The induction and needs of beginning teacher educators

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This article presents the results of an exploratory research study into induction practices of novice teacher educators in six different countries. The study was a project carried out by members of the Association of Teacher Educators Europe (ATEE) Research and Development Centre Professional Development of Teacher Educators. Induction is seen as a process of becoming a teacher educator and encompasses two levels. Firstly, it refers to the organizational induction into the teacher education institute. Secondly, it is about becoming a member of the profession (professional induction). Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 11 beginning teacher educators. The findings indicated that induction is quite problematic. None of the teacher educators experienced a satisfying induction into their institute and the profession as well. The article concludes with recommendations for improvement of induction practices and further research. This collaborative research project also revealed a lack of shared language in communicating professional issues and the need to further develop this within international communities like the ATEE.

Introduction

Within the Association of Teacher Educators Europe (ATEE), the Research and Development Centres (RDCs)—which are similar to Special Interest Groups—focus on collaborative projects and research. In this paper we present a study based on the research of the RDC ‘Professional Development of Teacher Educators’. The members of this RDC are experienced teacher educators in colleges and universities in various European countries and Israel, Australia and North America. The authors of this article all are members of the RDC Professional Development of Teacher Educators.

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When members of this RDC met for the first time in 2004 in Agrigento, Italy we exchanged experiences about our own development as teacher educators. One of the most urgent and broadly recognized problems proved to be the lack of induction of beginning teacher educators. It was decided then and there to start an explorative study to further enhance our understanding of the needs and induction activities of beginning teacher educators, and we all agreed to focus our research on the following question: How do novice teacher educators experience their induction period?

In this article we will first define the concept of induction in order to provide a conceptual framework for our research. Secondly, based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews with beginning teacher educators, we present the findings about the needs and induction activities of the beginning teacher educators who participated in the research. From these results we will draw conclusions that will lead to recommendations for teacher educators' induction practices and for further research.

**Entry into teacher education**

There are generally two routes into the profession of teacher educator. In many cases, new teacher educators have previously worked as teachers and usually were involved in teacher education; for instance, as mentors of student-teachers. The second route to teacher educator is the academic one; Ph.D. students or academics continue their careers as teacher educators. In some countries, like The Netherlands and Australia, both avenues into teacher education exist. In other countries, like the United Kingdom, almost all new teacher educators previously worked as school teachers (Boyd et al., 2007). In contrast, teacher educators in Israel are almost all academics with a Ph.D. degree.

The induction of teacher educators does not evoke much attention in educational research or educational policy. For example, none of the countries included in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2005) report ‘Teachers Matter’ offers arrangements on a national level for novice teacher educators. One exception is Israel, where the MOFET Institute organizes courses for beginning teacher educators and supports their development in different ways.

The limited research indicates that the induction of beginning teacher educators is usually a neglected issue that results in the lack of formal induction, and the induction of teacher educators is often haphazard depending on the good will, time and effort of experienced colleagues. Most beginning teacher educators have to find their own way and this can lead to a lonely and difficult introduction into their new profession (Guilfoyle et al., 1995; Murray & Male, 2005; Ritter, 2007).

The lack of support does not only harm the beginning teacher educators, but also the profession of teacher educators in general as it may have a negative impact on the quality of beginning teacher educators’ performance and on the quality of the education of student teachers (for example, Boyd et al., 2007; Murray et al., 2007; Swennen & Van der Klink, 2009). A problematic induction period hampers the sharing of knowledge and experiences of senior teacher educators with new members of the
profession, which can undermine the building, maintaining and renewing of a shared and mutual knowledge base for teacher educators.

**What do we know about the induction of teacher educators?**

The induction into a profession is a topic with a long tradition in organizational research, but the results are of limited value to the process of becoming a teacher educator as the induction of teacher educators differs substantially from the induction in most other professions. Much of the prevailing socialization research focuses on neophyte professionals recently graduated and without substantial working experience (for example, Carr *et al.*, 2006; Eraut, 2007). Usually new members are educated intensively *prior* to entering the profession (e.g. lawyers, engineers), but most new teacher educators have had a career as teacher and too often it is believed that a good teacher ‘will also make a good teacher educator’ (Korthagen *et al.*, 2005, p. 110).

The induction of teacher educators can be seen as a *second-phase induction* (Morberg & Eisenschmidt, 2009), a transition from one educational workplace to another. Teacher educators are still teachers, but the demands of teaching student-teachers are different from teaching pupils and the organizational context within the higher educational system differs from the primary or secondary educational system (Ritter, 2007). In their actual transition, teacher educators are thus confronted with a twofold induction: organizational induction into their new work environment, the teacher education institute; and induction into the profession at the same time. A sound framework to describe and explain induction of teacher educators is not yet developed and a coherent theory is not available. Teacher educators are an under-researched occupational group (Korthagen *et al.*, 2005) and this is also true for their induction (Smith, 2005).

However, there exists some literature that provides detailed insights into authors’ personal induction experiences. Zeichner (2005), for example, described his shift from classroom teacher to a university teacher educator at a university in the USA. He characterized the current practice as one in which the central assumption is that educating teachers is something that does not require any additional preparation and that if one is a good teacher this expertise will automatically carry over to one’s work with novice teachers. He advocates that, ‘If teacher education is to be taken more seriously in colleges and universities, then the preparation of new teacher educators needs to be taken more seriously as well’ (Zeichner, 2005, p. 123). Loughran *et al.* (2001) describe their transition as secondary science teachers to science teacher educators through a self-study process that begins to articulate many of the differences between teaching in secondary schools and teaching student-teachers in teacher education programmes. They argue that through critical reflection on practice a knowledge base for teaching about teaching might be initiated, and that this is important if those responsible for teaching about teaching are to be valued in the teaching profession.

Swennen *et al.* (2009) analysed the personal experiences of beginning teacher educators (see also Knowles & Cole, 1994; Guilfoyle *et al.*, 1995) and they describe
four critical circumstances that impeded the transition from teachers to teacher educators: the lack of opportunities to communicate and collaborate with colleagues; the many and very different tasks (mentoring, lecturing, research) they were required to undertake; the limited resources such as the lack of physical work space as well as the considerable work loads; and, finally, the low status of teacher educators within universities. On the other hand, there are personal characteristics that contribute positively to induction like the courage to learn by trial and error, being pro-active in engaging with colleagues and other relevant groups, reliving your own experiences as a teacher to understand the experiences and concerns of your student teachers and involvement in meaningful research activities such as self-study and action research. What these characteristics emphasize is the necessity to reflect on the various aspects of the teacher educator’s tasks and responsibilities to enable the transition from an identity of teacher to that of teacher educator (see also Loughran et al., 2001).

All of the above-mentioned personal experiences were retrieved from teacher educators with positions within colleges and universities. Problems become more urgent when the experiences of school-based teacher educators are taken into account. Being almost constantly in a school environment makes the transition from teacher to teacher educators quite bumpy and unpredictable (see, for example, Bullough, 2005; van Velzen & Volman, 2008).

In addition to individual reflections on induction experiences, Murray and Male (2005) provided valuable research findings from their study of school teachers’ transition in the United Kingdom. Their findings, based on interviews with 28 novice teacher educators, revealed that newcomers felt they were de-skilled, isolated and insecure about expectations on their performance. Murray and Male estimate that the length of the induction period of teacher educators is approximately three years. The authors give three reasons to justify their estimation. Firstly, teacher educators who previously worked as school teachers lack understanding of their new profession and they have had little opportunity to prepare themselves prior to their appointment as teacher educators. Secondly, the expert teacher becomes a novice teacher educator. While their teaching expertise is well defined and developed, their expertise has to be transferred to a new context. Such a transfer requires beginning teacher educators to acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding of teaching in the higher education context, regardless of their prior teaching experiences within schools. The acquisition of knowledge about teaching and pedagogy seems to be of utmost importance for the transition from teacher to teacher of teacher. And thirdly, the novice teacher educators need to develop research competences if they are to become experts. These competences are generally not part of the teachers’ knowledge and experience.

To summarize, induction is a process of becoming a teacher educator that involves two levels. At one level, a type of organizational induction is required in order to become a member of the teacher education institute; while on another level, beginning educators become members of the profession. Induction for teacher educators is mostly informal, although occasionally some formal arrangements exist, like provisions for mentoring. Induction depends on a mix of organizational conditions and personal characteristics. Prior experience as a school teacher might facilitate the
induction process; however, at the same time such experience could hinder induction as it prevents new teacher educators taking account of the different context higher education presents. A consequence of this lack of account of difference may also hinder the beginning teacher’s appreciation for the need to become engaged in the process of becoming a teacher educator and hence undergo a process of change.

**Context and methodology**

This study is carried out by the members of the RDC that focuses on the Professional Development of Teacher Educators. The members of this RDC are experienced teacher educators from different European countries and Israel, and they work within different educational systems.

We decided to use semi-structured interviews for the exploration of the various aspects of current induction practices. The interview scheme was collaboratively developed and its semi-structured nature offered ample opportunities for in-depth questions and the exploration of specific context-bound issues. The semi-structured interview scheme entailed questions that addressed biographical data, tasks, strengths and challenges, opportunities for participation in formal and informal learning activities, and recommendations for induction practices.

Between November 2004 and May 2006, 11 interviews were conducted by nine RDC members with new teacher educators with less than three years’ experience as a teacher educator. The uneven sampling (see Table 1) was caused by the problem of finding an equal number of novice teacher educators in each institute. Interviews were face to face and lasted between one and two hours. The interviews were held in the language of the interviewed teacher educator and the interviewer translated the answers and wrote a report. The RDC members mailed their interview reports to two RDC coordinators (also experienced teacher educators), who clustered the answers and summarized the responses into one document. They analyzed the data for recurrent themes that arose from the data. The validity of this analysis was increased through the further analyses of both the summary and the original interview report by two other RDC members. Both analyses were discussed between the three Dutch authors of this paper and sent back for further validation to the fourth author in Israel. Based on this procedure, adjustments were made—especially in the interpretation of the answers and their relation to specific themes.

Table 1 presents the teacher educators’ characteristics. These background characteristics vary quite strongly due to the different educational systems in the countries of the participating teacher educators.

Eleven beginning teacher educators were interviewed: eight women and three men. They were born between 1953 and 1977. Participants reported that their main tasks were to teach student-teachers and to supervise them during their teaching practice. Also frequently listed was participation in all kinds of curriculum development activities. None of the teacher educators mentioned explicitly research as a task. However, two Israeli teacher educators reported that they did join research groups.
Participants were asked to recall their strengths while working with students and in other tasks as well. Their responses indicated four strengths. Firstly, participants with previous teaching experience indicated that their own experiences as teachers were their main strength in working with students. They also identified their experience in Table 1. General information about the participants

| Gender, year of birth, country; pseudonym | Experience as teacher (years) | Qualifications | Teaching degree |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Woman, 1979, Flanders; Wilma            | 2                             | M.A. in Educational Studies | Degree for higher secondary education |
| Woman, 1971, The Netherlands; Ria       | 0                             | M.A. in Psychology | None |
| Woman, 1964, Israel; Orna               | 12                            | B.A. in Education | Kindergarten Teacher and Supervisor in the Early Childhood Department of the Ministry of Education |
|                                         |                               | M.A. in Early Childhood Education | Teaching license |
| Woman, 1965, Israel; Naomi              | 17                            | M.A. in Education | |
| Woman, 1953, The Netherlands; Joke      | 14                            | B.A. in English | Lower secondary education |
| Man, 1976, The Netherlands; Wim         | 4                             | M.A. in Dutch language | Lower and higher secondary education degree |
| Man, 1972, Serbia; Javar                | 11                            | B.A. in Education, Elementary school Specialization in elementary education | State bar examination for teachers Certificate in teacher’s role detection talented children |
| Man, 1964, Israel; David                | 5                             | B.A. in Psychology | No teaching qualifications |
|                                         |                               | Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology | |
| Woman, 1977, The Netherlands; Sanne     | 5                             | College Higher Education (primary teacher training) Post Higher Education: Arithmetic and Mathematics | Teacher primary education Second-grade arithmetic and mathematics |
| Woman, 1959, United Kingdom; Hilda      | 17                            | Ph.D. | PGCE Biology degree |
| Woman, 1955, USA; Tracy                 | 20                            | Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction B.M. and M.M. in Music Education | Teacher certificate |

Results

Strengths and challenges of beginning teacher educators

Participants were asked to recall their strengths while working with students and in other tasks as well. Their responses indicated four strengths. Firstly, participants with previous teaching experience indicated that their own experiences as teachers were their main strength in working with students. They also identified their experience in
preparing lessons based on ‘trying to understand the curriculum and adapt it to my
student needs’, as Hilda mentioned. Secondly, most participants identified their ability
to communicate and to connect with students, such as sensitivity to the group process and creating a good atmosphere in class, as an important strength. Thirdly,
they mentioned their capability to motivate students and support students’ reflection.
And fourthly, being well organized and flexible was also perceived by them as helpful
in doing their job as a teacher educator.

Strengths mentioned by participants regarding working with colleagues were their willingness and ability to share and to develop new ideas with their colleagues. Sanne,
for instance, said: ‘I was an effective team member. Asking colleagues and learning
from them.’ Almost all participants referred to their abilities to contribute to curriculum development and reform. Ria stated: ‘I have made a constructive contribution to the development of our own curriculum’.

The main challenges participants were confronted with concerned their work with students, such as the preparation of lessons, assessment, the use of adequate teaching styles and coping with students’ motivation. Participants mentioned that preparing lessons, assessments and examinations was difficult and time-consuming because they wanted to do it so very well. They struggled with finding a balance between providing structure and inviting students to learn independently or balancing between lecturing and providing moments for group interaction. Moreover, they pointed at the problem of coping with students who have limited motivation and show lack of responsibility for their own learning. Responses revealed that participants wanted to know more about coaching and guiding students. Other challenges, outside the work with students, were also discussed during interviews. Participants experienced significant difficulties with the workload. This workload was not just caused by the many and very different tasks, but mainly by participants’ unfamiliarity with their tasks and duties and, next to this, the fact that nobody recognized them as being ‘beginners’. The following statements by Wim and Ria are representative of this view:

As a novice teacher educator I have to do everything. I have to start all over again. (Wim)

I felt undervalued, because no one recognized that I was a beginner. Like the teachers that I teach, I had to find out everything by myself. (Ria)

The strengths the novice teacher educators mentioned are related to their former teaching experiences and the challenges they mentioned are related to the same themes, like preparation of lessons and working with student-teachers. This indicates that, although novice teacher educators are experienced teachers, the former skills and knowledge are not easily transferred to the context of teacher education.

**Formal induction activities**

Participants were invited to reflect upon their participation in formally arranged induction activities such as mentoring, workshops and courses. In total, seven participants received some kind of mentoring support. Four participants rated this
mentoring as useful or very useful. Three participants viewed the mentoring as quite insignificant for their induction.

Orna mentioned she received substantial support. Her mentor was the head of the staff and mentoring was included during regular staff meetings. In addition, she had the possibility to telephone and email her mentor, and she perceived the mentor support as very useful:

Thanks to that my induction stage went well. My mentor was well accepted socially and had a strong position within the staff. That’s why she could give us a better help during our socialisation process. She was something special. She offered support but without dictating what to do. She left a lot of space for freedom and choice. It was the first time in my life that someone initiated contact with me in order to ask if I needed help. Till then I was used to be the initiator. Sometimes my mentor shared with me what she did in her class and that was a great help. (Orna)

Sanne stated:

I needed very much the support of someone I really could rely on, someone I can turn to with all my questions, someone who can give a good advice or feedback. I do not know another way [of] how to get to know the things you should know to do the job in a proper way.

Issues discussed during mentor meetings varied from subject matters, to preparing detailed planning of lessons, to reflection on the latest lessons. Javar mentioned talking with his mentor about dilemmas regarding the organization of practice and about teaching demands within a new curriculum. Next to this, participants referred to discussions on the supervision of student-teachers during their practice in schools and also there was room to discuss personal issues.

For three participants the mentoring was not really an integrated part of their induction. Only a few meetings with a mentor were scheduled. Joke reported that the mentor did not contribute to her induction: ‘The support of colleagues was more significant to me. It [mentoring] was just not enough.’ So mentors were valued as only partly useful when participants were not able to discuss the entire range of their tasks or when opinions differed strongly. The interviews showed the importance of having a mentor who is knowledgeable, available, has good communication skills and has a solid position within the institute.

The data on participants’ participation in courses and workshops showed a rather blurred picture. Some participants did not attend courses and workshops at all, while others spent considerable time on courses and workshops. It is, however, not easy to interpret what the courses and workshops precisely are. The majority of the attended courses and workshops focused on practical skills, such as using a portfolio, or on using the electronic learning environment and were thus not especially geared to the needs of new staff members.

Informal induction activities

The interviews contained two questions about opportunities for the novice teacher educators to work together with colleagues and the usefulness of this collaboration
and two questions about the possibilities to reflect upon their experiences with colleagues. The last question of the interview was about their own initiatives during their first years as teacher educators. Five participants reported they worked together with colleagues. Joint preparation of lessons was important as is, in two cases, joint teaching. Next to working together some participants also observed colleagues at work:

I made a wrong start with my lesson about curriculum design and competence based education and I did not know how to improve the start of the next lesson. I decided to observe a colleague, who was teaching the same theme to another group. I went to sit on the chair of the student, as it were. Just by doing that I got three ideas about how to start my next lesson, even before my colleague had started. (Ria)

The participants who did not have opportunities to work with colleagues stressed that they would have liked joint preparation of lessons and feedback on their teaching. If teacher educators collaborated with colleagues, they perceived this as very important and useful; but when possibilities for collaboration were limited, collaboration was not viewed as potentially useful. Talking with colleagues about (assessment of) student-teachers and various topics such as teaching in teacher education and curriculum development was appreciated by the interviewed teacher educators, as the response of Orna showed:

The most valuable example was when discussing the curriculum and debating about student teachers’ assessment. Because then I needed very badly a good advice and the substantial experience of my colleagues. From them I learnt to reflect on every course and lesson. During these opportunities I felt a member of the education staff and I was able to contribute and to learn from practice. (Orna)

Three teacher educators reported that reflection with their colleagues happened casually and only took place when they took the initiative for it, but they usually found these talks very useful:

After my lessons I often went to Paul to talk. We first let off steam. Then we discussed the lesson plan and where it went wrong. We elaborated on that. After that we thought about ideas to improve the next lesson. These talks were a big support. I was able to improve my way of teaching for the next lesson. I sometimes started the lesson with the results of my talk with Paul which worked very well. (Ria)

It is not clear from the interview data to what extent teacher educators were involved in any structured form of reflection with their colleagues. However, in Israel, reflection is embedded in regular staff meetings and these teacher educators valued this as very useful: ‘We used to begin with the events of the last week and to reflect on what happened to the student teachers and what happened to us, teacher educators’. The other participants emphasized their need to meet on a regular basis to reflect on problems and practical difficulties they faced.

Participants’ own initiatives to enhance their induction

Seven participants declared that they took several initiatives that proved to support their induction, such as, ‘I asked for information and help from colleagues, observed
colleagues at work, and reflect on my work with a colleague’. The participants gave suggestions to support their induction, like: ‘Some difficulties can be avoided if people in the department pay attention and help solve misunderstandings’. Others complained that they had ‘a limited connection with the educational faculty for general information and had to survive’.

Participants also suggested the need to, ‘organise practice [for them] in real classes for many hours and more opportunities to observe colleagues at work’. Many mentioned that time constraints thwarted their intentions. They needed more time for scholarly activities, for preparing lessons, for reading relevant articles and for attending conferences.

Suggestions for improvement of induction practices

During the interviews, participants were invited to raise ideas on how to improve the induction of beginning teacher educators. At the end of the interviews, participants again were asked how their induction could be improved.

Responses revealed that most participants felt isolated during their own induction. The ideal induction support was perceived as a combination of formal and informal activities. With regard to formal activities, one major theme participants suggested was becoming more skilled in supervising (individual) student-teachers at school and at the faculty. The informal activity that was suggested by the majority of the participants concerned a closer collaboration with colleagues. Also the importance of a more thorough organizational introduction was mentioned. This assumes a proactive attitude of the novice teacher educator since experienced staff members are not aware of all the relevant information novice teacher educators might need when joining the staff. Another practical suggestion the beginning teacher educators mentioned was to reduce the workload.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study aimed to answer the question, ‘How do novice teacher educators experience their induction period?’ Eleven interviews with novice teacher educators from different countries were conducted. The interviews provide information that contributes to our understanding of induction practices and is helpful for the further development of assumptions to be investigated. Here we formulate our tentative conclusions with the utmost caution. Conducting cross-national studies has its own specific issues. One of the main problems concerns the fact that research instruments that proved to be reliable in one national context are not automatically reliable in other national contexts (see, for example, Wubbels, 1993). This was also acknowledged in this study.

The interviews revealed that new teacher educators have various background characteristics but, with the exception of one respondent, all participants worked previously as a teacher. It is not surprising that our participants’ main tasks are teaching and supervising student-teachers. Involvement in research activities is absent or insignificant compared with participants’ other tasks.
The results of the interviews mirror the two levels of induction: into the teacher education institute and into the profession of teacher educator. Novice teacher educators experienced problems on both induction levels. Participants' answers showed a need to acquire practical information on procedures and routines, while the accessibility of this kind of information was judged insufficient. Participants' comments revealed that their professional induction was even more problematic. Almost all participants were experienced teachers, but nevertheless working with student-teachers requires new knowledge and skills for preparing and delivering courses, working with large groups and motivating students.

Participants mentioned different arranged induction activities like courses, workshops and mentoring. Mentoring is judged more or less as helpful, dependent on the relationship between the mentor and the teacher educator and on the frequency and quality of the conversations. Courses and workshops are differently valued. Participants' informal learning depended strongly on the willingness of colleagues to support and to share with these newcomers.

The findings suggest that incidental and occasional learning is characteristic for beginning teacher educators. This conclusion supports the findings of previous studies, like the study conducted by Murray and Male (2005) on induction of teacher educators in the United Kingdom. They stated that novice teacher educators are often good teachers of the first order, but they may lack the knowledge that is needed to be good teachers of teachers; in other words, they lack the knowledge and skills to practice second-order teaching. None of the teacher educators in our study referred to second-order teaching as an important subject. However, we cannot exclude that this is partly caused by difficulties with data collection.

Like Hodkinson and Taylor (2002), we consider induction as a learning trajectory that can be designed and partly planned. It is striking that participants' suggestions to improve induction mainly referred to the desire to have a more planned and formally arranged induction. Their ideas are consistent with contemporary notions about professional learning in the workplace (for example, Billett, 2004; Glazer & Hanafin, 2006; Boyd et al., 2007), which stress the necessity of induction embedded in an organizational culture in which learning and working together are part of the everyday working lives of all members. Research on induction in closely related areas shows that formal learning opportunities, combined with utilizing informal learning possibilities, were found most appropriate for induction purposes. Hodkinson and Taylor examining the induction of UK university lecturers stressed the importance of collaborative training activities for newcomers that allow for sharing experiences and concerns. In addition, mentoring and supervision were found to constitute strong formal learning opportunities as well. On the other hand they pointed at more informal learning through team teaching, co-teaching and all kinds of communication with colleagues. Comparable conclusions were reported by Smith and Ingersoll (2004) in their extensive research on the induction of teachers.

Mentoring is one of the crucial cornerstones of induction. However, it is not sufficient that mentors provide answers and transmit the routines. Becoming a teacher of teachers presupposes mentors who possess the competencies to stimulate newcomers’
participation in various tasks and engagement in reflective learning experiences. Today it is acknowledged that teacher educators’ learning should be more geared towards developing an appreciation of the complexity of teaching and learning and teaching about teaching (Loughran & Berry, 2005; Loughran, 2006). Thus sufficient focus on learning, reflection and development as an ongoing process—partly individually, partly collaboratively—is more appropriate than induction that is primarily restricted to transmitting information, habits and routines.

The study we presented in this article is based on a limited number of participants who work in different international settings, and the participants are unevenly divided over the different countries. This means that we have to be cautious in formulating our conclusions. But given the limitations and the differences in national educational systems (e.g. Eraut, 2000), the problems of the induction of teacher educators and the needs of beginning teacher educators seem very much alike.

Based on our findings we present the following five recommendations. Firstly, teacher educators matter (Snoek & Van der Sanden, 2005)! It goes without saying that the quality of staff members is of paramount importance for teacher education. Therefore it is vital that teacher educators become lifelong learners who are able and willing to work on their own professional development. We are aware that the learning needs of newcomers are easily overlooked, since they are already experienced school teachers. But if we acknowledge that relying on prior teacher experiences is not sufficient for a teacher educator (for example, Smith, 2005), then it is necessary to provide opportunities for further development. More attention for newcomers’ professional induction is perhaps a costly investment but its benefits will definitely exceed the requested resources.

Secondly, teacher educators’ learning matters throughout their careers. It is likely that poor induction is not an isolated phenomenon but a manifestation of a wider problem. We assume that poor induction occurs more often in teacher education institutes that lack strategic human resource development policies. In fact, we even speculate that in most teacher education institutes the attention to human resource policies and career development is relatively insignificant. Since the work of teacher educators increasingly requires engagement in lifelong learning, we would like to place more emphasis on offering various learning opportunities throughout the entire career.

Thirdly, our understanding of induction is primarily based on the results of small-scale qualitative studies. Additional large-scale in-depth research will provide a more comprehensive view on existing (formal and informal) induction practices, their purposes and outcomes, and the factors that contribute positively or negatively to the quality of induction. More attention has to be paid to the problems of research in different countries with different educational systems and cultures with special attention to equivalence of concepts and instrument development (Wubbels, 1993). But like Aldridge and Fraser (2000), we think comparing the good and the bad of the arrangements in different countries can help us in further developing a powerful induction programme.

Fourthly, available research findings basically describe the induction experiences of individual teacher educators. The wider institutional conditions and features that
shape the induction experiences fade easily into the background (Ashton, 2004). However, goals and content of induction are, at least for a considerable part, the result of organizational decisions. It is therefore essential to establish the relative impact of institutional conditions on induction experiences.

Finally, working together with teacher educators from different countries forced us to use English as our common language. Because of this the interview scheme was translated back and forth into, for example, Dutch, Hebrew or English. During translation activities and discussions it became quite clear that some concepts used in the interview scheme caused uncertainty. For instance, the word ‘intervision’ is often used by Dutch teacher educators and its meaning is related to a structured way of reflection in a group of peers. In other countries this term is unknown. Does this mean structured peer conversations aimed at reflection do not occur in the other countries or is the term unknown? These observations make clear that we need to continue to build on a shared language in order to communicate in a meaningful way about our experiences, expectations and needs as teacher educators in different countries and different educational systems. Being engaged in cross-national research projects constitutes a strong collaborative learning environment for us teacher educators. We view this as a point of particular interest that deserves special attention in international communities like ATEE.

It was not the purpose of this research project to strive for representative findings; rather, it was the intention to explore contemporary experiences in distinct contexts, to identify the main barriers and facilitating circumstances to induction into the profession of teacher education, to formulate recommendations about induction practices based on these experiences and insights from other studies in this field and to further develop relevant topics that can be investigated in future research.

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