

## Novice Teachers' Experiences of Induction in Selected Primary Schools in Namibia<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*Problem Statement:* Many schools use induction programmes with the aim of contributing to novice teachers' well-being and professional development. However, the content of induction programmes varies across schools and countries. Given that existing studies do not conclusively establish the programme components with the greatest potential to affect the quality and retention of novice teachers, more research is needed to explore the aspects of induction programmes that are most productive.

*Purpose of the Study:* This exploratory qualitative multi-case study aimed to gain more insight into how novice teachers in Namibia perceive and experience their induction support. The specific research question that guided this study was: *What is the current state of practice in Namibia to support novice teachers with induction programmes?*

*Method:* In order to answer the guiding research question, the inquiry followed a qualitative approach. The small sample of eight novice teachers who had finished the induction period and had taught for one to two years was purposefully selected from two primary schools to participate in the study. The schools were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (1) proximity to the researcher, since the researcher is a resident of Namibia; (2) the number of sites manageable in terms of time, distance

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is based on a Master's dissertation titled "Novice teachers' perceptions of school-based induction programmes at selected primary schools in Windhoek, Namibia" completed at the University of South Africa in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Sello Mokoena in 2014.

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and cost; (3) availability of more than one novice teacher who graduated recently, making the sites relevant to the study; and (4) location of schools in different circuits to aim for different insights and experiences. Data collected through the focus group sessions were transcribed verbatim. An analysis followed an on-going and iterative non-linear process that identified common themes.

*Findings:* After analysis and interpretation of the literature and empirical findings, it was discovered that many schools in Namibia seem to use a form of induction programmes for novice teachers. However, based on the current study, it became apparent that some schools in Namibia use induction programmes with low-intensity activities, while others use induction programmes with high-intensity activities. Based on the interviews with the participants, the following themes in which induction programme activities differed were identified: the intensity/duration of the induction programme; resources offered in relation to induction programmes; the format/structure of support being used in the induction programme; the content of the induction programme; and lastly, the mentoring. Consequently, practical implications and recommendations to improve on these variations were offered.

*Conclusions and Recommendations:* In order to achieve its intended objectives, induction programmes have to be well organized and facilitated in schools. The study provides the following recommendations to establish this organization: there must be sufficient resources and mentors for all new teachers; mentors should be afforded opportunities to be capacitated so that they can offer professional guidance to novices; mentors and novice teachers should be afforded considerable time to spend on induction programme activities; timetables of mentors and novice teachers have to match with those of induction programmes; a physical space/office should be made available for meetings between mentors and novice teachers; and novice teachers should be allocated a reasonable teaching workload as compared to veteran teachers. Schools should use induction programmes with high-intensity activities in order to increase teacher effectiveness and retention.

*Keywords:* Novice teachers, experiences, low intensity induction programmes, high intensity induction programmes, Namibia.

## Introduction

Becoming a teacher involves a transition from pre-service training into the profession of teaching. Such a transition brings about a shift in role orientation and an epistemological move from knowing about teaching through formal study to knowing how to teach by confronting the daily challenges of the school and classroom. Novice teachers require the development of a professional identity and

the construction of a professional practice. However, for most novice teachers, also referred to as beginner teachers, such a transition is seldom smooth. While undertaking their trainings at teacher training colleges or universities as student teachers, they are seldom exposed to real teaching challenges. During these sessions, student teachers concentrate mostly on pedagogy. Teaching, however, goes beyond the management of learners in a class and could include cases of truancy, theft, classroom organization, coping with difficult students, and adjusting to the new environment, to mention just a few.

Although there is a recognized need for support for novice teachers, it is a documented fact that some schools are not structurally aligned in a way that facilitates this. As a result, some novice teachers encounter difficulties during their first year of teaching, sometimes preventing them from adapting to such environments. Some of these teachers become demoralised, ill, depressed, or face teacher burnout, leading to some teachers deciding to abandon teaching as a profession. However, there are those who maintain an optimistic perspective; they remain resolute in their career of choice, reflecting and learning from the challenging experiences they come across while integrating their learning into various teaching approaches and strategies. Factors such as the responsibilities of teaching, inappropriate teaching assignments, curriculum instructional challenges, and a non-supportive school culture are liable to make the initial year of teaching difficult. It is often the type of support that teachers receive that is indicative of whether the teacher moves forward and develops his/her teaching career or chooses to leave the profession. Therefore, induction programmes have been shown to be effective strategies in reducing new teacher attrition and also as an appropriate mechanism to provide a foundation for professional development and support necessary to prepare beginner teachers entering the field of teaching (Beijaard, Buitink, & Kessels, 2010). As a result, an increasing number of schools across the globe tend to support novice teachers with induction programmes (Beijaard et al., 2010). However, the content of induction programmes varies across schools and countries. Namibia, the focus country for this study, has little documented knowledge available about the way novice teachers are supported with induction programmes. Therefore, this exploratory qualitative multi-case study aimed to gain more insight into how novice teachers perceive and experience their induction support. Again, given that existing studies do not conclusively establish the programme components that have the greatest potential to affect the quality and retention of novice teachers, more research is still needed to explore the aspects of induction programmes that are most productive and can increase teacher retention rates. The specific research question that guided this study was: *What is the current state of practice in Namibia to support novice teachers with induction programmes?* Generally, an answer to this question contributes to the international body of knowledge on how schools use induction programmes to support novice teachers. Specifically, this study is important and relevant for Namibia, where the education system is undergoing a rapid transformation. The information sourced from the study could serve as a basis for sensitizing policy designers and implementers about the significance of induction in the early career of a novice teacher. Also, it could help school management teams to

understand what is expected of them so that they may harness their expertise and resources for the benefit of the novice teachers. The findings of this study might also be useful to the Namibian Ministry of Education and school principals to enable them to review current policy and implement proper school-based induction programmes. Furthermore, this study will assist in deepening the current body of knowledge and understanding about novice teachers' perceptions of school-based induction, and in gaining an insight into the methods that support, assist, and affect the quality of the novice teacher's experience and their intention to continue in the teaching profession. This idea is based on the understanding that the study will assist in discovering new ways and means of assisting both the supervisors or mentors and novice teachers in order to easily undertake the process of integration of the latter.

#### *Novice Teachers' Induction Programmes in Namibia*

As a means to improve the capacity building of newly qualified teachers, the Minister of Education in Namibia made recommendations to develop and implement induction programmes for cohorts of these teachers (Namibia, 2009). Such a move eventually culminated in the development of an induction and mentoring programme by the Namibian Institute for Educational Development (NIED), in collaboration with regional education offices. The mandate for the Namibian Novice Teacher Induction Programme (NNTIP) for newly qualified teachers was officially implemented in 2011. The purpose is to support novices to be competent and professionally qualified after two years. According to NNTIP, all novices will receive induction for two years. The programme, tailored for the needs of novices, is to be delivered at school and at cluster levels. At the school level, mentor teachers, subject specialists, and principals of school are responsible for the programme. At the cluster level, cluster principals will organise out-of-school training workshops while subject facilitators will coordinate subject-related workshops. Strategies used to support novices include orientation, mentoring, observation, continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities, and evaluation. Principals formatively evaluate novices twice in semesters one and two, while two summative evaluations are done in term three (Namibia, 2009).

Other stakeholders involved include the regional education officers, who design annual mentoring plans appropriate for their region and gather mentor teachers. Designing manuals per region will result in inconsistencies, as each one of the thirteen regions will have its own induction manual, but this might allow for divergent views on how to implement the induction programmes. The University of Namibia (UNAM) undertakes regular follow-up on their graduates to determine their CPD needs for further improvements. This practice supports Britton, Raizen, Paine, and Huntley (2000) in that induction should not be an isolated phase but should be linked to teacher preparation. School principals facilitate the programme by working together with mentors, the cluster centre, and the regional education officers. The Namibian programme allows novices to own their induction by identifying their needs and participating in the design of a mentoring plan of action. The induction programme is benchmarked on the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST). The needs of novices are linked to the standards, which are in

turn spread over two years of induction and mentoring (Namibia, 2006). Despite the fact that novices are involved through identifying needs, the system is less facilitative and more directive in prescribing what novices should do and know. A directive approach does not guarantee more effective results than a more informal, facilitative approach. Given the time at which the formal induction programme was introduced in Namibia, it is not possible at this point to draw conclusions on how successful its implementation is. However, there is a need to assess the impact that these programmes are making in the professional development of the novice teachers by tapping on their views and experiences. Therefore, responses to the central research question guiding this study provided more insight into novice teachers' perceptions of their induction programme experiences in Namibian schools.

#### *Theoretical Framework*

The combined work of Camp and Heath (1998) as well as Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000, cited in Moore & Swan, 2008) was found appropriate and provided theoretical basis to this study. More especially the work of Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) was found to be more appropriate and relevant and was used as the lens to investigate the extent to which novice teachers in Namibia are supported with induction programmes. Camp and Heath (1998) identified four contributor groups that should be involved in teacher induction programmes, namely: 1) an official of the state department, 2) teacher faculty members at institutions of higher learning, 3) the local school administrators, and 4) members of the profession. Elaborating on their roles, these authors argue that an official of the state department of education should provide direction, teacher faculty members at institutions of higher learning should provide a theoretical and research base, the local school administrators should provide support and assistance throughout, and lastly, members of the profession through their professional organisations should provide subject-specific assistance (Camp & Heath, 1998; cited in Moore & Swan, 2008). Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) argue that within the description of their approach, Camp and Heath mentioned only the broad roles and responsibilities that each group should perform, not specific activities each group or contributor should be responsible for. Elaborating on the work of Camp and Heath (1998), Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) posit a question: "What lifelines can be offered to novice teachers so that they will remain in the profession and develop into highly effective classroom teachers?" (p. 2). According to these authors, these lifelines come as either high-intensity or low-intensity teacher induction activities. High-intensity activities are those that require substantial funding and effort to develop and support novice teachers. These may include activities such as: selecting and training effective mentors, providing release time, roving substitutes releasing novices and mentors, mini courses tailor-made to address common challenges, examining evidence and developing reflective practice, and networking novice teachers into reflective practice groups (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000; cited in Moore & Swan, 2008). Although these activities require more effort and funding, they have been shown to improve teacher effectiveness (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). Low-intensity activities are those that require little funding and less effort by all involved compared with high-

intensity activities. These may include activities such as: orientation of novice teachers, matching novice teachers and experienced teachers, adjusting working conditions, and promoting collegial collaboration (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000 cited in Moore & Swan, 2008). These activities have been shown to impact a reduction in attrition and higher job satisfaction (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). In other words, low-intensity activities and efforts do not appear to develop teacher effectiveness, but address retention challenges in the teaching profession. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of high- and low-intensity activities for novice teacher induction programmes adapted from Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) as cited in Moore and Swan (2008). This conceptual framework was adapted and contextualized and served as a basis to investigate the central research question for this study, as stated in the previous sections.

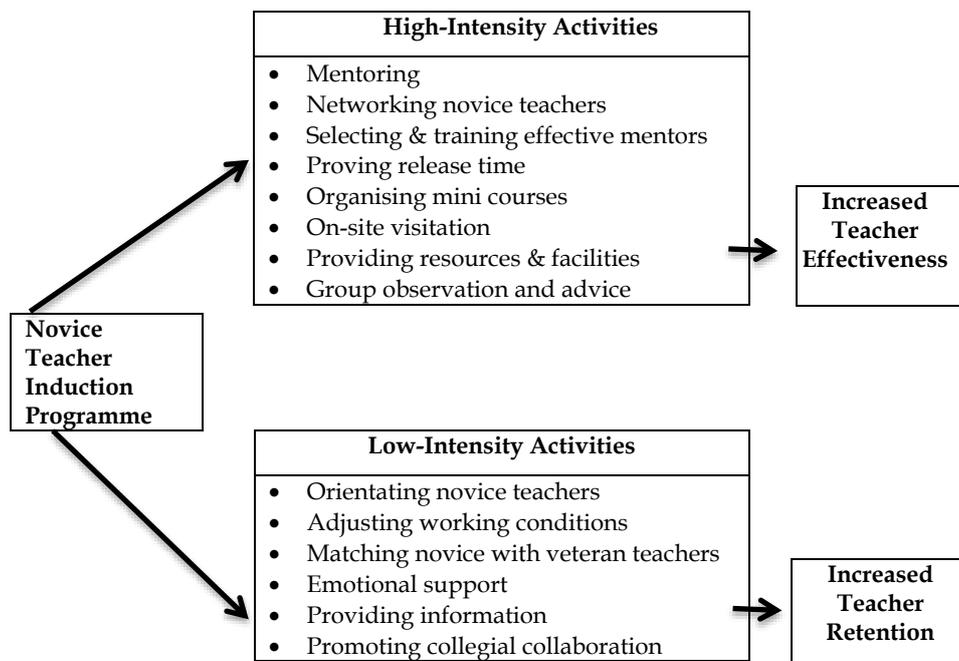


Figure 1. Framework of high- and low-intensity activities for novice teachers' induction

Source: Stansbury and Zimmerman, 2000; cited in Moore & Swan, 2008

## Method

### *Research Design*

A qualitative research approach was used in this study. Because the study aimed to gain more insight into novice teachers' experiences of their induction programmes, a case study design was used to investigate the phenomenon under study. The researchers decided to conduct a multi-site case study in order to obtain a deeper understanding of how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meanings they attribute to their experiences (Creswell, 2013).

### *Research Sample*

In order to answer the guiding research question, the researcher interviewed novice teachers from two primary schools in Namibia, Windhoek. These schools were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (1) proximity to the researcher, since the researcher is a resident of Namibia; (2) the number of sites manageable in terms of time, distance and cost; (3) the availability of more than one novice teacher who graduated recently, making the sites relevant to the study; and (4) the location of schools in different circuits to aim for different insights and experiences. In each school, a small sample of four novice teachers was purposefully selected to participate in the study. Purposeful sampling occurs when individuals are selected and possess the characteristics or attributes of interest to the study (Creswell, 2013). Merriam (2009) emphasises the importance of selecting a sample from which the "most can be learned" (p.12). The novice teachers who had finished their induction period and had taught for one to two years were selected to participate in this study.

### *Research Instrument and Procedure*

The main technique used to collect empirical evidence was focus group interviews. However, a questionnaire was also used mainly to collect the participants' biographical information. In this study, the researcher conducted one session of focus group interviews at each school; the interviews lasted approximately 50-60 minutes. Focus group interviews were conducted during the afternoon hours to avoid interfering with day to day school programmes at the selected schools. Each group consisted of four novice teachers. Research studies have shown that when individuals are grouped together, they can contribute to a better understanding of the research problem (Newby, 2010). Sharing the same view, Greeff (2011) asserts that such group dynamics serve as a "catalyst for bringing large amounts of information to the fore" (p. 362). It is easy for individuals to express themselves freely when surrounded by others whom they perceive to be like themselves. For this reason, the researcher considered homogeneity in selecting novice teachers. However, the benefit of focus groups lies in the group dynamism of the participants. Creswell (2013) argues that a more open exchange of information occurs during focus groups and the method "opens up opportunities to gain collective perspectives

speedily thereby deepening understanding" (p. 159). Focus group discussions were recorded (with permission from the participants) using audio-tape recorder, and thereafter transcribed word by word after each group session. Since the researcher acted as a moderator at the same time, field and observation notes were taken immediately after the conclusion of each session to avoid loss of information.

#### *Validity and Reliability*

Credibility and transferability are concepts commonly used by qualitative researchers. Validity and reliability in qualitative design have been criticised by qualitative researchers as a result of their deductive reasoning (Willis, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this study, the researcher provided an audit trail of the decisions taken during data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The process of member-checking was also done at different stages of this study; interview transcripts were given to the participants to confirm the accuracy of the data capturing process, and the interpretation of the findings was also shared with the participants and their peers to confirm and reduce possible bias (Creswell, 2013).

#### *Data Analysis*

Data collected through focus group sessions were transcribed verbatim. Verbatim transcriptions provide more details and records of what has been said in an accurate manner. The method of Johnson and Christensen (2012) and Creswell (2007), which follows a bottom-up strategy while moving in analytical circles, was used in analysing data. According to this method, the researcher follows the core elements of qualitative data analysis, for instance: (1) preparing and organising the data, (2) reducing the data into segments and assigning names to each segment through the process of coding, (3) finding connections and relations between codes, (4) writing statements about each theme and linking its meaning to literature for corroboration, and (5) presenting the findings in the form of a discussion. This is done while incorporating participants' direct quotes. The researcher read and re-read all the transcriptions several times to become immersed in the data before breaking it into parts. The reading and writing of short memos spiralled into classifying data into smaller analytical units. The identified units were coded by means of abstract descriptive words or category names and symbols. The coding scheme was consistently re-evaluated to avoid making premature judgments and to stay open to organising the data in various ways.

### **Results**

The study findings consist of the novice teachers' biographical information and their perceptions of their induction programme experiences. Before the discussion of findings is presented, it must be pointed out that it was not the purpose of this study

to generalise the findings, but to provide an in-depth view of the participants (novice teachers) regarding their experiences of induction programmes. Participants who gave their consent to take part in the study were given short questionnaires to fill in their details. No names appeared on the prompt cards. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to capture the demographic profiles of the novice teachers. The questionnaire included items such as age, gender, qualifications, and teaching experience. The researcher compiled the profiles of all the participants in table form, concealing their identities with letters of the alphabet as indicated in table 1 below. First, findings in relation to demographic data are presented in table 1, followed by an analysis of the interview data set.

**Table 1.**

*Biographic Information of Novice Teachers*

		<i>f</i>
Number of novice teachers		8
Gender	Female	5
	Male	3
Age Group	20 – 24	3
	25 – 29	4
	30 – 34	1
Subject Department	Class teaching	5
	Science and Mathematics	1
	Social Studies	2
Degree of Qualifications	First Degree + Profession	8
Teaching Experience	1 year	1
	2 years	7
Pseudonyms of participants and schools	Teacher <b>A; B; C; D</b> of <b>School X</b>	4
	Teacher <b>E; F; G; H</b> of <b>School Y</b>	4

Table 1 shows that a total of eight novice teachers (n=8) participated in this study, that is, four participants from each primary school. Of these, 5 were female and 3 were male. This unbalanced gender may be due to the notion that most men do not wish to enter the teaching profession (Mokoena, 2012). The ages of novice teachers were grouped into 5-year brackets. As expected, the majority of novice teachers were below 29 years (n=4). All of the novice teachers had a first degree in the teaching profession and additional specialisation in various fields. Lastly, the majority of them (n=7) had two years of teaching experience.

The findings from the interview data are presented under the headings of the five categories in which the induction programmes at the selected schools differed: (1) the duration or intensity of the programme; (2) the resources that were offered for induction activities; (3) the induction programme's structure; (4) the content of the induction programme; and, lastly, (5) mentoring. Using the theoretical framework of high- and low-intensity activities for novice teacher induction programmes in fig. 1, the following table 2, which categorises induction programme activities as high-intensity and low-intensity, was developed and subsequently used to guide the

discussion of the findings. The development of table 2 also drew from the work of Kessels (2010).

**Table 2.**

*High and Low Induction Programme Activities*

<i>High-intensity induction programme</i>	<i>Low-intensity induction programme</i>
<i>School X</i>	<i>School Y</i>
<i>Duration of the induction programme or intensity of the programme</i>	
Runs from one to two years (1-2 years)	Takes only a few days (1-3 days)
<i>Resources offered for induction activities</i>	
Several mentors responsible for induction programme	One mentor responsible for the induction programme
Preparation of a course which included the mentors	Ordinary preparation of intensive training for course for the mentors
Novice teachers allocated sufficient hours to participate in the induction related activities	Limited hours allocated to novice teachers to participate in the induction programme
<i>Structure or approach of the induction programmes</i>	
Introduction and orientation meeting which for 2 days	Introduction and orientation meeting lasted which run only for 2 hours
Mentoring which included class-visits, and recorded lessons took place throughout	Mentoring which included class-visits occurred twice year per year
Meeting for novice teachers included presentations, tailored training, and opportunity to share experiences(8 times a year)	Ordinary meeting for novices; aspects such as novice teachers to share experiences (3 times a year)
<i>Content of the induction programmes</i>	
Practical information which included school rules, notification of upcoming school events, and introduction of colleagues	Practical information: explanation of school rules and introduction to colleagues
Emotional support	Emotional support
<i>Mentoring</i>	
High degree of supportiveness and trustworthiness	Moderate degree of supportiveness and trustworthiness

The following section discusses the broad categories or themes as illustrated in table 2 that emerged from the data analysis of the responses given by the participants during the interviews.

#### *Duration or Intensity of the Programme*

The duration or intensity of the program refers to the amount of time allocated for the novice teachers to engage with induction programme activities. During the interviews, novice teachers gave various answers to the question about the time allocated to induction programme activities. According to the responses from the novice teachers, some were inducted for a few days, whereas some were inducted for close to a year or more. Novice teachers from school Y commented as follows:

*"We were only part of a school-based induction programme activities for two days"*

This could mean that after two days the novice teachers were left on their own to chart their way forward into the teaching profession. While at school X, it emerged that the duration of the induction lasted for a longer period. The novice teachers from school X commented as follows:

*"Our school-based induction exercises run across the whole year or across the three terms with a formal discussion with the Head of Department or the school principal at the end of each term"*

These scenarios give an obvious indication that the application of induction is not practised in the same way across all schools in Namibia or even across all departments at the same school.

#### *Resources Offered for Induction Activities*

It emerged from the interviews that the types of resources offered in schools for induction programmes correlated strongly with the duration of the induction programmes. For example, school X, which had a high-intensity induction programme, identified a few mentors (heads of departments) who were responsible for the support and guidance of novice teachers. They were allocated a considerable number of hours for their work in the induction activities. School Y, with a low-intensity induction programme, appointed only one mentor to be responsible for the support and guidance of the novice teachers. Moreover, only a limited number of hours were allocated for induction activities. While all mentors received some preparation for their job as mentors, at school X with the high-intensity induction programme, the preparation also included intensive training. Furthermore, school X also allocated specific time for novice teachers to participate in induction-related activities and took these activities into account in their work allocation as well.

The issue of resources thus seems to be a crucial factor that largely determines the attainability of induction programmes, as confirmed by the present study.

*Structure or Approach of the Induction Programmes*

During the interviews it emerged that both schools scheduled introduction and orientation meetings to welcome novice teachers as well as group meetings for novice teachers and individual meetings between the mentor and the mentee. Often these individual meetings were accompanied by class visits from the mentors. However, these induction activities differed in terms of frequency, duration, and approach. Novice teachers at school Y revealed that the introduction and orientation meeting consisted of two hours in which the novice teachers were briefly introduced to one another and school rules were explained, followed by a brief campus tour. At school X, the introduction and orientation meeting lasted for two to three days during which novice teachers were afforded time to share experiences, meet other staff members, and attend a workshop on how to start the first day. These induction activities were highly structured and strongly aimed at professional development.

The researcher also found similar differences in the individual meetings between the mentors and the novice teachers at both schools. For instance, at school Y, the discussion meeting with a mentor after a class visit took approximately 15 minutes during which time the mentor and the novice teacher discussed generally what had gone well and what could be improved. Novice teachers at school Y wanted more support, especially with regard to expectations of teacher performance, classroom management, and required paperwork. One teacher remarked as follows:

*"I expected more from my mentor...I really expected more guidance from him...the pre-service training did not give enough of things that are happening in the field...we need guidance in whatever we are going to do"*

At school X, the discussion meeting with the mentor after the class visit lasted for approximately one hour in which the mentor and the novice teacher thoroughly analysed the recorded lesson and discussed how it could be improved. According to the Namibian induction policy, novice teachers are supposed to have two mentors, one general mentor who did not necessarily teach in the same subject department, and another mentor from the same subject department. In practice, the researcher found that most novice teachers were supported by one mentor, especially at school Y. Other approaches which were used to support novice teachers included specific training courses and classroom observations of experienced teachers. These approaches were practised mainly in school X, which seemed to be implementing induction programmes with high intensity. It also emerged from school X that their induction programme included a day in which novice teachers visited another school to experience different teaching strategies. The novice teacher commented as follows:

*"It is valuable to share ideas with teachers from other schools and see if they are experiencing things as we do"*

Collaboration and networking are viewed to be essential, especially for new teachers, as these techniques may address some of the isolation and socialisation issues experienced by novice teachers.

### *Content of the Induction Programmes*

From the interviews conducted with novice teachers at both school X and Y, it became clear that induction programmes at both schools included attention mainly on two areas: practical information and professional development. However, attention on professional development was found to be rather limited. In most cases the focus seemed to be skewed towards practical information, which included school rules, notification of upcoming events, and introduction to other colleagues. Especially at school Y with low-intensity programmes, mentors tended to focus on welcoming the novice teachers, making them feel at ease, and trying to include them in the school culture.

### *Mentoring*

A mentor is perceived as a very important element of an induction programme. This became apparent when novice teachers at both schools were asked about their experiences of the induction programme and in answering often referred to their mentors. They did not value the programme much, but appreciated the manner in which they were welcomed by the mentors, mentors' enthusiasms, and their ability to differentiate between good and bad things. What also emerged was the fact that, when a novice teacher was not satisfied with the support from the induction programme, he or she criticised the mentor and not, for example, a lack of time or the resources that were provided. Based on the interviews with the novice teachers, the researchers identified two important characteristics of the mentors. The first characteristic that novice teachers spoke about related to the degree to which the mentors were able to create a base of trust and favourable environment that enabled novice teachers to feel at ease with their mentors and share whatever challenges they encountered in their work. Trust featured frequently in the discussion, and as such was labelled an important characteristic of a mentor. One novice teacher reported the following:

*"I feel as though my mentor is concerned about my teaching career...he is concerned about me as a person and his actions match his words"*

The second important characteristic which emerged during the interviews was the support that the novice teachers received from their mentors. Most novice teachers felt supported by their mentors. During the interviews, novice teachers very much appreciated the mentors' enthusiasm, positive attitudes, energy, personal interests, and degree of involvement. According to the novice teachers, these characteristics helped them to maintain their confidence and their own enthusiasm for their work and prevented them from becoming stressed, which may have resulted in them quitting their jobs. Novice teachers commented as follows:

*"Just knowing that there was someone whom we could turn to made us feel supported and not struggling on our own"*

The third characteristic of the mentor that emerged from the interviews was related to the degree to which a mentor can challenge the novice teacher in his or her professional development. A few novice teachers explicitly valued their mentors' ability to stimulate their professional development. These novice teachers spoke of their mentors' ability to observe things, to ask the right questions, and to get the teachers to really think about or realise something. On the other hand, this is an area that mentors were sometimes explicitly criticised for by the novice teachers. A few novice teachers found their mentors unable to help them in their specific subject area or stimulate their professional development. It emerged that mentors were found to be general in their comments, not clear and specific or just not helpful at all. One of the novice teachers from school Y commented as follows:

*"Sometimes you need more clarity in a specific subject area and someone whom you ask is not dealing with that it will be hard for you to ask something"*

Therefore, the need for more than one supporter is important, especially in offering subject-specific support.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This small-scale research study reports on novice teachers' experiences of induction programme activities in selected primary schools in Namibia. Because of a lack of in-depth knowledge on the way novice teachers are supported with induction programmes, this topic was explored by means of an interview study. After analysis and interpretation of the literature and empirical findings, the researchers found that many schools in Namibia seem to use a form of induction programmes for novice teachers. This confirms that the Namibian Novice Teacher Induction Programme Institute (NNTIP) has been successful in their mandate to develop and implement induction programmes for such cohorts of teachers. However, the current study found that some schools in Namibia use induction programmes with low-intensity activities, while others use induction programmes with high-intensity activities (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000; cited in Moore & Swan, 2008). In other words, novice teachers in some schools in Namibia are only inducted for one to two days, while at other schools, their induction period runs from one to two years. This practice contradicts the mandate of the Namibian Novice Teacher Induction Programme (NNTIP) for newly qualified teachers, which states that all novice teachers will receive induction for two years (NNTIP, 2011). Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000, cited in Moore & Swan, 2008) maintain that novice teachers who were supported by a high-intensity programme (one year or more) experienced the support as valuable to their professional development, whereas those who were supported by a low-intensity induction programme (two days or more) generally viewed additional support as insufficient and did not add any value to their teaching practice. These authors further argued that extended exposure to induction expanded the competences of teachers more than those who received less or no induction at all. Sharing the same view, Cherubini (2007) and Glazerman, Isenberg,

Dolphin, Bleeker, Johnson, Grider, and Jacobus (2010) found that novice teachers who received intensive induction support felt more satisfied and more prepared for the job than those teachers who received minimal induction support. The quality and duration of induction is also found to stem the attrition rate (Britton, Raizen, Paine & Huntley, 2000; Hudson, Beutel & Hudson, 2008).

Considering the above literature studies, which suggest that novice teachers who were supported by high-intensity induction programme experienced the support as valuable to their careers while those who were supported by a low-intensity induction programme viewed additional support as burden, the current study recommends that novice teachers be supported with high-intensity induction programme, which will likely impact their teaching effectiveness and reduce their attrition rate. It may therefore be concluded that, for novice teachers to remain in the teaching profession, their induction period needs to be personally and professionally fulfilling (Kidd, Brown & Fitzallen, 2015).

Another important finding from this study pertains to the resources and facilities offered for induction programmes. Surely influential induction programmes generally include adequate resources and facilities, but most novice teachers, especially from school Y, reported only a few resources and facilities provided for induction programmes. This finding concurs with points of criticism by Feiman-Nemser (2003), who wrote about the induction programmes offered to novice teachers that often lack necessary resources. This author argues that the availability of relevant resources and facilities to a larger degree determines attainability in the development of all other elements of induction programmes. In other words, if facilities and relevant resources are made available, time can be invested in capacitating mentors and novice teachers in various topics of the induction programmes. It is therefore recommended that most schools create more resources for induction programmes. Induction programmes have to be well organised, and there must be sufficient mentors for all new teachers. Mentors should be afforded training opportunities so that they can offer professional guidance to novices, mentors and novice teachers should be afforded considerable time to spend on induction programmes activities, the timetables of mentors and novice teachers have to match with those of induction programmes, a physical space or office should be made available for meetings between mentors and novice teachers, and novice teachers should be allocated a reasonable teaching workload as compared to veteran teachers.

Another finding of this study related to the content of the induction programmes. Although it appeared that schools involved in this study provided support to novice teachers, the content of the induction programmes focused mainly on practical information in areas such as orientation, emotional support, location of instructional material, etc. However, support of professional development was found to be rather limited, if existent at all, in both schools. This finding concurs with a literature study on induction programmes' contents in the USA, which discovered limited support dedicated to novice teachers' professional development (Wang & Odell, 2002; Feiman-Nemser, 2001a; Little, 1990). A factor provided in the literature (Yusko &

Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Carver & Katz, 2004; Athanases & Achinstein, 2003) that helps to explain the often limited influence of induction programmes on novice teachers' professional development is a lack of inclusion of assessment procedures. Including assessment procedures and tools in induction programmes can help mentors identify crucial topics that may enhance novice teachers' professional development. Although assessment procedures may be considered threatening, Kessels (2010) argues that it is essential first to create a base of trust between a mentor and a novice teacher. A mentor that can be trusted is seen as one of the most successful goals of an induction programme (Kessels, 2010). Therefore, to achieve a safe base for assessment procedures, service providers such as the University of Namibia (UNAM) must be involved in order to monitor the continuous professional development (CPD) of their graduates for further improvement. This practice supports Britton, Raizen, Paine and Huntley's (2000) view that induction should not be an isolated phase but should be linked to the university teacher preparation programme. Although novice teachers have knowledge and skills, perhaps even new enriching knowledge, they have not yet mastered the art of being an effective teacher. As a result, CPD is essential for them as they endeavor to build their teaching career.

Another finding from the study that was perceived to be beneficial to novice teachers is mentoring. Mentoring is a common type of induction assistance and some of its aspects are viewed positively by novice teachers. Mentors help pre-service teachers and novice teachers build their teaching confidence through observation, constructive feedback, and support throughout the induction period and beyond (Kidd, Brown & Fitzallen, 2015). Although it emerged during the interviews that schools involved in this study provided mentors for their novice teachers, it became apparent that the level of support received from the mentors varied. For instance, the findings revealed that only one mentor was responsible for the induction programme at school Y, while at school X a few mentors were responsible for induction programmes. Britton et al. (2000) and Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks and Lai (2009) assert that using multiple supporters makes mentoring practices more effective, as the coordinated induction activities of multiple providers then takes place. Therefore, the need for more than one supporter is important, especially in offering subject-specific support. It also emerged that at school Y, limited hours were allocated to novice teachers to participate in the induction programme, while at school X, novice teachers and mentors were allocated sufficient hours to engage in induction activities. However, this component (mentoring) has been described as important in the literature (Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005; Moir, 2003; Wong, 2004). Furthermore, the level of benefit received from mentors also varied from participating schools, that is, from having a mentor for each area of teaching or specialisation, to having mentor of little or no benefit. This finding concurs with Wong's (2004) article, which states that a quarter of novice teachers received little or no support from their mentors. Novice teachers need mentors who have time to observe their teaching and are easily reachable (Wong, 2004) and who know how to mentor effectively and efficiently. Moore and Swan (2008) shared that the minimum criteria for selecting a mentor are that the mentor is a successful classroom teacher, can articulate their practice, and has a level of understanding of how long it takes to get the teaching level they themselves are at. However, it is not enough to simply identify potential mentors

from the teaching pool who meet certain criteria. Once the potential mentors have been identified, they must then be trained to serve as effective mentors. This training must consist of several elements such as observation skills, strategies for working with adults, cognitive coaching, how to collect evidence to improve teaching, how to identify and communicate beginning teacher strengths, and how to build on those strengths (Stanbury & Zimmerman, 2000; cited in Moore & Swan, 2008).

Considering the fact that mentoring is perceived as an important component of induction programmes, especially for novice teachers, three elements that might have a positive impact on the mentoring are therefore suggested by McCollum, (2014): 1) The mentor and mentee should be in close physical proximity to one another. Having the mentor right next door may lead to higher levels of perceived satisfaction than situations in which novice teachers had mentors are not located in close proximity. 2) The mentor and mentee should teach the same subject matter. It has been shown that this connection of having the same responsibilities produced greater perceived satisfaction than when the mentor and mentee had different teaching assignments. 3) The mentor and mentee should work with students of the same grade level (McCollum, 2014).

#### *Limitations of the Study and Future Research*

This is a small-scale, qualitative study focused on a few selected primary schools in Namibia. The advantage of the approach used in this research study is that the researcher was able to spend more time with the participants and gather more in-depth knowledge in terms of their experiences than would have been possible using a large-scale study. Although the current study provided more insight into the way novice teachers in Namibia are supported with induction programmes and their experiences thereof, the findings may not be generalisable. Therefore, a large-scale study would be desirable to show whether the current findings would be confirmed. Efforts to make a difference in the lives of novice teachers are needed. Continued research focusing on evaluating and assessing perceptions and outcomes of induction programmes and tracking, analyzing, and improving working conditions of novice teachers is warranted. The present research study adds to the body of knowledge on opinions of novice teachers about specific aspects of induction programmes.

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