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Beginning Teacher Induction Practices in the Context of Large Classes

ABSTRACT: Most of the challenges faced by new teachers are connected to the inherent weaknesses of the public school system; lack of and congested classrooms; and not enough textbooks, instructional materials, and equipment. The challenges experienced by new teachers in the public school, specifically in dealing with student differences, are related to their being new to the public education system and to the urban setting. This study looked into the support given to new teachers of three schools from three Divisions of National Capital Region, that topped the National Achievement Test for 2013 and 2014. Data were gathered through the use of two validated sets of semi-structured interview guide. Results showed that handling large classes, student differences, and classroom management were the greatest challenges experienced by the new teachers. Training, school-initiated programs, and support from colleagues were mainly the form of support given. The study recommended that the Department of Education of the Philippines should consider the institutionalization of Induction Program for new teachers in the public schools, specifically addressing the unique needs, especially those related to large classes, of beginning teachers who have no experience in the professional teaching and transferees from private schools and the provinces.

KEY WORDS: Beginning Teachers; Teacher Induction; Public School System; Large Classes; Professional Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

As laid out in the sixth of the EfA (Education for All) goals and the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), every child must be provided with quality primary education. The road towards the attainment of this goal was rough as the problem of massive teacher shortage quietly looms over countries (Motivans, 2012; and Sengupta ed., 2016). In fact, according to

the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) Institute for Statistics, in 2009, that 6.8 million teachers should be recruited by 2015, in order to provide the right to education to all primary-school-age-children (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009).

The teacher-shortage phenomenon is largely attributable to the exodus of new teachers from the profession. Current

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estimates show that over 50% of new teachers leave in their first five years of teaching (cited in Hare & Heap, 2001; and Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012). Lack of support from school administration, school discipline problems, and limited faculty input in school decision-making were some of the reasons given for leaving the teaching field (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

As a remedy to the teacher shortage, R.M. Ingersoll (2007) suggests that it would be a more efficient strategy to put in effort to retain and support active teachers, especially the neophyte ones (Ingersoll, 2007). This is where teacher induction program comes in. Research evidences revealed also that effective induction program accelerates new teachers' professional growth – making them more effective faster – reduce the rate of new teacher attrition, and improve student learning (Wong, 2004; and Glazerman *et al.*, 2010).

In this context, L. Huling-Austin (1990) defines induction programs as planned programs intended to provide some systematic and sustained assistance, specifically to beginning teachers for at least one school year (Huling-Austin, 1990). L. McAlpine & M. Crago (1995) add that induction is the year in which the new teacher begins to understand the school culture into which he/she has chosen to enter (McAlpine & Crago, 1995). Thus, induction plans should be developed not only to meet mandated requirements, but more so to help new teachers become better educators within certain educational contexts. In short, induction must be context specific to maximize its effectiveness (Tillman, 2000; Doerger, 2003; and Kessels, 2010).

Since inception in the mid-1980s, teacher induction programs have evolved. In the early days, it was viewed as a temporary bridge designed to ease new teachers' entry into teaching. Then, it was seen as an individualized professional development prompted by standards-based reforms, calls for greater professionalism, and a growing understanding of teacher

learning. Recently, induction is viewed as a process of incorporating new teachers into collaborative professional learning communities, where new teachers get support and guidance, experienced teachers get recognition and renewal, and everyone focuses on student learning and school improvement (Williams, 2010; and Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

In the Philippines, a structured and organized teacher induction saw light when the TEC (Teacher Education Council) was created by virtue of R.A. (Republic Act) No. 7784, which was mandated to strengthen teacher education in the country.¹ Pursuant to its mandate, the TEC embarked on a project to systematize teacher induction nationwide. The Council conceptualized the TIP (Teacher Induction Program) during the 2003 Strategic Workshop, after a series of zonal conferences with teacher education institutions and the fields of offices of the DepEd (Department of Education) in the Philippines (Redillas, 2017).

The results of the consultations validated the findings that induction programs were conducted in the division and school levels, but there was a need to “systematize, structure, and organize” the program for teachers with 0-3 years experience. Thus, the TEC packaged a set of 17 self-paced modules with pre and post assessments used as a resource base for the TIP to be institutionalized by DepEd of Philippines. TIP was, then, pilot tested in 2006 and through DepEd Memo No.39, s. 2008, mass institutionalization of the TIP, revised as per pilot testing results, was announced (Nicodemus, 2011; and Redillas, 2017).

The objectives of the program are: to strengthen the continuum from pre-service to in-service education and training; to promote excellence in public education by enhancing teacher effectiveness, particularly by reinforcing the content knowledge and instructional skills of beginning teachers; to

¹See, for example, “Philippines: Principles and General Objectives of Education” in *WDE: World Data on Education*, sixth edition. Available online also at: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/archive/Countries/WDE/2006/ASIA_and_the_PACIFIC/Philippines [accessed in Manila, Philippines: December 27, 2017].

enhance the socialization process and ensure the smooth immersion of beginning teachers into the school environment; to safeguard the personal and professional well-being of the teachers by providing them with a peer support network and familiarizing them with stress management techniques; and to assist the teachers in discovering for themselves the joy and satisfaction that can be derived in the teaching profession and thereby increase the retention rate among beginning teachers (cited in SEAMEO, 2012).

Local literature on the TIP, which is more than half a decade in its implementation, is very scarce (Read & Atinc, 2017). This study is filler to the gap. It aimed to document actual new teacher induction practices of the NCR (National Capital Region)'s top three performing Divisions in the NAT (National Achievement Test) in 2013 and 2014. It assumed that these schools provide quality and comprehensive new teacher induction program; hence, their good performance in the NAT.

Specifically, this investigation looked into the: challenges of and formal/informal support to new teachers; number of years of support; mentoring; collaboration among teachers as a method of improving instructional effectiveness; professional development; and evaluation of new teachers throughout the process. Moreover, this study determined whether or not the induction programs of the selected schools are context specific to large classes, with provision of pedagogical support in handling said type of classes to new teachers.

METHODS

This study adopted the general approach of qualitative research. In-depth one-on-one interview was used as the data collection method. Two sets of semi-structured interview guide were developed and revised based on the results of pilot testing and experts' validation (Creswell, 2007; Gray, 2009; and Jamshed, 2014).

The research participants were all the new teachers and school heads in the selected schools of the top three performing Divisions in NAT (National Achievement

Test) 2013 and 2014 – Makati, Parañaque, and Taguig and Pateros. The top performing elementary school in each division was used as the study site as identified by the corresponding Office of the Schools Division Superintendent.

In totality, there were 13 new teachers and three school heads interviewed. New teachers, as defined in this study, are those who are new to the teaching profession and those who are not but new to the public education system and the urban setting. From the gathered data, out of the 13 teachers, only four were novice teachers, two were new to the urban setting, and seven were new to the public education system. The teachers had 0 to 5 years of experience in their own category.

Examination of the gathered data was done through NVivo, a qualitative software analysis for rich text-based information (Ozkan, 2004; and McNiff, 2016). The interview transcripts were copied into NVivo, and nodes were created based on the main areas of interest that the study covered. Themes were generated based on the responses of the new teachers and principals. Common answers were pooled together, while salient responses were highlighted. The frequency of the responses was gauged through the percentage of references coded under the nodes (Creswell, 2007; Gray, 2009; and Jamshed, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the study presents the themes generated from the responses, first, of the new teachers, followed by those from the principals which served to validate the former's responses.

Challenges Experiences by the New Teachers. The dominant themes generated from the answers of the teachers, when asked about the challenges they faced as new teachers, are: handling big classes, student differences, and classroom management. Although the issue of large classes is going to be discussed more comprehensively in another section of this paper, it is important to note that large classes have been a permanent feature of

the public school system, since its inception during the American period. The shortage of classrooms, teachers, books, and other educational materials were brought about by the perennial fiscal challenges faced by the government every year, coupled with the robust population growth of the country in the past (Florido, 2006; and Jones, 2017).²

However, in recent years, as the country's economy had experienced significant degree of growth, the fiscal standing of the government improved, and consequently more money was allocated by the government to address the problem of shortages in the public education system (Balisacan & Hal, 2003; Maligalig *et al.*, 2010; and Villegas, 2010).³

Some of the difficulties that the teachers mentioned when handling large classes are with regard to classroom management. Specifically, one teacher mentioned the limitation of the classroom space. Two teachers related handling large class to the difficulty of maintaining student discipline (Maligalig *et al.*, 2010; interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015; and interview with Respondent B, PP2, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

On student differences as one of the greatest challenges of new teachers, the context in which student differences is understood varied for some of the teachers interviewed. It has something to do not only with the background of the students, but also with the professional and personal background of the teachers themselves (Mulford, 2003; interview with Respondent C, PP3, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015; and interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Two teachers, for example, who originally taught in the province, related their difficulties teaching students in a highly urbanized city. One teacher-respondent

mentioned about the difference between the level of knowledge of the students in the province and in the city which, according to her, may be brought about by the availability of technology, especially in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in the city and by the fact that some of her students in the city came from relatively well-off families. This situation forced the teacher to cope up with the level of knowledge of her students in the city, which brought her significant challenges as a new teacher (Masagca & Londerio, 2008; interview with Respondent E, TP2, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015; and interview with Respondent F, TP3, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Also, teachers highlighted the difference in the attitude of students they taught in the province and in the city, they are currently teaching which makes maintaining discipline a challenge. For the teachers, who originally taught in private schools, handling the behavior of students in the public school was one of their challenges (*cf* Masagca & Londerio, 2008; al-Amarat, 2011; interview with Respondent C, PP3, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015; and interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

It is important to note here that being a new teacher itself already carries with it certain degree of difficulty, but when you add to the situation the adjustment that a new teacher has to endure brought about by his/her transfer from provincial to an urban setting or from a private school to the public school environment, it will really be, as we quote one of the teachers, a "shock" and their greatest challenge (Westbrook *et al.*, 2013; and interview with Respondent C, PP3, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

It is also important to highlight here how one teacher narrated her or deals as a new teacher whose actual teaching experience was only her practicum teaching. As a substitute teacher during her first year of teaching, she was assigned to teach in the lowest Grade 5 section. Her experience as a new teacher is insightful as it gives us a glimpse of the life of a teacher in her early

²See also, for example, "Stating the Obvious: The State of the Philippine Education Sector". Available online at: <http://philrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Stating-the-Obvious.pdf> [accessed in Manila, Philippines: December 27, 2017].

³See "Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Philippines". Available online at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002303/230331e.pdf> [accessed in Manila, Philippines: December 27, 2017].

years in the public school. She, then, said as following here:

In the last section of Grade 5 that I handled, the children were “hyper”. They did not consider me as a teacher. They cursed and sometimes engaged in fist fight in front of me. I didn’t know what to do at that time, and it made me cry. It was really a very difficult time for me (interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Other challenges that the teacher mentioned are teacher preparation and workload, school facilities, professional relationships, and parent’s support (Maligalig *et al.*, 2010; Sutherland & Brooks, 2013; and Oracion, 2015).

Support for New Teachers. The dominant themes under this section are: training, school-initiated programs, and support from colleagues. Also, noteworthy to mention is that one teacher talked about the existence of an induction program conducted by the Division Office and about the significance of moral and emotional support needed, especially by new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Sutherland & Brooks, 2013; Oracion, 2015; and interview with Respondent E, TP2, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Firstly, *on Training*. Most of the teachers mentioned the various training that they were sent to as one of the top support programs extended to them. The training mentioned are the IN-SET (In-Service Training) program that each school under the DepEd (Department of Education) in the Philippines initiates for their teachers (Lapus, 2008; and Maligalig *et al.*, 2010). One of the teacher-respondents said that:

In-service training program are conducted twice a year, during the semestral break and every end of the school year. The veteran teachers give lectures during the training (interview with Respondent P, TP10, Taguig of Philippines, 2/3/2015).

The Division Office of DepEd (Department of Education) in the Philippines also conducts division-wide training program, especially on content updates on the different subject areas, methods and

strategies, and other relevant information on the new K-12 Curriculum being implemented by DepEd. Some teachers cited being sent to seminars conducted by other organizations and higher education institutions (Lapus, 2008; Maligalig *et al.*, 2010; and Read & Atinc, 2017).

Being sent to the Division Office to attend an induction program for new teachers was mentioned as one of the support received by the new teachers. She said as following here:

The school sends us to an induction program by the DepEd. We attended the 2-day seminar on induction program (interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Two of the school heads interviewed confirmed the statements of the teachers regarding the program of the school to conduct in-service training, holding of professional meetings, team building, and sending of teachers to training and seminars outside the school. The effort also of the Division Office was recognized. As one principal asserted that:

[...] First, we have the in-service training. You could consider it formal, but that’s one factor that really helps the teacher. The in-service training is given to teachers occasionally, for example, monthly or twice, every semester [...]. We monitor them, their skills, their attitude, then I talk with the mentors during official meetings. Then, we also have the team building. We also have created study circles [...]. We send them to trainings and seminars (interview with Respondent C, PP3, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

Another school head pointed out as following here:

The Division Office sends teacher to Baguio to attend national training on K-12. Our Division Office is very supportive (interview with Respondent B, PP2, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

Secondly, *on Demo-Teachings*. Coupled with the training programs that teachers participated in, a good number of the teachers also mentioned the conduct of demo-teaching sessions, either initiated by

their own school or by the Division Office. Majority of the teachers were able to attend demo-teaching sessions, either as observers or a demo-teachers themselves (Villarreal, 2010; and Westbrook *et al.*, 2013). One of them said as following here:

The school initiates demo-teachings to sharpen our skills. We were also sent to observe division-wide demo-teaching sessions for every subject areas (interview with Respondent J, TP7, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

Thirdly, *on Support from Colleagues*. The teachers also gave a lot of weight to the invaluable assistance given to them by their colleagues, especially the master teachers, in their school. The master teachers usually act as grade leader providing the teachers, especially the new teachers, in his/her grade level leadership the support and assistance they need. One teacher even remembered his retired colleague, a master teacher in her school then, for all the help and the assistance voluntarily given him by this colleague (Timperley *et al.*, 2007; Westbrook *et al.*, 2013; and interview with Respondent J, TP7, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

A significant number of teachers also mentioned the school head as one who acts as a mentor to new teachers giving orientations, always reminding them of his/her readiness to listen to their difficulties and challenges in their teaching, and providing possible solutions to their problems and opportunities to attend seminars outside the school. One school head talked about her role as mentor and coach to her teachers, as following here:

I give them mentoring and coaching, especially now that there are many new things like the RPNS. I am hands-on in mentoring and coaching them (interview with Respondent B, PP2, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

Also another school head described her so called “buddy-buddy system” as a form of mentoring that she used to her teachers, as following here:

I become their friend. We are not like the traditional Principals that teachers cannot

approach. The generation now is different. Nowadays, we use the “buddy-buddy system”. For example, everyone can use the comfort room of the Principal (interview with Respondent C, PP3, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

Fourthly, *on School-Initiated Support Program*. One teacher revealed the role of quality circle in their school in providing her the assistance she needed as a new teacher. This was confirmed by one of the school heads, as following here:

First, we do the teachers’ quality circle or we call it the TQC. In this TQC, we discuss matters on teaching strategies, non-teaching, anything, not only related to teaching, but also to other activities that may help or contribute to the academic performance of the children (interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Another form of support given to new teachers is providing them with educational materials and equipment, like photocopy of references, projectors, and laptop (Ahmadi, Keshavarzi & Foroutan, 2011; Westbrook *et al.*, 2013; and interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Duration of the Support. The information gathered from the teachers revealed no general consensus as to the duration of the support given to them. These may be due to the fact that the usual support given to new teachers are also the same support continuously given to all the teachers in the schools regardless of how long they have been teaching (OECD, 2012; and Oracion, 2015).

All the teachers interviewed continue to attend seminars, especially the regular in-service training of DepEd (Department of Education) in the Philippines, observe demo-teaching sessions, and enjoy continued assistance from their colleagues and school head, not necessarily as part of the regular support system of DepEd and not necessarily because they are new (Oracion, 2015; interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015; and interview with Respondent C, PP3, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

Adequacy of the Support Received.

Majority of the new teachers perceived the support extended to them as adequate. However, two of them answered in the negative. The first teacher mentioned that the present support she is getting is not quite enough for her expectation. On the other hand, the second teacher is complaining about the facilities of the school, especially on the level of noise (Westbrook *et al.*, 2013; Oracion, 2015; interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015; and interview with Respondent C, PP3, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

This is quite understandable because during the interview, the school was undergoing major renovations, and construction was on-going. Many of the classes used the basketball court right next to the school as a make-shift classroom. Because the classes were held very close to one another, coupled with the on-going construction, noise was obviously a big problem for the teachers and students of the school. Some teachers said as follows:

As a new teacher, I am expecting more. I feel that it's not enough (interview with Respondent F, TP3, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

It's not enough, especially with regard to the facilities. Even, if you have prepared your lesson well, the students would not be able to hear you. Even, using lapel is not enough to compete with the noise (Interview with Respondent L, TP8, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

Effect of the Support Given to the New Teachers.

When asked about the effect of the support given to them as new teachers, three teachers declared that it changed the way they perceived their profession for the better and brought about a general improvement in their professional life as a teacher. The following statements support this assertion:

The support helped me a lot, especially in improving myself as a professional teacher. I learned a lot, especially in the use of ICT, and I developed further love for teaching and to be more supportive to my students (interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Through the support, I have improved in terms of my teaching styles, teaching strategies, how to handle and discipline the pupils, and then in relating with them (interview with Respondent R, TP12, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

All the teachers responded positively, when asked if the support given to them resulted in improvements in the learning of their students. Two teachers specifically mentioned that whatever professional improvements, they had gained as result of the support given to them were in turn directly translated to the better performance of their students in the class. That the support given to them were translated to better performance and increased learning of their students (Mulford, 2003; interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015; and interview with Respondent R, TP12, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

One teacher specifically mentioned the positive effect of attending demonstration teachings. She mentioned how it gave her a lot of ideas about teaching strategies and how to handle her class properly, as follows:

From the demo teaching, we learned a lot about strategies. We gained a lot of ideas (interview with Respondent J, TP7, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

When asked about concrete evidences that the support given to them as new teachers really translated to better performance of their students, both teachers and the school heads cited the result of NAT (National Achievement Test) as concrete evidence (Tumlos-Castillo & Baylon, 2015; interview with Respondent R, TP12, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015; and interview with Respondent J, TP7, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

Additional Support Needed. When queried about what they would have liked their school and Division to have done in terms of other forms support for new teachers, five of them clamored for more tangible support to instruction, like instructional materials textbooks, and new classrooms. It is important to note, though, that the lack of textbooks and other

instructional materials is perhaps due to the transition period with the implementation of the new K-12 curriculum. As per information released by the government, particularly DepEd (Department of Education) in the Philippines, the problem is already being addressed (Coloma, 2004; SEAMEO, 2012; and Redillas, 2017).

Also, the clamor for more classrooms may be due to the existence of large classes in the schools included in the research, which the teachers considered as one of their biggest challenges. The teachers, as Respondents, said as following here:

I hope they will provide more classrooms, textbooks, and other materials. The classrooms are limited, because of the large number of student population here (interview with Respondent H, TP5, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

New classrooms and learning materials, especially for Grade 1, because we do not have books (interview with Respondent J, TP7, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

One of the teachers suggested more training. One even suggested to include leadership training for new teachers, as follows:

Teachers should have leadership training, especially the new ones from the private school, so that they will be not surprised when faced with problems like large classes (interview with Respondent M, TP8, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

Moreover, one teacher mentioned salary increase as a form of additional support that she wants. Though many teachers suggested additional forms of support, noteworthy is that five teachers expressed satisfaction with the level of support received from their current schools and felt that there is no need to add more (Redillas, 2017; and interview with Respondent J, TP7, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

On Mentoring. Generally speaking, the beginning teachers affirmed that they have mentor-teachers assigned to them by the school head. One of them said as following here:

Yes, I remember Mr. Tecson, our master teacher. He retired last year. He oriented me on how to deal with different kinds of people. He also oriented me about the attitude of the children. Mr. Tecson is like us; he also taught in the private school before he applied in the public school [...]. He told us that it was a long adjustment for him, but he coped up with the challenges (interview with Respondent E, TP2, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

The usual evaluation tools used to assess the needs of the new teachers are observation, interviews, and informal conversation with the new teachers by their mentor-teachers. During their discussion in the TQC (Teacher Quality Circle), the mentor-teachers are able pick up the crucial needs of new teachers as regards their teaching difficulties. One of them said that the TQC meeting is every month (interview with Respondent G, TP4, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

The new teachers are also assessed using their records or contribution in the RPMS (Results-based Performance Management System) or PAST (Performance Appraisal System for Teachers), as following here:

We have PAST or the RPMS. We are assessed using those instruments (interview with Respondent Q, TP11, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

The new teachers were also given opportunities to observe their mentor-teachers. This observation of mentor-teachers have helped the beginning teachers on classroom management, improving their teaching strategies and techniques on how to handle students as well as how to effectively motivate or encourage pupils and students to study hard and learn the lessons (Rose & Reynolds, 2006; and Read & Atinc, 2017).

Likewise, the mentor-teachers had the occasion to observe their mentees. These observations may be formal or informal. When we say formal observation, the mentor-teacher will enter the classroom with her/his checklist or rating scale. When the observation is informal, according to one of the Respondents, the mentor-teacher will just make a peek (*sumisilip lang*) at the classroom (interview with

Respondent I, TP6, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015). Most of the points discussed after the observation of the mentee are teacher-student interactions (more student recitations), collaborative works, lesson planning, instructional materials, and others (cf Rose & Reynolds, 2006; Westbrook et al., 2013; and Read & Atinc, 2017).

The new teachers were given certain time which is non-instructional to meet with their mentors. In their meetings, they typically talked about lesson topics and how to present or teach the topics well as different topics have different ways of being presented or taught. The teachers and mentors regularly meet during their free time in the faculty room or after their work (official time). Some teachers said that they have set a time every Monday as meeting time with the mentors (interview with Respondent G, TP4, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015; interview with Respondent Q, TP11, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015; and interview with Respondent S, TP13, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

The new teachers and mentor-teachers communicate face-to-face, formal or informal. The formal encounter happens during their TQC (Teacher Quality Circle) meetings. They frequently discussed the content of the lesson plan as well as the strategies and activities to be used in their teaching. The face-to-face meeting or communication is underscored by one teacher as effective, because it is where they have friendly talks where the new teachers are able to express their feelings without reservation. It is this meetings that the new teachers tend to open up and feel that they are treated equally (cf Maligalig et al., 2010; Tummons, Kitchel & Garton, 2016; and Read & Atinc, 2017).

Some teachers also stressed that they communicate or consult with their colleagues or mentors online, like through mobile phones (text), Facebook, or email (interview with Respondent Q, TP11, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015; and interview with Respondent S, TP13, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015). The data on mentoring from the new teachers were corroborated by the

school heads. The school heads affirmed that they assign mentor-teachers to the new teachers. Usually, the mentor-teachers are the master teachers, grade area coordinators, or grade chairman. They are selected based on their very good performance (Maligalig et al., 2010; Read & Atinc, 2017; and interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Other criteria considered in the selection of mentors are: expertise in pedagogy; educational attainment; and accomplishments in various school activities. Two responses were captured as following here:

The criteria are the performance of the mentor-teachers and, of course, they their expertise (interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Relevant experience, educational background, accomplishment, merits, and fitness (interview with Respondent C, PP3, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

The mentor-teachers were also given the opportunity to attend training and seminar-workshops sponsored by the Division Office (Orleans, 2007; Maligalig et al., 2010; Read & Atinc, 2017). The tool used in assessing the training needs of the teachers is the performance rating of the teachers. The school heads believed that the performance of the pupils reflects the performance of the teacher. A school head reiterated as follows:

There is performance rating for teachers, and there is also performance of the pupils. Of course, if the performance of the students is good, the performance of the teacher is also good (interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

They also considered the various components of the NCBTA (National Competency- Based Teacher Assessment) as their evaluation tool, according to one school head. Likewise, through informal interview or plain conversation with the new teachers, the mentor-teacher could already cull some needs of the new teacher (Biong, 2013; and Read & Atinc, 2017).

Moreover, similar to what the new

teachers revealed, the school heads said that the mentor-teacher and the beginning teachers usually have personal or face-to-face communication. They sometimes talk along the corridors or in the faculty room. The informal conversation or meetings also happen after teaching hours. There are also instances wherein the mentor-teacher and the new teachers are communicating on-line (cf Florido, 2006; Ali & Rizvi eds., 2007; and Redillas, 2017). One of them, then, said as following here:

Sometimes there is face-to-face, personal communication. They also do it online, because we have computers here. Students also have online learning [...] (interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

The common mentoring happens through the TQC (Teacher Quality Circle). According to one of the school heads stating as follows:

We have regular meetings for the TQC. In the TQC, the mentors and teachers discuss the problems they encounter related to teaching strategies, the performance of their pupils, health issues of students, and others. After discussing issues and concerns, they formulate possible ways or steps to be done in order to address the problems. We have schedule for the TQC (interview with Respondent B, PP2, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

The TQC (Teacher Quality Circle) is an institutionalized mechanism in the DepEd (Department of Education) in the Philippines to improve the academic performance of the students. TQC of every school is submitting a report to the Division, and there is NCR (National Capital Region) Monitoring Team, which basically monitors the implementation of TQC (Total Quality Control).⁴

The mentor-teachers who are also the master teachers observe the new teachers in their classroom as part of assessing the needs and strengths of the new teachers (Kessels, 2010; Oracion, 2015; and Redillas, 2017). One of the school heads said as following here:

⁴See also, for example, "Memo Order No.688, on 22 November 2012, DO-Manila, Issued by DepEd NCR, Division of City Schools – Manila, Philippines", *Unpublished Letter*, owned by the Authors.

Actually, I allow the master teacher to observe. I allow them to observe classes through formal observation (interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

More importantly, the principals said that the new teachers are always given the chance to observe the master teachers, either in the classroom or through school demo-teaching program, so that the new teachers will gain insights and new skills in pedagogy. Demo-teaching is a way to share the best practices of the senior teachers to the newly-hired. The mentors are the model teachers (Maligalig et al., 2010; and Lomibao, 2016). One of them, then, said as follows:

Yes, we have demo-teaching within the school. This year we have five demo-teachers. All of them are master teachers (interview with Respondent B, PP2, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

In assessing the progress of the new teachers as they undergo mentoring or coaching, the mentor-teachers use the performance rating. The performance rating of the teachers are arrived at through observation using checklist, teachers' log, among others (Ali & Rizvi eds., 2007; Lofthouse, Leat & Towler, 2010; and Maligalig et al., 2010). They, then, said as follows:

Actually, the assessment of teachers is through their performance rating. Aside from that, we also have teacher's learning, that is teacher's LOC which are the records of the observation, teacher's LOC or Learning Observation Checklist (interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

Usually through informal observations, taking down notes, then conferring with me. We have the NCBTS also [...] (interview with Respondent C, PP3, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

According to the school heads, there are various compensations or incentives given to the mentor-teachers. The mentors are recognized by giving them certificate of recognition, and they are given higher performance rating (interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015; and interview with Respondent

B, PP2, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015). According to one of the school heads said as following here:

There is PHP [Philippines Peso] 1,500.00 monetary incentive from the local government given to the mentor-teachers during the recognition (interview with Respondent B, PP2, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

Another school head openly said as following here:

[...] there are certificates, certificates of recognition, letters of commendation for their files. These are used for their promotion [...] (interview with Respondent A, PP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

The mentor-teachers and the new teachers were given non-instructional time to discuss teaching strategies and styles. Both the mentor-teachers and the beginning teachers shared their experiences, and they both learned from their discussion. The teachers are really supportive in doing additional effort to conduct remedial classes, addressing health concerns of the pupils, aside from improving their teaching strategies (Rose & Reynolds, 2006; and Ambrosetti, 2012).

On Teachers' Collaboration. The beginning teachers meet with their colleagues regularly to discuss problems in the classroom: how to develop effective instructional materials; how to manage the classroom well (pupils/student discipline) and teaching strategies; how to motivate students; sharing of best practices; and generally sharing of wisdom by the senior teachers. One of the respondents said as following here:

There is regular meeting with the grade level chairman once a week. Sometimes, we meet after class hours (interview with Respondent J, TP7, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

Generally speaking, the issues discussed in their meetings are programs on how to improve the performance of their students, as stated following here:

We discuss the program that will be beneficial to the students, so that they will improve their

performance (interview with Respondent H, TP5, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

About the children's behaviour, like learning difficulties, one of them stating as follows:

Regarding the behaviour of the students, they are having a hard time in their lesson especially ICT [...]. I asked the help of the teachers handling the subject (interview with Respondent I, TP6, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

About the demonstration teaching, one of them stating as follows:

Our school head ensures to send all the teachers to the demo-teaching sessions [...] (interview with Respondent M, TP8, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

About TQC (Teacher Quality Circle), one of them stating as follows:

In the TQC, we discuss problems in the classroom, like for example the behavioural problems of the students, and we study it, so that we could address it and motivate students (interview with Respondent N, TP9, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

About the content structures, which are more on lesson planning and instructional materials and other related school issues, they also were sharing and caring (UNESCO, 2015; interview with Respondent M, TP8, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015; and interview with Respondent N, TP9, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

As mentioned, the schools have the TQC (Teacher Quality Circle) that is held twice a month to discuss matters on how to improve the performance of students/pupils. One of the teachers pointed out the significance of multiple intelligences in the TQC discussion. Also, through demo-teaching in the school level, the new teachers gained lots of new insights as to how to effectively teach their subjects or topics (Kessels, 2010; Oracion, 2015; Redillas, 2017; interview with Respondent I, TP6, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015; and interview with Respondent N, TP9, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

The new teachers mentioned that meetings are either required by the school as part of the policy, but they also keened that they need to meet among themselves by informally setting meetings for them to discuss important and urgent concerns that they need to address. Sometimes, the informal meetings were set by the grade area coordinators or among the mentor-teachers and the new teachers. If the meetings are formal, a memorandum from the school head is issued (*cf* Bell *et al.*, 2015; Maligalig *et al.*, 2010; interview with Respondent I, TP6, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015; and interview with Respondent N, TP9, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

On Professional Development. The teachers itemized the different professional development opportunities that they have experienced. They mentioned that attendance in seminars, training, and workshops are commonly done by their schools. Some teachers were currently pursuing their graduate degrees or planning to enrol in the graduate schools. They believed that graduate schooling is really helpful in improving their skills and competencies (Hustler *et al.*, 2003; Florido, 2006; interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015; and interview with Respondent E, TP2, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015). It is also a way for them to be promoted in the school as asserted by one of the teachers as following here:

I am enrolled in an M.A. program in the University of Makati as its scholar (interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

IN-SET (In-Service Training) is really part of the school calendar wherein the school, through the leadership of the school head, organizes a program for teachers to attend and participate. It is a regular program in the schools to the IN-SET as affirmed by one of the teachers as following here:

There are seminars that are mostly outside of the school, but we also have IN-SET (interview with Respondent R, TP12, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

Demonstration teaching is an integral part of the professional growth of all teachers that is why the school, the district as well as the division are constantly organizing programs for demo-teaching (Bell *et al.*, 2015; Maligalig *et al.*, 2010; and Lomibao, 2016).

It is interesting to note that the teachers highlighted the important role of mentoring or support from their colleagues (co-teachers) in their professional growth as teachers. They learned from the experiences of the senior teachers, and there is mutual support in every aspect of their teaching jobs (Mulford, 2003; and Oracion, 2015). In other words, having a good camaraderie or smooth inter-personal relationship among the teachers results in professional growth, and at the end of it all, the performance of their pupils also are improved.

Normally, the sources for professional development opportunities for new teachers are the support from the local government units; the school itself through the leadership and initiatives of the school head and the division office. The teachers are sent to attend seminars, workshops, or conferences more than five times a year or at least thrice in a year. One of the teachers said as following here:

Within a year, I have attended about five seminars or workshops (interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

From the data of the school heads, it was gathered that mentoring, professional development, and meetings with teachers are the common professional development opportunities that the school heads implement. The school heads relayed that they implement various professional development opportunities for the benefit of the new as well as their senior teachers. They ensure that the new teachers are able to attend seminars, conferences, and workshops that aim to enhance their teaching performance. The seminars and workshops are either conducted within the school, or the teachers are sent to the regional or national level conferences (Mulford, 2003; Hilton *et al.*, 2015;

interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015; and interview with Respondent E, TP2, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

The school heads also regularly organize IN-SET (In-Service Training) for their teachers. Part of the IN-SET program is demonstration teaching by master teachers, as one of them to said as following here:

During summer or in October, we organize IN-SET. Aside from this, I also send my teachers to workshop, seminars, and demo-teaching in different schools (interview with Respondent B, PP2, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

Another way of supporting the professional growth of the teachers is through the regular principal's meeting with new teachers. One of the respondents said as following here:

I meet with them once in 2 months or 3 months, if time permits [...]. They have to set their target at the beginning of the school year. They must have their own vision and mission [...]. And once in a while, I meet with them and ask about their mission and vision (interview with Respondent C, PP3, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

About the further studies, one teacher mentioned the support being given by the local government in giving them opportunities to attend graduate studies in the local university, as stated following here:

Aside from the training, they also support our master's studies (interview with Respondent F, TP3, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

On Teachers' Evaluation. According to the teacher-participants, they are evaluated using the PAST (Performance Appraisal System for Teachers), which includes observation of teachers in the classroom. Either the school head or a master teacher will observe the teachers with a checklist or rating scale. Included in the evaluation of the teachers are the checking of their lesson plans (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Westbrook *et al.*, 2013; White, 2014; interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015; and interview with Respondent

E, TP2, 19/3/2015). The common responses are following here:

We use PAST, the performance appraisal system. The principal does quarterly observation of the teachers, and she uses the observation checklist. We have also the RPMS. We set our targets, and later on we look on how we have attained those targets (interview with Respondent D, TP1, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

We have observation, monthly observation by the principal. The division office also observes the teachers (interview with Respondent E, TP2, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/2015).

The teachers are also required to have their portfolios as needed in the RPMS (Results-based Performance Management System), which is composed of the output of their pupils, their professional development, attendance in meetings, meetings with parents, and their objectives and targets in a particular school year (Read & Atinc, 2017; interview with Respondent K, TP7, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015; and interview with Respondent O, TP9, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

Some teachers are also interviewed about their teaching and in the preparation of lesson plans by the principals and the district supervisors who vouched that said as following here:

The master teacher observes us. She checks on our lesson plans and visual aids. The visual aids should be compatible with the lessons (interview with Respondent K, TP7, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

The principal observes our class. She evaluates if our lesson plans are being delivered very well. The MPS is also being monitored if it is increasing. This is a way to ensure that the students are learning (interview with Respondent O, TP9, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

According to the school heads, the new teachers are evaluated using the performance rating of the school because the school of DepEd (Department of Education) in the Philippines has its own standard system of teacher's evaluation. They are also likewise evaluated based on the components of the RBMS (Results-Based Management

System). Another way of informally assessing the performance of teachers is through meetings of teachers and the principals. The common method used in the evaluation of teachers is observation in the classroom. The school heads use a checklist in evaluating the teachers (Oracion, 2015; Read & Atinc, 2017; interview with Respondent K, TP7, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015; and interview with Respondent O, TP9, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

On Large Classes. Large class size has been a permanent fixture in schools, especially in third world countries (cf Orleans, 2007; Dahar, Dahar & Dahar, 2011; and Barrera-Osorio *et al.*, 2016). Hence, it was not surprising that the majority of the teacher-participants divulged that large class is a problem in their schools. Ten of them were able to handle large classes. Below are some of the responses of the participants.

When asked about the challenges they experienced in relation to handling large class, the two common themes that emerged are student-related challenges and physical environment. The teachers were concerned about low levels of student engagement and learning, especially by those seated at the back of the classroom, having slow learners in the classroom whose needs may be neglected as individualized instruction is difficult with large classes, discipline of students, overcrowded classrooms, noise, and lack of facilities (Orleans, 2007; Barrera-Osorio *et al.*, 2016; interview with Respondent G, TP4, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/ 2015; and interview with Respondent H, TP5, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015). Reflected in these statements as following here:

Overcrowded space, noise (interview with Respondent G, TP4, Makati of Philippines, 19/3/ 2015).

The class is hard to manage because of its big size (interview with Respondent H, TP5, Paranaque of Philippines, 3/3/2015).

We lack classrooms and facilities, so what I do is encourage the children to strive harder. I told them not to think that the classroom is hot and congested. We have to show them that their

teachers are not having a hard time teaching a large class, so they would not be affected (interview with Respondent O, TP9, Taguig of Philippines, 5/3/2015).

Forms of support given to new teachers to cope with the challenges of large classes were focused on building the capacity of teachers (sending teachers to training) and systemic matters such as inadequate facilities (Maligalig *et al.*, 2010; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; and Jones, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Most of the challenges faced by new teachers are connected to the inherent weaknesses of the public school system; lack of and congested classrooms; and not enough textbooks, instructional materials, and equipment. The challenges experienced by new teachers in the public school, specifically in dealing with student differences, are related to their being new to the public education system and to the urban setting.

The schools under the leadership of school heads are implementing a mentoring program to new or beginning teachers as a way to assist them in improving their teaching styles, techniques, and strategies as well as in the preparation of instructional materials. There are many ways of implementing the mentoring program in the schools, but the overarching objective is to improve the academic performance of the pupils or students. The mentoring program or collaboration of senior and new teachers is an effective mechanism to improve the performance of new teachers.

Training and demonstration teaching sessions are the most important forms of support the new teachers perceived to be effective in giving them the assistance they needed. Though there is no consensus as to the duration of the support given, the support is given continuously. The school heads and the Division Office have institutionalized the professional development program for all teachers in various forms like attendance to seminars, workshops, conferences and IN-SET (In-Service Training). These programs have

helped a lot in enhancing the performance of the new teachers in their major function which is instruction.

The evaluation of new teachers is not only limited to the prescribed evaluation instruments, but the school heads and master teachers are using non-formal techniques in gathering information about the performance of the new teachers. The teachers are in agreement that the most notable effect of the assistance given to them as new teachers are the improvement of their professional life which is translated into the improvement of the learning and academic performance of their students.

In general, the teachers are satisfied with the support they received from their present schools. Nonetheless, improvement of the school facilities, especially the classrooms, and the sufficient availability of instructional materials (e.g. textbooks, other references) were suggested to be provided as forms of additional support. Large class is one of the greatest challenges of new teachers. Forms of support given to new teachers to cope with this challenge focused on building their capacity of teachers (sending them to training) and systemic matters such as inadequate facilities.

In the light of the findings gathered and conclusions drawn, the following are suggested:

The DepEd (Department of Education) in the Philippines should address the insufficiency of resources allotted to the school as this further contributed to the challenges faced by new entrants to public school teaching. The DepEd should consider the institutionalization of Induction Program for new teachers in the public school, specifically addressing the unique needs especially relating to large classes of those new teachers who have no experience in professional teaching, transferees from the private school, and those from the provinces.

Further study is needed to validate the effect of the support given to new teachers on the learning and academic performance of the students. The schools should sustain the implementation of the mentoring

or coaching even up to the end of the school year, and it should be cyclical. The mentoring program should be dynamic by addressing the specific needs of every teacher, and it should adjust to the next level of needs of teachers as they stay in the teaching profession.

Aside from the regular budget of the school and the support coming from the local government, the school heads and the Division Office should establish linkages with various TEIs (Teacher Education Institutions), NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), or private foundations which will support the mentoring program or profession development opportunities of teachers.

The mentors or master teachers should also be capacitated in a specialised training of mentors program, so that they will have the knowledge and skills in effective mentoring or coaching. Incentivising the mentors could be done through monetary and non-monetary rewards. Technical supports to mentoring program should be properly in place like availability of rooms, time, equipment, resource materials (e.g. books, journals), among others. The DepEd in the Philippines should be updated to include training new teachers on how to handle large classes.⁵

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⁵**Statement:** We are stating that this paper is our original work, and our references are properly included. Likewise, this paper is not product of plagiarism, and only be published in the HONAI journal, not to other scholarly journals.

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Teaching and Learning Process in the School of the Philippines

(Source:<https://asia.nikkei.com/Business>, 2/3/2018)

The schools under the leadership of school heads are implementing a mentoring program to new or beginning teachers as a way to assist them in improving their teaching styles, techniques, and strategies as well as in the preparation of instructional materials. There are many ways of implementing the mentoring program in the schools, but the overarching objective is to improve the academic performance of the pupils or students. The mentoring program or collaboration of senior and new teachers is an effective mechanism to improve the performance of new teachers.