A Self Actualization Model for Teacher Induction into the Teaching Profession:
Accelerating the Professionalization of Beginning Teachers
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Paper Presented
Teacher Education Division (TED), Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
San Diego CA November 2006

Abstract

The authors examine the literature that sets the foundation for a self-actualization model for teacher induction. The model is analyzed in light of data from a successful induction program designed to keep special education teachers in the profession.

What is meant by the term "professionalization of teachers"? According to Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), in their executive summary of the findings of the American Educational Research Association Panel on Research and Teacher Education, professionalization involves identifying a "research-base and formal body of knowledge that distinguishes professional educators from lay persons" (p. 44). They cite research that shows professional teachers were among the factors that determine students' learning and achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Given regulatory bodies such as state agencies, national teacher certification boards (e.g., National Board Professional Teaching Standards, and professional organizational requirements for the entry into the profession (e.g., Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), the professionalization of teachers has been a conversation only in the recent history of teacher preparation. In the United States, the 2001 legislation known as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) calls for highly qualified teachers in every classroom.

In the United States, beginning teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates in their first years of teaching. Recent statistics suggest that one third of beginning teachers quit during the first three years of teaching and half quit by the fifth year (www.ctc.ca.gov). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003) found that the lack of opportunity for continued preparation and guidance in teachers' formative teaching years was a primary reason for teacher job dissatisfaction. Moreover, Ingersoll (1999) found that retirement was a minor factor for teacher turnover; more teachers leave because of job dissatisfaction, to change careers or to move for better teaching jobs elsewhere "…due to organizational conditions" (p. 4). School personnel are advised to address the job dissatisfaction issues rather than rely on recruitment to fill vacancies. Teacher induction programs may be one way to address the organizational conditions that lead to turnover.

An Example of a Viable Teacher Induction Model

The California Beginning Teacher Support System (C-BTSA) provides an example of a program for the professionalization of beginning teachers (Cegelka & Malley, 2002). The goal was to persuade beginning teachers to stay in the profession and to refine their teaching skills. Features of the program include collaboration, a structured individualized induction plan, assigned mentors who are trained, and the creation of a community of learners. The program, legislated in 1997, enabled new teachers to apply their prior professional learning as well as to further develop and refine their knowledge, skills, and abilities as teachers. Since 1998, C-BTSA has been the primary vehicle for the delivery of inservice training and support for beginning teachers. Through BTSA , experienced master teachers from districts are trained to do formative and summative evaluation, in conjunction with administrators and the beginning teachers. Feiman-Nemser (2001), a Michigan State University professor, is a strong advocate of teachers performing the gatekeeper function of the profession and is a researcher and teacher educator who is in favor of mentors evaluation and support of newly credentialed teachers.

Within the BTSA program, a *trainer-of-trainers* model is used to ensure that the mentors deliver the professional development curriculum. This assures local program directors that all participating teachers will have the highest level of individual support available. The mentor process uses a systematic, step-by-step *plan-teach-reflect-apply* cycle that blends teaching knowledge and performance. To encourage new teachers to become autonomous in making sound judgments about their own teaching practices, the assessment system includes opportunities for beginning teachers to share professional insights as they complete the training modules for the 6 categories of teaching practices shown in Table 1. The overall outcome of this cycle is to provide beginning teachers with accurate, reliable information about the nature and impact of their teaching. With their assigned (and trained) mentors, all first- and second-year teachers are guided to show mastery of the teaching standards in six interrelated categories of teaching practices.

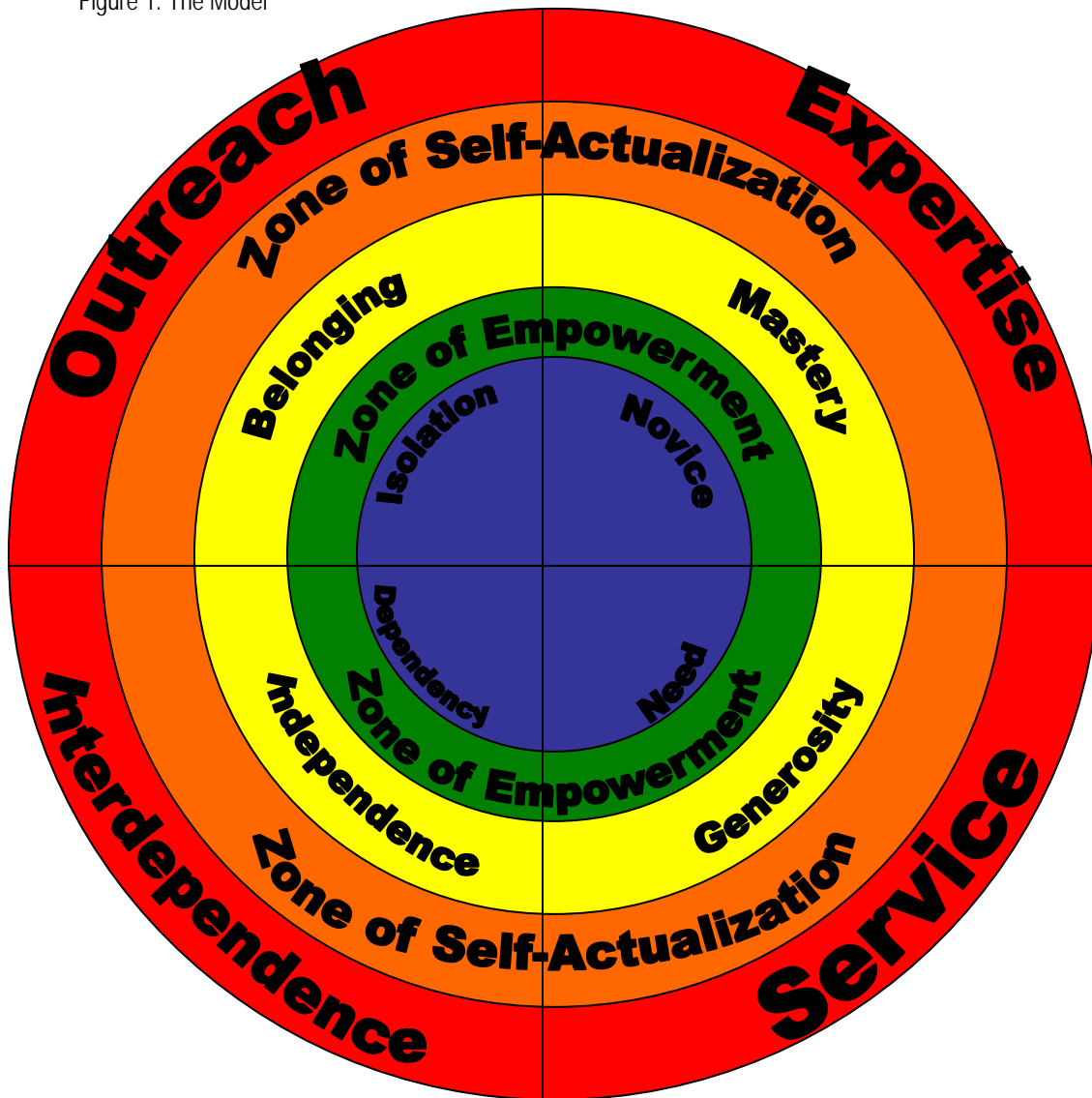| Table 1: Six Interrelated Categories of Teaching Practices* |
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| 1.　engaging and supporting all students in learning; |
| 2.　creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning; |
| 3.　understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning; |
| 4.　planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students; |
| 5.　assessing student learning; and |
| 6.　developing as a professional educator. |
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| * Excerpted from California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2000). *Requirements for teachers prepared in California.* Retrieved November 20, 2004, from http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentialinfo/leaflets/cl561/cl561c.html |

Guided by the mentors, beginning teachers create an Individualized Induction Plan (IIP) during their first two years of teaching. The plan links the outcomes of formative assessments of the beginning teacher's performance with strategies that are designed to support and improve the teacher's professional competence. Typically, first year beginning teachers focus on perfecting teaching practices that engage and support all students, create and maintain effective environments for student learning, and plan instruction and designing learning experiences for all students. During the second year, the focus shifts to assessing student learning and understanding and organizing subject matter. Outcome data for the first two years of implementation revealed retention rates for first- and second-year beginning teachers were extremely high in the 145 statewide induction programs-- approximately 93% (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), 2003) regardless of size of school district (e.g., large urban districts and small rural districts).

Follow-up data in 2004 indicated 84% of BTSA participants have continued to teach, and many beginning teachers have become mentors. Kennedy and Burstein (2004), for example, reported the increase in retention of C-BTSA supported special education teachers reached more than 95%, "suggesting that supports provided by the program contributed to the retention of participating special education teachers" (p. 446). Finally, as noted in the evaluation report, the language used by state staff, program directors, mentors, and others became a language of a family and community of learners. It seems that the induction program provided the necessary support that empowered new teachers to transition from their role as inexperienced teachers into competent and confident practicing teachers.

Lev Vygotsky believed that learning was first and foremost a social act. With guidance, through an approximation of skills, a learner evolves in skill development. Vygotsky described this evolution primarily in the development of thought and language, both spoken and unspoken, written and read. In his review and analysis of Vygotsky's *Thought and Language,* Benson noted, "According to neo-Vygotskians Tharp and Gallimore (1988), it is essential that an interface between spontaneous and schooled concepts be provided during instruction. This is where the highest understanding is achieved" (www.kolar.org/vygotsky/). The induction model takes the *spontaneous* and links it to the *schooled concepts* providing instruction to develop teachers through the zones of empowerment and self-actualization.

Figure 1: The Model

In the application of this model to the experiences of beginning teachers, the center of the concentric circles represents the point at which new teachers begin their careers. In the innermost circle are novice teachers who receive continuous professional growth opportunities, guidance, and mentorship through the induction cycle. They often experience isolation as they work behind the closed door of a classroom filled with eager students (and their parents). Their empowerment arrives when their daily experiences, mentorship, collaborations, and reflections are transformed to more and more effective informed decision-making. Over time, they recognize their membership into a school community (*belonging*) as they build confidence and competence in their teaching skills (*mastery*). They develop their unique knowledge of how students learn as well

as how to provide their students with thoughtfully designed curriculum and instructional experiences *(independence).* Eventually, they transition through a Zone of Self-Actualization when they can share their expertise to proactively serve their profession, successfully collaborate with colleagues on school-wide decision-making (*generosity).* In short, they have become *professional* educators poised to successfully recruit others into the teaching profession.

The features of the induction model that synergistically combine to make it successful are a structured individualized induction plan, collaboration with assigned mentors who are trained, and a community of learners. Vygotsky's (1987) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) provides a theoretical framework to describe how teachers learn from each other when they collaborate with their mentors. The ZPD refers to a particular range of ability with and without assistance from a more capable peer (that is, the mentor). To effectively scaffold teachers within their ZPDs, the mentor is aware of the reciprocal roles that can be assumed throughout the mentoring process: a mentor can model the teaching behavior; then that behavior is imitated by the beginning teacher; the mentor fades out instruction; and the teacher practices alone. Later, reciprocal teaching (scaffolding others) can occur to show that the teaching practice has been mastered well enough to teach others.

<div align="center">Discussion</div>

Emergent teachers are capable of deciding what their needs are, and which skills they want to develop. New teachers are capable of determining what they want to focus on with their mentors. Kurtz (a BTSA program coordinator for a large urban school district in southern California) suggests, "*Teachers cannot be on an assembly line; they won't learn this way. The individualized plans have been an important guide in determining what a teacher's professional growth plan should be.*" (P. Kurtz, personal communication, June 1, 2004). Because they are typically viewed as less competent when compared to more experienced veteran teachers, emergent teachers are often denied opportunities to practice their generosity. In many cases, beginning teachers come to the teaching profession with enthusiasm, focus, best practices, and a unique set of knowledge (current and research-based) and with support, they can reach the level of mastery of teaching that will allow them to stay in the profession. Sclan and Darling Hammond (1996) noted that "constructivist" approaches, wherein teachers practice reflective and collaborative action, engender a wide repertoire of techniques to respond to student needs. Other researchers have found that beginning teachers who are mentored are more effective teachers in their early years, since they learn from guided practice rather than depending upon trial-and-error alone. Mentored novice teachers tend to focus on student learning sooner and leave teaching at a lower rate (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

Many novice teachers have perspectives that have not, as yet, been compromised by the culture of the system they are entering. In the model for self-actualization, the potential for every beginning teacher to serve as a reciprocal teacher becomes valued and respected, the strengths these new teachers bring to the profession should be acknowledged and valued. Many new teachers have come from other careers, have had families of their own, and/or have a level of sophistication and experience that enhances their professional growth and development. They often bring a great diversity to the profession. Induction programs must include procedures to capitalize on unique qualities in the community of learners. "*The newly esteemed mentorship role of veteran teachers is about acceptance and collegiality,*" Kurtz emphasizes, "*Many former*

beginning teachers have become mentors, indicating that the role of mentor is revered and respected among teachers" (P. Kurtz, personal communication, June 1, 2004).

Authentic and sustained collaboration between teacher education institutions and public schools enhances the potential for success among beginning teachers and, consequently, among school children who learn from beginning teachers. The self-actualization model can provide beginning teachers with focused support at a sufficient level of intensity to make a difference in the new teacher's performance and apparent satisfaction as evidenced by higher retention rates. The features of the model allow for collaborative opportunities that empower teachers to move from novice to master to expert. The model provides a self-actualization menu (including a self-designed individual induction plan) as well as a personal mentor, networking opportunities, and regularly scheduled opportunities to receive feedback leading to corrective action.

Implications for Research and Practice

Researchers, practitioners, teacher education professors, and staff development personnel may discover that the self-actualization model of induction into the profession may involve changes in *conscientization* (Freire, 1970; 1998) or awareness of one's self as a professional. A major implication of the model may lie in the potential for accelerating the process of acquiring the identity of a professional educator. By engaging in an interactive inquiry process with their mentors, the beginning teachers in the California induction program learned to monitor and personalize their own professional development. Moreover, the dialogical processes of the mentoring process exemplify an interpretive introspective method that can show beginning teachers what it might mean to learn from oneself as well as how to learn about oneself by learning from others (such as their mentors, other teachers, and the children they teach).

In fact, through the process of a dialogical interaction (using empowering language and providing supports for communication), the beginning teachers can create a mental awareness of one point of view and its opposite, i.e., a *dialectic*. This can lead to the experience of *praxis*, or a cycle of action-reflection-new action, such as realizing that effective teaching can transform the individual learner's experience of the classroom. *Praxis* is an important aspect for teachers and leading beginning teachers to experience praxis is a task for the mentors.

In what ways might these concepts improve both the induction process and the pre-professional preparation of future teachers? Are these concepts culturally specific, discipline specific, context specific? Are they universal enough to apply to other professions such as vocational education programs, speech/language programs, and school psychology programs? If the answers to these questions is "Yes," then the model may be provide a robust set of descriptors for the success of programs that lead to increased professionalization of those who choose teaching as a profession.

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