

Teacher induction in Australia: Historical context and current challenges

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In Australia, the recognition of the importance of induction for beginning teachers has been present for over three decades. In 2016, the first set of guidelines was introduced to implement beginning teacher induction: *Graduate to proficient: Australian Guidelines for teacher induction into the profession*. However, reports of variations and inconsistencies in beginning teacher induction were widespread before the release of the guidelines. This article examines the historical context that led to the release of national guidelines and looks at recent research regarding beginning teacher induction to ascertain whether there have been any significant changes in the conduct of induction in the five years since the release of the guidelines, 2016-2020. Through a case study of beginning teacher induction, this article illustrates the extent to which the guidelines are being implemented, the experiences of the teachers undergoing beginning teacher induction in schools, and the ensuing policy implications. The findings indicate that a lack of policy-driven, mandatory guidelines and oversight by regulators and school systems has led to little change in the implementation of induction, specifically in New South Wales (NSW) schools.

Introduction

It is well understood that most countries continually seek to improve their schools and schooling systems (OECD, 2015; 2019). For over 20 years, enhancing teaching and learning has been at the forefront of every national and state review of education in Australia. Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, research established that teaching quality was among the most critical factors in student achievement in the US (Darling-Hammond, 2000) and Australia (Hattie, 2003; Rowe, 2003). As a result, the past two decades have seen increasing state and federal intervention in teaching in Australia. Interventions in the teaching profession have ranged from entry requirements into initial teacher education (ITE) programs (Bruniges et al., 2012), to teacher professional development and the formal registration and standardisation of the profession throughout Australia (AITSL, 2015) and finally, attracting high-quality teachers and subsequently retaining those teachers (NSW DET, 2020). The standardisation of the profession has seen the establishment of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), formed in 2005 with the mandate to promote excellence in teaching through the development and implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) (AITSL, 2011), which forms the foundation for teacher accreditation, and subsequently induction, nationally.

Beginning teacher induction (BTI) is one of the latest features of the movement to improve teaching and student outcomes in Australia. The publication of *Graduate to Proficient: Australian Guidelines for teacher induction into the profession (Australian Guidelines)* in 2016 (AITSL, 2016) was the first of its kind in Australia to encourage a standardised best

practice BTI on a national scale for the profession. While BTI has had its proponents for several decades, there has been much resistance to imposing policies, procedures, or even guidelines on schools without adequately funding those changes (Kearney, 2016).

This article begins with an overview of the nationalisation of the Australian educational context, not only regarding induction but the educational landscape more broadly, to explain where and when Australia started its teacher quality movement and how this led to the *Australian Guidelines* (AITSL, 2016). The second part of the article evaluates the policy implications of the *Australian Guidelines*. The last part explores a current case study of BTI and analyses one program against the *Australian Guidelines* and international best practices. Finally, the article concludes with an overall analysis of induction in Australia, the policy implications of the guidelines, and recommends future directions for induction.

The Australian context for teacher induction

The notion and support for teacher induction did not become prevalent in Australian research literature until the 1990s (Dinham, 1992; Ramsey, 2000). It was implemented informally in the late 1990s and more formally in the 2000s (DEST, 2002; Khamis, 2000; McCormack & Thomas, 2003). However, there was no formal national policy or common guidelines on induction until 2016. The publication of the *Australian Guidelines* (AITSL, 2016) sought to provide advice and recommendations for the implementation and execution of BTI nationally.

Prior to a major review in 2000, teacher induction was an informal process handled at the school level that involved basic familiarisation with policies and practices within a particular school context (DEST, 2002). However, the NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) commissioned an essential review of quality teaching in 2000, one aspect of which concerned beginning teacher induction within the state:

Such [induction] programs must be more sophisticated than introductory familiarisation programs and may involve core packages developed cooperatively between the employers, universities, and others with appropriate expertise. Those responsible for their delivery would have detailed knowledge and training in these programs as part of professional practice. Indeed, such induction programs should be recognised in any system of teacher accreditation. (Ramsey, 2000, p.66)

While little eventuated from this review regarding BTI at the state level, the Australian Government released two reports in the early 2000s that mention induction. A report entitled, *An ethic of care: Effective programs for beginning teachers* conducted by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST, 2002, p. 11) reported that induction refers to “support programs for beginning teachers” as a “critical phase within a continuum of professional learning.” This report was the first genuine attempt by the Australian Government to support teachers and develop a national focus on the work of teachers and, subsequently, teachers’ impact on student achievement. A separate report the following year, titled *Australia’s teachers: Australia’s future – Advancing innovation, science, technology and mathematics* (DEST, 2003), reported that the provision of well-designed

induction to provide support and guidance in the transition from novice to professional, is one key to beginner teacher success in the early years.

Although the national government was commissioning reports on teaching, it is crucial to understand that education and schooling are state-based responsibilities in Australia. Therefore, before examining the *Australian Guidelines*, which was the first attempt to nationalise guidelines for induction and formalise induction processes, it is essential to understand the movement towards the nationalisation of education in a state-based system.

While the responsibility for educating students in schools in Australia is a state-based affair, funding those schools is a partnership between national, state and territory systems (Gonski et al., 2011). This partnership has grown over the years, whereby the Australian Government has taken more responsibility for funding schools. The Australian Government's total investment in schooling rose from \$4.8 billion in 1999-2000 to \$20 billion in 2009-2011 and \$25.3 billion in 2022 (The Treasury, 2000; 2008-11; 2022). The growth in federal funding formed a foundation for the country's nationalisation and standardisation of education. Lingard (2000) suggested the role of the Australian Government in schooling was improvisational until the government "fully systematised the Commonwealth's role" in the 1970s. The nationalisation of schooling and the teaching profession grew from a concern about the changing role of education in a globalising world and economy, which led to the government considering education within national social and economic policies (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). These policy reforms to exert more national control, according to the OECD (2004), were part of a broader global trend since the late 1970s. In an attempt to consolidate this effort, Australia saw the emergence of new national policy organisations such as AITSL, which was tasked with developing national standards for the profession, and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), which was responsible for the development of the Australian Curriculum, the *National Assessment Program* and the *My School* website. All of these were national initiatives that saw the traditional roles of the state and national governments in education policy in transition.

In addition to funding, this movement towards standards and standardising the teaching profession had its foundations in *The Hobart Declaration on Schooling* (AEC, 1989) and *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling* (MCEETYA, 1999), which the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) adopted in 1999. An essential step in this process was the establishment of a *Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce* (TQELT) in 2001, which provided advice on the professional standards for teachers. Those standards are the basis for the *Australian Guidelines*. The task force released *A National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching* consultation paper in 2003 (MCEETYA, 2003). As a result, in 2003, state, territory, and federal ministers created and endorsed the National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching. The national framework was a significant achievement and led to a project to align standards nationally. The National Framework was not a set of standards, but rather it outlined "core dimensions and attributes of standards that allow

the development of generic, specialist and subject-specific standards” (2003, p. 8) and encompassed both professional elements and career dimensions of teachers.

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) then superseded the *Adelaide Declaration*, to set the agenda for Australian schooling for the following ten years. At the same time, the current Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) began under the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) in 2009. In the same year, the Australian Government also initiated the Smarter Schools—Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership (TQNP), which had several priorities, including developing national standards, teacher registration and improving the quality of teacher education (Australian Government, 2009). AITSL was established in 2005 to provide national leadership in “promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership” (AITSL, 2011). One of the first tasks for the new institute was validating and finalising the Standards.

AITSL finalised the APST in 2011 and then updated them in 2015 (AITSL, 2011; 2015). The APST are categorised into three domains and four career stages, which contextualise the experience and expertise of the teacher at each phase. The three domains are Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, and Professional Engagement, and the career stages are: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished, and Lead, the first two of which are compulsory and the last two optional. The three domains are separated into seven standards and then further delineated into 37 descriptors. All teachers in Australia must now have their registration/certification renewed throughout their careers so that regulatory authorities can assess their teaching quality and suitability to continue to teach (AITSL, 2018).

The registration of teachers leads to the induction of teachers into the professions, which occurs between the first two mandatory stages, Graduate and Proficient. Teachers finish their initial teacher education and move into the profession at the Graduate stage. They then have three to five years to progress to the Proficient stage; induction occurs between the Graduate and Proficient phases.

It is too simplistic to say that the journey over the past thirty years of reviews in Australia led to the *Australian Guidelines*. Internationally, the preoccupation with improving teacher quality is universally shared with similar programs and reviews (see Churchward & Willis, 2019; Cochran-Smith, 2016; Mawhinney, 2010; OECD, 2015a). The journey in Australia to reach the point where there are nationally consistent guidelines for beginning teacher induction started with a move from a state-based approach to a more national and standardised process in education, more generally. The development of TQNP in 2009 illustrated the recognition that teacher quality was an essential facet of student achievement. The TQNP responded to the falling standards seen in international tests such as PISA, where the mean performance has been steadily declining in reading since 2000; in mathematics since 2003; and in science since 2012 (OECD, 2018). This decline in performance is only one facet of the move to a professionalised teacher workforce that recognises induction as an “investment with high returns” (AITSL, 2016, p. 3). The

various organisations developed during this period aimed to raise student achievement, primarily by improving teacher quality. The rhetoric of teachers as the most significant source of variance in student achievement was popularised in Australia by John Hattie (2003; 2009), who has been the non-executive Chair of the AITSL Board since 2014.

The development of the APST was the first step in improving teacher quality. Despite the various policy initiatives over this time, an apparent missing facet of this, especially in the context of this article, was any reference to professional learning, particularly in the form of induction for newly appointed teachers. From the implementation of the APST in 2011, it took five years for the *Australian Guidelines* to be published, which signified a recognition that the beginning years of a teacher's career are essential in their professional development and "have a material impact on learner outcomes" (AITSL, 2016, p. 3).

The Australian guidelines for teacher induction

School systems have realised the necessity to support beginning teachers to make a successful transition into teaching (DEST, 2002; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kidd et al., 2015; OECD, 2019; Zembytska, 2016), and this was a developing idea in policies and practices in many schools in the early to mid-2000s.

The development of the *Australian Guidelines* emanated from the nationalisation of accreditation processes and the advent of the APST, as discussed in the previous section. Even the full name of the guidelines, *Graduate to Proficient: Australian Guidelines for teacher induction into the profession*, indicates that the process of induction, at least as described by the guidelines, is about moving teachers from the Graduate stage of accreditation to Proficient; the level of full accreditation necessary to remain in the teaching profession. The *Australian Guidelines* set out to encourage a communal effort between teachers, administrators, schools, school systems, and ITE providers to help support beginning teachers through their first years to reach proficiency. It is important to note that Proficient, in this sense, refers to a level of accreditation rather than a proficient professional as determined through a school-based induction process. Although the two ways of considering proficiency may be compatible, reaching the level of Proficient does not necessarily mean the teacher is proficient. In the context of proficiency, it is helpful to unpack the guidelines and compare them to international best practices, evaluate their usefulness for the profession, and examine whether or not they meet their intended purpose.

Best practice

Understanding what constitutes best practice and communicating best practice induction to the teaching world is a difficult task. Induction, as a term, has and continues to be synonymous with words such as orientation, mentoring, or in one case, a teacher reported: "relating to workplace health and safety organised by the school secretary" (quoted in Kearney, 2013). The confusion regarding what constitutes induction and its purpose leads to a situation where many beginning teachers are told they are receiving it without

understanding what it should entail. The etymology of the term ‘induction’ comes from the Latin ‘*inducer*’ or ‘*to lead*’, which is a useful way to think about induction and induction programs. BTI can be considered as a neophyte being led into a professional community of practice by more experienced colleagues (Kearney, 2015). In this research, BTI is defined as: “the primary phase in a continuum of professional development leading to the teacher’s full integration into a professional community of practice and continuing professional learning throughout their career” (Kearney, 2014, p.5). The *Australian Guidelines* define induction as referring to:

A formal program and other support provided to assist early career teachers who have achieved the Graduate career stage in the Standards to move to the Proficient career stage - to learn, practice and refine the elements of the professional role that are best acquired while teaching (AITSL, 2016, p. 2).

While the definition in the *Australian Guidelines* is somewhat similar to the one put forward above, it refers to induction by the stages of accreditation, which firms the link of induction to the accreditation process rather than professional learning.

In research conducted on BTI in Australia almost a decade ago, Kearney (2013) reviewed ten studies to identify effective induction characteristics based on several interrelated factors. The reviewed studies included a broad range of literature that ranged from international reports (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997; OECD, 2005); national reports from the United States (Fulton et al., 2005); Australian national reports (DEST, 2002; 2003); an international literature review (Howe, 2006); a literature review of United States induction (Serpell, 2000); two empirical studies (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wood & Stanulis, 2009); and a report of state-level induction practices in New South Wales (NSW DET, 2004). The selected literature relied on specific descriptions of induction that corresponded to the definition of induction above. Those components acknowledged by six or more of the ten chosen studies were deemed characteristics of effective induction and used as a basis of comparison for the programs researched. The review identified eight characteristics of effective induction: provision of a mentor; opportunities for collaboration; implementation of structured observations; reduced teaching and/or time release for the beginning teacher; teacher evaluation; opportunities for professional discussions and/or communication; professional support and/or professional networking; and continuing professional development (Kearney, 2014). More recent reviews of induction programs were considered in recognition that this review is almost a decade old. However, recent induction studies still cite this list (see Keese et al., 2023; Scharp, 2019), and other independent reviews have found similar characteristics (see Frederiksen, 2020; OECD, 2019; Reitman & Karge, 2019). These eight characteristics were and still are dominant in the literature and are used in this article to evaluate the *Australian Guidelines*.

Table 1 shows that the *Australian Guidelines* meet five of the eight characteristics for effective induction as found in the literature. The first of those not met is opportunities for professional discussions or communication, which the *Australian Guidelines* mention, but only as part of the mentoring program. While the guidelines imply this criterion, in the

Table 1: *Australian Guidelines* compared to characteristics of effective induction

<i>Graduate to proficient: Australian Guidelines for teacher induction into the profession</i>		Characteristics of effective induction
What the <i>Guidelines</i> say	Yes/No	
Practice-focused mentoring by one or more expert colleagues is particularly powerful in supporting the transition from the Graduate to Proficient career stage (AITSL, 2016, p.7)	Yes	Provision of a mentor
Networks and collaboration: Involvement in teacher networks, including formal and informal networks within and beyond the school/education setting, to gain access to others' knowledge and skills and insights into the profession (AITSL, 2016, p.6)	Yes	Opportunities for collaboration
Study of teaching: ... This is most effective when it involves structured observations of and by the teacher, to broaden the teacher's experience base and to offer feedback, evidence, and advice based on observed practice (AITSL, 2016, p.6)	Yes	Implementation of structured observations
Time allocation: Time should be made available in the initial period to enable effective conduct of the range of activities identified above (AITSL, 2016, p.6)	Yes	Reduced teaching and/or time release for the beginning teacher
Regular evaluation of induction policies and programs are essential to maximise effectiveness as well as to ensure consistency with other policies and programs (AITSL, 2016, p.9)	No	Teacher evaluation
[As part of mentoring] ... regular, scheduled discussions and activities taking place, and sanctioned time set aside for mentor-teacher interactions (AITSL, 2016, p.8)	No	Opportunities for professional discussions and/or communication
Practice-focused mentors are the main support for early career teachers in schools and education settings, but all teachers have a role to play (AITSL, 2016, p.10). [For networking, see Opportunities for Collaboration above]	Yes	Professional support and/or professional networking;
Induction represents a more substantial and intense commitment to learning on the part of the early career teacher and those who support them, than the continuing professional development that is available to all teachers (AITSL, 2016, p.2).	No	Continuing professional development.

original literature, this characteristic was in addition to the provision of a mentor as a stand-alone characteristic. More recent literature addresses professional communication as a necessary factor of effective induction (Keese et al., 2023; Scharp, 2019). Another characteristic not mentioned in the *Australian Guidelines* is teacher evaluation. The guidelines clearly state that the evaluation of the program is an essential component but that it is the responsibility of the “system, sectors and regulatory authorities” (AITSL, 2016, p. 9). While the evaluation of BTI is essential and should be carried out by the organisation, it is equally necessary to allow teachers who undertake the program to evaluate its effectiveness to complete a feedback loop for continuous improvement. The last characteristic not met by the guidelines is induction being part of continued professional development. The idea of professional development is well-embedded in the *Australian Guidelines*, but once again, similar to the concept of evaluation, the guidelines state that effective BTI “fosters the development of an early career teacher’s professional

identity” and that it “fosters career development” (AITSL, 2016, pp. 3, 9). These may be broadly connected to professional development; however, the guidelines also state that “induction represents a more substantial and intense commitment to learning on the part of the early career teacher and those who support them, than the continuing professional development that is available to all teachers” (AITSL, 2016, p.2). This statement illustrates that while the *Australian Guidelines* recognise the importance of BTI and professional development, they are not considered part of the same process. The *Australian Guidelines* recognise the beginning teacher as a Graduate teacher, not yet fully accredited, and therefore, different from a Proficient teacher needing professional development. This is an important distinction concerning effective induction, which presents a problem.

The teaching profession should not be differentiated based on levels of accreditation, especially if those levels are relatively new, as it creates an artificial tier-system of teachers: those who are accredited at Proficient and those who are not yet accredited but still fully qualified. There are also optional higher levels of accreditation, which could further stratify teachers. Although important, especially in an argument regarding the stratification of the teaching profession, those higher classifications are not relevant to induction as they take place later in a teacher’s career and have been very slow to be adopted, with only 0.24% of teachers accredited at those higher levels (AITSL, 2020). However, if BTI is a form of organisational socialisation (Kearney, 2015), then it is vital that the neophyte feels like a full member of the organisation from the start. Furthermore, viewing a career as a learning process facilitated by professional development illustrates induction as the first stage on a continuum of professional learning (DEST, 2002; Kearney, 2014; 2015; 2021) rather than separating the two, which can cause a false tier system amongst teachers.

The *Australian Guidelines* provide a research-based justification of induction, and the analysis of the guidelines against best practice illustrates that they meet most of the characteristics of effective induction; however, the issues raised in this section reveal poignant flaws. The first of which is evident in the name of the guidelines: ‘Graduate to Proficient’, which indicates that induction, as described in the guidelines, is linked to an accreditation process: a process that is part of evaluating the teacher. Linking accreditation to induction turns a learning process into a high-stakes evaluation, where the teacher’s career hangs in the balance. Moreover, high-stakes induction prompts undue pressure and stress on beginning teachers when they are already undergoing considerable stress (Harmsen et al., 2019).

Another major limitation of the *Australian Guidelines* is that they are only guidelines. They do not form part of a policy or procedure, which means schools have discretion over implementation. While mandating programs has not been a popular idea at AITSL, nor in the school systems researched, there is little doubt that at a system level, there are variations and inconsistencies in BTI.

The *Australian Guidelines* are well-intentioned recommendations and ideas about what constitutes good induction; however, they do not mandate induction. Again, the process is aligned with moving a new teacher through the accreditation process, which is valuable but may undermine a process of learning and collegiality since it is an assessed process

that requires oversight and supervision rather than one of reciprocal learning and professional and personal development. The question remains whether or not the *Australian Guidelines* will have the desired effect on the acculturation of teachers to the profession and, subsequently, on student learning outcomes.

The agenda of the nationalisation of education in Australia seems to suggest that teaching and the educative process is a 'fixable' entity rather than a process that improves slowly and with intention. Nationalised policies, procedures, and guidelines, including the induction guidelines, aim to raise the standard of education, which is well-intentioned. However, BTI is a learning process for beginning teachers to help them acculturate to their new profession. While effective induction may have the capacity to improve student learning (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), arrest teacher attrition rates (Kearney, 2014a; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017) and, in Australia, help beginning teachers navigate the process of professional accreditation (AITSL, 2016), its intent should be to support teachers through the hurdles of their first few years in the profession. In essence, it should be a learning process.

Beginning teacher induction: Then and now

In 2002, school administrators reported that 82.6% of teachers were mentored, while only 39.9% indicated receiving mentoring (DEST, 2002). In the 20 years since DEST released those results, there have been more than ten national reviews of education; the development of state and national standards authorities; the development and implementation of a national curriculum; the introduction of professional teaching standards; the introduction of mandatory accreditation and professional development; and, the release of the current national guidelines for induction; however, there has seemingly been very little change. For example, the 2019 AITSL Stakeholder Survey found that 89% of school leaders (n=2665) indicated that early career teachers had received formal induction, while 48% of early career teachers stated that they had received it (AITSL, 2016).

After almost twenty years, there has been an increase of 8% of teachers reporting that they received formal induction. If what school leaders and administrators say is accurate, that 90% of teachers receive some form of comprehensive induction, this would be a success. However, based on AITSL findings and those presented here, one can only conclude that little has changed in the understanding of induction as comprehensive, structured support for beginning teachers since the publication of the *Australian Guidelines* in 2016. Consequently, the same "variation and inconsistency in the management of induction" reported by the DEST in 2002 (p.16) is prevalent today. One could go even further and suggest that the extent to which induction is misunderstood and poorly implemented by school leaders leads to a situation where leaders believe they are providing it, but teachers do not think they are receiving it. Consequently, the *Australian Guidelines* have had little to no effect in the six years since their introduction, according to AITSL's own data.

Methods

A qualitative multiple-case study design was adopted for the research. School leaders were sent surveys through professional networks to ascertain the extent to which they thought their school had an effective induction program for beginning teachers. Ten government schools participated, based on the declaration that they had a BTI program, had a suitable number of teachers who had recently undergone the program, and their readiness to participate. The leadership team at the school agreed to complete a survey that consisted of ten short answer questions and an interview, which averaged about 40 minutes. They also facilitated linking the researcher with beginning teachers at the school who agreed to be interviewed about their BTI experience. All interviews were conducted via *Zoom*, were audio-only recorded and averaged 25 minutes.

The limitations of this study are similar to other case studies, where generalisability is difficult. Although the one case presented is representative of the ten, suggesting that those ten represent all schools in the state, approximately 1350, is impossible. Instead, the case is presented to allow the reader to determine the transferability of the case to other situations, recognising that the one case shown in depth is similar to the other nine that informed this study. The delimitations are such that only one case has been presented, and the data from all cases were subject to the researcher's interpretation of the data relevant to the research questions. The data presented is not meant to be a case study of each induction program but rather an examination of the phenomenon of BTI as interpreted by those who have taken part in the various programs. As in most qualitative research, the intent is not to be generalisable nor deterministic but to examine the program from the participants' perspective and then to compare that experience with the *Australian Guidelines*.

In total, 22 interviews were conducted with teachers, mentors and executives. This research is in response to the *Australian Guidelines* and seeks to ascertain whether there has been a systemic change in induction since their release (Table 2). What is presented is a table of the ten cases compared with the recommendations of the *Australian Guidelines*. Additionally, one BTI program, Program 3 (P3), has been chosen to evaluate the characteristics of effective induction and the recommendations of the *Australian Guidelines* in depth, using the interview and survey data.

It is important to note that P3 represents the other cases; it was not an outlier (for more details on other cases, see Kearney, 2021). Outlier best and worst-case scenarios have also been published (see Kearney, 2017 and Kearney, 2016, resp). The themes and trends that are reported for P3 are those that are prominent in all cases that have been analysed. P3 is an illustrative case of the current context of induction in the participating schools but is likely typical of many Australian public schools. It was chosen as the representative case because it constitutes the most comprehensive case of the ten. It consisted of three beginning teachers who all shared a single mentor who was also an executive member, which allowed for multiple perspectives to be analysed.

Table 2: Overview of cases compared to *Australian Guidelines*

	Program									
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Provision of a mentor - common stage (primary school)	No	No	No	No	Yes					
Provision of a mentor - common department (secondary school)						Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Modelling good practice	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Observation and use of data	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Mandatory observation only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Using learning outcomes to improve teaching approaches	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Supporting well-being	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Regular scheduled meetings and time allowance	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Coaching, supporting, and challenging the teacher to improve practice	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Using multiple mentors, online media, or networks	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Opportunities for collaboration	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Implementation of structured observations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Implementation of structured observations - mandatory only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reduced teaching and/or time release for the beginning teacher	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Teacher evaluation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Opportunities for professional discussions and/or communication	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Professional support and/or professional networking;	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Continuing professional development.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

P3 is a primary school with approximately 550 students. There are three beginning teachers currently undergoing BTI at the school: one is a first-year teacher, the other two are in their second year, and all are at the Graduate stage of accreditation and working towards Proficient. The mentor assigned to the three beginning teachers was the deputy principal which is consistent with other cases examined, wherein 90% of all participating programs, the mentor appointed is also the teacher's line manager. In the high schools studied, all mentors were the teacher's head of department, and in all primary school cases, it was the deputy or assistant principal. One of the school leaders at P3, who was also a mentor, said, "Someone has to do it and that someone has to have the time and expertise to mentor the new teacher. We can't expect a full-time class teacher to take on the role, so I do it." As seen in Table 2, most of the ten programs were similar to the *Australian Guidelines*.

There are obvious limitations to presenting only one program. Still, considering the similarity of experiences and familiar themes (see Table 2), it has been determined that P3 represents the most comprehensive data and is representative of what was generally reported in the other cases, where data from multiple sources was more limited. Furthermore, it should be noted that the purpose of this paper is not to evaluate programs, which has been done elsewhere (see Kearney, 2016; 2017; 2021), but to contextualise induction within the era of national guidelines to appraise the program within those guidelines and to make recommendations for general improvement, not of the guidelines, but of their use and implementation.

Since each of the programs evaluated had a mentoring program and the *Australian Guidelines* specify mentoring as the most critical aspect of an induction program, mentoring forms the basis of qualitative comparison. Specifically, the *Australian Guidelines* recommend eight practice-focused mentoring behaviours, which form a large part of the analysis. These are: common teaching area; modelling good practice; observation and use of data; using learning outcomes to improve teaching approaches; supporting well-being; regular scheduled meetings and time; coaching, supporting and challenging the teacher to improve practice; and using multiple mentors, online media or networks (AITSL, 2016).

The focus of this study was to ascertain whether schools' induction programs reflect the *Australian Guidelines* and, if so, the extent to which they are effective. The overwhelming reaction of the participating teachers regarding their BTI experience is that it is deficient. As is seen below in Table 2, only two of the eight recommendations in the *Australian Guidelines* for mentoring were fully met in P3. The provision of a mentor is a foundational principle in the *Australian Guidelines* and is further broken down into eight behaviours, of which only one was met. The other categories for comparison come from the characteristics of effective induction mentioned above.

The provision of a mentor is arguably the most significant role in any induction program (OECD, 2019) and according to the *Australian Guidelines*, mentoring is the most crucial strategy of BTI.

Of all the induction strategies available, practice-focused mentoring, by one or more expert colleagues, is particularly powerful in supporting the transition of a teacher from the Graduate to Proficient career stage (AITSL, 2016, p. 1).

None of the teachers interviewed had a mentor who met all eight Australian Guidelines recommendations. The teachers in P3 all reported in the initial survey that they were in an induction program; however, in the interview, it was revealed that none of them felt that the support they received was part of a formal program. One of the second-year teachers articulated it this way:

We are told we are being inducted without any real sense of what that entails. [The deputy] is our supervisor, which we are told is the same as a mentor, but is it? It doesn't seem like we are treated differently than any other staff. I mean, I don't want special treatment, but if this is what an induction program is, then I don't see any difference between me and a teacher with ten years' experience.

Another teacher added:

I'm already looking for another job. I might just decide to do casual for a while. While I like the school and the kids, I'm just not sure it's for me. I don't get along with [the deputy], and it makes it hard to come to work. I know I have areas I need to improve upon, but I'm struggling, and while some of the teachers are great, they all have their classes to look after. I just feel like I don't particularly belong.

The first-year teacher was more optimistic about her induction but didn't feel supported through an official program. She reported:

I'm learning a lot. I love the school and the children, and I just feel so lucky to have this job. The support from the other teachers is amazing, especially (name removed). She is great and is so helpful. [The deputy] is good too. She helps when you ask, and our meetings are usually positive, but I'm learning more from the teachers I meet than from her. She is my boss, so I don't want to bother her with my questions and problems.

In P3, the program is not embedded in any policy or procedure documents; the deputy principal implements it from her own experience. The lack of structure is not necessarily a failure of the mentor or the teachers but rather a function of the system and the program, or lack thereof. A manager can be a good mentor, but they reinforce a hierarchy that does not necessarily facilitate a good mentor-mentee relationship, which is built on being mutually beneficial to both the mentor and mentee and allows for open communication, trust, and confidentiality (Heikkinen et al., 2020). When a line manager is also the mentor, it can be challenging to see the relationship as one of mutual learning and even more difficult, as in the example of the first-year teacher above, to open up about problems one may have.

There are difficulties in implementing effective mentoring, which were seen in most cases. Baker (2002, p. 39) said there must be "an absolute clarity of roles, expectations, and knowledge of what constitutes the mentoring relationship". Similarly, Fransson and Gustafsson (2008) warned that a failure to clarify roles could lead to conflicting goals. In P3, there were no stated goals nor clarity of roles, which caused confusion. Because of the different meanings of induction and mentoring and their misused synonymy, schools need to have policies and procedures clearly delineating roles and responsibilities, such as those suggested in the *Australian Guidelines*. The school leaders interviewed saw the *Australian Guidelines* as aspirational guides and relied more on their experience to acculturate new teachers to the profession. The issue with relying on experience is that it reinforces why the *Australian Guidelines* were created in the first place: beginning teachers were not receiving the support they needed.

In P3, the induction program and the mentoring process were not clearly defined, were not embedded in policy and were implemented indiscriminately, which ignores the complexity of the mentoring relationship. In her foundational research on mentoring for beginning teachers, Feiman-Nemser and colleagues (1993, p.16). reported:

The assumption that the activity of mentoring necessarily facilitates the ability of beginning teachers to understand the central tasks of teaching and to engage in pedagogical thinking ... is problematic.

While mentoring is not the only aspect of this program that was lacking, it is the most prominent and essential part of any induction program, according to the *Australian Guidelines* and international best practices. If the mentoring facet of induction is deficient, other aspects are likely inadequate as well. Without the mentor's support, the mentees, as evident in P3 and the other cases, did not know whom to ask to find out if and what additional supports were available.

Implications and conclusions

The findings suggest that the *Australian Guidelines* are not being implemented as intended. Put in another way, the same practices that necessitated the creation of the *Australian Guidelines* are still prevalent, likely because those guidelines are not embedded in policy and overseen by the sector or the regulator.

The policy changes that have taken place over the past 15 years have been quite significant; however, there has been little, if any, noticeable positive effect on the desired result: student achievement (OECD, 2018). These policy changes were explored to contextualise the lack of action regarding beginning teacher induction, despite overwhelming evidence suggesting that it can contribute to improving the quality of teaching and subsequently improve student outcomes (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, OECD, 2015a).

The nationalisation of education throughout Australia contextualises the how and why of the *Australian Guidelines*; however, it does not tell us why induction continues to be undermined in teacher development. What this article has highlighted is that the necessary foundations for high-quality induction exist throughout the Australian educational sector and that appropriate steps have been taken to get to this point. The *Australian Guidelines* provide advice and recommendations for the implementation and execution of BTI across the country; however, despite the continuous support for BTI for over three decades, this is the first attempt to address the variability and inconsistencies that were and are still prevalent in the understanding, development, and implementation of induction programs in Australia (Kearney, 2013; 2019; Paris, 2010; 2013). The publication of the *Australian Guidelines* was an essential step in recognising the importance of an acculturation process for beginning teachers; however, without a policy to mandate induction and oversight to ensure that it is implemented, induction remains inconsistent.

AITSL's limitations as a national education body in a system where schools and education are a state-run enterprise are recognised and understood. However, further actions could have been taken to lobby state education ministers to accept the guidelines as policy, resulting in a more standardised approach in all state and territory schools. If induction is as significant as the literature and the *Australian Guidelines* suggest, then mandating induction should be a worthwhile consideration.

The questions that still need to be answered are: Why is it so challenging to develop and implement good induction in schools, and: what are the main obstacles to effective induction in schools? According to the research available, it is challenging to develop and implement good induction in schools because there is a lack of awareness and expertise about what good induction entails, and there is little oversight of the process once implemented. The *Australian Guidelines* now provide the model; however, induction requires school leader buy-in and accountability procedures to ensure that the program, once implemented, is meeting its intended purpose. Until beginning teacher induction is policy-mandated and overseen, and leaders are held accountable for implementing those programs, we may continue to see the same variation and inconsistency in BTI that has been reported for the past 20 years.

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