

Induction Practices of Teacher Educators: Case of Pakistan

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This study explored professional and organisational induction practices of teacher educators in a public sector university of Pakistan. The research aimed to contribute to the growing literature on induction of teacher educators by considering both organisational and professional contexts. The paper presents findings from an exploratory research using semi-structured interviews with 38 teacher educators and eight heads of department (both from government sector and university sector). The data was analyzed using constant comparison technique. The findings indicate concerns about the consistency and relevance of the formal induction provisions. The findings reveal that most induction occurs informally and is provided by the Heads of the Departments. The findings highlight that the two groups of respondents (the university teacher educators and the government teacher educators) follow different entry pathways into the university which lead to their differentiated induction provision. In the absence of adequate induction provision, the university teacher educators learn through trial and error or with experience. On the other hand, Government teacher educators rely either on their previous teaching experience or learn through practice. This study has important implications for induction-specific policy reforms in teacher education in Pakistan and elsewhere with similar contexts and structures.

Keywords: *Teacher Educators, Induction, Teacher Education, Professional Development*

Introduction

Induction of teacher educators has been gaining attention in recent years around the world. This has particularly been the case in countries including the UK, the USA and other European countries including the Netherlands (Murray and Male, 2005; Smith, 2005, Val-Velzen *et al.*, 2011). Previous studies indicate that teacher educators working in university departments, colleges of higher education and schools enter into teacher education with diverse professional and academic backgrounds (Koster *et al.*, 2005). These studies have also provided an insight into the transition experiences of teachers from school teaching to teaching in higher education institutions and have stressed the need of induction for teacher educators (Boyd & Haris, 2010).

The need for induction of teacher educators has been recognised on the grounds that they have previously worked as teachers and have had little or no

experience of teaching in higher education settings. It has also been argued that teacher educators, despite having experience as teachers, need induction (Harrison & McKeon, 2008). Murray and Male (2005) argue that induction allows beginner teacher educators to develop expertise to teach in higher education as well as to understand the requirements and expectations of their new role. Boyd and Harris (2010) also stress that induction is essential for teacher educators to develop their expertise in pedagogical knowledge, appropriate assessment processes and pragmatic knowledge, to familiarise with their new institutions and roles.

Several studies carried out in the UK, and in the Netherlands (Murray 2005, Korthagen, 2000; Koster *et al.*, 2008; Van-Velzen *et al.*, 2010) indicate a lack of formal preparation and substantial support for teacher educators. on entering the field of teacher education. Griffiths *et al.*, (2010) and Cochran-Smith (2003) also

point out a lack of formal preparation of teacher educators in the countries of the European Union as well as in the USA.

There are limited examples of formal arrangement to support of beginner teacher educators. Teachers working in higher education in the UK and Netherland need to complete formal courses to teach in universities. MOFET Institute in Israel is a case in point that specifically organises courses for beginner teacher educators (Van-Velzen *et al.*, 2010).

Research indicates that due to the absence of formal and constant process of induction, teacher educators usually receive informal support within teacher education departments (Smith, 2005). Examples of informal support include the help of senior faculty or heads of the departments, observing senior colleagues during teaching and informal discussions on different aspects of work. Van-Velzen *et al.* (2010) maintain that induction provision is subjected to both organisational conditions and personal initiatives of teacher educators. Many studies have explored the experiences of induction of teacher educators but have not considered the organisational characteristics and context to study the induction practices. The induction of teacher educators has been scarcely investigated in the Pakistani teacher education context. The current research, therefore, aimed at exploring this important issue.

This study revolves around exploring possible answers to the following two questions:

- a) What kinds of induction opportunities are provided/available to the teacher educators in the public sector, teacher education university of Pakistan?
- b) How are induction opportunities perceived by the teacher educators?

Methodology and Context

This study adopted, qualitative, explorative research design. The study was conducted at an Education university in a main city of Pakistan. The university under study had ten campuses across the Punjab province of Pakistan. Of the ten campuses, only two were newly established university campuses, while the other eight campuses were previously either Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers (GCET) or Government Colleges of Education (GCE).

Interview was used as the primary data collection tool. One important interview type that helps in the collection of qualitative data is semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview helps in obtaining rich, contextual data in natural setting due to the inherent flexibility in its design and conduct. For this research, 38 semi-structured interviews were conducted with teacher educators, eight interviews with Heads of campuses/departments and one interview with a representative of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC). Among the sample from teacher educators (n= 38), 17 were males and 21 were females. 27 respondents were university teacher educators (UTEs) while 11 were government teacher educators (GTEs). Purposive sampling was used to have representation (Silverman, 2004), based on gender, professional status, professional and academic experiences. Multiple sources of data helped in the triangulation of the findings besides providing a holistic picture of the topic under study. Analysis was done using constant comparison (Cohen *et al.*, 2007) exploring similarities and differences across cases (Thomas, 2009).

In this article, the faculty which were associated with GCET or GCE were named as Government Teacher Educators (GTEs) and those who joined afresh and appointed by University were named as University Teacher Educators (UTE).

Findings

The following section presents findings under four themes that emerged from the data.

3.1 Limited Formal Induction Activities

Findings from this study indicate that most teacher educators had limited formal induction training. Out of the thirty-eight respondents, only 7 UTEs and 2 GTEs had participated in the formal induction programme organized by the HEC or by the university. The remaining twenty-two UTEs and 7 GTEs did not go through any formal induction process.

One UTE who attended the induction programme mentioned its details while she believed that it was the only opportunity she got.

“Yes, we have been provided a 2 to 3 days workshop that was relating to IT and there were 3 months PGD in teacher education which I have attended in a sub-campus. It was related to teaching and teaching in education. That was the only opportunity and after that I could not get any opportunity.” (UTE3)

Some UTEs (i.e., UTE 5, UTE9, and UTE11) showed concern that they had not been provided timely access to important information. One teacher educator seemed sceptical about the arrangements of the induction programme in far off campuses and said that there were no induction courses available for them in their campus. Almost all GTEs pointed out that they received little or no formal induction training since their shift from training colleges to the university. The GTEs shared that their transition from training colleges to the university brought subsequent shift in their roles as well as their working system. However, GTEs responses showed dissatisfaction over the limited induction provision and support from the university.

One of the GTEs said:

No, there was no induction about the teacher education courses or the university system regarding how to teach in the university. [GTE 4]

GTEs also reported that because of little or no formal induction experiences, their understanding of the university rules, policies, procedures, practices, and expectations was limited.

“No there was no induction programme. But I knew about this university as a special university for the education subject. But we did not have any induction regarding university rules, policies and procedures.” (GTE8)

Another GTE highlighted the absence of induction programmes:

“Actually, our appointment letter describes that, but no separate orientation was conducted.” (GTE7)

The head of the main city campus also highlighted the lack of formal induction activities for teacher educators. He maintained that due to the change in the university administration and resistance from teacher educators (holding science degrees), the induction programme was abandoned.

Other heads of the departments also highlighted the absence of induction provision by the university.

3.2 Recognition of the Need of Formal Induction Programme

Data indicate that almost all respondents i.e. UTEs, GTEs and Heads recognized the importance and need of formal induction activities for teacher educators. They maintained that induction programmes were particularly important for the beginner teacher educators. A respondent argued:

Formal induction should be there for the beginner teacher educators to equip them with different teaching techniques, and to develop their confidence and classroom management skills. [UTE 15]

A GTE emphasized the significance of induction programmes:

“It is very important because you get a guideline to follow----a new person when he/she comes he/she does not know

anything he/she just follows other people just like students who follow their friends and choose subjects.” (GTE2)

She further stated that it is essential for those teacher educators who enter teacher education without professional qualification in education, or other sustained experience in the school or college sector.

“Their confidence level should be checked, teacher educators should not just follow lecture method, they should be aware about different techniques, how to handle children. Even after orientation, training courses must carry on which can groom the personality of the teacher educators.” (GTE2)

Teacher educators pointed out the significance of induction programme for university and its progress.

“I think there should be a proper orientation programme for new teacher educators to familiarize with the teachers, students and with the system. University is a very important and big organisation, the orientation will help in the progress of the university too.” (UTE13)

He further elaborated that university has its own mission to produce good teachers, therefore, significance of proper induction programme cannot be ignored.

Another GTE emphasized the induction programme for those teachers who have not experienced teaching in university semester system to familiarize with university expectations and system.

“...definitely, definitely, it is very important. I think when you join a new set up; you should be given orientation programme. Every institution has its own system, and it can differ from other institution. For example, if someone has not studied in semester system and if he must teach in semester system...he should be given complete training and induction since each system has its own demands. (GTE 7)

Most of the heads stressed that induction provision should be the responsibility of the university.

3.3 Experiences of Teacher Educators about Formal Induction

Teacher educators who had experienced formal induction reflected upon their experiences of formally arranged induction activities. Teacher educators who had attended the induction programme (offered by the HEC and the university) saw it partially useful.

One UTE shared his experience of attending the induction programme by Higher Education Commission, he reflected:

“I have also attended a training conducted by HEC for newly inducted lecturers who have less than 5 years of experience...that was a very good experience in my job, and I learnt so many new things with respect to my profession...(UTE8)

Most of the teacher educators viewed the HEC induction programme as beneficial in improving their knowledge about general teaching skills, about using IT and multimedia in lectures, as well as in developing their communication skills.

One teacher educator highlighted the inconsistency of policy regarding induction programme. He mentioned a postgraduate diploma (PGD) programme which was abandoned a few years back. He argued that the programme was considered useful by the beginner teacher educators. However, the appropriateness and consistency of the programme was a concern for many who attended that programme. A few teacher educators with qualifications in the field of Education saw the content of the PGD course redundant. They perceived the programme content inappropriate for them. They mentioned that they were put through the same induction programme or workshops as teacher educators that was actually for

those with no substantial experience of teaching.

Similarly, teacher educators with qualifications in science subjects perceived the induction programme less focused in terms of subject-based pedagogies.

".... as a teacher educator, the programme did not offer substantial support. I think the programme should be extended with more diverse subject based pedagogical skills...." (UTE15)

Teacher educators who did not attend the courses frequently complained about inequitable distribution of courses across campuses and lack of information about provisions made available by the university.

One respondent who attended the induction programme by HEC shared that he could not cascade the training. The HEC representative when asked argued that cascading of the induction programme was the responsibility of the university.

3.4 Informal Induction Experiences

Majority of the respondents stated that they had not received any formal induction provision by the department. They also shared that department often arranged welcome party for the new inductees and used to share the common practices and general rules regarding running of the department. The support and guidance of the Heads of the Departments were appreciated. The findings revealed that informal support/induction was attributed to 'daily experiences', 'trial and error', 'encounters with problems' or 'occasionally sharing with colleagues'. One respondent said:

Here, no Terms of Reference (TOR) are provided. We do it on observation and experimental basis....a lot of mistakes occur in this process, we learn by trial and error. [UTE 29]

Similarly, another respondent mentioned:
"Whatever problems we encounter we solve on daily basis –otherwise there are no rules and regulations – nothing."(GTE3)

The Heads of the campuses felt that informal support was always available for the beginner teacher educators. In addition, they elaborated their support in administrative and general academic affairs. They further said that beginner teacher educators were given ample time to assimilate to the new environment and were provided with notes and course files to facilitate them in teaching. Overall, the support provided by the Heads was limited to a general orientation. Teacher educators frequently highlighted the absence of clear and written guidelines and expected professional roles. This response of helplessness was also evident in a study conducted by Martinez (2008) on beginner teacher educators.

GTEs comments indicated their lack of familiarity with the university rules, system and requirements established by the university. Most of the GTEs characterised their support 'by doing', by 'practicing over time' and by 'encountering challenges'.

The problems which I faced, I learned from those problems... I have encountered so many problems here since teaching in colleges is different from university...but I have learned from my own experiences.... (GTE8)

The school teaching experience, including familiarization of teaching techniques, and addressing the various students' academic needs were clearly recognized as ways of support to teach in the university by GTEs. One GTE who did not attend the induction programme expressed,

"As I was having previous work experience of school, college and university so it helped me a lot" (GTE5)

In three university campuses, communal support was found useful through informal talks and staff meetings. However, formal induction provision was limited for both university and government teacher educators. In the study, induction was mostly seen as informal and ad-hoc. This indicates the lack of attention to the

induction policies within teacher education institutes.

Discussion

The study findings indicate that induction of teacher educators was not an established practice in the university under study. Though there were opportunities for informal induction, they were not much helpful in learning about *what* and *how* of the institution which include institutional norms, procedures and description of their work. As a result of a lack of planned induction, teacher educators learnt about the university norms and procedures through practice and through trial and error. This finding resonates with the study of Khan (2011) and Harrison & MacKeon (2008) who identified inadequate support for beginner teacher educators. The finding is also in line with Murray (2005) who noticed insufficient induction support for teacher educators leading to a 'lonely and difficult introduction' to the profession. Murray (2008) termed this approach as 'induction by immersion'. She concluded that lack of awareness about the planned induction curriculum is one of the main reasons that results in *ad hoc* and reactive learning of teacher educators. Lack of induction leads to a waste of time on the part of teacher educators and the university in identifying and resolving a problem. Teacher educators who are informed at a short notice for new roles are put under extra burden for which they are not ready. The study findings also support the findings of UNESCO (2006) that teacher educators in Pakistan are not fully prepared for their role.

This study also highlighted the inequitable access to the formal induction provision in the university. The finding that the formal induction activities were only partially useful is in line with the previous research of Murray (2009). Moreover, partial usefulness of the induction programme indicates lack of thoughtfulness on the university's part or on the part of HEC.

Induction programmes focused more on general topics of education like educational psychology, assessment techniques, and classroom management. These topics were found useful by novice teacher educators. However, they were not found useful by the teacher educators who possessed a degree in education and experience of teaching. This reflects Murray (2008) findings who observed that induction programme in the UK employed 'one size fits all' model. As a result, it was seen less appropriate by the teacher educators who already had schoolteacher qualification (Murray, 2008).

Although there are differences in the career paths and professional experience of teacher educators of Pakistan and those in the US, UK and the Netherlands, the induction experiences were found unsatisfactory in both contexts. It also highlights the issue of lack of attention to the policies that could support the teacher educators in their induction (Cocharn-Smith, 2003).

The examples of lack of organisational and professional induction highlighted in this study indicate that teacher educators are not recognized as a distinct professional group in Pakistan. Other studies also noted that a difference between a teacher and a teacher educator was not seen as significant (see for example, Korthagen *et al.*, 2005; Murray, 2005). National Professional Standards for Teachers in Pakistan were developed in 2009. The introduction part of these Standards states, "Although the standards are aimed for primary level beginning teachers, these can be adapted and used for secondary level teachers and teacher educators (Ministry of Education, 2009). This gives the impression that knowledge and understanding of teaching in schools and teaching in higher education were assumed to be at par. The efforts to improve the induction provisions of teacher educators and to devise a careful policy for entry of

the teacher educators would not be successful until teacher educators are recognised as a professional group. Literature on induction has frequently maintained that not only the workplace settings of higher education differ from primary or secondary school (Ritter 2007), but also that the competencies and skills of teachers are different from teacher educators (Van-Velzen *et al.*, 2010)

This study also indicated that there was no designated mentor to take on the responsibility for regular support in teaching and research of inductees. In the responses, there was also no mention of team teaching, observation, self-study research or reflection on teaching with experienced colleagues. This is different from experiences in other countries where usually heads of the department take on the mentoring role and there is provision for informal induction to the beginner teacher educators.

Conclusion, implications, and recommendations

It can be concluded from the study that induction provision for teacher educators is inconsistent and insufficient in teacher education institutions. Induction programmes offered by the HEC and the university were found useful but less relevant to teacher educators' need. The findings of the study have significant implications at two levels. At one level, there is need for an equitable and fair access to the induction provisions of all teacher educators. Secondly, the narrow focus of the programme necessitates to design the programme considering the needs and diverse professional backgrounds of teacher educators. This suggests that teacher educators may be considered a 'specialized group', that need to improve not only their general competencies but also advance their subject-oriented, pedagogical, and reflective competencies which are considered core characteristics for teacher educators (Koster *et al.*, 2001). This realization also becomes urgent keeping in

view the fact that the university under study itself is a teacher education university.

Both groups of teacher educators (GTEs and UTEs) were found considerably different in their provision of professional and organisational induction opportunities. It was also found that in the absence of proper professional induction, GTEs had to rely mostly on their previous experience of teaching or on trial and error. It is frequently stressed in the literature (Smith, 2005) that teacher educators, despite having school experience, need induction in higher education settings since the school setting is different from the higher education setting in several ways. This also demands due consideration at the policy level before deciding the transition of teaching colleges into the university status. This aspect of transition of colleges into the university and resulting challenges for the faculty need further inquiry.

This study shows that it is critical to consider the professional adequacy of teacher educators in their entry to the post in particular their preparation for teaching and research. Particular attention is needed to recognise the teacher educators as distinct from teachers. This acknowledgement will further help in the recruitment criteria of teacher educators as well as in designing formal induction provision for teacher educators. The study necessitates the need to improve the current induction provision taking into consideration the prior academic and professional experiences of teacher educators (Martinez, 2008) and institutional backgrounds.

The recommendations provided by the teacher educators included the need for clear and written role specification and expectations at the start of their joining. Setting the appropriate performance targets and supporting the teacher educators in achieving those should be considered a core function of teacher education departments.

This article contributes to our understanding about the professional and organisational induction practices of teacher educators in Pakistan. The professional backgrounds of teacher educators and underlying structural issues of institutions can be investigated in more depth in future research to improve the induction provisions for teacher educators.

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