

# What We Know about Professional Adaptation of Newly Hired Teachers: A Literature Review

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**Abstract:** *This is a paper about the adaptation of the newly hired teachers based on the literatures and studies. It is intended to newly hired teachers, faculty members and school administrators. This paper presents a comprehensive review of current global and local literature and studies to provide an understanding of what we know about professional adaptation of newly hired teachers. The presentations of the insights from the readings are presented using thematic approach. The identified and unifying themes are presented one after another and then a synthesis is made that provide the grounds to launch this specific study, and its justification. The themes are: teachers' personal adaptability is important to effective adaptation process; teachers face multiple challenges in the professional adaptation process; workload complexity causes enormous beginning teachers' stress; negative work environment creates excessive stress for beginning teachers; positive emotional experiences strengthen teachers' professional adaptation; motivation to work at school influences the process of teachers' professional adaptation; teachers' personal qualities influence the process of teachers' professional adaptation; level of professional competence affects the process of teachers' professional adaptation; the interest in the profession and students facilitate teachers' professional adaptation; the effective communication facilitates teachers' professional adaptation; cooperation with the colleagues influence the process of teachers' professional adaptation; strong induction program for teachers is important to professional adaptation; and mentoring and administration support are important in overcoming the teachers' adaptation crisis.*

**Keywords:** newly hired teachers, professional adaptation

## 1. Introduction

### Teachers' personal adaptability is important to effective adaptation process

The first theme is teachers' personal adaptability is important to effective adaptation process. According to Collie, Martin, and Granziera (2018), "adaptability is something teachers require on a regular basis and likely plays an important role in helping them to navigate the demands of their work, when teachers were more adaptable, they tended to report better well-being" (p.1).

Collie and Martin (2016), argue that "working in schools requires that teachers are able to successfully respond to and deal with any changing demands that transpire across the school more broadly. As such, adaptability is a capacity that is of central relevance to teacher's healthy and effective functioning at work" (p.8). Green (2020) found out that "employees with higher levels of personal adaptability show concern about future career-related tasks, take control of their career construction, possess the curiosity to explore possible selves and career opportunities" (p.5).

From these authors, what stands out is that the more adaptable teachers are, the less disengaged at work they are likely to be, and at the same time, they are able to face challenges at work with ease.

### Teachers face multiple challenges in the professional adaptation process

The second theme is teachers face multiple challenges in the professional adaptation process. According to Cetin and Sadik (2020):

The challenges faced by the teachers in the adaptation process are related to the

teaching process, including the presence of inclusive students in the class and the failure to prepare plans for these students, crowded and heterogeneous classrooms, inadequacy of teaching materials, inadequate knowledge in teaching, sudden changes in the system and being unformed about these, over expecting co-teachers, paperwork and other school activities. (p. 1316)

Jomuad, Anore, Baluyos, and Yabo (2017) observed that teachers face multiple challenges in the professional adaptation process. Aguirre and Faller (2017) further observed that "neophyte teachers also face problems due to their multiple roles, so many tasks and functions interfere with their teaching functions" (p.3398).

From these authors, it appears that the multiple challenges experienced by the newly hired teachers do not only affect the adaptation process, but also impede their teaching functions.

### Workload complexity causes enormous beginning teachers' stress

The third theme is workload complexity causes enormous beginning teachers' stress. According to Jomuad, Anore, Baluyos, and Yabo (2017), "the newly hired teachers found workload challenges to be serious, which could mean that the challenges gave them a considerable amount of stress and trouble" (p.100). This particular observation has been further observed by Pacaol (2021) that "newly hired teachers are overworked and stressed due to hidden work that exists and a real fact experience, teachers are preoccupied and overloaded with duties and responsibilities whether it is teaching and non-teaching related tasks" (p.44). Another

observation made in Pacaol, (2021) is that “an increase of workloads from policy makers often resulted in teachers’ burnout” (p.48).

De Vera (2021) found out that “majority find it as negative experience now for them to be having several preparations and handling multiple grade/year level and these experiences confronting newly hired teachers warrants better adaptability” (p.34). In another work, Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, and van Veen (2018) observed that “workload reduction reduced beginning teachers’ high psychological task demands and therefore indirectly reduced the experience tension among beginning teachers” (p.638).

The general observation is that workload of newly hired teachers causes burnout (Aguirre & Faller, 2017; Cetin & Sadik, 2020; Shuck, Aubusson, Buchanan, Varadharajan & Burke, 2017). From these authors, it appears that indeed workload complexity causes enormous beginning teachers’ stress.

#### **Negative work environment creates excessive stress for beginning teachers**

The fourth theme is negative work environment creates excessive stress for beginning teachers. According to Harmsen, Lorenz, Maulana, and van Veen (2018), “high psychological task demands, negative pupil aspects and negative social aspects appear to be stronger and more stable predictor of stress responses in beginning teachers” (p.637). This observation is complemented by Aydin and Kaya (2016) that:

Reasons of stress for teachers are originated from school administration (constant supervision, lack of encouragement etc.), the teaching profession (exhausting and boring nature of the profession, low social status and etc.), colleagues (rivalry and ambition, widespread gossiping etc.), students (undisciplined/problematic behaviors, academic incompetence etc.), parents (high demands and expectations, intervening with the teacher’s duties etc.), and school facilities (lack of resources, lack of technological facilities etc.). (p. 192)

From these authors, what is notable is that negative work environment results to excessive stress for newly hired teachers.

#### **Positive emotional experiences strengthen teachers’ professional adaptation**

The fifth theme is positive emotional experiences strengthen teachers’ professional adaptation. According to Green (2020), “offering positive emotional experiences may be a worthwhile option for strengthening teacher’s career adaptation over the academic year” (p.26). In another context, Cipriano and Brackett (2020) concluded that “positive emotions like joy and curiosity harness attention, promote greater engagement (p.3). On the contrary, Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, and van Veen (2018) found out that “beginning teachers experiencing more negative emotions during work showed a significantly lower

quality in safe and stimulating learning climate, efficient classroom management, clear instruction and activating learning” (p.636).

From these authors, it seems that indeed positive emotional experiences of newly hired teachers strengthen their professional adaptation.

#### **Motivation to work at school influences the process of teachers’ professional adaptation**

The sixth theme is motivation to work at school influences the process of teachers’ professional adaptation. According to Corpuz (2013), “when someone is motivated, he or she tries hard to accomplish more and do a job well” (p.220). This observation is further highlighted in Melnikova and Zascersinska (2017) who found out that “one of the most important factors that influences teachers’ adaptation process is motivation to work at school” (p.483).

Cetin and Sadik (2020) goes further to observe that when newly hired teachers love their profession and students, have a job security, and satisfactory salary they are the more motivated to adapt well. The contrary situation can suggest the opposite according to Melnikova and Zascersinska (2017) who argued that “lack of motivation hinders the career of the beginning teachers” (p.487).

From these authors, the general observation is that motivation to work at school indeed influences the process of teachers’ professional adaptation.

#### **Teachers’ personal qualities influence the process of professional adaptation**

The seventh theme is teachers’ personal qualities influence the process of professional adaptation. According to Afanasjeva, Fedotova, and Solonitsyna (2021), teachers’ personal qualities that influence the process of professional adaptation include “flexibility, tolerance, curiosity, creativity, independence, and collaboration which help beginning teachers use their resources efficiently, manage their time, energy and workplace and accomplish assigned tasks successfully, accept new duties and innovations” (p.377). Of all the factors that affect teachers’ professional adaptation, Melnikova and Zascersinska (2017) argued that personal qualities are the most important ones.

From these authors, it appears that the personal qualities of teachers influence the process of professional adaptation.

#### **Level of professional competence affects the process of teachers’ professional adaptation**

The eighth theme is level of professional competence affects the process of teachers’ professional adaptation. According to Afanasjeva, Fedotova, and Solonitsyna (2021), “adaptability is one of the basic components of professional competence which is sure to have a direct impact on teaching activity to the extent to which professional functions appear to be effective” (p.376). In another work, Melnikova and Zascersinska (2017) found out that professional competence of the teacher is an important factor which affects teachers’ adaptation process.

From these authors, what is notable is that the level of professional competence affects the process of teachers' professional adaptation.

#### **Interest in the profession and students facilitate teachers' professional adaptation**

The ninth theme is interest in the profession and students facilitate teachers' professional adaptation. According to Cetin and Sadik (2020):

Being interested in the profession and students is the main characteristic that facilitate teacher's professional adaptation. Teachers are expected to have professional aptitude and excitement, to love students, and to obtain pleasure in students' learning, regardless of the type and level of educational institution in which they are working. (p. 1314)

De Vera (2021) goes further to observe that "love and passion for the profession, performing duties responsibly, maintaining the attitude of professionalism and being open to the culture of public school were some of the adaptive mechanisms in facilitating teachers' professional adaptation" (p.35).

From these authors, it is apparent that the interest in the profession and students facilitate teachers' professional adaptation.

#### **Effective communication facilitates teachers' professional adaptation**

The tenth theme is effective communication facilitates teachers' professional adaptation. According to Cetin and Sadik (2020), "effective communication facilitates teachers' professional adaptation which make it easier for teachers to adapt to the school environment" (p.1314). This observation is complemented by Melnikova and Zascierinska (2017) that "communication among teachers, students and parents as the one of most important to teachers' adaptation" (p.485).

In another work, Aguirre and Faller (2017) discovered that "in dealing with highhanded parents, the neophyte teachers asked some tips from senior colleagues. Colleagues and co-teachers communication were therefore a constant source of help among the neophyte teachers" (p.3399).

From these authors, what stands out is that the effective communication facilitates teachers' professional adaptation.

**Cooperation with the colleagues influence the process of teachers' professional adaptation** The eleventh theme is cooperation with the colleagues influence the process of teachers' professional adaptation. According to De Vera (2021), "harmonious and supportive relationship with peers is important to newly hired teachers" (p.35). Aguirre and Faller (2017) found out that "senior colleagues were a constant source of help for the neophyte teachers during adaptation process" (p.3399).

In another context, Melnikova and Zascierinska (2017), concluded that "one of the most important factors that affects teachers' adaptation process is the cooperation of colleagues" (p.483). The opposite is true according to

Usoltseva, Savotina, Metlik, and Kabalevskaya (2020) who argued that without the cooperation of their colleagues, novice teachers will have difficulty in overcoming the crisis of professional adaptation.

From these authors, it seems that cooperation with the colleagues influence the process of teachers' professional adaptation.

#### **Strong induction program for teachers is important to professional adaptation**

The twelfth theme is strong induction program for teachers is important to professional adaptation. According to De Vera (2021):

Transition of the beginning teachers was never easy. Majority experienced reality shock. The transition to the new teaching assignment was overwhelming and discouraging for some that is why it is recommended to intensify the orientation program by the human resource department not only in the private institutions but more so in the government sector. (p. 35)

Corpuz (2013) argued the "importance of orientation of employees for them to become familiar with assigned tasks, organization's practices, policies, and procedures" (p.63). In another study, Aguirre and Faller (2017) suggested that "after being recruited, hired, and positioned, new teachers need to become acquainted with the school culture, they need to be told how things are done" (p.3400).

Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) recommended that "the week before school, beginning teachers receive a formal orientation to the community, district, curriculum, and school. Orientation is also an opportunity to give an overview of the school's philosophy" (p.6). This recommendation is complemented by Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, and van Veen (2018) who said that "induction program is important to address the lack of experienced support related to pre-service and beginning teachers' sense of burnout" (p.627).

From these authors, it is highly logical that strong induction program for teachers is provided and important to professional adaptation.

#### **Mentoring and administration support are important in overcoming the teachers' adaptation crisis**

The thirteenth theme is mentoring and administration support are important in overcoming the teachers' adaptation crisis. According to Usoltseva, Savotina, Metlik, and Kabalevskaya (2020), "the support of colleagues and of a school administration in the early stages of the adaptation was more frequently needed by the novice teachers" (p.2616). In another context, Melnikova and Zascierinska (2017) suggested that "the principal should support and encourage novice teachers by providing opportunities to acquire work experience, to assist in overcoming obstacles and provide possibilities to develop professionally and personally" (p.491). This recommendation is complemented by Collie, Martin, and Granziera (2018) that "when teachers received more principal support, they tended to be more adaptable" (p.2).

Aguirre and Faller (2017) argued that “teachers were keen on leaving their careers due to various issues and adjustments. However, the above phenomenon could be avoided by providing the novice teachers with effective support through a mentoring program” (p.3396). In another study, Ponce (2018) suggested that “tenured or more experienced teachers should be trained to learn the principles and practices of mentoring, then, they will be assigned to mentor novice teachers so that these teachers will be helped in the course of their adjustments in the academic environment” (p.150). In fact, Ponce (2018) found out that “teachers were not formally assigned with mentors which implies absence of clear, well-structured mentoring sessions in public and private school systems” (p.150).

From these authors, what is notable is mentoring and administration support are important in overcoming the teachers' adaptation crisis.

### Synthesis

From the foregoing discussion reflected in the themes, the following is what we know about the professional adaptation of the newly hired teachers. Teachers' personal adaptability is important to effective adaptation process; teachers face multiple challenges; workload complexity causes enormous beginning teachers' stress; negative work environment creates excessive stress for beginning teachers; positive emotional experiences strengthen them; motivation to work at school is an essential influence; teachers' personal qualities are vital; high level of professional competence is necessary; equally important is the interest in the profession and students; effective communication matters; cooperation with the colleagues is equally critical; strong induction program for teachers is significant; and mentoring and administration support are necessary.

## 2. Recommendations

The following recommendations amend for newly hired teachers, faculty members, and school administration to help improve the quality of adaptation for newly hired teachers to the teaching profession and community.

- 1) The newly hired teachers must pay attention to their adaptability competencies. Such competencies include openness to create friends and embrace ambiguity.
- 2) Members of the faculty must express their willingness to guide and support the newly hired teachers as they learn new things in the new work environment. Establishing a harmonious and supportive relationship within the community will ease the complexity of newly hired teacher's adaptation process in the teaching profession.
- 3) The school administration must create an effective and well-structured program for catering the needs of the newly hired teachers during their adaptation process. Supporting the newly hired teachers in an empowering way will inspire them to become better teachers.

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