

A Comprehensive Examination of University-Based Induction Support for Early Career Teachers

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BACKGROUND

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of teacher educators in supporting early career teachers during their initial years in the profession. Currently, a significant percentage of teachers leave the field within their first five years (Ingersoll et al., 2022). Research indicates that providing induction support to new educators is one of the most effective strategies for improving teacher retention (Ronfeldt & Kiel, 2017). Given this reality, it is more important than ever for universities to offer meaningful support to their graduates as they transition into the teaching workforce.

- Teacher education: The higher education programs that are designed to produce and teach future teachers.
- Teacher induction: A program designed to mentor and support novice educators during the early stages of their teaching careers.

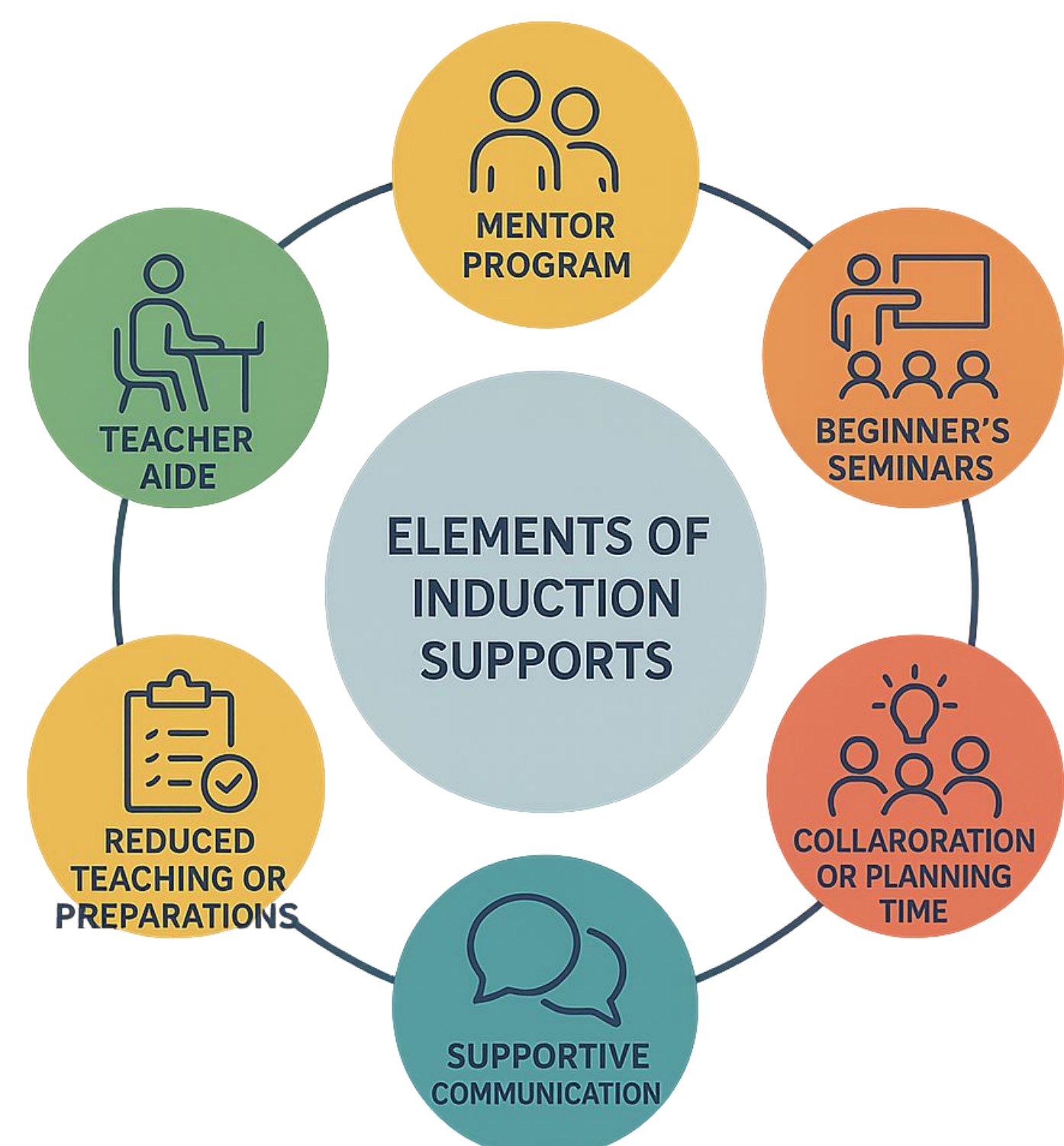


Image based on (Ronfeldt & Kiel, 2017)

Objective

To examine the role of teacher educators and their induction programs in supporting early-career teachers during their critical early years in the profession.

Research Questions

- What are universities doing to bridge the gap between professional education and teacher induction?
- Who benefits when universities support their teacher education graduates
- What challenges do universities face when doing this work?

METHODOLOGY

This research project was conducted using a phenomenological approach, focusing on the “lived experiences” of participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews featuring open-ended questions, allowing for rich and meaningful responses. Several individuals were invited to participate either from an initial list or through a snowballing technique and seven were subsequently interviewed via Zoom.

- Recruitment** - A small initial group was identified and emailed to participate in interviews all consisting of those who work the induction systems. Additional participants were identified through snowball sampling based on interviewee recommendations.
- Data Collection** - Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and reviewed and verified by both researchers for accuracy. A total of five transcripts were prepared for analysis.
- Data Analysis** - After data collection, transcripts were analyzed using a coding process in which each line was reviewed by both researchers and categorized through mutual agreement. The main categories identified were:
 - Outcomes
 - Challenges
 - Elements of Program
 - Bridges
 - Perspectives on induction
 - Resources

benefits teacher
phenomenological induction
coach challenges educators
support transcripts mentor bridging
coding

INCENTIVES PEOPLE IN PROGRAM ACTIVITIES
OUTCOMES CONSEQUENCES OF CHALLENGES OUTCOMES DESIRED ELEMENTS
NEEDED ACTIVITIES FOR OTHERS
ELEMENTS OF PROGRAM
BRIDGES
CHALLENGES
RESOURCES
PERSPECTIVES

RESULTS

What do these programs do?

- Teachers in every program are paired with mentor figures who support them in various aspects of their early teaching careers. These mentors provide guidance, reassurance, and a foundation for professional growth.
- Programs offer events designed to support new teachers. These range from small in-person gatherings to large virtual events that celebrate and showcase teachers' hard work.
- Some well-funded programs are also able to provide "teacher support packages/goodie bags," which include classroom materials to help new educators transition smoothly into their roles.
- Many institutions offer continuing education credits—essential for teacher licensure renewal—providing both a incentive to participate and a valuable reason to stay engaged.
- Supportive alumni networks help keep teachers connected with one another, offering a space to share advice, ask questions, and simply have someone to talk to.
- Many teachers have the opportunity to return as mentors themselves—giving back to the community that once supported them while continuing their own growth in the process.

Who is able to benefit?

- Several individuals benefit from these support programs, but arguably the greatest beneficiary is the school system itself. Each program has data to demonstrate that these initiatives significantly improve teacher retention rates.
- Early Career Teachers also gain meaningful support—having access to a mentor-like figure creates a sense of reassurance, allowing them to feel more comfortable taking risks and learning from mistakes.
- The mentor and returning alumni also benefit from these programs by expanding their networks, honing their skills, and receiving support through induction programs, including compensation and a sense of community.

What are the challenges?

- As with many aspects of education, funding remains a constant challenge, with nearly every program in need of additional financial support.
- Mentorship is undeniably valuable, but it often places a heavy emotional burden on the mentors themselves. As one interviewee noted, “I do worry a lot about that, because we are potentially harming our mentors by giving them [that] load.”
- In some programs, if a teacher does not return to serve as a mentor, the level of support the institution can offer drops significantly.
- Many programs are limited in geographic scope—meaning that if a teacher relocates outside of the service area, they often lose nearly all of the benefits and support they previously received.

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CONCLUSION

Teacher induction is a vital component of the education system, with several countrie (Wei et al. 2025) and 29 states (Woods, 2016) requiring some form of induction program. These programs help bridge the gap between teacher education and induction by supplementing the school-provided mentor figure.

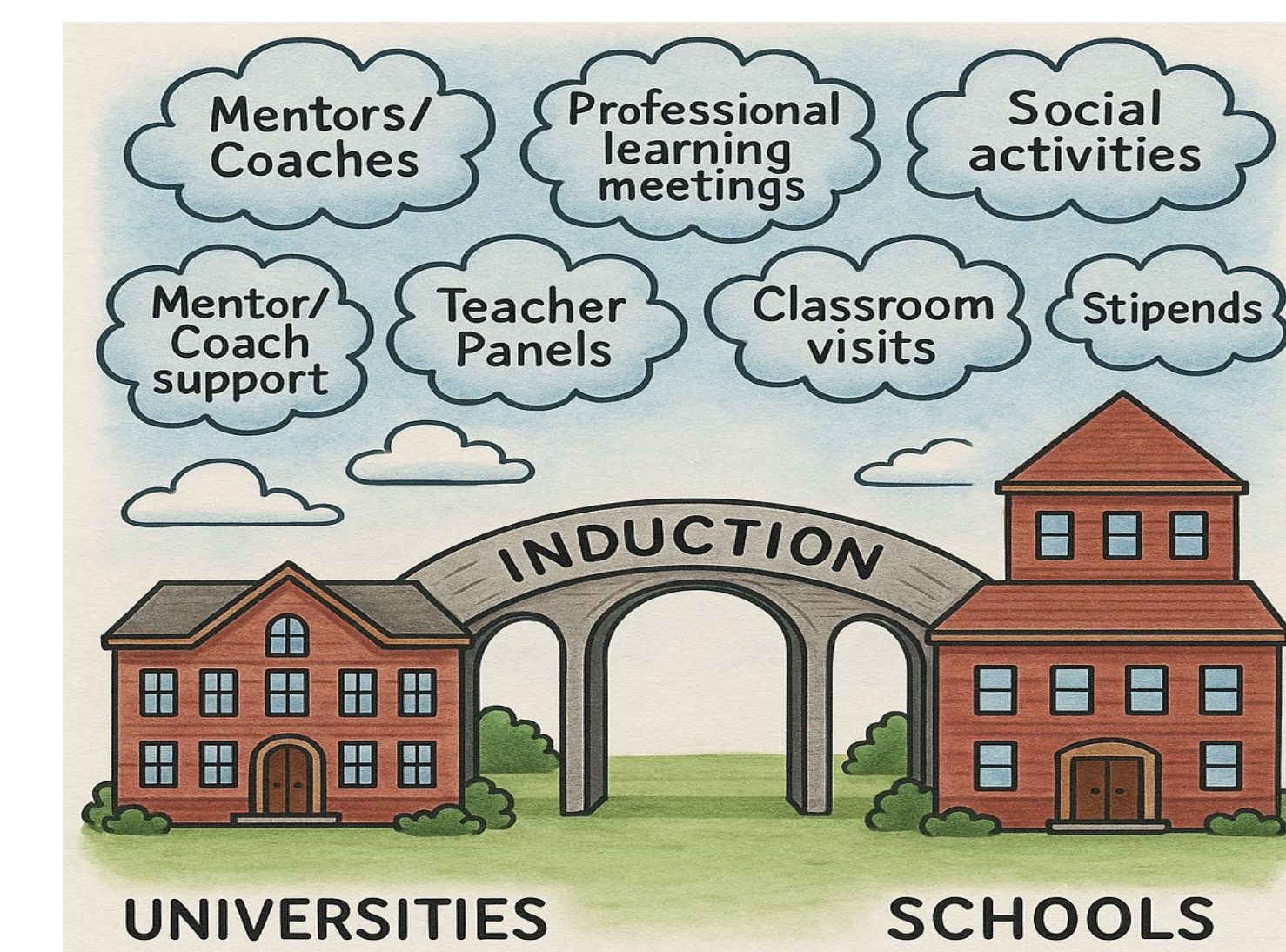
These programs support new teachers by offering goodie bags and providing a safe space during times of need.

While new teachers are the primary beneficiaries, other stakeholders also gain from these programs. School districts benefit from a statistically higher teacher retention rate, and higher education institutions gain future mentors to support new teachers.

However, these programs face challenges such as time constraints, limited funding, lack of resources, and the mental health burden on mentors.

Despite these difficulties, those involved in the programs find the work deeply meaningful, with one participant expressing: " I love the work and I'm still trying to incorporate new things and new ideas and stay on the cutting edge of what's happening.."

In the end, while these programs are not without their obstacles, they play an essential role in fostering a supportive environment for both new teachers and the broader educational community.



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