many municipalities had an interest in local teacher induction programs because of a shortage of trained teachers, and various development programs at different levels providing support for newly qualified teachers appeared in a number of municipalities. As a clear sign of this interest, a collective agreement was signed between the Danish Union of Teachers and the public employers' organization, Local Government Denmark (Sørensen, 2008); the agreement entitled all newly qualified teachers to additional time for preparation as part of their employment agreement.

At the same time, a national network was established (Network for Supporting Newly Qualified Teachers), consisting of researchers, municipality and ministry representatives, school leaders, teacher educators, teacher students and teacher union representatives. In this network, new research about induction programs was presented and different ways to support newly qualified teachers, and experiences in relation to this, were discussed. The network still exists, but has been greatly diminished and consists now of very few people: a researcher, teacher union representatives and a few representatives from teacher education – no representatives from local or central authorities.

Unfortunately, as a result of the events that took place in Denmark in 2013, the interest in induction programs and support for newly qualified teachers trickled away from the municipalities in the years that followed.

Lockout of Danish teachers in 2013

In 2013, all Danish teachers were locked out for almost four weeks. The lockout was the culmination of a long conflict about the fundamental agreements on Danish teachers' working hours. The lockout ended

with a political intervention and the adoption of a law governing working hours (Beskæftigelsesministeriet, 2013), with predominant support for the employers' interests. This circumvented all the normal rules of the Danish labor market, and the Danish teachers working hours are, up to the present time, regulated by working hours legislation instead of, as is usual, by a collective agreement between employers and trade unions.

The former central agreement that gave newly qualified teachers extra time for preparation disappeared at the same time, as a result of the working hours law in 2013. This law was followed up by a new school reform, adopted by the Danish Parliament in 2013, that extended the school week considerably for all pupils (Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet, 2019).

As a result of the combination of the working hours legislation and the school reform, the teachers workload increased by 3–4 lessons per week. As an inevitable result of the heavier workload, there was less time for preparation and for cooperation with pupils' parents and colleagues, including less time for cooperation with and informal support of newly qualified teachers.

For the newly qualified teachers, this was an extra heavy burden. The lack of time with their experienced colleagues meant that they now received *neither* formal nor *informal* support from their colleagues. Newly qualified teachers experienced a greater pressure of work and a lack of support, and many considered leaving the teaching profession.

In 2017, the Danish Union of Teachers took the initiative to set up a working group with representatives from all major stakeholders (municipalities, school leaders, student teachers, ministries, teacher-training institutions, teacher unions and researchers), to try to formulate a joint recommendation for the support of newly qualified teachers. Until now, the task has not been fulfilled; it appears to be difficult to formulate a concrete joint recommendation in a field where responsibility is distributed among several actors and, in a time of congestion on the educational-policy agenda and declining resources, responsibility seems to have a tendency to be shuffled around.

Analysis of new initiatives for newly qualified teachers

The collective bargaining negotiations for teachers in the spring of 2018 resulted in the establishment of a Teacher Commission. The Teacher Commission was given the task of providing recommendations for new regulations for teachers' working hours in Denmark. As a part of this, the Teacher Commission also had the task of analyzing initiatives to secure newly qualified teachers a good start to their professional life, including regulations for teachers' work, and estimating the need to adjust teacher education and organization (Kommunernes Landsforening og Forhandlingsfællesskabet, 2018).

Relevant research and evaluations

In 2015, the VIA Profession and Education Research Center started a research project about induction programs in Denmark, called "Induction and Foothold". The main research question was "How can a teacher-induction system be designed and implemented in a Danish context?" The first step was to investigate "How, and to what extent, are newly qualified teachers in Denmark supported during the first year of their professional work?" (Frederiksen, Krøjgaard & Paaske, 2017a) It has been examined through a national survey sent out to all newly qualified teachers hired after January 1, 2013. The intention was to identify problems regarding the improvement of mentoring and induction programs for newly qualified teachers in Denmark, in order to have a basis for developing design principles for teacher-induction programs. The intention was also to attract the attention of politicians and school leaders, and to identify if our hypothesis was right that many newly qualified teachers did not receive any kind of induction.

The survey indicated that a large part of the newly qualified teachers generally experience a lack of structure for their debut as teachers; however, this is the case for a significantly smaller share among those with a mentor. The survey showed that less than half of all newly qualified teachers (38 %) answered "yes" to having participated "in a program in

which an experienced teacher was charged with assisting and supporting – mentor/tutor program”. Only 17 % of these mentors (of the 38 %) had any kind of mentor training. The division of respondents according to their conditions of employment reveals that mentoring programs are offered, to a significantly lesser extent, to newly qualified teachers who are not employed on a permanent, full-time basis. Furthermore, there is a tendency at municipal schools for mentoring programs to be more frequent at schools with classes 8, 9 and 10 (15–17 year-old students). The duration of a mentoring program seems to vary a lot. Of the durations stated, 41 % are 1–6 months, 50 % are 9–12 months, and only very few are more than a year. The fact that a total of 37 % answer “Do not know” when asked about the duration of their program indicates unclear framing of mentoring programs at many schools.

The survey also showed that 60 % of the newly qualified teachers with trained mentors have subject-content dialogues (about the teaching subject, for example mathematics, English, etc.) and 67 % have pedagogical-content dialogues (about methods and approaches in general), while this was only the case for respectively 39 % and 45 % of those who had a mentor without any kind of mentor training. The survey also showed that the newly qualified teachers who participated in mentor dialogues that focused on pedagogical-didactical content valued this very much. However, those who did not take part did not find that this kind of dialogue was important. Furthermore, the survey also showed that almost 24 % of all respondents did not expect to be working in Danish municipal primary and lower secondary schools in 3 years’ time.

Challenges

The biggest challenge in Denmark just now is that there is no national organization nor resources for the support of newly qualified teachers. At the same time, schools are challenged by a teacher shortage and an increasing number of newly qualified teachers who have left or are considering leaving the teaching profession. More than 17,000 trained teachers are currently employed outside of primary and lower secondary schools. This is more than every fifth trained Danish teacher

(Arbejderbevægelsens Erhvervsråd, 2016). Therefore, the most urgent challenge is to put newly qualified teachers on the national school policy agenda – in competition with many other challenges on this agenda.

The Danish Teacher Training Program was formally evaluated in 2018 by a group of experts appointed by the Ministry of Education. The members of the group were Elaine Munthe (Chairman), Professor and Dean of the University of Stavanger and Head of the Norwegian National Council of Teacher Education, Sven-Erik Hansén, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Åbo Akademi, Per B. Christensen, Chairman for the Danish Council of Accreditation, Carsten Aude, Principal of Aarhus Municipality, Lise Tingleff Nielsen, Chief of the Basic School Area at the Danish Institute of Evaluation (EVA), and Inaluk Hede Pedersen, teacher at Bagsværd Skole.

The expert group highlighted:

that a high-quality teacher education must necessarily go hand in hand with ongoing professional development. With reference to both the latest TALIS Study 6 and research on the importance of continuing education, the expert group points to two potential areas of action in relation to lifelong learning:

- (1) a stronger focus on working systematically with the transition from students to newly educated teachers, e.g. via induction programs, mentor programs and the like, and
- (2) the need to continuously build capacity and develop the teacher's competencies as a basis for maintaining and developing the teacher's practice.

The expert group in this context points to the importance of continuous professional development as an instrument for retaining teachers in the teacher profession. (Styrelsen for Forskning og Uddannelse, 2018, p. 17)

The recommendation shows a growing official awareness of the need of support for newly qualified teachers, in order to maintain professional development and maintain and recruit talented, competent, educated teachers in the future.

We know that induction programs with mentoring programs as an element have a positive significance for newly qualified teachers' classroom

management (Hobson et al., 2009), teaching quality (Hobson et al., 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) and pupils' learning outcomes (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). See also the article "Support for newly qualified teachers through teacher induction programs – a review of reviews" in this book. Hobson et al. (2009) establish that mentoring programs also reduce the feeling of isolation for newly qualified teachers, and increase self-confidence and self-worth. Furthermore, mentoring can increase the abilities of professional self-reflection and problem solving. Therefore, there is a great need for induction programs in Denmark.

In Denmark, researchers are still collaborating with the national teacher union. Both parties share the same vision that newly qualified teachers should keep up their commitment to being a teacher, stay in the profession, and desire lifelong professional learning. National research develops and tests design principles for induction programs for newly qualified teachers (Frederiksen, Krøjgaard & Paaske, 2017b; Frederiksen, Paaske, Halse & Rosholm, 2019), and branches of the Danish Union of Teachers carry out small induction programs outside school time. In addition, the Danish Union of Teachers has arranged workshops for union representatives on the topic of support for newly qualified teachers.

Hopefully, the recommendations from the Teacher Commission will contribute to greater political awareness of teacher induction programs for newly qualified teachers in Denmark in the near future, programs that, to a great extent, have focus on professional development, and not only focus on socialization into underlying cultural teaching practice, the already-existing practice and personal support (cf. SEC, 2010). What is needed is educative mentoring, a kind of mentoring with a development-oriented mentor approach, with focus on both the newly qualified teachers' professional growth and on development of teaching that promotes the pupils' possibility of learning and well-being (Bradbury, 2010; Langdon & Ward, 2015).

Need for educated mentors

However, introduction of national mentor systems or induction programs with mentoring is not enough if it is to result in ongoing professional

development as the expert group recommends. Becoming a good teacher is not necessarily the same as being a good mentor (Bullough, 2008; Orland, 2001; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008) as some school leaders think (Frederiksen et al., 2019); there is much more to mentoring than teaching skills. Therefore, mentors have to be trained in mentoring at the same time as they practice mentoring (Brunstad, 2007). If you are going to facilitate ongoing professional development, it requires educated mentors for teachers (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Mentors have to possess analytical skills as well as reflection skills on practice. Mentors have to understand the complexity in teaching situations and be able to initiate dialogues that are equally about new perspectives and different layers of knowledge (Löfström & Eisenschmidt, 2009). Mentors also have to be able to reflect on and analyze not only mentoring, but also teaching in general, and new teachers' professional development in particular (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). Especially, mentors have to be able to analyze and be aware of their own prior assumptions, underlying values and opinions about teaching.

Today, the teacher training programs at the Danish University Colleges offer additional 10 ECTS credit supervisor courses for teachers who have student teachers in teaching practice. The content of the courses is primarily about counseling methods and communication. However, up until now only a very small proportion of teachers have participated in these courses. Different university colleges also offer shorter one-day or half-day courses, which mainly focus on the examination of teacher students and practice as another education arena. Most often, schools only have one qualified supervisor. However, general courses for teachers who need to be mentors for newly qualified teachers do not exist. To be a supervisor for student teachers and to be a mentor for newly qualified teachers is, though similar, not the same task. It demands some different competence to be a mentor to newly qualified teachers (Lejonberg & Føinum, 2018).

In the above-mentioned national survey, it appeared that only 4 % of the respondents had participated in initiatives where teacher education was involved after graduation. However, 70 % of the respondents wished that teacher education, to some degree, was involved in the transition from education to profession. There could be initiatives in the future to develop induction programs and mentor courses where this is integrated.

Conclusion

The biggest challenge in Denmark just now is that there is neither national organization of nor resources for the support of newly qualified teachers. At the same time, schools are challenged by initial teacher shortages and an increasing number of newly qualified teachers who have left or are considering leaving the teaching profession. The responsibility for newly qualified teachers is divided between several levels and stakeholders and, so far, it has been difficult to coordinate efforts to seriously improve the support of newly qualified teachers. From both national and international research, we know what it takes to support newly qualified teachers in the challenges they face in their first years of teaching, which also the expert group that evaluated the Danish Teacher Training Program pointed out as a crucial prerequisite for retaining teachers in the continuous development of teaching. At this moment in time we can observe incipient shifts in the political ecosystem of education (Kemmis, 2014).

Denmark has a teacher shortage. At the same time, the evaluation of Danish teacher education points to the need for working systematically with the transition from students to newly educated teachers, e.g. via induction programs and mentor programs.

On December 16 2019, the Teacher Commission published their report (Christensen, 2019). In the report, the Commission recommends a more systematic reception of newly qualified teachers. The report makes mention of the following, among other things:

- The Commission proposes that all schools have a strategy for how they introduce newly qualified teachers.
- The municipalities must support the schools in close cooperation with the local partners in the school area, including the local teacher union.
- The teacher commission suggests that the central partners in the school take initiative to collect and spread information about good experiences with initiatives that contribute to a good start for newly qualified teachers and carry out experiments preferably in cooperation with the University Colleges (p. 67).

Furthermore, the Teacher Commission suggests that schools introduce initiatives to mentoring and induction programs, including relevant induction courses (p. 68).

It has to be emphasized that these are not political decisions. They are recommendations. However, these recommendations concern both initiatives for teacher education and initiatives for practice, and point with some weight at a possible realization in the near future of initiatives in both teacher education and school practice. Initiatives that may support and develop self-efficacy, encourage and motivate newly qualified teachers.

Taken together, this point to renewed central and local interest in supporting newly qualified teachers. An interest that creates hope for a step forward for the newly qualified teachers in Denmark.

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