

# The Role of Person-Organization Fit and Principal Leadership in Beginning Teachers' Induction Experiences

*Peter Youngs, University of Virginia*

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## Acknowledgements, My Own Background

- Thanks to Beth Wilkins, Patricia Brady, Nancy Johnson, and Kevin Seymour
  
- I'm a former elementary school teacher
- I've worked as a teacher educator at Michigan State and U. Virginia
- I conduct research on issues related to teacher preparation and induction
  - Particular interest in how school context, principal leadership, and educational policy affect beginning teachers

## Overview of Presentation

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- ❑ Brief review of research on beginning teacher induction
- ❑ What we know from research about the role of person-organization (P-O) fit and principal leadership in beginning teachers' induction experiences
- ❑ General implications of this research for a) the work that mentors and principals engage in with novice teachers; and b) how school districts organize mentoring and induction programs
- ❑ Given the current emphasis on the Common Core and teacher evaluation reform, I will address ways that mentors, principals, and districts can help novices respond to these initiatives, experience P-O fit in their schools, and have high levels of commitment, retention, and effectiveness

## Research on Beginning Teacher Induction

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- ❑ We know from professional experience and research that formal mentoring is often associated with key outcomes for beginning teachers, including increased levels of retention
- ❑ Tom Smith and Richard Ingersoll (2004) found that within-field mentoring and collaborating with colleagues were both associated with first-year teacher retention
- ❑ Kavita Kapadia and colleagues (2007) reported that "strong mentoring" was linked to novice teachers reporting a good experience and planning to continue teaching in the same school. Strong mentoring included help with teaching and assessment strategies, classroom management, district policies, observation of teaching, and communication with parents

## Research on Beginning Teacher Induction

- ❑ A recent study by Steve Glazerman and colleagues at Mathematica Policy Research (2010) compared beginning teachers in 17 districts who received comprehensive induction with other novice teachers in the same districts who received traditional induction support
- ❑ Comprehensive induction featured weekly meetings with a full-time mentor, monthly professional development, opportunities to observe veteran teachers, and ongoing evaluation of the novices' instructional practices
- ❑ The comparison group typically received mentoring from a mentor teacher in their school

## Research on Beginning Teacher Induction

- ❑ The study by Glazerman and colleagues (2010) found no differences in instruction, retention, and effectiveness between comprehensive induction and the traditional support offered in these districts.
- ❑ But perhaps we should not be too surprised. In many cases, the mentors in the comparison group were individuals who taught the same subjects and/or grades as their mentees.
- ❑ This contrasted with the comprehensive programs where sometimes mentors had not taught the same subjects or grades as their mentees.
- ❑ Unlike the full-time mentors in the comprehensive programs, the mentors in the comparison group typically had strong knowledge of the school contents where the novices were teaching.

## Research on Person-Organization Fit

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- ❑ The study by Glazerman and colleagues (2010) provoked my colleagues and I to consider other factors, in addition to mentoring and induction, that can affect a beginning teacher's experience.
- ❑ There is a strong body of research in organizational psychology that examines the role of fit in employee satisfaction, effort, commitment, and retention.
- ❑ This literature asks how well individuals *fit* or match with the expectations and resources in their work environment.
- ❑ Fit can be measured subjectively or objectively.

## Research on Person-Organization Fit

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- ❑ Jennifer Chatman (1989) developed the seminal theory of person-organization fit. She conceptualized fit as congruence between the values of a person and an organization.
- ❑ Chatman took an interactionist perspective to studying fit; i.e., individuals both influence and are influenced by their work situations.
- ❑ In addition to value congruence, other researchers have thought of fit in terms of a) shared goals, b) common preferences for work climate, and c) similar preferences for work structures and systems.

## Research on Person-Organization Fit

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- ❑ Research from outside K-12 education: there is strong evidence that individuals who perceive a low level of fit with their organizations are likely to seek work in a different context.
- ❑ Conversely, those who perceive a high degree of fit are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction, effort, and retention (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005).
- ❑ For example, a study of nurses and hospital administrators found that higher levels of fit were associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment (Mitchell et al., 2001).
- ❑ There is growing evidence from K-12 education that high levels of fit are associated with beginning teacher commitment and retention.

## Michigan-Indiana Early Career Teacher (MIECT) Study

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- ❑ For the MIECT study, we surveyed about 200 novice teachers in grades 1-8 and we interviewed 25 of them
- ❑ We also surveyed their formal mentors and close colleagues
- ❑ The study examined whether early career teachers who reported higher levels of professional fit with a) their school or b) their close colleagues were more likely to plan to continue teaching or to actually continue teaching

## Michigan-Indiana Early Career Teacher (MIECT) Study

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- We operationalized “fit with school” in the following way:

Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements:

- My approach to teaching fits in throughout this school
- My professional interests are the same as those of other teachers throughout this school
- I identify with other teachers throughout this school
- My professional goals are the same as those of other teachers throughout this school
- I matter to other teachers throughout this school
- Other teachers throughout this school matter to me

## Michigan-Indiana Early Career Teacher (MIECT) Study

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- We operationalized “fit with close colleagues” in a similar way:

Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements:

- My approach to teaching fits in with my close colleagues (at this school)
- My professional interests are the same as those of my close colleagues
- I identify with my close colleagues
- My professional goals are the same as those of my close colleagues
- I matter to my close colleagues
- My close colleagues matter to me

## Examples

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- My approach to teaching fits with my close colleagues
  - They have a similar teaching philosophy
  - They incorporate technology into their teaching in similar ways
  - They have similar approaches to formative assessment
- My professional goals are (not) the same as those of my close colleagues
  - An elementary teacher focuses on solving math problems in groups, but her colleagues emphasize direct instruction and procedural knowledge in their math teaching
- I matter to my close colleagues; my close colleagues matter to me
  - Mentors and principals can look for opportunities for novice teachers to contribute to the work of the school in meaningful ways; e.g., serving on committees, leading professional development, sponsoring students' extra-curricular activities

## Michigan-Indiana Early Career Teacher (MIECT) Study

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### Subjective Measures of Fit

- The MIECT study found that early career teachers who reported higher levels of professional fit with their school were more likely to plan to remain teaching in their schools (Pogodzinski et al., 2013)
- The MIECT study also found that early career teachers' perceptions of fit with close colleagues were associated with actually remaining in the teaching profession over time (Grogan, 2011)

## Michigan-Indiana Early Career Teacher (MIECT) Study

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### Objective Measures of Fit

- Early career teachers whose predominant instructional orientation matched with their group of close colleagues were much less likely to leave teaching than those whose inst. Orientation was misaligned with the orientation of their close colleagues (Grogan, 2011).
- We measured instructional orientation by collecting data on the frequency with which novice teachers and their close colleagues focused on a) basic skills, b) lower-order comprehension, and c) higher-order comprehension.

## Data from 2003-04 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)

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### Subjective Measures of Fit

- Increased person-organization fit was associated with decreasing odds of moving from one school to another or leaving teaching altogether (Grogan, 2011)
- The 2003-04 SASS included teachers at all experience levels
- Nonetheless, this finding is consistent with the findings from the MIECT study



## Short Activity in Groups of 2 to 3

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Please spend 8 to 10 minutes working on a small-group activity – please address one or more of the following questions:

- ❑ What contributed to your own sense of fitting in (or not fitting it) at the first school where you taught (or one of the schools where you taught)?
- ❑ How can mentors and principals increase the likelihood that beginning teachers will experience a strong sense of fit?
- ❑ What are some challenges to helping beginning teachers experience a sense of fit?

## Research on Principal Leadership

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Several recent studies have reported that principal leadership has an important impact on novice teacher retention:

- ❑ Don Boyd and colleagues (2011) found that there was a positive influence on beginning teacher retention in schools where administrators were viewed as supportive, an effective discipline policy was established, teachers were evaluated fairly, and teachers were included in decision making
- ❑ Elaine Allensworth et al. (2009) reported that teacher retention rates were higher in schools that had principals who demonstrated strong leadership, where teachers and administrators collaborated on making school decisions, and where there were high levels of trust between the administration and teachers

## Research on Principal Leadership

- Helen Ladd found that the quality of school leadership was the strongest predictor of teachers' planned and actual departures compared to other school working conditions (such as student demographics). High-quality leadership involved maintaining high expectations for students and teachers, supporting teachers with regard to instruction and student discipline, cultivating trust between themselves and the teachers, and involving teachers in decision making.
- Ben Pogodzinski et al. (2012) reported that the quality of the relationships between principals and their teaching staffs had a significant effect on early career teacher commitment. They also found that when novice teachers perceived that they have adequate resources, they were more likely to remain at their schools.

## Implications – Teacher Hiring

- We know that P-O fit, P-G fit, and principal leadership are important for beginning teacher commitment and retention
- What does this mean for the work of mentors, principals, and district administrators?

### Teacher Hiring

- The teacher hiring process can influence the extent to which a novice teacher feels that they are a good fit for their school
- The use of realistic job previews (RJPs) can help prospective teachers learn about schools where they might be working
- RJPs can provide applicants with information about curricula, assessment practices, the use of technology, services for special needs services, how disciplinary issues are handled, etc.

## Realistic Job Previews (RJPs)

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### Four Reasons that RJPs Can Potentially Help Promote Fit (Breugh, 1983)

- ❑ Teacher applicants' initial job expectations may be unrealistically high; RJPs can help them lower their expectations, help them be more realistic
- ❑ RJPs can increase satisfaction and retention by improving beginning teachers' ability to cope with the demands of the job
- ❑ RJPs can communicate an underlying message of care, concern, and honesty
- ❑ With better information, teacher applicants can potentially select positions that better meet their needs

## Implications – Teacher Hiring

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- ❑ To promote P-O fit, teacher hiring should also include efforts by the school and district to really learn about the applicant's background, their teaching philosophy, their teacher preparation institution, their student teaching experiences, and other relevant experiences
- ❑ One way that beginning teachers are able to establish an identity in their schools and get to know their colleagues is by being involved with extra-curricular activities, such as athletic coaching, student newspaper, after-school science programs, etc.
- ❑ During the hiring process, principals should explore how an applicant might contribute to their school in addition to delivering classroom instruction

## Implications – Perceptions of Fit

- Once a novice teacher starts working in a school, their perception of fit can be based on many factors and it can change over time
  - Some beg. teachers will perceive that they do/don't fit in well based on their sense of how they match with their entire school
  - Others will perceive that they do/don't fit based on their relationship with their mentor and 1-2 colleagues
  - Some will perceive that they do/don't fit based on their teaching philosophy or their use of technology
  - Others will perceive that they do/don't fit based on such factors as their age, gender, and/or other personal characteristics
  - In many instances, a novice teacher will be hired to work in a school with students and/or staff whose cultural background or first language is different than their own

## Implications – The Work of Mentors

- To promote a sense of fit among novice teachers, mentors need to take steps to:
  - get to know them
  - put them in position to succeed
  - communicate to them that they are important and they matter
- Effective mentors are very good at the following:
  - helping beginning teachers address issues related to classroom management/discipline
  - helping them plan, analyze, and modify their instruction
  - helping them address the unique needs of their students

## Implications – The Work of Mentors

- Other key parts of mentoring include:
  - helping a novice understand the culture or dynamics among other teachers at their school
  - helping them negotiate professional relationships with colleagues
  - helping them come to feel over time that they have an important role
  - helping them see ways in which their professional goals/interests align
    - ✓ with those of their colleagues/schools
- When a beginning teacher is assigned to work with students whose cultural and/or language backgrounds are different than their own:
  - at first, the novice may not feel that they fit well with such students
  - one role of the mentor is to help them grow confident over time in their ability to succeed in teaching such students

## Implications – The Work of Principals

- Strong principal leadership can promote a sense of fit among beginning teachers – such leadership includes:
  - providing support for instruction
  - evaluating teachers fairly
  - having an effective school-wide student discipline policy
- Another key aspect of principal leadership is developing and maintaining good relationships with teaching staff and promoting trust between themselves and teachers
  - Principals can promote trust through their integrity and competence, by demonstrating respect and care for teachers, and by reducing teachers' potential sense of vulnerability
- Principals can strengthen novices' perceptions of fit by including them in the process of making decisions about the school
  - This can help beginning teachers feel that they identify with and matter to others at their schools

## Implications – How Districts Organize Induction Programs

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- ❑ One important way that school districts can promote fit and retention among beginning teachers is through the teacher hiring process; districts should consider the use of realistic job previews and teacher selection tools that can promote fit
- ❑ When possible, it is helpful if a) formal mentors have teaching experience in the same subjects and/or grades as their mentees and b) they have knowledge of their mentees' school contexts
- ❑ Mentors should be aware of research on fit and recognize that perceptions of fit are subjective, often based on several factors, and can change over time
- ❑ Districts should attend to the key role that principals play in beginning teachers' experiences

## The Current Policy Context

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- ❑ In 2014, educators in Illinois and across the U.S. are facing challenges associated with the Common Core State Standards and teacher evaluation reforms.
- ❑ How can these insights related to fit and principal leadership help mentors and principals as they work with beginning teachers to implement the Common Core and teacher evaluation reforms?

## The Current Policy Context – Implications for Mentors

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- Mentors need to ensure that their mentees have access to teacher colleagues, instructional coaches, or others who have strong knowledge of the Common Core standards and the types of teaching practices and learning outcomes associated with the standards.
  - In some cases, mentors themselves will have strong knowledge of the standards; in other cases, they will need to link novices to others who are knowledgeable about them
- When mentors have taught the same subjects and/or grades as their mentees and when they have knowledge of their mentees' school contexts, they will be in a relatively stronger position to help novices enact the Common Core standards.

## The Current Policy Context – Implications for Mentors

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- Beginning elementary teachers who are responsible for teaching reading/language arts and math will face particular challenges enacting the Common Core standards in both subjects.
  - Promoting a novice teacher's sense of fit will involve putting them in position to succeed, helping them identify teacher colleagues who teach in similar ways, and helping them feel that their professional goals and interests align with those of their schools.
- In some cases, beginning teachers may have greater knowledge of or commitment to the Common Core standards than some of their colleagues. Mentors can play an important role in helping them navigate potentially challenging situations when the novice has more knowledge of the Common Core or when the novice encounters norms among colleagues that run counter to the type of instruction envisioned by the Common Core.

## The Current Policy Context – Implications for Principals

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- ❑ As with mentors, principals need to ensure that beginning teachers have access to teacher colleagues, instructional coaches, or others who have strong knowledge of the Common Core standards.
- ❑ Commonly used classroom observation instruments, such as the Framework for Teaching and CLASS, address many aspects of teaching represented by the Common Core standards.
- ❑ At the same time, these observation tools are generic; i.e., they are not subject-specific. Thus, it will be important for principals to have sufficient subject-specific knowledge of teaching to help novices address expectations associated with the Common Core and observation tools.

## The Current Policy Context – Implications for Principals

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- ❑ Growth models and value-added models can provide important information about a teacher's contribution to student achievement. At the same time, it can be hard for novice teachers to interpret data about their performance that is generated by such models.
- ❑ Principals need to help beginning teachers make sense of and respond to such evaluation data. This can include connecting them to external professional development, instructional coaching, and/or other support within their schools.



## The Current Policy Context – Implications for Districts

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- ❑ The move to the Common Core and teacher evaluation reform is placing increasing demands on mentors and principals, and it is making their work with beginning teachers more complicated. There are a number of ways that school districts can respond:
- ❑ Districts can increase the likelihood that mentors and principals will work effectively with beginning teachers by attending to teacher hiring and mentor and principal selection.
- ❑ Districts should also provide training and support for mentors and principals related to the Common Core and changes in teacher evaluation

## The Current Policy Context – Implications for Districts

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- ❑ Districts need to examine whether other district policies are consistent with the Common Core:
  - For example, these might include curriculum guides, district tests in reading and math, and district requirements related to teacher professional development
  - The degree of policy coherence at the district level can have a strong impact on the work of novice teachers, mentors, and principals

## Conclusion

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- ❑ Mentoring and induction programs at the school and district level are very important
- ❑ While such programs cannot ensure that all beginning teachers will be effective and remain in the profession, they can increase the likelihood that novice teachers will flourish and continue in the schools where they start
- ❑ In your work, I encourage you to consider how perceptions of fit and principal leadership can affect beginning teachers' experiences
- ❑ The Common Core and teacher evaluation reform make the current teaching environment a very challenging one for beginning teachers
- ❑ You are well-positioned to help novice teachers respond to these challenges in productive, self-sustaining ways

## More Information

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### Contact

Peter Youngs, Associate Professor  
University of Virginia  
Dept. of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education  
(434)924-1752  
pay2n@virginia.edu