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An Assessment by Beginning Missouri Art Teachers of Their Beginning Teacher Assistance Programs

Bonnie Black

Becoming a teacher is a developmental process that extends beyond the pre-service level. The amount of growth and development that takes place during this process depends on what happens to teachers and how they react (Davis & Zaret, 1984; Grant & Zeichner, 1981; McDonald, 1980; Swick, 1983). This continual development of teachers encompasses three distinct phases: (1) pre-service -- the period preceding certification, (2) induction -- the first years in the profession as a probationary teacher, and (3) in-service -- following permanent certification and continuing throughout the teacher's career (Grant & Zeichner, 1981). Of the three phases, pre-service and in-service have been the ones most heavily researched and reported in the literature. The induction phase is now gaining attention and study, and many articles have been written to point out the need for planned, systematic induction programs (Grant & Zeichner, 1981; Hall, 1982; Hulling-Austin, 1985; Ryan et. al., 1980).

The transition of pre-service teachers into the teaching profession has been described many ways in the educational literature. Some writers have referred to this period as a time of "reality shock", "trial by fire", and as a "sink or swim" process. Due to the degree of problems experienced by the beginning teacher, research has estimated that as many as forty percent of beginning teachers leave the profession during the first three years (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Beginning teachers can be expected to possess a wide variety of skills, but they should not be expected to function as master teachers. Formal induction programs provide continuity between the closely supervised pre-service experiences and the assumption of full classroom responsibilities (Hall, 1982).

Throughout the nation induction programs have been created and implemented to try to help meet the needs of beginning teachers, but there seems to be little consistency between programs (Gorton, 1973; Grant & Zeichner, 1981; Hall, 1982; Ryan et. al., 1980). The evolution of induction programs began over twenty years ago as schools began to explore ways to assist the beginning teacher. Prior to the 1960's the majority of research on induction in the United States dealt with identifying the problems of the beginning teacher from the neophyte point of view. Early research on induction in education has come from Australia and Great Britain (Zeichner, 1979; Griffin, 1985). These studies included only a handful of induction programs. Often programs have been reported without evaluation or assessment. The evaluation of data that does exist does little to describe the

impact of specific induction practices on the development of teachers (Zeichner, 1982).

The concept of induction programs has blossomed throughout this country in the last ten years. In 1980 a study by the Educational Testing Service identified only the state of Georgia as being active in the area of induction programs for beginning teachers (McDonald, 1980). In 1984 a national survey of states activity in programs for beginning teachers identified 18 states with programs in advanced planning stages and four states with operational induction programs (Defino & Hoffman, 1984). In 1986 the National Commission on the Induction Process identified statewide teacher induction programs. Of the 50 states responding, 19 reported they had no plans for such a program, 15 states had teacher induction programs and 10 states and the District of Columbia had statewide implemented induction programs. Nine of the eleven implemented programs were state mandated and certification or licensure was dependent on the completion of these programs. The other two were developed to comply with the state board of education policies. All of the eleven state programs that were being mandated contained evaluation components.

Research being published in the 1980's, pertaining to novice teachers' transition into teaching, provides some evidence about the specific types of difficulties experienced by neophyte teachers (Marso & Pigge, 1987; Veenman, 1984; Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, McLaughlin & Dull, 1988). Other research suggests that we are developing an awareness of the subtle differences between beginning and experienced teachers' responses to the same types of classroom problems (Fogarty, Wang & Creek, 1983). This recent research also suggests that we now better understand the specific nature of the problems most commonly experienced by novice teachers (Cruickshank, 1981; Grant & Zeichner, 1981; Hall, 1982, Quaglia & Rog, 1989). The problems of beginning teachers in areas ranging from instructional techniques to classroom management have been cited in the literature associated with the neophyte teachers. An assessment of new teacher needs is a valuable tool for providing information about new teachers' perceptions of their immediate needs.

A review of the literature provided only a few studies dealing specifically with the beginning art teacher. In a 1964 study of 28 beginning art teachers in New York, the three most urgent problems of beginning art teachers were reported. These include provision for the talented student, evaluation of student work, and classroom control or discipline. (Reed, 1964). The problems of beginning art teachers in the states of Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming and South Dakota were reported in a 1985 dissertation from the University of Nebraska (Hopson, 1985). This study reported 537 problem areas as experienced by the beginning art teachers surveyed in this study. These two studies reported problem areas for the beginning art teacher but did not deal with the induction or mentoring aspect as related to these beginning art teachers.

A number of studies have focused on the beginning teacher and the problems they encounter. However, only a few have dealt with the first and second year art teacher and none have been found that deals specifically with induction programs for art teachers in Missouri. A study of the importance beginning art teachers place on the types of assistance given them by their development plans will aid in developing planned induction programs designed to assist the beginning art teachers as they make the transition into the teaching profession.

In Missouri, as a legislative response to the national reports on the quality of education in the public schools and the outcry from the voters in the state for accountability, the Legislature passed the Excellence in Education Act for the State of Missouri in 1985. A section of this act requires Missouri school districts to provide professional development programs for beginning and practicing teachers. Such programs must include professional development committees to assist all teachers and individual professional development plans for first and second year teachers. In addition, programs for beginning teachers will be designed to include assistance from the teacher education program which provided the teachers training, if such training was provided by a Missouri college or university. This act also suggests, and teacher certification in Missouri requires, that beginning teacher support include a mentor program (Section 168.400 (1) (2) & (5), RSMo.).

The Missouri state-mandated beginning teacher assistance program seeks to help provide first and second year teachers with induction programs designed through local school districts to aid in the neophyte teachers' transition into the profession. In Missouri, school districts are developing these plans to comply with this state-mandated policy. These professional development plans are being designed without documentation as to what is actually helping the new teacher in general and the new art teacher in specific. Studies have not been conducted to assess the beginning art teachers in Missouri that are going through the new certification process and the induction phase of their orientation into the teaching profession.

The purpose of my study is to evaluate the state-mandated beginning teacher assistance program as experienced by the first year art teachers in the state of Missouri. Specifically, the questions posed by this study are:

1. What is involved in the beginning teacher assistance process for beginning Missouri Art Teachers; who is involved; to what extent and in what ways are they involved?
2. What is included within the Professional Development Plans of beginning Missouri Art Teachers; how frequently has assistance actually been provided in these areas and how helpful has this assistance been?

3. How do the types of assistance provided relate to the following demographic variables; age, sex, school size, and grade level(s) taught?

The 1989-90 school year is the first full year for the induction program to have total impact on beginning teachers in the state of Missouri. The beginning teachers that have graduated after August 1988 no longer possess life teaching certificates. The professional development plan and mentor program is part of the continuing certification process for these beginning teachers.

By evaluating the responses of beginning art teachers across Missouri, the designing of professional development plans for new art teachers may be directed toward areas that will give greater assistance to the neophyte art teacher.

This study will use the methodology of descriptive research. Inductive analysis of data received from questionnaires sent to all identified beginning art teachers will provide a basis for field interviews conducted with a cross-sample of the beginning art teachers. Once the types of assistance are identified, a cross-tabulation of assistance with demographic variables will examine such questions as:

1. Is there a relationship between age and types of assistance reported by beginning art teachers?
2. Is there a relationship between sex and types of assistance reported by beginning art teachers?
3. Is there a relationship between school size and types of assistance reported by beginning art teachers?
4. Is there a relationship between the grade level(s) of teaching and types of assistance reported by beginning art teachers?

The population for this study will consist of beginning art teachers in the state of Missouri as identified by the Superintendents of the 544 school districts in the state.

Out of the 544 school districts in the state, there were 413 districts that responded to the initial questionnaire. It requested the superintendent of each school district to identify the beginning art teachers in their district. Of the districts responding, 38 reported employing beginning art teachers. There were a total of 40 beginning art teachers identified throughout the state.

A questionnaire has been sent to the beginning art teachers identified throughout the state. From the responses to this questionnaire, information will be gleaned to classify and describe the types of assistance provided

beginning art teachers by their beginning teacher assistance programs as well as information concerning the demographic variables. A cross-sample consisting of 12 beginning art teachers will be taken from the initially identified beginning art teachers responding to the questionnaire. On site interviews will then be conducted to further evaluate the importance of the types of assistance reported by the beginning teachers.

As a consequence of this study it may be possible to structure induction plans to better assist beginning art teachers in their professional development during the first year of teaching. A study that describes the types of assistance being experienced by beginning art teachers, determines if there is demographic impact on this assistance and evaluates the importance beginning art teachers place on certain areas of their professional development plans. By understanding these needs, school administrators, university representatives, and mentors can help the beginning art teacher to have a more productive induction experience.

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