



Provision of support structures for beginner teachers at schools: An induction programme approach

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Abstract – This study explored providing support structures for beginner teachers at schools during the induction programme in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district schools. Entering the teaching profession is a challenge for many beginner teachers. Studies in the South African and international contexts have shown that beginner teachers often experience a lack of support from their colleagues or inadequate mentorship when they enter the teaching profession, which can lead to frustration and even resignation. One aspect that might help beginner teachers overcome this challenge is through the support structures offered through induction programs. Induction programmes are designed to prepare beginner teachers when they enter the workplace. Many such induction programmes in South Africa and internationally have not guided new teachers' objectives in their new positions. A research gap reveals that novice teachers often lack support when they enter the profession. Using an induction programme, this study explored how support structures can be provided to beginner teachers participating in an induction programme. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory informs this study and employs a qualitative research approach, generating data through semi-structured interviews. The telephonic interviews were conducted in two different phases. The first (T1) occurred in January 2021, and the second (T2) took place in August 2021. This study interviewed fourteen participants drawn from fourteen secondary schools across the Bethlehem and QwaQwa areas within the Thabo-Mofutsanyane district. The research findings indicated a positive effect of offering support to beginner teachers in their first years of teaching, as this reduced their anxiety levels and made them feel well-informed and prepared. Therefore, this study provides conclusive evidence that supports the notion that structures for beginner teachers through induction programmes positively impact their preparation to acquire professional skills and contribute to learner development.

Keywords: Beginner teachers, First-year teaching experience, Induction programme, Schools, Support structures at schools

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I. INTRODUCTION

ENTERING the teaching profession is a challenge for many beginner teachers. Studies in the South African and international context have shown that beginner teachers report the lack of support from their colleagues or a lack of a mentor as a challenge they experience in their first years of teaching. This often leads to feelings of frustration and even resignation from the job (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). In South Africa, Makhananesa and Sepeng (2022) found that beginner teachers reported insufficient support because they became independently involved in different school activities. They had no support in classroom management and curricular, extracurricular, and governance issues. Similarly, Makafane (2022) observed that beginner teachers in Lesotho were assigned large classes with numerous students, which led to problems in classroom management, content delivery, and discipline issues, with no support available to address these issues.

Support structures through induction programmes are one of the elements that can help beginner teachers in their first years of teaching and encourage them to stay in the teaching profession, which is why they should be implemented. Induction programmes are designed to prepare beginner teachers when they enter the workplace (Halford, 1998, p. 33), particularly in cases where the support structure is not offered to them through induction programmes. New teachers must develop their teaching skills through trial and error. These skills (lesson

preparation, teaching methods, assessment, and classroom administration) do not happen overnight. By the time they developed the skills, some teachers would have already resigned from the profession (Freiberg, 2002). Many such induction programmes in South Africa and internationally have not guided new teachers' objectives in their new positions (Steyn, 2004). Additionally, research suggests that the support provided to new teachers, such as mentoring and introductions, influences their decision to remain in the field (DeAngelis et al., 2013; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kelly et al., 2018).

Overall, Previous research shows a gap in school support structures through induction programmes for beginner teachers in South Africa. Thus, it is essential to introduce and implement support structures at schools to help beginner teachers in their first years of teaching.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although research has consistently emphasised the importance of induction and support programs for beginning teachers, evidence from South Africa indicates that many schools still lack systematic and sustained structures to support beginning teachers. Beginner teachers often enter the profession without proper mentoring, feedback mechanisms, or institutional guidance to assist them in handling the academic, administrative, and emotional challenges of the job. As a result, they face difficulties in classroom management, lesson delivery, and adapting to school culture, factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction and attrition. The absence of effective induction support

hinders the professional growth of novice teachers and negatively impacts the quality of teaching and learner outcomes. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the availability, nature, and effectiveness of support structures provided to beginner teachers in South African schools.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Albert Bandura was born in 1925 and is widely regarded as the pioneer of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Bandura's SCT has significantly impacted several research fields, including education, health science, and social policy. Bandura (1986) expanded the theory from social learning to social cognitive theory. According to Green and Piel (2015), SCT provides individuals with a framework for anticipating and comprehending human behaviour change. Bandura's theory introduced self-efficacy as a framework for describing human behaviour, in which it encourages action results but not vice versa (Bandura, 2006a; 2006b). Their self-efficacy ideas influence how people think, either positively or negatively. Self-efficacy is vital to self-motivation because it influences goal setting, task performance, and outcomes (Mark et al., 2011). According to the hypothesis, people participate in activities depending on their abilities and accomplishments. Self-efficacy remains essential because it is a key component of Bandura's social cognitive theory (Betz, 2007).

SCT is based on the notion of reciprocal determinism. The interplay of a person (cognitive events, emotional events, and biological events) with the environment (physical environment, family and friends, and social influences) and behaviour (motor reactions, verbal responses, and social interactions) is central to reciprocal determinism. Reciprocal determinism is a hypothesis that the outcomes of previous events determine a person's actions or decisions. This suggests that people's actions are influenced by what has already occurred. Bandura goes on to claim that human activities, because of past occurrences, have an impact on the environment (Bandura, 1986). SCT posits that a person's behaviour is best understood through their perceptions of their social context. Psychologists have utilized this strategy to better understand human behaviours. In this approach, human motivation and actions depend on perceived self-efficacy, which is influenced by the outcomes of circumstances and actions (Green & Piel, 2015).

The researcher analysed qualitative data from a sample of beginner teachers to investigate their confidence (self-efficacy) in their capacity to perform the daily activities demanded of them in this study. The researcher investigated how an introduction programme aided the self-efficacy of beginner teachers in schools, how obstacles presented to individuals affect their self-efficacy levels, and how their work environment influences their behaviour.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Support structures through induction programmes for beginner teachers internationally

According to Azhar and Kayani (2017), the primary role of a preparation programme is to develop the capabilities of beginner teachers and enhance their teaching competency. One of the most fundamental things to do at the school level is to conduct an induction for beginner teachers. Induction is necessary for beginner teachers because they are given the same responsibilities as those of the more experienced colleagues (Magudu, 2014). Induction programmes equip beginner teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge when they enter the workplace (Halford, 1998).

A study by Shanks et al. (2022) compared the induction programmes of beginner teachers in three countries: Scotland, Malta, and Denmark. In Scotland, a national teacher induction scheme has been in place since 2002. Malta introduced an induction programme in 2010, while Denmark has no national scheme; however, some types of support are organised at the school level. In their findings, they discovered that the implementation of mentoring faced difficulties in all three countries,

including a lack of time for observation and feedback, as well as uncertainty about how to effectively mentor. Critical elements of teacher professional development were also lacking, including the expansion of pedagogical knowledge and understanding, as well as the establishment of a professional identity. The results showed that some professional practice areas, such as evaluative processes, are more challenging to support through mentorship than others.

The beginner teachers' mentors and university instructors who participated in the Scottish study appreciated the chance to learn in a partnership community. The mentors emphasised the advantages and difficulties of encouraging beginner teachers to conduct an inquiry in the classroom. They also found that more assistance was offered in Scotland and Malta, where national induction programmes with mentors are in place, than in Denmark, where each school determines the level of assistance given to beginning teachers. The significance of the level of aid to beginner teachers in the classroom was a critical finding of the three studies. In Scotland, a staff shortage made this assistance more challenging. In contrast, in Malta and Denmark, institutional support and school culture had a significant role in determining the extent of support. The presence of a mentor (Gray & Taie, 2015), having access to high-quality professional development (Castleberry, 2010; Coldwell, 2017), or feeling self-sufficient (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007) may all help beginner teachers continue in the field.

In countries such as the United States of America, Japan, Germany, Scotland, and England, there is widespread support for implementing induction programs, and support for beginning teachers is also offered through mentorship programs (Black, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Rippon & Martin, 2003). This is crucial in fostering the success of novice teachers in their first years of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Induction programmes in countries like Israel are mandatory for all beginner teachers in their first year of teaching, and their successful completion of the one-year programme is a requirement for obtaining a permanent teaching license. The schools, national educational authorities, and teacher training institutions are jointly responsible for implementing an induction programme for these teachers (Nasser-Abu, Alhija, & Fresko, 2016). Renbarger and Davis (2019) urged that there should be practical applications, such as improving the working environments for beginner teachers. These initial supports are crucial in a job with a high turnover rate because the first few years of a teacher's career impact their future commitment.

According to Howe (2006), an induction programme should ensure that new teachers have mentors and a reduced teaching load, and they should be granted time to observe other teachers. They should be allowed to interact with colleagues and respond to the guidance offered by their mentors. Mentors can review their practice and recommend strategies to enhance the quality of their classroom interactions. At the same time, Killeavy (2006) stated that an induction programme provides beginner teachers with opportunities to become comfortable in learning new things and consult with their colleagues, enabling them to engage in their new profession. An induction programme can develop and refine skills that are lacking or require improvement. An induction entails teaching and learning, primarily focused on supporting beginner teachers in their new profession by allowing them to experience the work to make informed career decisions (Farnsworth & Higham, 2012). Furthermore, induction should also be provided to experienced individuals who supervise and mentor the transition of beginner teachers into operational professionals.

Support structures through induction programmes for beginner teachers in South Africa

The need for structured teacher orientation in South Africa was officially recognised in 2005, when the Commission of Ministers for Teacher Education published A National Framework for Teacher Education in South Africa (Department of Education [DoE], 2005). The report emphasised that "every new teacher should be required to participate in a formal induction or mentoring programme for support for at least two years" (DoE, 2005, p. 14). Despite this policy recognition,

induction programmes have not been systematically incorporated into teacher preparation. Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus among educational stakeholders on the importance of supporting beginner teachers through induction (DoE, 2005).

Concerns have been raised regarding the qualifications and preparedness of pre-service teachers produced by the South African education system. Botha and Rens (2018) observed that some beginner teachers struggle to apply their theoretical training to the practical realities of modern classrooms, indicating a persistent gap between theory and practice. This underscores the need for effective mentoring and induction to bridge this divide. Similarly, several studies have reported that novice teachers often face challenges related to instructional knowledge, classroom management, time management, and administrative duties (Botha & Rens, 2018; Modise, 2016; Condy & Blease, 2014).

Recent studies have examined the impact of induction on the professional experiences of beginning teachers. Tjirumbi and Muller (2023) examined teachers' experiences before and after induction within a South African district and found that, before induction, many struggled with curriculum implementation, learner discipline, workload, and overcrowded classrooms. After induction, however, components such as peer support, leadership involvement (particularly from departmental heads), and professional development opportunities (through workshops and the IQMS model) enhanced teachers' professional identity, motivation, and self-efficacy. In a subsequent study, Tjirumbi (2024) recommended strengthening the quality of mentorship, feedback, and sense of belonging within induction programmes to enhance teachers' professional identity.

Similarly, Mkhabele et al. (2024) investigated how School Management Teams (SMTs) in quintile one to three primary schools implement induction. Their findings revealed that induction processes were often inconsistently or poorly executed due to SMTs' limited understanding, workload, time constraints, and unclear procedures. Dyosini (2024), focusing on the foundation phase in urban Johannesburg, found that novice teachers preferred induction processes that incorporated coaching, mentoring, and peer collaboration, promoting school-based professional growth. Correspondingly, Ndabankulu (2023) highlighted that induction enhances the confidence of beginner teachers, their professional skill development, and their capacity to contribute effectively to learner achievement.

In contrast, Badrudin (2022) reported that, although mentors were often assigned, mentoring was largely informal and inconsistent across schools. Support for beginner teachers was typically offered through ad hoc advice and informal relationships with experienced colleagues. Despite mentoring being included in teachers' job descriptions, there were no clear national guidelines on implementation. The Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), though sometimes used as a mentoring tool, was found to be ineffective because it was not appropriately adapted for induction purposes.

V. METHODS

Research approach

A qualitative research approach was employed to explore the experiences of beginner teachers with induction programmes. Qualitative research enables the collection of non-numerical data, such as words and images, to understand meanings, concepts, and experiences (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Berg & Howard, 2012). This approach was suitable because it enabled the theory to emerge from the data and allowed the researcher to adapt procedures based on participants' responses rather than testing pre-existing data.

Research design

A qualitative case study research design was employed to gain in-depth insight into the experiences of beginner teachers in real-world contexts (Maree, 2016). This design was appropriate because it provided the flexibility to capture personal perceptions, experiences, and emotions, which are critical for understanding the effectiveness of

support structures during induction.

Research site

The study formed part of a research project conducted in the towns of Bethlehem and Qwaqwa, within the Thabo Mofutsanyane district of the Eastern Free State Province, South Africa. Bethlehem is an urban town situated in the Eastern part of the Free State Province and serves as the commercial hub of the region, providing access to surrounding rural communities. Qwaqwa, also known as Phuthaditjhaba, is a rural area situated around Wistiehoek, near the point where the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, and Lesotho meet. It was initially designed as the homeland for the South Sotho-speaking people during the apartheid regime (Tswala, 2010).

Participants

This study formed part of a larger research project that initially involved 47 beginner teachers from the Thabo Mofutsanyana District. From this group, 14 participants were randomly selected to take part in the interviews. These participants were drawn from 14 secondary schools located in the Bethlehem and QwaQwa areas within the district. The sample comprised eleven females and three males, aged between 20 and 40 years, representing diverse cultural backgrounds. They taught across Grades R-12 and had three years or less of teaching experience.

Data collection method

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. This method allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences in depth while ensuring consistency through predetermined guiding questions (Maree, 2016). It was relevant for this study because it captured detailed, contextual insights into the support structures offered during induction programmes, while allowing participants the freedom to share personal experiences and perceptions.

Procedures

In January 2021, the initial round of interviews was conducted over the phone. The COVID-19 lockdown rules made it impossible for the researcher to meet with the participants personally. In August 2021, a second round of interviews took place. These interviews included both telephone and in-person components. By abiding by COVID-19 rules, such as maintaining a social distance of 1.5 metres from the participants, this was made achievable. The first set was intended to be introductory, gathering information on the participants' expectations regarding the induction model. The second set of interviews aimed to gather participants' general experiences with the induction model and the changes they had experienced since beginning the induction process. In a study, interviews confirm data from other sources (Maree, 2016). The researcher gained a deeper understanding of how support structures, through an induction programme, supported beginning teachers. The interview questions were organised so that pertinent inquiries could be asked.

Data analysis

The researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to analyse and identify patterns or themes observed in the data and then arranged and described the data in depth. Thematic analysis proved to be a versatile and valuable research method, with the potential to provide a rich, detailed, yet complex account of the data. It entailed reviewing and rereading all the collected data from the interviews, compiling a preliminary list of themes that emerged from the data, and rereading the data to ensure that it corresponded with the participants' words and the study questions. Bird (2005, p. 227) describes it as "a critical stage of data analysis within qualitative interpretative methodology." Furthermore, this entailed connecting the themes to direct quotes and notes, and researching the categories present in the themes to provide an interpretation. To minimise bias, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal, engaged in peer debriefing, and conducted member checking to verify participants' responses. Trustworthiness was established following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework, which emphasises credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these criteria was purposefully addressed through methodological techniques designed

to enhance the integrity and rigour of the qualitative data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of the Free State Ethics Committee, and authorisation was also obtained from the Department of Basic Education to conduct the research at schools. Participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. COVID-19 safety protocols were followed for in-person interviews.

VI. RESULTS

Thematic results

Phase 1 (T1)

The induction programme started in October 2020. The researcher conducted Phase 1 of the interviews two months after the induction program had commenced with the beginner teachers.

Table 2: Phase 1

Themes	Subthemes
Support structures	School-based mentoring
	Peer support
	Training sessions
	Personal development plan

Provision of Support structures

The participants' responses from semi-structured interviews revealed that school-based mentoring, peer support, training sessions, and personal development plans could serve as the support structures that beginner teachers received in their initial school years.

School-based mentoring

The participants' responses from semi-structured interviews revealed that school-based mentoring could serve as a support structure for beginner teachers in their initial years of teaching. Three participants mentioned receiving school-based mentoring from their heads of departments and colleagues. One participant mentioned that the form of mentorship involved observing the mentor in class for a period of three months. This helped them in terms of curriculum implementation and in interacting with their colleagues and learners. The participants shared the following.

"Yes, I got mentorship at school from my HoD (head of the department) and from my colleagues, the teachers who were already there" (Participant 2).

"I think my first year was not that easy, but I did manage to enjoy the work and know the work better because I had a very supportive HoD (head of the department). Yes, the HoD who was helping me work, who made things much easier for me" (Participant 3).

"I think it was fine, yes - Yes, my HoD (head of the department)" (Participant 7).

"I did because I got into my school in 2019, not 2020. I did, because, as I mentioned earlier, after I was hired, I had to attend my HoD's (head of the department) class for about three months, covering the first quarter and the entire quarter. I was in her class, and she showed me how to plan and implement the curriculum and interact with my colleagues, the learners, and the faculty staff" (Participant 1).

Some participants mentioned that they did not get any school-based mentoring. Hence, they signed the contract and were shown the classes they would be teaching. The participants shared the following.

"I did not get much of the mentoring, yeah. When I came to school, I was told, "Okay, you have arrived, here is a contract, okay, these are the classes you are going to teach" (Participant 4).

"I was just given a class to teach with no mentor or somebody to show me how it works" (Participant 13).

"Eish...(Oops). Hehe... (Laughing) I did not have a mentor as a first-time teacher because we just had to get in class and do without being mentored" (Participant 5).

"No, no, we did not" (Participant 1).

Some participants have reported experiencing a barrier between themselves and their mentors due to the age gap. They were not comfortable being open to them about challenges. One participant shared the following.

"We have HoDs, but in terms of emotional support, I do not think we can open up freely because some of our HoDs are way older, and we cannot interact in such a way that we are free" (Participant 1).

Some participants mentioned that their opinions or views were not considered when interacting with mentors. One participant shared the following.

"I think the new teachers are not accommodated at school, like, they need us to come and work and go home. They do not listen to us" (Participant 8).

Therefore, some participants were assigned mentors to help them transition into the job, while others were not. Others felt a barrier between them and their mentors because of the age gap, while some did not consider their opinions.

Peer support

The responses from semi-structured interviews revealed that beginner teachers considered peer support a support structure they received in their initial years of school teaching. Most participants' responses indicate that they received peer support in 2020, which came from other beginner teachers in their schools. The participants shared the following.

"Yeah, I got peer support, I can say, from the new teachers who were also entering the field" (Participant 3).

"Yes, there was a new teacher I worked closely with" (Participant 5).

"We supported each other when there was something, maybe when one of us did not understand a concept" (Participant 2).

Therefore, peer support was one form of support that beginner teachers received, especially from other new teachers. This network, with other beginner teachers, helped them navigate the teaching profession together.

Training sessions

The responses from semi-structured interviews revealed that beginner teachers considered training sessions to be a support structure they received during their initial years of teaching in schools. Participants indicated that they had training sessions at the beginning of the year 2020, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshops were primarily designed to assist them with curriculum adjustments due to the pandemic's impact. The curriculum had to be adjusted to account for the time lost due to the pandemic. The participants shared the following.

"Yes, we did have workshops; it was on ATPs (Annual Teaching Plans) because the curriculum had to be, you know, changed a little bit because of the time lost due to the COVID-19 lockdown regulations" (Participant 2).

"I think yes; I think I did. Yes" (Participant 3).

"Yes, it was, at least, a bit helpful. I got to know different things, different methods to approach learners and everything" (Participant 9).

Therefore, the participants received training sessions, which they found helpful in adapting to the curriculum changes. The curriculum had to be trimmed due to the time lost for teaching and learning because of the COVID-19 lockdown regulations. Additionally, they mentioned that they were provided with methods to approach the learners during that period.

Personal development

The responses from semi-structured interviews revealed that beginner teachers considered a personal development plan a support structure they received in their initial years of school teaching. Some participants mentioned that they had to develop a personal development plan. The plan was either in the format of IQMS or just their plan. The participants shared the following.

"Yes, I did. I did at the end of 2019. I had my development plan" (Participant 2).

"Yes, we did IQMS (Integrated quality management system), but for last year, it was just self-evaluation only... due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They said we should only do self-evaluation" (Participant 4).

"The IQMS files and all those things.... Ja, so I would say I received them" (Participant 14).

Some participants mentioned that they had to create a development plan to manage the classes and cope with the challenges they were

experiencing. One participant shared the following.

"Yes, I did. I had to come up with strategies to manage those classes, you know, to cope because it was very challenging. So, it gets easier, it gets better with years and experience" (Participant 7).

Therefore, the participants' responses indicated they had established an individual development plan for 2020. They mentioned IQMS as a model they used for individual development plans. IQMS helps individuals identify their strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies to address the identified areas for improvement.

Table 3: Phase 2

Themes	Subthemes
Support structures	School-based mentoring Peer support Training sessions Personal development plan

Provision of support structures

The responses from semi-structured interviews revealed that school-based mentoring, peer support, training sessions, and personal development plans were the support structures beginner teachers received in their initial school years.

School-based mentoring

The responses from semi-structured interviews revealed that school-based mentoring was a support structure that beginner teachers received in their initial years of teaching in schools. The participants reported receiving school-based mentoring from their department heads and colleagues. Some participants revealed that the form of mentorship was observing the mentor in class for three months. This helped them in terms of curriculum implementation and in interacting with their colleagues and learners. The participants shared the following.

"I was assigned a mentor, somebody who helps me with whatever case I have, or whatever problems I encounter, especially with teaching and learning and anything regarding the teaching process" (Participant 3).

"It was excellent. I think the more support you have, the better it goes in classes" (Participant 2).

Some participants felt that the mentors they were assigned were not the right ones, as they were knowledgeable in the subject, and they believed that the mentors were not very helpful regarding subject content. The participants shared the following.

"The funny part is that I have a HoD for business studies, but she does not teach or know anything about business studies. So, I sometimes find it difficult to set a test and give it to her because she would say, okay, you know the content, and then I do not know anything about business" (Participant 8).

"I just have an HoD, but she is not my mentor, because obviously, she is not... She has not done life sciences, so there is no way she can mentor me concerning it, while she does not know it" (Participant 6).

Some beginner teachers were assigned mentors who were nearing retirement, while others had mentors who had left the school but continued to stay in contact with them. The participants shared the following.

"They also must check their age, if it is not close to retirement, ya bona (you see)? Because if they are so old, they would always say, very soon I will be leaving, as the case in my school" (Participant 1).

"In terms of my experience with my mentor in 2021, as I indicated earlier, we departed, but sometimes we have telephonic conversations" (Participant 7).

"But then, I think that movement has disturbed him with the project" (Participant 5).

"It was unfortunate that our mentors, one of them, got promoted. He is now a principal. So, he left the school before we even started. And then the other one is now at home; he is a pensioner. So, they both left before we even started" (Participant 4).

Therefore, some participants had good mentors who helped them, while others mentioned that they had mentors nearing retirement. Other mentors left the schools due to promotions, and some left for undisclosed reasons. The mentors who left the schools were not replaced.

Peer support

The responses from semi-structured interviews revealed that beginner teachers considered peer support a support structure they received in their initial years of school teaching. Most participants' responses indicate that they received peer support in 2020, which came from other beginner teachers in their schools. The participants shared the following.

"I did. Okay, we are supporting each other there. So, I would say I got 100% of support. If I needed support with a specific learner, I would ask one of my colleagues, and they would assist. So yeah, they have been supportive" (Participant 1).

"Most of the support I get is from my peers" (Participant 3).

"We can just help each other" (Participant 6).

Some participants mentioned that they changed schools and lost the peers who supported them, along with the support they got from them. One participant shared the following.

"I left my peer at the previous school. There is no longer that relationship with my peer. And I hear that he also resigned" (Participant 2).

Therefore, some beginner teachers received support from their peers, while others, having changed schools, also lost the support they had received from their peers in those schools.

Training sessions

The responses from semi-structured interviews revealed that beginner teachers considered training sessions to be a support structure they received during their initial years of teaching in schools. The participants reported having undergone training sessions at the beginning of 2020, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshops were primarily designed to assist them with curriculum adjustments due to the pandemic's impact. The participants shared the following.

"They did organise some workshop for me, you know, so that I will enhance my knowledge in teaching" (Participant 2).

"We have a lot of workshops. Now, it is virtual workshops. But still, there are a lot of workshops that you can attend, so that they help you to see how you can change, maybe, explaining this work or things like that" (Participant 5).

"There are so many workshops that I attended, but then, I think this one, I have learned something" (Participant 3).

"During the beginning of the year, the business studies subject advisor did an online workshop due to the COVID-19 pandemic" (Participant 7).

However, some participants indicated that they did not get any training due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following.

"But then, in terms of the officials from the ministry, due to COVID-19, there were no school visits, so I do not blame them" (Participant 1).

Therefore, in addition to pre-service training at university, professional work often requires extensive training for new teachers upon entry. This is done to help beginner teachers easily transition into the job. Some beginner teachers had virtual training workshops due to the pandemic, while others did not receive them because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Personal development

The responses from semi-structured interviews revealed that beginner teachers considered a personal development plan a support structure they received in their initial years of school teaching. One participant shared the following.

"They are based on me, what I have seen, what I have identified as my weaknesses or the areas in which I lack. So, I identified them and tried to develop strategies, you know" (Participant 6).

While IQMS is a well-known tool for personal development plans in schools, some participants indicated that they aim to see their learners succeed. The participants shared the following.

"I do not know if it is a personal plan, but what I planned was... because I wanted to focus more on these learners since most were failing. So, yeah, I told myself that I want to see them pass, even though you know how they are; they would complain when they have to work. To see them pass was one of my plans" (Participant 1).

"I developed it, and it is called the IQMS because every year we have to do IQMS. There is, however, a specific part of the development programme. So, I

had to sit down and identify my weak areas, and I also had to come up with the intervention strategies" (Participant 5).

"They used to call it IQMS. We do a lesson. We present while the mentor teachers and the supervisors are there" (Participant 2).

Therefore, some beginner teachers used the IQMS system to develop their growth plans by identifying their weaknesses and devising interventions to address them.

Comparing the results between phase 1 and phase 2

Table 3: Comparing results between Phase 1 and Phase 2

Themes	Phase 1	Phase 2
	Subthemes	Subthemes
Support structures	School-based mentoring	School-based mentoring
	Peer support	Peer support
	Training sessions	Training sessions
	Personal development plan	Personal development plan

Provision of support structures

No changes occurred regarding the support structures that the participants received during T1 and T2. The sub-themes identified during T1, which included School-based mentoring, Peer support, Training sessions, and Personal development plan, remained the same as those identified in T2.

During T1, some beginner teachers reported receiving support. However, in T1, some beginner teachers suggested they did not receive support. This was not the case in T2. During T2, all the beginner teachers reported receiving support.

The participants expressed the same information in both sessions, whereas some became disconnected from their mentors due to the age gap, and others were nearing retirement. Some participants had good mentors who helped them, while others mentioned that they had mentors nearing retirement. Other mentors left the schools due to promotions, and some left for undisclosed reasons. The mentors who left the schools were not replaced.

Regarding peer support, most participants mentioned receiving support from their peers and departmental heads during T1 and T2. No changes were recorded. Training sessions continued as the curriculum had to be trimmed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and participants in both T1 and T2 developed their growth plans. In addition to pre-service training at university, professional work often requires extensive training for new teachers upon entry. This is done to help beginner teachers easily transition into the job. Some beginner teachers had virtual training workshops due to the pandemic, while others did not receive them because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding personal development plans, some beginner teachers utilized the IQMS system to develop their growth plans by identifying weaknesses and devising interventions to address them.

VII. DISCUSSION

Support structures for beginner teachers are fundamental as they help the newly qualified teachers navigate the profession. These support structures can take various forms, including school-based mentoring, peer support, training sessions, and personal development plans. According to the reviewed literature, the support structure offered to beginning teachers helps them overcome the challenges they face in the workplace (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). This paper explored these support structures by implementing an induction programme at schools. Some beginner teachers expressed that they had mentorship from their Departmental heads at school or senior teachers before implementing the induction programme. During the induction programme, beginner teachers reported being assigned mentors but felt uncomfortable sharing information due to the age gap. Others mentioned that their assigned mentors did not stay long at their schools, leaving them without anyone to continue mentoring them. Others felt that they had mentors who were very close to retirement, which made it difficult for them to connect with them. This shows the importance of having mentorship.

Regarding peer support, beginner teachers felt that they received

support from their peers, especially other beginner teachers, as they were more comfortable sharing information with them. One participant mentioned that although their peer changed schools during the induction period, they still managed to stay in touch and supported each other. Beginner teachers felt more connected and comfortable with the support they received from their peers than from the mentors, largely due to the age gap. The findings from the participants coincided with the literature; the presence of a mentor (Gray & Taie, 2015), having access to high-quality professional development (Castleberry, 2010; Coldwell, 2017), or feeling self-sufficient (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007) may all help beginner teachers continue in the field.

In terms of training sessions, beginner teachers mentioned that they received training in the form of workshops prior to the start of the induction programme. During the induction training sessions, the primary focus was on covering the curriculum. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the curriculum had to be adjusted to accommodate the time lost during lockdown. During the COVID-19 pandemic, gatherings of any sort were prohibited, including the training that beginner teachers usually received from the district level. Their training aimed to reduce the curriculum for that year, and this training was conducted using online platforms.

In terms of personal development, participants mentioned that they developed their development plans using the integrated quality management system (IQMS) before the induction program, which continued during the program. IQMS is used when a teacher reflects on their teaching practices, identifies their strengths and weaknesses, and then draws an action plan to develop those weaknesses.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The study wanted to assess the provision of Support structures for beginner teachers at schools during an induction programme. Support structures should be implemented at the school and district levels to support beginner teachers during their first year of teaching. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on induction programmes or institutionalized induction processes in South Africa. Given these findings, teachers close to retirement should not be assigned as mentors at the school level, as this was an issue that participants mentioned experiencing. Once these individuals retired, they were not assigned another mentor, preventing proper mentorship at schools. The schools should invest in peer mentoring as it is more effective, as beginner teachers feel more comfortable with their peers. The district continued to provide training through other means, even during the pandemic. To summarize, significant work remains to be done throughout the country to establish a proper support structure for beginning teachers in schools as they enter the teaching profession. The researcher goes on to say that for beginner teachers to succeed, they must be trained and supported.

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X. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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Table 1: Biographical results of participants

Participants	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Locations	Grade levels	Highest qualifications
Participant 1	Black	Female	20-30	QwaQwa	Grades R and 1-3 (Foundation Phase)	B.Ed.
Participant 2	Black	Female	20-30	QwaQwa	Grades R and 1-3 (Foundation Phase)	B.Ed.
Participant 3	Black	Female	20-30	QwaQwa	Grades 10-12 (FET Phase)	B.Ed.
Participant 4	Black	Female	31-40	QwaQwa	Grades 10-12 (FET Phase)	PGCE
Participant 5	Black	Male	20-30	QwaQwa	Grades 10-12 (FET Phase)	B.Tech. in electrical engineering
Participant 6	Black	Female	20-30	Bethlehem	Grades 10-12 (FET Phase)	B.Ed.
Participant 7	Black	Female	20-30	Bethlehem	Grades 4-6 (Intermediate Phase)	B.Ed.
Participant 8	Black	Female	20-30	Bethlehem	Grades 4-6 (Intermediate Phase)	Hons. Ed.
Participant 9	Black	Female	20-30	Bethlehem	Grades 7-9 (Senior Phase)	B.Ed.
Participant 10	Black	Female	20-30	QwaQwa	Grades 10-12 (FET Phase)	PGCE
Participant 11	Black	Male	20-30	QwaQwa	Grades 4-6 (Intermediate Phase)	B.Ed.
Participant 12	Black	Female	20-30	QwaQwa	Grades 10-12 (FET Phase)	B.Ed.
Participant 13	Black	Female	31-40	QwaQwa	Grades 7-9 (Senior Phase)	B.Ed.
Participant 14	Black	Male	31-40	QwaQwa	Grades 7-9 (Senior Phase)	PGCE

B.Tech. in electrical engineering

B.Ed.: Bachelor's degree in Education

PGCE: Postgraduate Certificate in Education

Hons Ed.: Honours Education degree