

What new teachers need

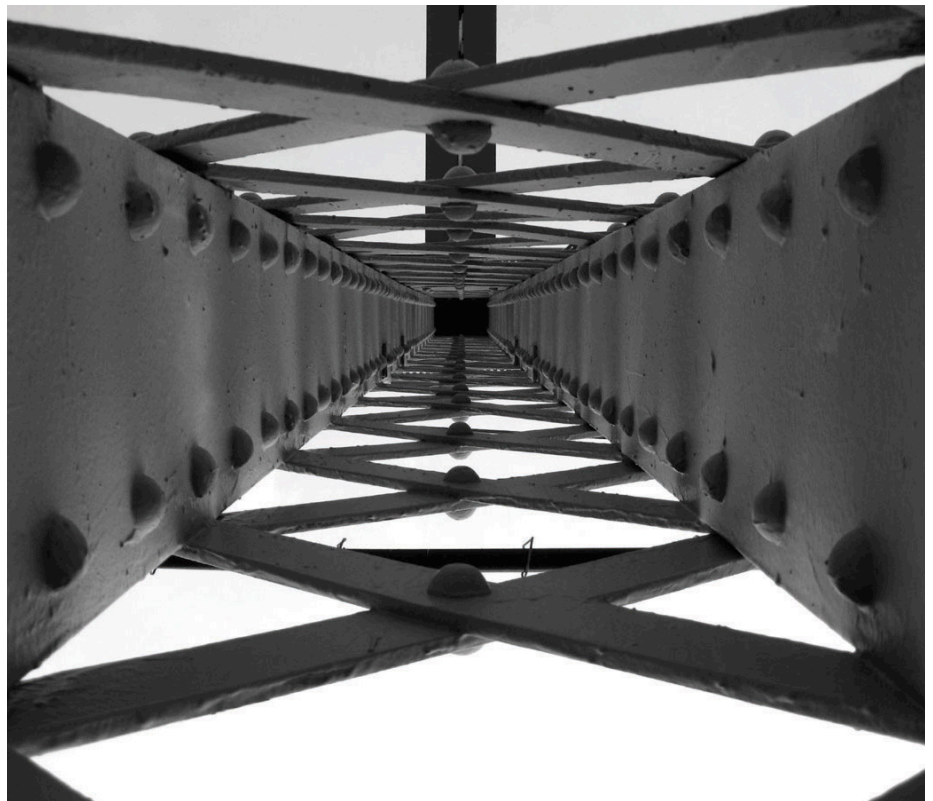
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Many new teachers aren't 'new' at all. Whilst about half of graduate teachers are entering the workforce as first career people, for about 20% this is a second career, for another 20% it is a third career and further, about 10% are fourth career people (TCS data, 2018). They have come from a variety of places including Mechanical Engineer; Lawyer; Psychologist; Journalist; Boilermaker; Diesel Fitter; Graphic Artist; Accountant; Forensic Scientist; Medical Researcher; Personal Trainer; and Nurse. Only a quarter of new teachers are under 25 years of age (Jensen, *et al*, 2012).

Yet despite possible experience in other fields, most new teachers quickly discover that they aren't fully prepared for the practical realities of running a classroom. Yes, they have the theory, and some short-term practical experience, but the long days of constant responsibility across multiple competing demands is completely new.

Besides seemingly boundless energy and enthusiasm, new teachers bring many gifts and talents to their school and to their classrooms. Yet, as with new students, new teachers need scaffolded assistance. This support should go beyond merely assigning them a mentor, a practice that only reduces five-year attrition rates by one percentage point, from 40–39% (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Whereas experienced teachers might bristle at receiving classroom management tips, model lesson plans, and constructive feedback on instruction, new teachers appear to long for such supports (Goodwin, 2012).

Obviously, new teachers have a specific set of needs. So, what should we focus on, to give them the support from which they can productively benefit? From experience across three differing educational systems, here in priority order are my top



four things that make most difference to the welfare, productivity and happiness of graduate teachers:

- A strategic overview of the emotional roller-coaster that is about to happen to them
- Ongoing moral support
- Classroom management
- Lesson planning, differentiation and reflection.

A strategic overview of their forthcoming journey

Moir (2013) in liaison with the University of California, identified attitudinal phases through which all new teachers' progress through (Figure 1). The months of this diagram have been modified to reflect the Australian school year.

Each of the phases can be summarised as:

Phase One: *Anticipation* – romanticisation and a commitment to making a difference.

Phase Two: *Survival* – reality hits, primary focus on self and survival questions of:

- How am I doing?
- Will I make it?
- Do others approve of my performance?

Phase Three: *Disillusionment* – becoming worn down by extensive time commitment, high stress and self-doubt.

Phase Four: *Rejuvenation* – getting the hang of it, able to focus on time and task and look at improving systems and the way in which work is done.

Phase Five: Reflection – focus now on student difference and making learning most meaningful.

Phase Six: Anticipation – I've made it, I can't wait for next year.

Knowing ahead of time the probable sequence of feelings as they progress through the year, lends to graduates, both perspective and also a reminder that they are not alone or unusual in their journey. All graduates experience the same emotions in the same sequence although at slightly differing rates, yet school leaders can help graduates greatly in forewarning them of the roller-coaster ahead (even if most don't initially believe it applies to them).

Ongoing moral support

Structured school support helps new teachers increase their resilience. Formal structure should be apparent through a comprehensive school-based orientation and induction program that commences at appointment and progresses well into their second year of teaching and incorporates extensive use of mentoring.

Novice teachers also look to their school leaders to develop supportive, non-judgmental relationships with them and from them, seek examples of professional behaviour and clarification of their roles and duties as education professionals. This interaction and modelling help them become successful professionals (Wood, 2005; Mingo, 2012). School leaders are critical in establishing both a sense of community and a sense of belonging, without which, new teachers won't stay.

Classroom management

Research shows that school principals feel graduate teachers are ill-prepared for dealing with difficult student behaviour (McKenzie, 2014), and graduates largely feel the same (O'Neill, 2015). For new teachers, it is not just managing the students themselves but their parents too.

Teachers will learn from experience, but this will be accelerated and clarified when there is a credible, transparent and practical behaviour management process in which new teachers can develop appropriate relationships with students whilst still holding them accountable.

There is no easy path to exper-

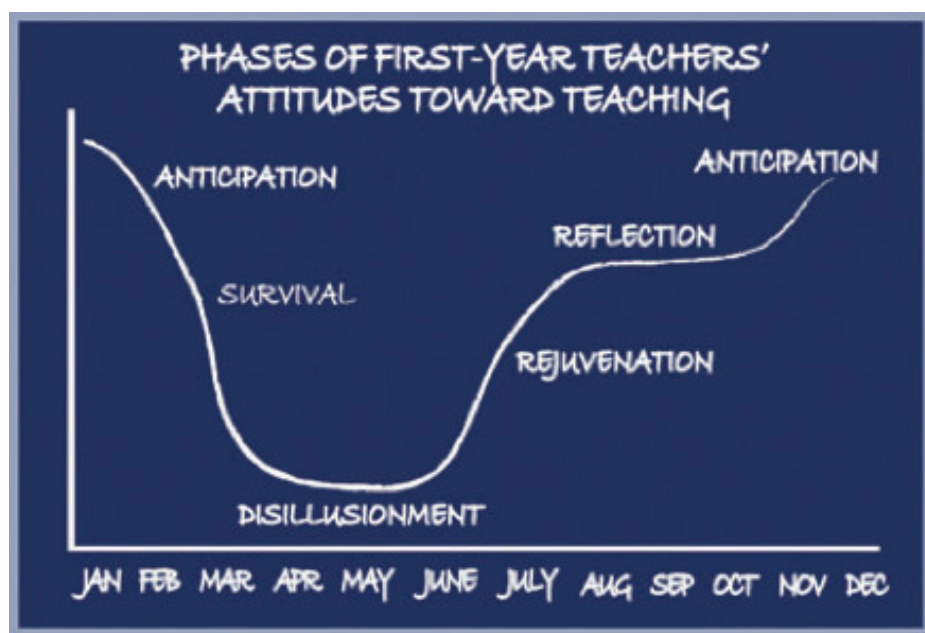


Figure 1: Attitudinal phases through which all new teachers' progress

tise in this area, but aside from professional learning workshops, strategies such as scenario discussion, modelling, observation, coaching and developmental feedback are essential.

Lesson planning, differentiation and reflection

Making sense of the scope and sequence of several different curriculums, creating learning objectives, organising and delivering course content, and planning and preparing learning activities and materials occupy the bulk of a new teachers after-school time as they do it again and again and again, day after day after day.

Without guidance in seeing the wood for the trees, this alone will dishearten new teachers. With school support and mentor coaching, new teachers can be ably assisted when they have access to: exemplar lesson plans; planning checklists and templates that can be modified and used in respective teaching disciplines.

Summary

Teaching is not a career that just anyone can do. Early career teachers need to be supported in transitioning from university to being classroom ready and beyond. The skills, effectiveness and confidence of an experienced teacher take time and commitment both from the individual and the system itself.

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