

## TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Sean Kearney

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\*Corresponding author: Sean Kearney,  
School of Education, University of Notre  
Dame Australia, Sydney, Australia  
E-mail: [sean.kearney@nd.edu.au](mailto:sean.kearney@nd.edu.au)

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# Reconceptualizing beginning teacher induction as organizational socialization: A situated learning model

Sean Kearney<sup>1\*</sup>

**Abstract:** The process of beginning teacher induction has gained widespread attention in the literature as a means to help newly appointed teachers negotiate the early years of their careers, which are characterized by high attrition rates, due in part to stress, burnout, heavy workloads, and lack of support. While there is empirical evidence to suggest that comprehensive teacher induction can curtail teacher attrition by up to 20%, there exists a lack of understanding with regard to how to develop and implement effective programs. Although new teachers face some distinctive challenges, all new career starters, irrespective of their field, have a period of adjustment to go through. This article presents a conceptual framework for understanding beginning teacher induction as a situated learning process through an organizational socialization framework more commonly used in business. By conceptualizing beginning teacher induction through a common framework, culminating in a shared understanding of induction, it is envisaged that more effective programs may be implemented to help support teachers in the early years of their career.

**Subjects:** Continuing Professional Development; Education Policy; Educational Change & School Reform; School Effectiveness & Improvement; Work-based Learning

**Keywords:** beginning teacher induction; organizational socialization; teacher attrition; situated learning



Sean Kearney

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Kearney is an associate dean in the School of Education, Sydney at the University of Notre Dame Australia. He lectures in educational psychology and general pedagogical methods. His research interests include cross-cultural service learning, assessment reform in higher education, and beginning teacher attrition and induction. His PhD research centered on beginning teacher induction programs in the independent education sector and the nature of professional socialization. Most recently, he has expanded on his research into induction and is seeking to establish links between induction and quality teaching.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This paper provides a new framework for conceptualizing beginning teacher induction through an organizational socialization framework relying on situated learning. The paper outlines the proliferation of beginning teacher induction programs internationally, but notes that those programs, and indeed the induction in general, is an ill-defined term that denotes a multitude of programs with different purposes. By presenting a common framework for beginning teacher induction, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of induction will be reached so that more effective programs can be developed. The current paper presents a conceptual model for beginning teacher induction and a thematic map of induction, which are founded on van Maanen and Schein's (1979) framework for organizational socialization.

## 1. Introduction

The nature of beginning teacher induction in the process of acculturating beginning teachers to their profession has received considerable international recognition in past decades as one of the foremost means of facilitating the transition from student to teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2001); arresting teacher attrition (Australian Education Union [AEU], 2009; Department of Education Science and Training [DEST], 2002; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004); and, alleviating the hurdles that many beginning teachers face in the early years of their career (Jensen, 2010; Serpell, 2000; Wojnowski, Bellamy, & Cooke, 2003). Although the problems of beginning teachers are varied and complicated, the growing rates of beginning teacher attrition worldwide have led to the growth of induction programs, specifically in the United States (Ingersoll, 2012) and Australia (DEST, 2002; Kearney, 2014a). However, despite the proliferation of induction programs, the nature of those programs and the support they provide is not always clear. The provision of comprehensive induction is a widespread problem (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2011) as the purpose of many beginning teacher induction programs, specifically in Australia, is either certification and/or registration and not the professional learning of teachers (Kearney, 2013). A lack of understanding around the induction, what constitutes comprehensive induction and the administrative formality of many programs, has led to induction programs that lack a theoretical or conceptual foundation that fosters teacher learning in the early years of their careers (Kearney, 2013).

One major problem with the provision of comprehensive induction programs is the significant confusion as to what induction means (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2010; Wong, 2004) and how to structure effective programs (Kearney, 2014b). The term induction has been used interchangeably with organizational socialization in business (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2010) and has been used in education to mean mentoring (Wong, 2004), orientation (Martinez, 1994), and professional socialization (Lawson, 1992). With the ambiguous nature of the terminology used to denote induction, it is important that one's conceptualization of the idea is in-line with the purpose of the process. This is where a common conceptual framework for induction becomes a useful proposition: it provides the foundation for the development of localized programs to meet the individual needs of beginning teachers within their local school context. The early years of teaching are characterized by learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001); therefore, the conceptual framework presented is based on professional learning, whereby teachers are inducted into the profession and socialized into their workplace. This paper puts forth a clear and detailed conceptual framework for teacher induction based on van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model regarding organizational socialization, adapted for use in education for neophytes starting new careers as teachers within a model of situated learning.

Previous studies about induction have looked at its effect on retention (Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson, & Burke, 2013; Gujarati, 2012; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Kearney, 2014a); the characteristics of specific programs (Howe, 2006; Kearney, 2014b; Gilles, Davis, & McGlamery, 2009; Wong, Britton, & Gasner, 2005); its effect on improving teaching and learning outcomes (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008; Wong, 2004); policy supporting induction (Bartlett & Johnson, 2010; Smith, 2007); induction as part of a learning community (Carroll, 2005; Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005; O'Malley, 2010); participating teachers' perceptions of their experiences in induction (Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, & Cowan-Hathcock, 2007; Buchanan et al., 2013; Kearney, 2013); and countless others. What is missing in the inexhaustible volumes of research and commentary with regard to beginning teacher induction is a framework by which it can be implemented that serves both the beginning teacher and the institution providing the induction.

### 1.1. Organizational socialization

Studies on socialization have moved through a development of diverse conceptual models and methodologies (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2010): from socialization as an independent variable affecting the organization (van Maanen & Schein, 1979), to a model where socialization is an ongoing process

and not the linear path of the individual (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). The latter model is more closely associated to educational induction and constitutes the basis for the conceptual framework proposed. Fifteen years ago, Howkins and Ewens (1999) suggested that professional socialization needed to be considered from a new perspective and that “it can no longer be seen as a reactive and linear process associated with one course, but a dynamic, ever changing process” (p. 48), which illustrates the changing nature of professional socialization over time and its contemporary use in conceptualizing beginning teacher induction.

Organizational socialization deals with employees becoming socialized into the workplace, not those new to the workforce (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010; Ardts, Jansen, & van der Velde, 2001; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005, 2006); whereas the literature on induction in education focuses on neophytes entering a new profession for the first time. While organizational socialization can be applied broadly to all aspects of business and organization, the acculturation of neophytes into a new profession requires professional socialization into a learning community or community of practice within a specific framework to ensure that the transition, for both the neophyte and the organization, has the greatest chance for success. Exploring definitions of organizational socialization, professional socialization, and those concept’s inter-connectedness with the term induction provides an in-depth understanding of the role induction plays in the socialization of individuals to their professional community of practice.

van Maanen and Schein (1979) combine professional socialization and organizational socialization in defining organizational socialization as, “the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (1979, p. 3). About two decades later in the late 1990s and into the 2000s, there was a marked shift in the definitions of both organizational socialization and induction from a sociological point of view, focusing on the learning process by which socialization occurs (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010; Ardts et al., 2001; Chao, Kozlowski, Major, & Gardner, 1994; Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005, 2006; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2010; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a, 1997b). One such definition reflective of others that identifies learning as the focus of socialization from the organization’s point of view is: “The learning process by which newcomers develop attitudes and behavior that are necessary to function as a fully-fledged member of the organisation” (Ardts et al., 2001, p. 159). It is in this definition that we can begin to see that learning processes become the foundational pivot of organizational socialization, whereas previously organizational socialization and the professional socialization of individuals were seen as separate due to their differing goals (Chao, Kozlowski, et al., 1994). Through an understanding of organizational socialization as a process of learning, the revelation of the crossover between educational induction and organizational socialization becomes apparent in that while the organization is looking to acculturate their employee, they must acknowledge the individual’s learning within that process for the induction to be successful. By acknowledging that learning is paramount in the socialization process, there is recognition that one needs to be taught (van Maanen & Schein, 1979), which consequently, at least in part, relies on the employer to support and/or provide that learning.

### **1.2. Induction**

The research surrounding educational induction has been prolific with regard to what induction entails, despite the uncertainty of a specific definition (Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Fulton et al., 2005; Martinez, 1994; Wong, 2004). Gherardi and Perrotta specifically note that the “term ‘induction’ lies in the semantic openness deriving from its scant definition” (2010, p. 85). What becomes apparent in the literature on specific induction programs, however, is that many cherry-pick-specific elements that suit their context, without consideration for the comprehensiveness that is necessary for effectiveness (Ingersoll, 2012). Regardless of context, whether in educational realms or sociological literature, induction is an ill-defined term that derives from the excess of research that has “drained” the concept of its meaning and derivation, which has impeded its significance (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2010). Given the crossover between induction within the context

of education, and the attention it has received in the research on organizational socialization, it is not surprising that many of the common practices in schools in inducting employees are drawn from the literature on socializing employees into the workplace and not those new in the workforce (Kearney, 2013).

Domestic and international literatures advocate induction and mentoring as vital to the success and development of beginning teachers (Fletcher & Barrett, 2004; Fulton et al., 2005; Wong, 2004). As a result of studies throughout the 1990s and 2000s, which cited beginning teacher attrition as a growing trend, the number of formal induction programs increased significantly within the international context (Howe, 2006; OECD, 2005; Wong et al., 2005), specifically in the United States (Ingersoll, 2012) and Australia (DEST, 2002; McCormack & Thomas, 2003). There have been improvements, for example, in the acknowledgment of induction for beginning teachers in every state in Australia; however, beyond the provision of a mentor, there is no indication of what induction entails. And while government systems now have probation processes for all beginning teachers (DEST, 2002), there is incongruity in what is reported by administrative supervisors and beginning teachers. Administrators reported that 82.6% of teachers were mentored, while only 39.9% of teachers indicated they received mentoring (DEST, 2002). More recently, the AEU (2008) found that more than half of beginning teachers had not participated in formal mentoring in 2006 and that in 2007, 55.3% of beginning teachers had not been involved in an ongoing induction process. This holds true in the US as well: although 91% of beginning teachers have reported participating in induction in 2007–2008, Ingersoll (2012) reported that the type of support they received was varied, with the most proliferate means of support being “face time with an administrator” (87%) followed by receiving a mentor (81%). While the statistics from the US are more positive than those in Australia, it seems that the rhetoric of the importance of induction programs does not match the reality of what is happening in schools (Kearney, 2013).

The issue that arises is the acknowledgment of the necessity of induction without an understanding of what comprehensive effective induction entails. The lack of understanding around induction at the school level results in haphazard programs that do not have the desired effect (Kearney, 2013). The framework presented simplifies the process, specifically in the Australian context, through the illustration of the foundation and purposes of induction from both a professional learning point of view as well as an organizational perspective, which includes accreditation/registration. In many cases, administrators have been delegated the task to develop, implement, and/or oversee induction programs for new staff without the knowledge and/or funds to implement successful and effective programs (Kearney, 2013).

The framework presented provides a research-based structure of induction based on the premise of well-established organizational socialization practices adapted for use by neophyte teachers for the purpose of professional learning in the early stage of their career. The framework is based on the premise that teacher induction is “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, 2014b, p. 5). This article is intended to clarify some of the misconceptions and variations with regard to beginning teacher induction and propose a structure for induction that allows flexibility to meet the individual needs of beginning teachers to successfully acculturate to their new profession.

The crossover between induction and organizational socialization is evident in the literature. While socialization can be thought of as the theory in which induction practices occur, the framework illustrates the conceptualization of that program, and who the beneficiaries of induction are within the school context. Learning is paramount in organizational socialization (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2010); therefore, a foundation in professional learning should be central to a framework developed for induction practices, or specific programs developed for beginning teacher induction. Situated learning and communities of practice (CoP)



are well-established means by which to conduct professional learning and subsequently, induction practices, from both organizational socialization and educational perspectives (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

### 1.3. *Situated learning and CoP*

The learning community is a concept that has become increasingly prevalent in modern companies and educational institutions (DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010). What organizations can achieve by creating a community focused on learning depends on their interpretation of that community; however, any organization that encourages learning through sharing information among its members generates a more knowledgeable employee base (Wenger, 1998). The idea that people best learn as members of communities rather than as individuals, while not a new notion, or a theory of great debate, is neither common practice among educational institutions nor regularly practiced at school level (Mousley, 2002). An effective induction program should be one of the initial stages in inducting new teachers into learning communities within the school environment; however, this must be part of a large-scale multi-tiered program with a foundation in situated cognition (see Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) or situated learning (see Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The theories of situated learning, legitimate peripheral participation and CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), which form the basis of the theoretical underpinnings for the proposed framework, enable the learner, in this case, the beginning teacher, to progressively piece together the culture of the group and what it means to be a member (Herrington & Oliver, 1995). The premise of developing schools as learning communities, specifically with regard to the induction of new teachers, is well established (Carroll, 2005; Fulton et al., 2005; O'Malley, 2010); consequently, a model of professional learning focused on professional CoP and the ways that neophytes are introduced into those communities is a logical progression through the various early stages of a neophyte's career. Situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation, culminating in the initiation of teachers into professional CoP are well suited to the preliminary stages of the comprehensive induction of beginning teachers, based on the established organizational socialization practices as informed by van Manen and Schein (1979).

Through a collegial learning process over an extended period of time involving critical examination of classroom and school practices, and practitioner research, not only do teachers engage in effective professional development and learning, but also the possibility for educational transformation may transpire (Lave & Wenger, 1991). From an organizational point of view, that transformation into a learning community is the purpose of an effective, ongoing induction program, designed to relieve the stress of early career teachers and acculturate that teacher into an organization that is focused on professional learning throughout the teacher's career and quality teaching and learning in the classroom (Kearney, 2013).

Teachers who are successfully inducted into the school and the profession become full members of the professional learning community that quality teachers belong to. The learning community is the initial goal with the secondary goal being teachers entering into a community of practice. However, not all teachers become members of a community of practice; rather, these communities build around informal relationships that grow around a need in a specific school or department within a school, and are formed among small groups of teachers (Hildreth & Kimble, 2008). Members within a community of practice have highly developed communication skills and have developed relationships that reinforce confidence and trust in each other and therefore result in the evolution of community (Habhab-Rave, 2008). According to Habhab-Rave (2008), this evolution happens in two distinct realms: social and personal. The human aspect of the relationship formed as a result of being in a community of practice highlights the social relationships formed, while the personal realm involves the personal growth each member of the community experiences through mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire of actions (Wenger, 1998). These CoP have shared values and practices that evolve and where individual identity becomes intertwined with the group (Wenger, 1998). Consequently, teachers who are successfully inducted into the profession become

full members of the professional learning community that quality teachers belong to, which serves both the organization and the individual. Once a teacher enters a professional learning community, they are more likely to become form or join a community of practice CoP and begin to take responsibility for the learning of others. This process creates an environment best suited to learning and teaching, not only for the teachers, but also for their students who get the benefit of the teacher's increased learning and collaboration.

Although the concept of CoP did not originate in the field of education, the term has been applied in many educational settings, from children in primary classrooms to adult learners, and also describes some of the professional learning that teachers are engaged in throughout their careers (Wenger, 1998). Through CoP teachers “collaborate to develop new knowledge and to develop and learn about new resources” (Hildreth & Kimble, 2008, p. x); therefore, CoP are essential in schools to aid in the learning process of teachers.

From an organizational perspective, the goal is to establish an intentional learning community by implementing a comprehensive and effective induction program that will help acculturate teachers to their new profession, while also encouraging learning that could improve teaching and student learning in the classroom. From the beginning teacher's perspective, an induction program that encourages learning with more experienced teachers helps them to establish those relationships, which could lead to various CoP developing within in the school and form the basis of the learning community.

Understanding that neophyte teachers do not have all the skills of their more experienced colleagues is instrumental in understanding the need for comprehensive induction. According to Habhab-Rave (2008), “this may not be so simple for newcomers. The newcomer would just have the domain knowledge to understand the practice” (p. 218). The beginning teacher starts their career on the periphery of the organization because they do not have the domain knowledge to become part of an established learning community or community of practice; therefore, the induction process functions as an effective way for beginning teachers to collaborate with their more experienced colleagues and continue their professional learning by legitimately participating within that community.

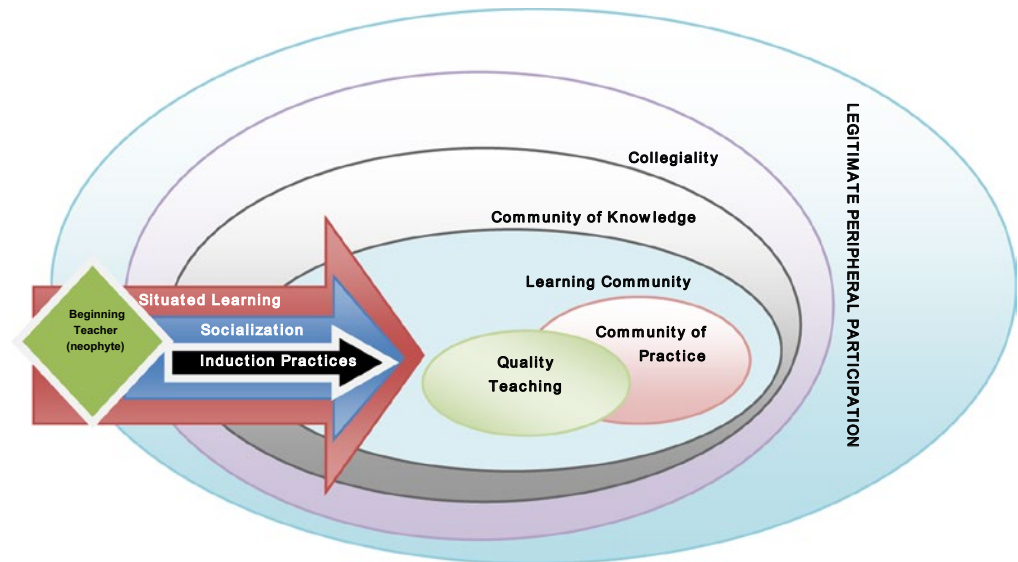
The interactions and relationships formed in such a community are crucial in the development of neophytes into professionals through situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation. In understanding the nature of induction, it is critical to appreciate that professional learning does not happen in isolation, but rather is part of a process. Whether beginning teacher induction is viewed as professional development, socialization, or legitimate peripheral participation, all of these terms denote a platform of learning that is social, or embarked upon, within, or among a group of like-minded colleagues with the same goal of quality teaching and learning in the classroom for improved student achievement.

## 2. A conceptual framework for beginning teacher induction

Figure 1 presents a visualization of the beginning teacher's trajectory to becoming “fully fledged” teachers. This figure represents induction as the theory in practice. Both socialization and induction come under situated learning, as learning is the process by which both socialization and induction take place (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010). Here, the beginning teacher starts as a fully qualified teacher, but acting on the periphery of the profession. Through situated learning, the teacher becomes both professionally and personally socialized through induction practices that depend on collegiality. Once beginning teachers establish relationships with peers, which may include mentoring, they move through the community of knowledge, into the professional learning community and may eventually enter a community of practice within the organization.

In the framework, the beginning teacher is also striving towards quality teaching, which is the single most significant factor that affects student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; DEST, 2002; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Fulton et al., 2005; Hattie, 2003; Rowe, 2003); therefore, the goal of

**Figure 1. Beginning teacher induction as conceptualized in situated learning theory.**



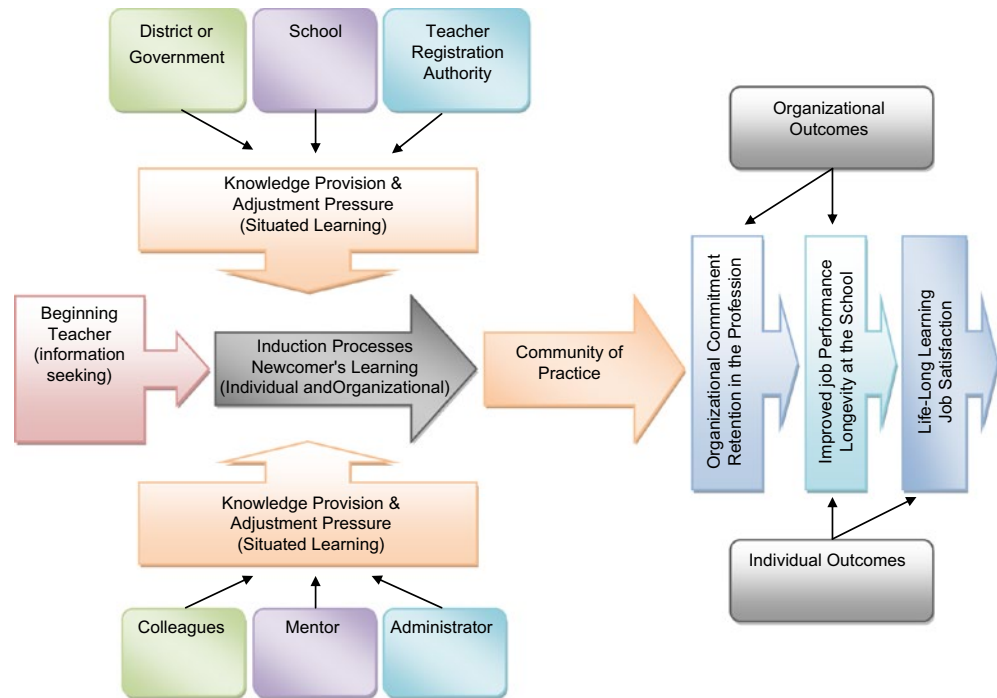
beginning teacher induction programs should be to develop quality teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000). There is, however, not enough empirical evidence to directly link induction and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Wang et al., 2008). Although the empirical evidence available cannot establish a causal link between induction and student achievement, Bartlett and Johnson (2010) argue that increased student achievement is reached “by extension” through comprehensive, successful teacher induction programs (p. 868). This concept is portrayed in Figure 1, by placing the quality teaching circle just out of reach of the arrow representing induction, which indicates that while induction puts the beginning teacher on the right trajectory, there is not enough evidence to suggest that participation in a program result in quality teaching.

Figure 2 presents a thematic map of induction within a situated learning framework, based on van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) six domains of organizational socialization adapted from Antonacopoulou and Güttel’s “Thematic map of empirical staff induction and organizational socialization research” (2010, p. 41). The map illustrates the goals and outcomes of induction from both the institution and individual’s perspective to show how induction is mutually beneficial. As neophytes are inducted they participate in the institution’s socialization practices, which refer to all teachers partaking in the same formal induction program, to acculturate the neophyte to the school and the profession. While these practices meet the institution’s goals, the individual socialization practices are more closely associated with the personal needs of the teacher, whereby informal relationships develop between neophytes and experienced teachers, based on the needs of the individual, culminating in a learning community or community of practice. At each stage of the process, the responsible parties for a particular aspect of induction are represented as situated learning. Situated learning depicts the context of the knowledge based on the pressures associated with professional learning at that stage of the neophyte’s career.

In developing a concept from an existing framework, an attempt has been made to provide links between the social psychology of the individual undergoing the socialization process, in the form of induction, as undertaken in school settings. This model has been conceptualized through the domains of organizational socialization as defined by van Maanen and Schein (1979), and also envisaged through a learning framework, as proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991). The ideas of legitimate peripheral participation, situated learning, and CoP are well established; however, conceptualizing a learning framework that combines CoP and organizational socialization practices, and subsequently induction, adds to the existing literature on the various ways to conceptualize beginning teacher induction and the development and implementation of induction programs.



**Figure 2. Thematic map of beginning teacher induction and organizational socialization.**



### 3. Conclusion

The literature is clear that induction programs for beginning teachers are an essential component to continuing teacher learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). It has been shown that beginning teacher induction has been proven in recent decades in multiple national and international studies to help ameliorate the problems that beginning teachers face in the early years of their career (Jensen, 2010; Serpell, 2000; Wojnowski et al., 2003), and are successful at arresting growing attrition among beginning teachers (AEU, 2009; DEST, 2002; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; OECD, 2005; Serpell, 2000; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wojnowski et al., 2003).

Through a comprehensive examination of induction through the theory of organizational socialization, institution versus individual induction processes have been illustrated to differentiate the various purposes of induction: professional, personal, and organizational socialization. Major (2000) explains that institutional tactics of organizational socialization “are likely to be ineffective in encouraging personal growth and development and may even be dysfunctional when newcomer flexibility and adaptability are important goals” (p. 364). This framework brings forth the perspective that beginning teacher induction can be seen as a form of legitimate peripheral participation in an organizational socialization framework culminating in a learning community with mutual benefits to the organization and to the individual teacher.

This article has presented a conceptual framework for induction practices that exemplifies how beginning teachers advance through the induction practices of an organization and illustrates how the benefits of socialization aid in neophytes’ progression into CoP. The opportunity for beginning teachers to learn within a professional learning community that cultivates their preparation through collaboration with experienced members of the community, and inversely allows them to contribute back to the community, are fundamental ingredients for a successful induction program (Kearney, 2013).

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### Author details

Sean Kearney<sup>1</sup>

E-mail: [sean.kearney@nd.edu.au](mailto:sean.kearney@nd.edu.au)

ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6910-3372>

<sup>1</sup> School of Education, University of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney, Australia.

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