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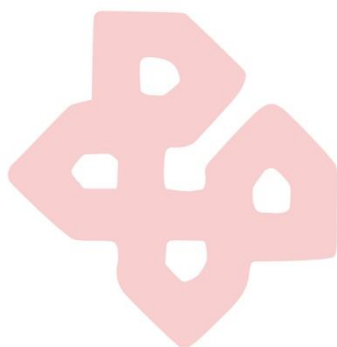
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FIVE YEARS LATER. RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF INDUCTION EXPERIENCES OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

Cinco años después. Análisis retrospectivo de experiencias de inducción de profesores principiantes



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Abstract:

The first years as a teacher are intense in both the professional and personal aspects. Tension, stress, dissatisfaction and insecurities affect teachers who start teaching. To support beginning teachers, many countries have launched induction programmes which offer beginners the support, not only of a mentor, but of a set of complementary training experiences. In this article, we describe the perceived effects of participants of the Inductio programme that was developed in the Dominican Republic five years ago. Questionnaires and interviews have been used with teachers participating in the programme, as well as principals and coordinators of schools where some of these teachers currently teach. The results show that discipline, planning and methodology remain problems for beginning teachers. Retrospective evaluation of the programme is highly favourable in all of its aspects, especially regarding the support received by a mentor. The Inductio programme has been shown to be effective in providing a training experience that is adapted to the needs of beginning teachers.

Key Words: *beginning teachers; induction programme; mentors.*



Resumen:

Los primeros años como docente son intensos tanto en el aspecto profesional como personal. Tensiones, estrés, insatisfacciones, inseguridades afectan a los docentes que empiezan a enseñar. Para apoyar a los profesores principiantes, muchos sistemas educativos han puesto en marcha programas de inducción. Estos programas ofrecen a los profesores principiantes el apoyo no sólo de un mentor, sino de un conjunto de experiencias formativas complementarias. En este artículo describimos los efectos percibidos por parte de los participantes del programa Inductio desarrollado en la República Dominicana hace cinco años. Se han utilizado cuestionarios y entrevistas a docentes participantes en el programa, así como se ha entrevistado a directores y coordinadores de centros educativos donde actualmente enseñan algunos de esos docentes. Los resultados muestran que la disciplina, planificación y metodología siguen siendo problemas de los docentes que empiezan. La valoración retrospectiva del programa es altamente favorable en todos sus aspectos, especialmente en lo que hace referencia al apoyo recibido por parte de un mentor. El programa Inductio se ha mostrado eficaz para ofrecer una experiencia formativa adaptada a las necesidades de los profesores principiantes.

Palabras clave: mentores; profesores principiantes; programa de inducción.

1. Introduction

The first years as a teacher are intense, both professionally and personally (Marent et al., 2020). Tensions, stress, dissatisfaction and insecurities affect teachers as they begin to teach, which could be considered as normal experiences at the beginning of any profession. This has been the case for a long time, notwithstanding the fact that the effects of these tensions do not fall solely on the beginning teachers, because the victims are their students (Voss & Kunter, 2020). For decades, the induction of new teachers to teaching has been a theme that is present in educational research (Veenman, 1984). Such research has shown that beginning teachers face specific problems in their early years of teaching that tend to be consistently persistent over time, and these include: discipline, motivation, evaluation and relationships with peers and families, which are still present today (Avalos, 2016; Farrell, 2016). Problems that pose a challenge for beginning teachers, as specified in the perspectives outlined by Keller-Schneider & Hericks (2019) are: 1) identity and role as a teacher; 2) teaching in response to individual needs; 3) classroom management to establish a healthy work environment and relationships with other teachers and with the school management team. The consequences of not addressing these problems are posing a serious deficit for the quality of education systems in many countries, manifested as high rates of beginning teachers leaving the teaching profession. Studies in the body of literature indicate that in the first 5 years between 40 and 50% of beginning teachers drop out of teaching in the United States; 10% in Australia; 13% in Switzerland; 45% in Belgium; 29% in the Netherlands; 35% in Israel; and 40% in Chile (Aarts et al., 2020, Avalos, 2014; Zavelevsky and Lishchinsky, 2020).

To help beginning teachers cope with these problems and learn the language and practice of teaching, education systems have established what are termed as teaching induction programmes, which represent a tailored response to the needs of beginning teachers. The TALIS report (OECD, 2019), which reviews the situation of teacher training, teaching and leadership in schools, highlights the importance of

induction programmes. This report states the following: “Induction for beginning teachers is important because it improves the quality of teaching and job satisfaction” (OECD, 2019, p. 141). However, induction is not a generalised policy in all OECD countries. This report describes that the countries with the highest percentage of incoming primary school teachers who are assigned a mentor or companion are Shanghai with 70%, followed by Kazakhstan with 60%, whereas the average in OECD countries is 22%. This means that, although there is evidence of the benefits of induction programmes (Howe, 2006; Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010; Orland-Barak, 2014), they are not generally practiced in all countries and for all teachers.

Induction programmes offer beginning teachers a relatively wide variety of training components: follow-up by an experienced teacher (mentor), courses and seminars, collaboration with other beginning teachers, journal writing, portfolios and online training (OECD, 2019). From an analysis of its components, Kearney (2016) identified those that have been characterised as effective induction programmes: a programme of one to two years duration with a focus on the learning and evaluation of teachers, partial accompaniment by a mentor, the opportunity for collaboration between beginning teachers, structured observations by mentors, reduction of teaching load, intensive learning in the workplace, seminars for beginning teachers, professional support, professional networks and, lastly, being a part of a broader professional development programme.

Of all these components, the most prominent for its high impact on beginning teachers is the mentor or companion, who is a teacher with greater experience, training capacity and motivation who supports beginning teachers (Hobson et al., 2009; Langdon et al., 2014; Sundli, 2007). Mentors accompany beginning teachers through joint planning, classroom observation, feedback, and proposing improvement plans. The effects that the mentor figure have on beginning teachers are varied: teaching effectiveness; commitment; well-being; and improvement of teaching practice (Richter et al., 2011). Mentors carry out different accompaniment activities with beginning teachers, some of which are personal and emotional support, pedagogical support, and instrumental support. Also, van Ginkel et al. (2016) identified four types of activities that mentors developed with beginning teachers: “providing emotional and psychosocial supports; supporting the construction of personal practical knowledge of the beginning teacher; create a favourable context for beginning teacher learning and changing the behaviour of the beginning teachers” (p. 206).

Induction programmes have been implemented in different countries, based on public policies that have highlighted the need to offer beginning teachers specific training, according to the needs of educational systems. The effectiveness of induction programmes has been demonstrated in the results of research into the impact of these programmes. In the literature review that was carried out by Ingersoll and Strong (2011), those authors found that induction programmes had a positive effect on teachers’ commitment, on their decision to continue teaching, and on improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes. More recently, Ronfeldt et al. (2017) achieved results that are similar to those of Ingersoll and Strong, when they found that induction predicts retention or abandonment of beginning teachers. Those

authors found that a specific type of induction support has a greater effect: supportive communication by school leaders, mentoring programmes, and seminars with beginning teachers. Professional support from mentors and other beginners is a key element for the development of beginning teachers (Thomas et al., 2019). Another positive aspect that induction programmes show is related with the reduction of stress in beginning teachers (Harmsen et al., 2019). Those authors found that discontent among beginning teachers increases throughout the second year of teaching when most induction programmes have already ended.

In this article, we focus on presenting a retrospective assessment regarding an induction programme (INDUCTIO) that was developed in the Dominican Republic during the academic year of 2015-2016. That programme has already been documented in a previous publication (Marcelo et al., 2016), but what interests us in the present work is to review that particular induction programme from the current perspective of its protagonists after five years have passed since the programme. The INDUCTIO programme was a pilot programme developed in the Dominican Republic, and its positive assessment allowed the consolidation of induction as a public policy, which has become an official and normative programme for all new teachers in the pre-university educational system of the Dominican Republic (Marcelo and López, 2020).

The retrospective evaluation of induction programmes is common in the specialised body of literature (Aktaş, 2018). Davis and Waite (2003) followed the *Teacher Fellows Program* (TFP), an induction programme for beginning teachers in the southwestern United States, which had been in operation since 1994. As with the research we present in this article, those authors conducted interviews with beginning teachers, as well as collecting information using a questionnaire. The results showed that participation in the TFP reduced the chances of dropping out of teaching, as well as improving the professional development possibilities of beginning teachers (Davis and Waite, 2003). In that same year, Colleen Conway published an article in which she presented the results of an induction programme for beginning music teachers (Conway, 2003). Ten years later, the same author published an article describing her study in which she asked 13 teachers, who participated as beginners in the programme, for their impressions of that programme. For this, the materials produced by the beginners during the investigation were sent to the author: journals, interviews, focus groups, interviews with their mentor, and questionnaires. The results show some overlapping aspects regarding the vision that the beginners had ten years earlier, highlighting the role played by the mentor.

Wilcoxon et al. (2019) analysed the impact of the *Career Advancement and Development of Recruits and Experienced Teachers* (CADRE) Project that has been a formal induction programme for 27 years in the United States and in which, as in INDUCTIO, the mentors are school teachers who accompany the beginning teachers in their teaching practice. The results indicate that mentoring has a positive impact on the well-being of beginning teachers. Also, Plöger et al. (2019) analysed the impact of an induction programme, identifying its consequences on the ability of beginning teachers to analyse classroom situations. Alhija & Fresko (2016) developed a retrospective assessment of an induction programme in Israel, that is mandatory for

all beginning teachers, comparing the results between teachers who had completed the programme and teachers who were currently in the programme. In relation to satisfaction with the induction experience in which they had participated, the teachers who had completed the programme were more critical than those who were undertaking it. However, the evaluation of the programme, especially the work of the mentors, was very outstanding.

Clearly, the retrospective evaluation of a programme can allow us to know, with the distance that is provided by time, the experiences of the participants and their perceived results regarding the programme. It must be taken into consideration that the retrospective evaluation of a programme is based on the memories and experiences that are lived by the participants. In this sense, we have to triangulate sources of information to ensure that the data which are provided are as objective as possible. To respond to this concern, we formulate the following research problems:

1. How do the beginning teachers who are participating in the INDUCTIO programme evaluate its components?
2. What teaching problems did beginning teachers face during their induction period and to what extent did the INDUCTIO programme help them address these problems?
3. How do beginning teachers evaluate the contributions that the INDUCTIO programme has made to their professional development?
4. What is the assessment that members of educational centre management teams make in relation to teachers who have participated in the INDUCTIO programme?

2. Methodology

To answer these questions, we chose a descriptive design that would allow us to collect relevant information through different procedures and subjects. In this way, we used the questionnaire and the interview that were aimed at beginning teachers and members of school management teams.

2.1. Subjects

In this article, we present a retrospective assessment of the development and results of a pilot induction programme for beginning teachers, namely, the INDUCTIO programme which was developed throughout the academic year of 2015-2016. A total of 363 beginning teachers and 43 mentors participated in the programme. Of the total number of beginning teachers participating in the programme, 85% were women and 15% were men. Regarding the age of the beginning teachers, 34% were between 21 and 30 years old; 28% were between 31 and 45 years old; and finally, the remaining 38% were between 46 and 53 years old.

To obtain the opinions of the beginning teachers in the programme, we designed a questionnaire that we sent to the 363 beginning teachers, which was answered by 105 participants, representing 29% of the total number. The teachers were mostly women (82.4%), with an average age between 31 and 40 years (44.4%) and with a teaching experience of no more than five years (85.2%). These teachers mostly teach at the level of primary education (61.1%), secondary education (27.8%) and, to a lesser extent, early childhood education (6.5%). Most of the beginning teachers who answered the questionnaire continue as teachers. However, there is a small percentage who have assumed other responsibilities. Thus, three teachers are school directors, five teachers are pedagogical coordinators of their educational centres, and another five are technological facilitators.

To complete the information that was obtained through the questionnaire, we conducted interviews with a sample of beginning teachers. In the questionnaire, we invited participants to provide us with their email address and telephone number, and whether they would be available to conduct an interview concerning the programme. We interviewed 16 teachers, of whom 14 were women and two were men. The majority of teachers (10) taught at the primary education level, five taught at the secondary education level, and two at the infant education level.

Along with the interviews with teachers, we conducted interviews with five pedagogical coordinators and a director of an educational centre where the interviewed beginning teachers were currently teaching. In the case of the director, her experience in the educational system reaches 30 years, while in the case of the pedagogical coordinators their experience was in the range of 9 to 27 years. The pedagogical coordinators in the Dominican educational centres are teachers with a greater specialisation, whose function consists of the curricular coordination of the teachers, as well as the accompaniment of the school teachers in the classroom. Hence the importance of their opinions for this study.

2.2. Instruments

In this research, we used two information gathering procedures: the questionnaire and the interview. The questionnaire was designed with a structure that made it possible to collect the assessment that beginning teachers made retrospectively regarding the induction programme in which they had participated. The questionnaire included a first part that collected descriptive information about the teachers: gender, age, years of teaching experience, educational level at which they teach, as well as the role they currently perform. Below is a list of 20 items on an ordinal scale, through which teachers were asked to report on the benefits they received as a teacher following their participation in the programme. The items refer to the problems that the research literature has shown as being characteristic of beginning teachers (Voss & Kunter, 2020). This was followed by a second scale in which beginning teachers were asked to rate the different components of the induction programme: duration, mentor, platform, workshops, etc. Both scales showed high reliability. The first scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.942 and the second scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.839.

As aforementioned, we conducted interviews with pedagogical coordinators and directors of educational centres where some of the beginning teachers who participated in the INDUCTIO programme currently work. In these interviews, we formulated the following questions: What opinion do you have of the teacher? In relation to other new teachers with similar seniority, how do you view this teacher? What is the attitude and commitment as a teacher (i.e., participant in the INDUCTIO programme)? What is his/her level of digital competence? What is your level of mastery of pedagogical competence? How are you integrating and collaborating with the rest of the teaching staff?

In connection with the interviews, we developed a script through which we could understand the perceptions of beginning teachers regarding their experience in the programme. The interview consisted of the following questions: descriptive data regarding age, teaching experience, educational level; Have you attended the same school? Have you changed schools? Have you worked in the same grades? Have you taught the same subjects, or have you been changing? How did you live the first months as a beginning teacher? What were your main problems? How do you remember your experiences during the INDUCTIO programme? How did you manage to transfer what you learned in the INDUCTIO programme to your daily practice at school? How do you think having been a participant in the INDUCTIO programme has influenced your teaching development?

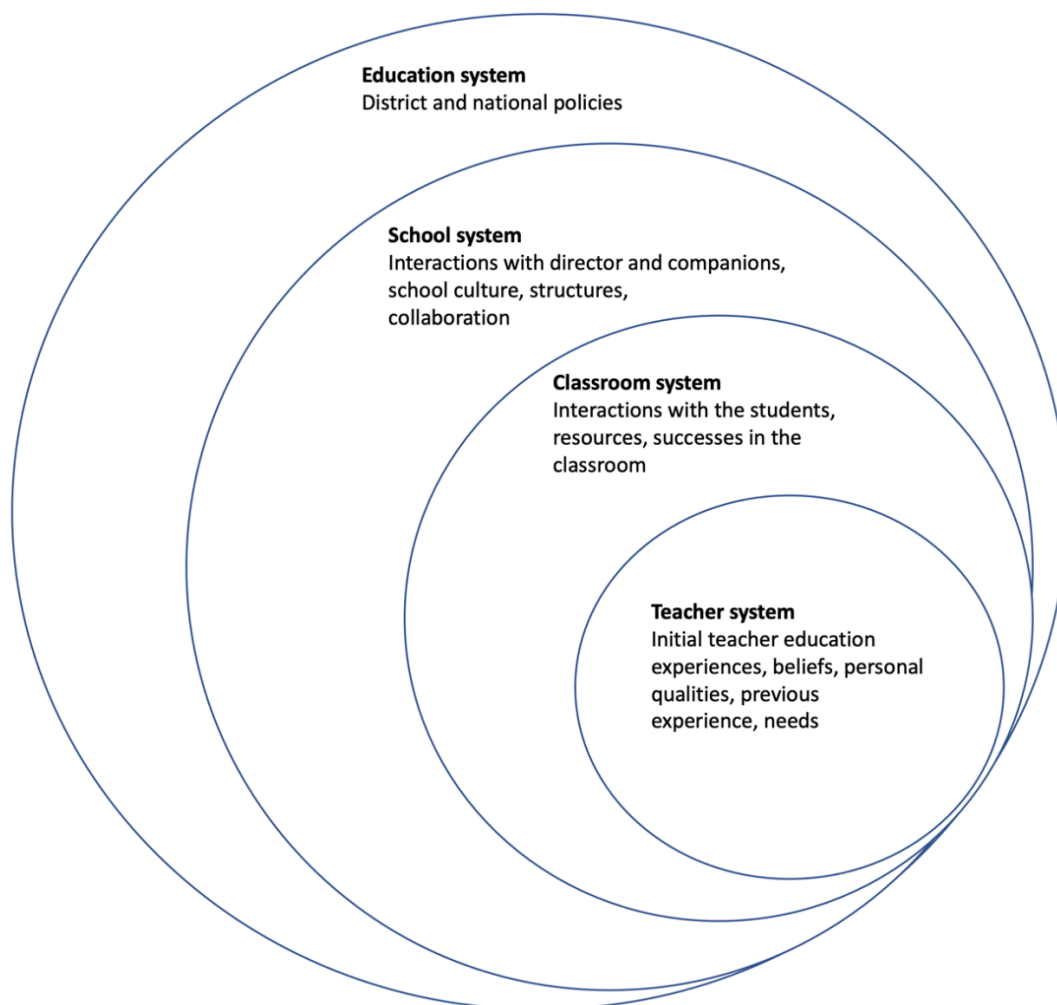
To analyse the interviews that were directed at beginning teachers, we designed a category system based on previous studies that one of the present authors had carried out in relation to the problems of beginning teachers (Marcelo, 1991). The dimensions that we contemplate in the present study are those that have been synthesised in the recent review by Strom et al. (2018). Those authors reviewed the research on beginning teachers, and they group the research topics into the four dimensions or systems that can be seen in Figure 1.

In line with what was discussed by Strom et al. (2019), the developed category consists of four dimensions: personal, didactic, institutional, and system. The personal dimension includes references by teachers to their previous experiences, such as in teacher training or in their studentship. It also includes statements related to their concerns, problems, learning and training needs.

The didactic dimension concerns the references that teachers make in relation to class teaching during the period when they were beginners: teacher/student ratio, class environment, relationships with students, teacher-student relationships, academic background of the students, learning outcomes, planning, interactive teaching, methodology, discipline, motivation, evaluation, and technologies.

In the institutional dimension, we address two issues: the educational centre, including references to colleagues, teaching load, management bodies, recognition at school, and the environment: relationships with families and with their surroundings.

Figure 1. Dimensions affecting beginning teachers.



Source: Strom, K., Martin, A., y Villegas, A. M. (2018). Clinging to the Edge of Chaos: The Emergence of Practice in the First-Year of Teaching. *Teacher College Record*, 120(7), 1-32.

Finally, the system dimension includes teachers' references, mainly regarding the INDUCTIO programme. The categories that have been included in this dimension are those that refer to the programme, the mentors, and the management of the accompaniment. In relation to the programme, references are made concerning positive and negative experiences, complaints about management, transfer of acquired learning, and the impact of currently passing through the programme. Mentoring has been another of the topics that appear help, support, and relationships with the mentor. Finally, regarding the management of the support received, the teachers make some proposals for improvement that is related to the management of the programme and the relationships between beginners.

The data analysis that is presented below has integrated, as far as possible, the information that was obtained by the two main sources of information that we have used with beginning teachers: the questionnaire and the interview, with a focus on the dimensions that emerged from the analysis of the interviews.

3. Results

3.1. Personal experiences of teachers in their first year

As described in the body of literature, the first year of teaching becomes a period of challenge and constant review for beginning teachers. During this period, old beliefs emerge and they are recomposed according to the new role that the teacher assumes. In the interviews with our study participants, the research findings on the beginning teacher are confirmed. The clash with reality is one of the elements that we find most frequently in the presentations of beginning teachers which particularly manifest negative feelings in relation to the reality of the classroom and teaching. Teachers expose fears and insecurities: “My first months in the classroom were very different from my job. It was full of questions. Whether or not I’m doing well”, difficulties, frustration and a reality that they did not imagine: “the beginning was chaotic, one of suffering, in which you find a reality that is not what you imagined”, chaos, and problems due to overcrowding in classrooms.

Five years later, this retrospective perception of a lack of preparation is attributed by teachers to their lack of practice and knowledge regarding teaching, and to their inexperience in previous teaching processes, which is partly justified by having undergone a university training with no practical elements: “My beginnings were quite difficult because one does not have sufficient experience in the practical handling of things. It is no secret that in universities it is one thing but the reality is another.”

Inevitably, frustrating experiences affect the teacher system. Thus, the conception that the beginning teacher has of her/himself as a teacher is temporarily deteriorated when they encounter negative evaluations, such as the doubts they present concerning their work in the classroom, feelings of shame or difficulties experienced: “My first months in the classroom were very different from my job. The period was full of questions like, am I doing it right?” However, we also encountered statements by teachers concerning overcoming these fears and difficulties, which causes emotions, satisfaction, and feelings of high self-esteem towards their work as teachers: “For me it has had a lot of influence. Because it ended my fears. I broke the paradigm. For me there is no level that is not achievable. I do have and I can have the necessary knowledge to master any level that may be requested of me in my educational centre”; “For me, I feel more competent about doing things, with certain capacities to inquire, search, and manage.”

As we have seen, the beginning teachers in the Dominican Republic who were interviewed do not differ much from any other teacher, anywhere else in the world. It would seem that the induction year is a rite of passage that is strongly established in the teaching culture. Further, these problems and situations occur despite the participation of teachers in an induction programme. However, when these teachers were asked about the extent to which the programme offered them support in this personal system, we found that the programme contributed greatly to improving their self-confidence and the necessary overcoming of frustrations, as can be seen Table 1.

Table 1
Means and deviations of items that assess the results of the INDUCTIO programme when considering teachers as people.

The beginning teacher as a person	Mean	Deviation
Self confidence	3.53	.557
Overcoming frustration	3.29	.649

Source: Own elaboration.

3.2. The teacher in the classroom

As demonstrated in the body of literature (Avalos, 2016; Farrell, 2016), beginning teachers encounter serious problems with handling discipline and the classroom environment. Difficulties such as handling the students themselves, as well as the fear that the first months of teaching present, due to their lack of experience, are elements that the study participants sometimes expressed: “The problem that most affected me was the handling of discipline, since there were many factors that influenced the population that corresponded to me”, “The main thing, and that I will always remember, was the lack of discipline of the children because I encountered a group that already had another teacher and I said I’m going, I’m not going to cope!”. However, today they state that the INDUCTIO programme helped them to connect with these students and to master strategies that allowed them to have control of the classroom and the handling of the students: “Regarding discipline, I am still implementing many strategies that I learned.”

One of the elements that directly intervene in the teacher’s work is the teaching methodology and strategies that they apply on a daily basis in their classrooms. In this area, we address the learning that beginning teachers acquire throughout the INDUCTIO programme in relation to these methodological strategies: “As I learned about new strategies in the programme, my pedagogical practice changed; I could see the results in my students”, “They gave us a lot of very useful training in our pedagogical practice. There were always people who were very attentive to what was done in each of the centres whenever there was a beginning teacher”. This category shows us statements by beginning teachers in which they reflect that the acquisition of knowledge and practices throughout the programme has allowed them to improve their methodology, which was scarce in some cases due to the training they had received: “I was directly applying the skills I learned in the INDUCTIO programme and the strategies that they gave us on the enabled platform. There, we had some socialisation forums, and I used some of the ideas that I observed there if I needed to improve my pedagogical practice”, “I totally changed my pedagogical technique.”

Along with the limited knowledge about teaching strategies that can be applied in the classroom, beginning teachers state that they have presented problems related

to the planning of their classes at the beginning of their teaching practice. In interviews, they stated that planning was one of their main problems: “The main problem was the planning. The first months in the classroom; although I already had previous experience as a teacher, the system had changed. There was a new curricular design that I knew nothing about and that experience was somewhat traumatic at the beginning.”

Table 2
Means and deviations of items for evaluating the results of the INDUCTIO programme in the classroom teaching experience of beginning teachers.

The beginning teacher and classroom teaching	Mean	Deviation
Attend to special educational needs	3.24	.690
Attend to diversity	3.56	.536
Classroom learning environment	3.55	.519
Digital competences	3.27	.700
Knowledge of the Dominican curriculum	3.30	.657
Mastery of the content	3.38	.688
Student assessment	3.45	.605
Time management in the classroom	3.41	.666
Teaching methodologies	3.50	.558
Motivating the students	3.52	.573
Preparation of teaching materials	3.56	.553
Disciplinary problems	3.49	.574
Relationship with the students	3.64	.538

Source: Own elaboration.

Coupled with the pressure of having to plan and control classroom discipline, we discovered that beginning teachers care about the relationships they maintain with their students. They consider it a vital element for the class welfare to develop in a positive way. In this sense, we once again emphasise the aforementioned clash with reality that these teachers suffer in their first months of teaching, in that children do not always receive their teachers in a positive way from the beginning, especially if they replace a previous teacher with whom they had a good relationship. The teachers informed us about the difficulty of connecting with the students on an emotional level: “Without a doubt, the main problem I had was connecting with the students, establishing a bond to establish an environment of discipline within which to develop my work.” However, they did find that the INDUCTIO programme gave them the support they needed, not only in controlling classroom discipline, but in establishing that emotional bond with the students: “It was very difficult at first to start working with them and, really, the INDUCTIO programme was the best thing that could have happened at that time, because thanks to it, I was able to overcome my fears”.

In relation to classroom teaching, the hindsight of beginning teachers concerning the INDUCTIO programme led to an improvement in their own teaching skills. In Table 2, we show the results that were obtained using the questionnaire that was answered by the teachers. As can be seen, in all of the items the mean is greater than 3, with the upper response limit being 4. This indicates that the memory that teachers have of the effect that the programme had on them is highly satisfactory. We can highlight the items that are related to the improvement in the relationship with the students, the attention to diversity, the learning environment in the classroom, and the preparation of materials as the items with the highest score.

3.3. The beginning teacher in the educational centre

When teachers begin teaching, they enter a new world in which they must educate boys and girls who expect everything from them. Getting started in teaching means accessing a work environment in which the relationships of all the agents involved are of great importance. Relationships with the environment and with families, and the recognition that teachers receive at school, are topics that enter into conversations and worry them in their first months as teachers.

Beginning teachers themselves promote the forging of relationships with the environment and with families as fluidly and pleasantly as possible. Teachers encounter children who come from complex social backgrounds, with family and economic difficulties, and with families that do not participate in their children's education. However, the teachers put their efforts into achieving a connection between the community and the school: "Also, there is some weakness in connecting the community with the school and being able to do a joint work with both", "That is why I created a very familiar environment with the principal, with the teachers, and even with the community. This is how I showed myself who I am". In other cases, it is the same families who find support in these teachers for their children's education: "It has been such a beautiful experience that even the community has asked me to continue there." To a large extent, the INDUCTIO programme supported relationships with families at school from the beginning of the teacher's training: "It also favoured relationships with the family, which is a great support to education."

The recognition of a job well done is always a motivation and satisfaction for anyone who is starting out in their profession. Beginning teachers are no different, and they feel grateful, because over the years they have evolved in the school and they have felt that they are also recognised by the school. Many beginning teachers are currently working in pedagogical coordination and school management positions within a very short time: "They take me into account when they need someone to do any important work that has to be carried out in an exemplary way, hence I have been able to grow. I am part of everything they need." This is the case for the teachers who managed to attain pedagogical coordination positions: "The director asked for references from another person to be the coordinator of the 2nd cycle. When he arrived at the centre the director told him: 'We already have a coordinator. She is very prepared and I can tell you because we were together in the INDUCTIO programme'. And that is how I became the coordinator in this educational centre."

Feeling recognised is always a motivating element that makes any teacher want to improve and evolve in a school. Beginning teachers need to feel recognised in order to continue on their path, something that influences the way in which they see themselves as teachers and how they view themselves. Recognition from fellow teachers, principals or even the families themselves makes these beginning teachers feel valued in the community: “Something interesting that is unforgettable is the fact that my colleagues chose me on the last day, so that I would be the one to present the project”.

Table 3.
Means and deviations of items for the assessment of results of the INDUCTIO programme regarding teachers and the educational centre.

The beginning teacher and the educational centre	Mean	Deviation
Integration in the school	3.50	.575
Extended School Day	3.35	.608
Rules of the educational system	3.37	.594
Relationship with the families	3.43	.571
Relationship with the teachers	3.45	.605

Source: Own elaboration.

As can be seen in Table 3, in the dimension related to the integration of the beginning teacher in the educational centre, the teachers participating in the INDUCTIO program also valued very positively the possibilities that the INDUCTIO programme offered them regarding integrating into the school, and relating to the other teachers and with the families.

3.4. The INDUCTIO programme from the perspective of its protagonists

Thus far in this article, we have reviewed the retrospective description that beginning teachers make of their first year of teaching. We have found references to the INDUCTIO programme in the different dimensions analysed. Our aim was to go deeper into the assessment of the components of the INDUCTIO programme. In Table 4, we present the results obtained through the assessment questionnaire that was completed by beginning teachers.

Especially noteworthy is the high overall evaluation score for the programme, as well as the participation of beginners in the face-to-face workshops that were organised, and in which all of the teachers participated jointly. This gave them an opportunity to share their time and experiences with other beginning teachers and mentors. This highlights the assessment of the mentor as a key element in the development of the programme. In relation to the figure of the mentor, we included an open question in the questionnaire where we asked the beginning teachers to describe in their own words the memories that they had of the programme.

Table 4
Assessment of the programme components by beginning teachers.

Components	Mean	Deviation
Duration	4.18	.879
Mentor	4.68	.672
Platform	4.53	.721
Face-to-face workshops	4.70	.587
Online content	4,54	.636
Programme organisation	4,71	.616
Diplomas	4,46	.924

Source: Own elaboration.

The vast majority include positive phrases regarding the work that was carried out: “I remember my mentor as someone special, a very capable person in every sense of the word; always dedicated to her work and willing to share her knowledge with others. Thanks to her I was able to develop various activities with my students, which improved my teaching practice.”, “I remember many of his visits to the centre when I least expected it, to accompany me and give me support, help me with anything that he saw that I needed in class”, “He was an excellent mentor, understanding, patient, responsible. We developed activities with a focus on diversity that helped me a lot; I think it was what I liked the most, since it was the greatest need I had at that time”, “I have unforgettable memories left me by my mentor, Helan Hidalgo, who was always aware of everything we did, and at no time did she leave me alone. I thank her for all her advice when she supervised me in my beginning period. She gave me plenty of confidence and her teachings strengthened me a lot.”

During the interviews carried out with the beginning teachers, we found that all of them reported that the INDUCTIO programme came to be a very positive experience for them. The teachers considered that the programme became an element that helped them overcome difficulties, put an end to their fears, and helped them to grow personally and professionally. “The programme served me a lot. It’s like a featherless dove that came in and later acquired its plumage”, “If I hadn’t participated in INDUCTIO, I wouldn’t have had the development that I have today”. The beginning students highlight the great support that their mentor provided as part of that process of improvement and growth, being the person who helped them with their guidance and follow-up: “You could tell that my mentor had a vocation. She inspired a lot of confidence to be able to tell her the difficulties I had, and she kindly helped with them all.

Regarding the other components of the programme, beginning teachers value face-to-face activities, as well as training in digital skills, as is demonstrated by this statement: “It taught me a lot in the management of digital platforms. For this reason, during the Covid-19 pandemic, it made the teaching process accessible to me in terms

of the training courses that are being implemented, so that the teachers can give the tasks to the students.” If there is one claim in relation to the programme, it is regarding its duration, and some teachers claim a duration of two years to be adequate: “The programme must last at least two years and with more face-to-face workshops each quarter. In this way, the beginning teachers feel more constant support and a more regular evaluation of their pedagogical practice.” or “The time that the programme lasted, I consider to be very short. In my opinion, I believe that at least two years is a prudent time for the teacher to adapt and show more significant evidence of progress.”

3.5. Opinions of principals and coordinators regarding teachers

To contrast the opinions of beginning teachers regarding the INDUCTIO programme and its results, we conducted six interviews with pedagogical coordinators and the directors of schools where teachers were participating in teaching in the INDUCTIO programme. Without exception, the evaluations made by these interviewees in relation to the ability, motivation, initiative of the beginning teachers, about whom they have been questioned, is very high and outstanding. In the interviews, we asked about the differences the interviewees observed between these six teachers who were participating in the INDUCTIO programme and the rest of the beginning teachers with the same seniority. These are some of the statements we encountered:

1. “If we compare her with other teachers who studied education directly, she has gone far. She has a facility, while having extensive mastery of the curricular content, which is the facility of reaching students. The simple method, which was so easy for her was to explain the topics, to make herself understood by the students, which is the facility of enabling them to participate.”
2. “At that time, there were other teachers who came to the centre again and at one point when I had already been working with for a few weeks, I saw how one teacher joined in with the team. I saw how she would identify herself, noting ‘you are good, and this is not good.’ And she even had the confidence to suggest something and also correct the team members. I compare it in this way with other teachers who arrived at the same time because I saw that particular one with a willingness to learn. Whatever I don’t know, I’m going to find whoever can support me in the centre. To find a way to do it. To take time out in the lunch break and be able to say, ‘I want you to explain something to me.’ To take their weekend time to contact me. All of that was very different from what we used to see in some teachers. It is all about a willingness to learn.”
3. “She has had a different work responsibility to the others. She works with attachment, with love, with daily commitment. And she is special when it comes to her work. She makes it very different from that of the others.”
4. “There is a difference between heaven and earth, because after the teacher Fiordaliza del Carmen participated in the INDUCTIO programme, there were many changes and I could see the difference between her and other teachers who entered at the same time, since I could observe that there was more integration and responsibility applied, with more time invested in what is one’s

responsibility as a teacher in the classroom, which is to get the most out of one's students.”

The coordinators and directors spoke up about the teachers who had different aspects in their educational centres and who participated in the INDUCTIO programme, regarding all of the positive aspects related to teaching, such as the ability to integrate into the teaching team: “In that sense, she was good. Collaborating with people with fewer skills, she was masterful. She always gave herself to collaborating. She demonstrated this in the days we had together. She was always open to change and innovation. She was always open to preparation”; her pedagogical competence: “We had student overcrowding and a high rate of children in the classroom. She was able to work with that overpopulation and be competent before a large group of children. She was able to work and get ahead in teaching-learning and reading-writing. I can say that, for this teacher, it was worth being in that programme”, “We had some resistant teachers, but Orfa arrived equipped and with her portfolio prepared. Later, she had already assumed, with calmness, that they were going to support her, help her, because that was her greatest achievement, identifying who was going to help her in that process, so she arrived with her portfolio prepared for what she knew the children would need. Together with that, many teachers learned the ease of planning with the computer, because in that sense you have it all.”

4. Discussion and conclusions

Beginning teachers invariably go through an adaptation phase that in many cases represents a clear challenge to their own personal and professional stability. As we have demonstrated in the present study, the problems that beginning teachers face remain present over time and are similar to those problems that studies in the body of literature have shown for decades. The question remains, as to what we are not doing well enough in initial teacher training, in that no matter how many educational reforms are introduced, teachers still do not bring to the classroom the conceptual, procedural and emotional tools that are necessary to learn the art and craft of teaching. Indeed, the reality of the classroom presents such complex and integrated situations that they are difficult to reproduce in initial training laboratories. But these problems should not necessarily be perceived as a limitation. Consistently, the challenge posed by the aforementioned clash with reality represents an opportunity for most teachers to reaffirm their own capacities as a teacher. This situation is achieved when teachers do not feel alone. As we have presented throughout this article, the accompaniment of beginning teachers is the best antidote against the abandonment of teaching or, what is worse, the development of a conservative mentality in young teachers.

In this article, we have taken a retrospective look at the perceptions and experiences of beginning teachers, as well as their participation in an induction programme. We aimed to distance ourselves in order to analyse the perceptions of the subjects involved using more objectivity. We find that the conceptual framework that we adapted from Jordell (1987), by which the situation of beginning teachers could be

analysed through three dimensions: personal, didactic, and institutional (Marcelo, 1991), is still useful more than thirty years later.

As the present study has demonstrated, the first year of professional practice in the classroom is challenging for beginning teachers, as the clash with reality is one of the elements most frequently found in research results in the literature, which indicates that the scenario for beginning teachers is similar everywhere. The teachers who participated in the INDUCTIO programme stated five years later that, when they arrived at school, they had to face their fears, insecurities, and surprises in relation to what they learned at university and what they actually encountered in school, with obstacles, suffering, little preparation related to teaching, inexperience, and doubts about whether their teaching practice was in accordance with the established guidelines.

The problems and situations that beginning teachers must face are more easily identified when participating in the INDUCTIO programme, through which the support offered to them improves their self-confidence, helps in overcoming frustrations, helps in mastering strategies that allow them to have control of the classroom and students, strengthens their digital skills, knowledge of the curriculum, design and implementation of planning, development and use of teaching resources, development and application of assessment instruments, and strengthening of interpersonal relationships. These results help in understanding that induction programmes for beginning teachers are key to becoming successful teachers.

The components of a teacher induction programme serve as the basis for beginning teachers to overcome any limitations that they may manifest at the beginning of their professional practice. The duration of the programme, the mentor, the platform, the workshops that are carried out, the contents that are developed, the organisation of the programme, and the diplomas or certificates that participants receive at the end of the induction programme are among the elements that make up a programme, and when they are well managed, they generate favourable results for both teachers and students in the learning process. In this sense, we conclude that, although the duration of the induction programme can vary according to the country where it is being carried out, for a greater consolidation of the classroom teaching practice it must last for at least two years.

However, we did find that the intensive use of digital technologies in a teacher induction programme helps an individual to develop digital competencies, resulting in the ease of integration of such technologies for beginning teachers throughout their professional careers. In this process, the guidance and accompaniment of the mentor constitute the most important support points with which to achieve personal, professional and work growth of beginning teachers who participate in an induction programme. The training actions or training workshops that are carried out in person and/or in the virtual environment, also contribute to the personal, professional and work growth of beginning teachers. Further, the contents that are developed during the induction programme are important, because they must respond to the perceived needs, since they help to know more about the curriculum, planning, evaluation,

didactic resources, methodologies, rules of the educational system, and also interpersonal relationships.

Finally, due to this study, we have a better understanding of the impact of the training received by the teachers during the INDUCTIO programme as well as the administrative and pedagogical support that was provided, and the recognition of the pedagogical coordinators and directors of the centres where the programme participated work. It has been found that, in relation to other teachers with equal service time in the classrooms, while not participating in the induction, the INDUCTIO programme improved performance, mastery of curricular content, application of methodology in coaxing children to learn more and in a better way, motivation, initiative, responsibility, degree of commitment to teaching, willingness to innovate, and collaboration with the peers of the beginning teachers.

Teacher induction has become an essential educational policy to ensure that teachers who join the educational system do not impact their incomplete initial training on their students. For this reason, it is necessary to establish induction programmes in countries, such as in Spain (the native country of the authors, and where this absence is noteworthy), where to date they do not exist. The results of this and many other investigations show the importance for teachers who are new to teaching to have an enriched accompaniment programme, within which the figure of the mentor is complemented with formal and non-formal professional development activities.

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