

Article

# Teacher Induction in Schools as Learning Communities: Successful Pathways to Teachers' Professional Development in a Diverse School Serving Students Living in Poverty

Rocío García-Carrión <sup>1</sup>, Maria Padrós Cuxart <sup>2,\*</sup>, Pilar Alvarez <sup>3</sup> and Ainhoa Flecha <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ikerbasque, Basque Foundation for Science, Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Deusto, 48007 Bilbao, Spain; rocio.garcia@deusto.es

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Education, University of Barcelona, 08035 Barcelona, Spain

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 43007 Tarragona, Spain; pilar.alvarez@urv.cat

<sup>4</sup> Department of Sociology, Autonomous University of Barcelona, 08193 Barcelona, Spain; ainhoa.flecha@uab.cat

\* Correspondence: mariapadros@ub.edu

Received: 5 July 2020; Accepted: 27 August 2020; Published: 1 September 2020



**Abstract:** Teacher induction has been an object of interest in teacher education and professional development, mostly as a result of the analysis of the difficulties faced and the coping strategies developed by newly qualified teachers. However, the specific mechanisms to facilitate teachers' induction when being appointed by schools working under challenging contexts have been less explored. This study aims to explore the potential of a community-based school model named Schools as Learning Communities to induct new teachers and to help them embrace the school's project. A single case study was conducted in a high-poverty school located in Barcelona (Spain). Data collection included observations and interviews with teachers and the school management team. Findings highlight two main features of the school model that facilitate teacher induction: the dialogic approach to teachers' professional development and the participation of family and community members in the school, which operates as a pedagogical resource. Furthermore, our results reveal this model as a successful pathway for the new teachers to embrace the school mission and to become agents of transformation who contribute to the project's sustainability. The study offers lessons on how to support the induction of teachers who join diverse schools serving students living in poverty.

**Keywords:** teacher induction; teacher education; teacher professional development; Schools as Learning Communities; family and community participation

## 1. Introduction

The induction and retention of teachers in schools have been widely examined objects of study in teacher education. Recent studies in diverse countries have analyzed the mechanisms that explain the difficulties faced by teachers in their incorporation to new teaching appointments, as well as the mechanisms that may favor their retention [1–5]. The *Study on Policy Measures to improve the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in Europe* [6] identifies some recommendations to provide early career support (ECS), such as extending the programs beyond the first year of teaching service to the first two to three years, reducing the number of classroom hours for beginning teachers, or making comprehensive support programs compulsory for all new teachers. However, more research is needed to identify the most conducive mechanisms that favor the induction process of teachers who join new

teaching appointments, whether they are non-experienced or experienced professionals. Likewise, there is some recent research that analyzes teacher education initiatives addressing issues of poverty and educational inequality, as in the case of Teach First in England [7]. Nevertheless, more research-based knowledge that focuses on the most suitable actions or strategies that schools can undertake during teacher induction is needed in order to support those teachers who join schools serving students living in poverty.

Teacher education programs focused on preparing teachers to work in culturally and linguistically complex classrooms or in high-poverty schools have reflected the crucial role of preparing teachers within those communities [8,9]. The present case study is focused on a culturally diverse school setting serving students living in poverty. Particularly, it explores the mechanisms of a community-based school model to induct new teachers and to help them embrace the school's project. This particular school model, named Schools as Learning Communities, involves engaging families and community members in the learning process of students in the classroom as part of the transformative project in which they are involved. Schools as Learning Communities is an educational project based on promoting dialogue and interactions between schools, families, and the community that brings together more than 1000 schools in a total of 13 countries. The European Commission [10] presented the school model as follows:

Schools as "learning communities" agree on a common vision, basic values and objectives of school development. It increases the commitment of pupils, teachers, parents and other stakeholders and supports school quality and development. "Learning communities" inspire both teachers and pupils to seek improvement and take ownership of their learning processes. It creates favourable conditions also for reducing school drop-out and for helping pupils at risk of dropping out.

One element that has been pointed out as critical for the sustainability of the Schools as Learning Communities project is teacher professional development, since the implementation of the project requires the commitment of the entire teaching staff [11]. An exploratory study on teacher professional development in four Schools as Learning Communities in Latin America identified some key components that have enabled the transferability of this model to other schools [12]. However, there is one element that has been less explored: the features and mechanisms that are enacted as part of the teacher induction in Schools as Learning Communities. Furthermore, the ways in which new teachers embrace the project and become agents of change for its development are relevant questions to be examined in depth. With the aim to move forward in the analysis of this problem, this study focuses on the specific case of a School as a Learning Community, located in one of the most deprived areas in Barcelona (Spain). This case is of special interest because the school excels in standardized tests against the odds, with 92% of immigrant pupils and 95% of students receiving free school meals (FSMs). In 2017 it showed remarkable results in terms of academic outcomes, performing twice above the regional average in all subjects, turning the school into a successful example not only in its school district, but also at the regional and national levels. Gradually, the school has consolidated these improvements for seven years, even though teacher mobility has been around 30% every academic year. Consequently, this school represents an excellent case to deepen the analysis of the mechanisms that favor new teachers in Schools as Learning Communities embracing the vision and principles of the school, and to examine how this may have an impact in the sustainability of the project over time. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the mechanisms that favor teacher induction in Schools as Learning Communities?
2. To what extent does teacher induction in Schools as Learning Communities encourage new teachers to embrace the school's project?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. *The Induction of New Teachers*

The mechanisms for the induction of new teachers and their retention in schools have been extensively analyzed in the field of teacher education and professional development [13]. In general, the existing literature has explored the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). Some studies have pointed out some of the difficulties that newly appointed teachers may encounter. These might be, among others, the lack of balance in the allocation of the teaching load or other responsibilities, and the lack of recognition by senior teachers, which can hinder their integration into their professional communities [3]. With the aim of advancing in the understanding of the mechanisms that can facilitate this integration process, some studies have focused on the importance of mentoring [14,15], which can play a key role in supporting new teachers in areas such as acquiring knowledge about the infrastructure and school life, the management of student behavior, or the creation of a work–life balance [16]. In this sense, it is relevant to highlight the concept of “educative mentoring” [17], which goes beyond traditional approaches to mentoring focused on the support for the induction of the new teacher, incorporating a form of “accompaniment” that promotes the long-term professional development of new teachers. This approach to mentoring is aligned with the idea of professional learning [18] that conceives teachers as active agents involved in self-initiating professional learning activities. School principals play a key role in creating a school climate that provides opportunities for professional learning, since they provide recognition and support to new teachers to develop their potential, and encourage the rest of the teachers to be involved in this process [19].

This critical role of relationships has been highlighted by other studies, either as networks of support in the professional environment [20,21] or as relationships with other people outside the educational context [22]. Those relationships can be critical in supporting the new teachers to face the difficulties they encounter to meet the demands of their new position. Providing high-quality collegial support for beginning teachers in the professional, emotional, and social domains has been revealed as a means to improve job satisfaction and the intrinsic motivation to teach [23]. Studies conducted by van Daal and colleagues [24] have stressed the need to establish a school culture that stimulates teachers to engage in learning activities that may help them develop their learning orientation and self-efficacy, thus supporting them to strive for the enhancement of their teaching skills.

### 2.2. *Teachers’ Coping Strategies and Resilience*

Another set of studies analyzing teacher induction and retention in different countries has specifically explored the new teachers’ coping strategies to adapt to the requirements of the new job and to face the potentially harmful consequences of this new position. Beyond identifying the feelings of stress, lack of self-confidence, early burnout, or emotional exhaustion [25,26], studies conducted in different OECD countries [25,27] revealed that a high percentage of teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years. Pillen and colleagues [28] focused on exploring the difficulties experienced by new teachers in the Netherlands when building their professional identity. Regarding the strategies to cope with those tensions, the preferred strategies were to look for a potential solution themselves, as well as to talk to their significant others about the tensions they experienced.

Increasingly, numerous studies in diverse countries have referred to the existing theoretical corpus on teacher resilience [29–33], understood “as a set of behaviors over time that reflect the interactions between individuals and their environments, in particular the opportunities for personal growth that are available and accessible” [34] (p. 14). In this sense, as stressed by Mansfield and her colleagues, resilience can be understood as a capacity, a process, and an outcome [35]. Among the studies on teacher resilience, we highlight the contribution of Castro et al. [30], which focuses on analyzing this ability to resist adversity from a perspective that acknowledges the “agency” of teachers, understood as their ability to influence the environmental conditions, to transform the negative aspects. The importance of supporting new teachers to establish respectful educative relations with their students has also been

identified as a key aspect that will allow them to generate a more dialogic context in the classroom [4]. Knowing the mechanisms that allow teachers to cope with the challenges they encounter when entering schools located in high-poverty areas is especially relevant to better understand how to face those challenges from a transformative perspective.

### *2.3. Adaptation to New Teaching Appointments in Challenging Contexts*

Other studies in the field of teacher education have tried to unravel the implications for inducting and retaining teachers, either beginning teachers or more experienced staff, to teach in complex settings such as urban high-poverty schools [36], schools serving underrepresented populations [37,38], or rural isolated areas [39]. An example of this corpus of research is the study conducted by Sharplin et al. [5], focused on identifying the different phases through which staff members adapt to a new school in the rural context of Australia: the first weeks of appointment, in which new teachers search for information; the first semester, in which they search for assistance, support, feedback for development of competence; and three months before the end of the year, when they need stability and certainty. The study showed that those teachers who were more successful in their integration to a new settlement showed direct-action and palliative coping strategies, and they managed to build a sense of self-efficacy as well as an internal locus of control. On the other hand, the study by Kraft and his colleagues [38] in six high-poverty, urban schools in one district in Massachusetts (US) showed that the individual efforts of teachers can be insufficient to ensure a successful experience. The results highlight the need for organizational responses. Zeichner, Payne and Brayko [40], on their side, point out that the challenge of “democratizing” teacher education to better prepare teachers to serve all students requires creating partnerships between schools and the communities that are going to be served by those teachers. The implications of this study point to the relevance of opening educational and professional teacher development initiatives to the experience, reality, and inclusivity of the communities in which schools are located. This is especially relevant because teachers may find it difficult to identify themselves with disadvantaged populations. Teachers might bring with them mindsets concerning poverty, which must be challenged and confronted to more effectively address the effects of students’ living conditions or ethnic/racial origin in their educational opportunities and outcomes [41].

The reviewed studies highlight the relevance of exploring how teachers are able to adapt and work effectively to address the needs of students at an educational disadvantage (due to their economic status, racial or ethnic origin, or social exclusion), as well as analyze what kind of resources and supports can be activated to facilitate the induction process. With the aim of contributing to this research gap, our study focused on analyzing the mechanisms for the induction of new teachers in a community-based school serving culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse students living in poverty, as well as the ways in which this process favors the sustainability of the school project.

### **3. Context of the Study**

The study was conducted in a public elementary education school located in a municipality near the city of Barcelona (Spain). As mentioned above, the uniqueness of this case relies on a remarkable transformation the school has achieved in the last seven years. In this section, we first provide an account of the school context, and secondly, we show the results that justify the relevance of this case.

According to the data from the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT), the school is located in one of the poorest neighborhoods of the metropolitan area of Barcelona, which concentrates the highest percentage of low-income families in the entire city (around 18%). The unemployment rate in the neighborhood was 29.7% in 2016, while it was 13.8% in the city. Almost 30% of the population living in the neighborhood has only basic education. Regarding the school, in the 2016–2017 academic year, according to the Statistical Institute of Catalonia and the school records, 92% of the students were immigrants or had an ethnic minority background. Overall, the school is a culturally and linguistically diverse setting: students represent up to 28 nationalities—including Pakistan, Morocco, Georgia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru, the Philippines, China, Bangladesh, Senegal,

and the USA. The school also serves Roma students, the largest and most discriminated ethnic minority in Europe [42]. Regarding the socioeconomic status of the families, 95% of students receive Free School Meals (FSMs), which is an indicator that households are at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

In recent years, students have outperformed noticeably in the standardized tests conducted by the regional government in Catalonia. Results published in 2017 showed that 55.2% of the students in the school outperformed in Catalan, whereas the regional average of students outperforming, including elite schools, was 25%. This is particularly significant because Catalan, the language of instruction, is usually the third language for most of the students. According to the Department of Education of Catalonia, in Spanish, 39.3% of the students of the school reached the highest level, while the average was 20.8% in Catalonia. Similarly, in English, 32.1% of the students obtained the highest level, compared to 24% of the average in Catalonia. In mathematics, an outstanding percentage was reached (58.7% of students reaching the highest level of achievement at the school, compared to a regional average of 30.6%).

### *Transformation of the School into a Learning Community*

The entire community made all the efforts to promote educational change and school improvement to reach this noteworthy success. In the academic year 2009/2010, after an intensive initial teacher training course focused on the scientific and practical grounds of the project, teachers, students, and families got together in an assembly and agreed to transform the school into a Learning Community. This decision entailed implementing research-based actions to create inclusive spaces for interaction and dialogue involving families and community members. Among the interventions implemented, we can highlight interactive groups [43], which involve transforming the classroom into an inclusive learning environment based on promoting family and community participation in curricular tasks; or the dialogic literary gatherings [44] through which students and family members read and discuss classic works of universal literature in the classroom (e.g., *The Odyssey*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Don Quixote*, etc.), based on the principle of egalitarian dialogue, which enables the collective construction of meaning and knowledge. The interventions implemented in the school have already proven to be successful in very diverse contexts and, as a result, have been defined as successful educational actions (SEAs) [11].

However, it is well-known that changes in educational culture take time [45]; this also applies to our case, as improvements in academic results have not been immediate. Likewise, more than 30% of the staff changes every year. Therefore, the school has gone through important challenges in terms of the teacher induction, not only due to the high complexity of the context in which the school is located, but also due to the specific features of a school organized as a Learning Community (i.e., promotion of inclusive practices and participation of family and community members in the classroom). These circumstances could increase the challenges faced by new teachers to meet the needs of their new appointments and thus hinder teacher induction. However, the school has striven to ensure sustainability in the implementation of the project. Our study departs from the need to elucidate the mechanisms that favor the induction of new teachers in the school and describes how these newly appointed teachers become critical agents for the sustainability of the project.

## **4. Methods**

### *4.1. Research Design and Procedure*

We conducted a single case study in the mentioned school during the school year 2016–2017. Specifically, we used qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the processes taking place in the school, as well as to capture the perspectives of the actors involved. The study was informed by a communicative orientation [46], which is oriented to analyze reality as a means to transform it. The communicative methodology allows the inclusion of the participants' voices throughout the research process through an intersubjective dialogue with the research team, which allows a joint

interpretation of the phenomena under study. Data were collected at the participant school from January to May 2017 and included communicative observations, which were carried out in 5th- and 6th-grade classrooms at the school, as well as in-depth interviews—both individual and in a group—with the classroom teachers, the special education needs teacher, and the principal (see Table 1). Following the research questions, protocols for communicative observations, as well as scripts to guide in-depth interviews were designed that included themes aimed at delving into the mechanisms for the induction of new teachers in the school, as well as exploring how teachers embrace the project’s principles and actions. The selection of participants, which included both members of the school’s management team and the teachers, was made by means of a convenience sampling, considering each informant’s capacity and suitability to provide sufficiently rich and relevant information. Following ethical guidelines to conduct research with human beings, informed consent was requested from participants. Furthermore, the study was revised and fully approved by the Ethics Committee of the Community of Research on Excellence (CREA), formed by seven experts. The following table summarizes the data collection techniques used in this study:

**Table 1.** Data collection techniques.

Technique	Description
7 communicative observations	Conducted in different classrooms. The researcher/s contrasts the information observed with the participants to share the meaning and interpretation of their actions.
2 group in-depth interviews	1 with the school management team: Sandra (School’s Principal) and Joan (Assistant Principal); 1 interview with teachers: José (6th-grade teacher), Unai (5th-grade teacher), Joaquim (5th-grade teacher) and Marina (6th-grade teacher).
2 individual in-depth interviews	1 with Sandra (School’s Principal); 1 with Lola (Special Education teacher).

#### 4.2. Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded for subsequent transcription and analysis, together with the information collected through communicative observations. Once transcribed, the information was analyzed in depth, following a conventional approach to content analysis [47]. Inductive analysis of the information allowed the emergence of themes directly from the text data, allowing us to address the two research questions guiding the study. Regarding the first research question, referring to specific features of the educational model of the school, two categories were identified: (1) the dialogic approach to teacher education and professional development; (2) the participation of families and the community in the school as a pedagogical resource. Regarding the second research question, aimed at exploring how teachers embrace the educational project and how this contributes to its sustainability, our analysis identified the following emerging issues: (3) sense of professional growth; (4) commitment to improve the educational reality of students. Table 2 shows the themes emerging from the inductive content analysis:

**Table 2.** Key themes emerging from the content analysis.

	<b>Emerging Themes</b>
Research question 1 (which features of the educational model of the school facilitate teacher induction)	(1) Dialogic approach to teacher professional development (2) Family and community participation as a pedagogical resource
Research question 2 (how teachers embrace the educational project of the school)	(3) Sense of professional growth (4) Commitment to improve the educational reality of students

## 5. Findings

In this section, the main findings from the study on teachers' induction in a School as a Learning Community are reported. The first sub-section is devoted to summarizing the evidences related to the main features that facilitate teacher induction. In the second sub-section, we present findings related to the means through which new teachers embrace the vision of the project and become key agents of transformation for its sustainability in the school. To preserve confidentiality, all names assigned to the participants are pseudonyms.

### 5.1. Features of the School as Learning Communities Project that Facilitate Teacher Induction

#### 5.1.1. Dialogic Approach to Teacher Education and Professional Development

The educational model of the school, based on the centrality of dialogue and interactions in educational processes, is transferred to the teacher professional development approach. Hence, teacher professional development is promoted as part of a dialogic network in which all members engage in reflection and action, drawing on and deepening the theoretical and scientific basis of the Learning Communities model. This effort to establish an ongoing professional development following a dialogic approach was described by the school's principal in the following excerpt:

We understand that we are in continuous training, we must have many meetings and many dialogues and many specific training, in which we explicitly work on all these aspects with all the staff that is already in the project, and I always tell them that it is necessary to review, to recover, it is necessary to read again, to listen again and to reflect again, all these things. All these scientific grounds that evidence that the way in which we work, the way in which we understand education is a different perspective.

This constant effort to revisit the scientific grounds of the project and to contrast them with the daily practice in the school through reflection and joint dialogue enables teachers to integrate theory within their classroom practice [48]. This process of reflection and action plays an important role in facilitating help and support to newly appointed teachers. This was stated by the school's principal:

We have been in the project for a long time, we need to be continuously reviewing, reminding, refreshing [our knowledge], and that helps us to integrate the new teachers who join the project and who may start a little bit from scratch.

Hence, teacher professional development follows a dialogic approach. This is understood as an opportunity to guide the new staff induction process, while it strengthens bonds among teachers. This allows the overcoming of unidirectional approaches to teacher induction—in which initial training is uniquely addressed to the newly appointed teachers. Instead, it enables all teachers to engage in a process of reciprocal educative mentoring that favors sustainable professional learning [17]. This was described by the principal as follows:

If the training to all the people who start working in the school is only unidirectional, and it consists on explaining how things are done, how they are lived and how they are felt, you end up offering the opposite of what you are striving to. The idea is precisely to act in the same way that you say you must act.

New teachers are introduced to the dialogical approach to teacher's professional development from the beginning of teacher induction. From their arrival and welcome to the school, in the days before the start of the classes, 3 h of training are carried out daily in which the new staff is trained in the theoretical and practical foundations of the school's project, while they learn about the school and its community. This implies breaking down dynamics that might privilege the senior teaching staff in the school and replacing them with egalitarian interactions that contribute to increasing the quality of educational processes.

Once the school year is started, newly appointed teachers are accompanied in their professional practice by more experienced staff who act as facilitators. These facilitators not only support new teachers in the planning and revision of their teaching, but they also engage in classroom observations and provide feedback for new teachers. This ongoing professional dialogue between newly appointed and more experienced teachers enables new staff to increase their self-confidence and build relationships in the school. In the following excerpt, José, one of the teachers participating in the group interview, recalled his first days in the school and the way in which members of the school's management team helped him adapt his classroom practices to the pedagogical model of the school, based on the promotion of dialogue and interactions for learning:

I remember that at the beginning I used to talk a lot, I talked a lot... And they told me one day, people from the school's management team who were entering [in my class] to guide me . . . I asked them 'how do you see me?'. I wanted to know, just landed, and they said... "José, you talk very well, but you talk too much, you will gradually get to know the dynamics", and now, and now I have learned, of course, I've been here for four years, I've learned a lot, and I'm still learning...

As shown in José's words, the school's management team plays a key role in the teacher induction process. According to the information collected through interviews, teachers highly appreciate the work and commitment of the school's management team. As expressed by Lola, the special education teacher, "[O]ne of the cornerstones of this project is that the management team is very powerful at a human level and, without this part, the project could not be maintained today."

However, for teacher induction to be possible—given the context of high educational complexity in which the school is located—it is necessary to establish a network formed by "many mixed 'complicities,'" as expressed by Sandra, the school's principal. It is necessary to make the most of all existing resources in the school and the community and align them with the educational demands of students. Families and the community members play a decisive role in this task.

### 5.1.2. Family and Community Participation as a Pedagogical Resource for Teacher Induction

The participation of family and community members in the school was identified not only as a guiding principle of the school's educational model, but also as a critical pedagogical resource that supports teacher induction. Whereas the adaptation of new staff might be challenging in any school, in this particular case they must be prepared to work with children living in poverty and to do the most to create an inclusive learning space for all. Indeed, teachers are required to work with volunteers in the class, for example, during Interactive Groups, where non-teacher adults facilitate students' interactions by working with a small group of students to solve curricular tasks. This participation of families and community members in learning spaces can be threatening for the new staff, who are usually not familiar with this approach. As explained by Unai in one of the group interviews, opening the classroom to the volunteers (other teachers, family members, etc.) might be seen initially as a struggle:



It's not just the planning of the activity, it's also that I was used to being alone in class... And you get here, and you don't know how you must do the activities, because you're still lost, and above you have a person, who is not judging you, s/he is doing her/his job, s/he is not judging you or anything, on the contrary, it is a reinforcement for you, but... you already have that pressure.

Gradually, new teachers get used to these new ways of working in the classroom and start to benefit from the inclusion of volunteers in the classroom to promote more productive interactions for learning among students. In the following excerpt, Unai and José reflected on this change in the teaching staff's attitude towards family and community participation:

Unai: Now we are the ones who are in class alone and when someone tells us "a group will come ...", you say: "perfect, better!" At the beginning the support [of volunteers] is a pressure, and then you start to appreciate it.

José: ... Then, if you don't have it [the support of volunteers] you have a bad time... [You say to the main assistant:] "Joan, give me more resources, more teachers, more volunteers...!"

## 5.2. *Newly Appointed Teachers' Commitment to the School as Learning Communities Project*

The information gathered revealed that teaching in a School as a Learning Community not only makes the induction process easier for newly appointed teachers, but also encourages them to get involved and step up to play a pivotal role in the school. In this section, we describe two main outcomes of the teacher induction process that have encouraged new teachers to embrace the school's project, and how this is contributing to its sustainability in the school.

### 5.2.1. Sense of Professional Growth

Our data showed that this model creates affordances for teachers to embrace the project and develop a sense of professional growth. Teachers link their professional growth with a constant improvement in student performance, which seems to be a major incentive for the teaching staff to be persistent in their efforts to align their practice with the school model and to keep improving it. As teachers adapt to the school's educational project, the impact of the inclusive strategies working in the classroom increases, and it becomes more visible to the teacher. Joaquim, one of the teachers, reflected on the evolution in his way of working in the classroom with the students: "I talk to them [the students]: imagine what we were able to do the first week, and look now!"

The impact in terms of professional learning is especially remarkable on those teachers who start in the school having previous teaching experiences that differ from this inclusive model. The words of Lola, the special education teacher, were of great interest in this regard. Accustomed to the individual work with students with Special Educational Needs, when she started working in this school she quickly learnt that in a Learning Community the role of the special education teacher is transformed, and that she was invited to work inside the regular classroom. The inclusive principles of the school meant for her an opportunity to rethink her work as a special education teacher, and motivated her to get involved in the project:

I didn't even know what a "learning community" was ... I was the Special education teacher. I used to come to a school and: "look, these are your children." The children who already had a label ..., and of course, I took those students out of the [regular] classroom and worked with them individually. And when I got here, they said to me: "No, you're going to work within the classroom with these children, supporting the class teacher, you take part of a community." And I don't know why, why I fell in love with the project, and I was hooked right away.

### 5.2.2. Commitment to Improve the Educational Reality of Students

The experience of teaching in a highly diverse school serving students living in poverty that is organized as a Learning Community allows newly appointed teachers to rethink their professional task and to develop a sense of professional commitment to their students. Lola highlighted how the fact of joining the project meant for her a change of mindset and encouraged her to invest her efforts in promoting the educational improvement of all students:

Just the fact of working in a school as a “learning community” already makes you be different, when you start working here your mind changes . . . the important thing is not you and your goals, but always the child and the child’s safety, his/her social and academic success. We work by and for children, that’s very clear for us, and without the help of the family this would not be possible, that’s also very clear for us. . . . This is not just about teachers, it is about everyone.

Teachers’ alignment with the need to improve the reality of students is a critical feature that explains their commitment to the sustainability of the project. An idea that underlies all participants’ considerations about the evolution of the school is the conviction that the school’s project transcends the individual people who are involved in it. As Sandra explained: “This vision of the project . . . goes beyond the aims of a particular person and goes beyond the aims of the staff and of the management team” (Sandra, school’s principal). To be a School as a Learning Community cannot be a personal methodological option of the school’s management team, but rather it requires teachers to understand that it is a right of the students, of the families, and of the community to participate and benefit from academic and social success. In the following excerpt, Sandra explained how this vision is transmitted to the new staff:

We always present the project as a project that belongs to the families, to the students, a project that aims to be a project of the city. Thus, the function that we all have as agents working on the project is to facilitate it, accompany and promote it, but not to make decisions about whether the project is carried out or not. For me, this is an important issue, if you relate a project with a specific person, if that person disappears, the project has the risk of disappearing.

Teachers’ efforts to open the school to the community in order to create inclusive spaces and achieve sustainable improvements is exemplified through the case of Gladys, a student originally from Paraguay recently arrived at 6th grade. During the interview, José explained how he has tried to ensure the successful inclusion of the student in the classroom, both academically and emotionally. In his narrative, his efforts to inform Gladys’ mother about the way in which the school works, as well as to encourage her participation in the school, inviting her to get involved in it, stood out:

When I had the interview [with Gladys’ mother] I explained to her how we worked, the methodology that we used, and I even told her that she could come to the classroom and to see what we are doing. That caught her attention. I explained to her, I also told her where she could look for information, what is our website, so she could get informed, and she told me that she would probably like to enter the class and see what we do, because of course, this was something new for her, because there [in Paraguay] they did not work like that. And in this way, she can see what we do and she can introduce the academic part afterwards also at home. That is the important thing.

José’s words are the best testimony of the way in which teachers, as they adapt to the school, embrace its educational project, and consequently, they start to share the goal of allocating all the existing efforts and resources in the school to better serve the students and the community in which they work.

## 6. Discussion

The concern about how to better support teacher induction continues to be in full force in the scientific literature on teacher education and professional development. Numerous studies have analyzed the challenges and tensions faced by teachers joining new teaching appointments [2,3,28], as well as the strategies that favor their better integration [20,29], with a special focus on the specific challenges faced by the so-called newly qualified teachers (NQTs) [3,14]. Based on this body of research, this study attempted to advance in this area through an in-depth analysis of the specific features that favor the induction process of teachers in a school organized as a Learning Community, which serves culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse students living in poverty. Our results revealed two features of the educational project of the school that favor the induction of teachers: the dialogic approach to teacher professional development that is put into practice in the school, as well as the school's understanding of family and community participation in the school as a pedagogical resource. Likewise, the study unraveled two outcomes of the teacher induction process that enable newly appointed teachers to embrace the vision and principles that underlie the school's educational project: the development of a sense of professional growth among the new faculty, and the commitment to improving the reality of students. These findings are consistent with other studies [49] emphasizing how teachers' involvement in dialogic-based training has a positive impact on their ability to transfer their knowledge to their teaching practice in order to deal with the needs of their students, and provides a novel analytical framework about the induction of teachers who join highly diverse schools that serve students living in poverty.

This study constitutes a relevant contribution in the field of analysis of the induction and retention of teachers. Firstly, it is relevant to understand that as teachers progress in their careers, new needs arise that can be related to changes in job demands or professional placements, or personal issues [18]. Hence, in order to better address teachers' needs and motivations [50], it is relevant to broaden the focus to explore the conceptions and needs of teachers facing new professional challenges [51], whether they are beginning teachers or more experienced professionals. In this sense, although the less experienced teachers represent a vulnerable age group in relation to the difficulties derived from the teaching work, the most experienced teachers can also be vulnerable to difficulties related to their teaching [52]. In this sense, the study allowed us to shed light on the difficulties and opportunities that arise from the incorporation of new teachers to a school with a community-based educational orientation [11]. This implies new challenges and demands for those teachers who have previous teaching experiences and who must transform their prior perceptions and visions in order to open their classrooms and other decision-making spaces to the active participation of families and the community.

Secondly, as recently expressed by Tatto and colleagues [53], a vigorous research effort is needed in underexplored areas in the field of teacher education, such as the preparation of teachers to reach disadvantaged populations and to learn how to teach in challenging contexts. In this sense, the case analyzed provided relevant lessons, since it was focused on a school located in a highly disadvantaged area that is successful in terms of educational achievement. Our results revealed that the sustainable endeavors of the teaching staff and the school's management team to create an inclusive space for all students and to engage family and community members in the classroom are contributing to confront potential stereotypes and deterministic beliefs [54], thus challenging deficit thinking [55]. Furthermore, the school environment that is highly influenced by the egalitarian dialogue and cooperation between teachers, families, and community members, in turn, has an impact on the initiatives put into practice in the school to facilitate teacher induction. Accordingly, such an egalitarian atmosphere allows new teachers to face the demands of their new teaching appointment in a challenging context while feeling supported, not only by the school's management team and the staff, but also by family and community members who participate as volunteers in the school. Consequently, a school organized as a Learning Community becomes a unique context for the induction of newly appointed teachers, as well as for the continuous personal and professional learning and growth for teachers, while making the most of the

potential of all members of the educational community to jointly contribute to the common goal of improving the educational response for all students, even in the most adverse contexts.

## 7. Conclusions

The study aimed to analyze in depth the case of an exemplary school serving culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse students living in poverty in Barcelona (Spain), which has been highlighted by its outstanding academic improvement, in order to draw conclusions to inform future efforts to facilitate the preparation and induction of teachers who have new teaching appointments in schools serving students in poverty. The dialogic approach to teachers' professional development, together with the family and community participation in learning activities and decision-making spaces, were revealed as key aspects in the induction of new teachers, particularly in a culturally and linguistically diverse school setting with a large proportion of students living in poverty. Furthermore, being a teacher in a School as Learning Community favors the sense of professional growth and the teacher's commitment to the educational improvement of the students. Although our research yielded a landscape of promising conclusions, there were some limitations that must be pointed out. Firstly, since this was a single case study, the results obtained were not compared with others corresponding to other schools functioning as Learning Communities in similar contexts. On the other hand, in order to move forward in this line of work, it would be interesting to develop longitudinal research that may allow drawing more far-reaching conclusions about the evolution of the school and the sustainability in the improvement of educational results. Likewise, the present study did not look into the resilience mechanisms or coping strategies that help newly appointed teachers face the challenges derived from their professional work, an aspect that has been pointed out by previous research [29–33]. Further research may address how family and community participation in Schools as Learning Communities can contribute to create networks of support composed of teachers, families, and community members, and explore its impact on newly appointed teachers' professional development. Whereas the study was conducted in 2016/2017, and we acknowledge this might be a limitation, we argue the contribution is timely and relevant to the research community as well as to non-academics, since newly qualified teachers continue to face challenges when entering schools that serve students living in poverty. Nevertheless, there is a need to continue advancing in the study of which mechanisms of teacher induction allow professionals serving students who face educational disadvantages not only to survive but also to thrive [56]. However, despite all the odds, the growing commitment to strive for more democratic work in the field of teacher education [40] seems to offer further good results to come.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, R.G.-C., P.A., A.F.; methodology, R.G.-C., P.A.; resources, R.G.-C., M.P.C., P.A.; investigation, R.G.-C., P.A.; writing—original draft preparation, R.G.-C., P.A.; writing—review and editing, R.G.-C., M.P.C., P.A., A.F. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This work was supported by the Spanish Ramón y Cajal Grant RYC-2016-20967 for open access publication of the article.

**Acknowledgments:** In this section, you can acknowledge any support given which is not covered by the author contribution or funding sections. This may include administrative and technical support, or donations in kind (e.g., materials used for experiments).

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

1. Avalos, B.; Valenzuela, J.P. Education for all and attrition/retention of new teachers: A trajectory study in Chile. *Int. J. Educ. Dev.* **2016**, *49*, 279–290. [[CrossRef](#)]
2. Le Maistre, C.; Paré, A. Whatever it takes: How beginning teachers learn to survive. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2009**, *26*, 559–564. [[CrossRef](#)]
3. Magudu, S.; Gombo, M. Encounters of newly qualified teachers with micro-politics in primary schools in Zimbabwe. *S. Afr. J. Educ.* **2017**, *37*, 1–11. [[CrossRef](#)]

4. O’Grady, E. Establishing respectful educative relationships: A study of newly qualified teachers in Ireland. *Camb. J. Educ.* **2015**, *45*, 167–185. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Sharplin, E.; O’Neill, M.; Chapman, A. Coping strategies for adaptation to new teacher appointments: Intervention for retention. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2011**, *27*, 136–146. [[CrossRef](#)]
6. European Union. *Study on Policy Measures to Improve the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in Europe*; Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, 2013.
7. McIntyre, J.; Thomson, P. Poverty, schooling, and beginning teachers who make a difference: A case study from England. In *Teacher Education in High Poverty Schools*; Lampert, J., Burnett, B., Eds.; Springer: New York, NY, USA, 2016; pp. 153–170.
8. Ball, A.F. Toward a theory of generative change in culturally and linguistically complex classrooms. *Am. Educ. Res. J.* **2009**, *46*, 45–72. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. Lampert, J.; Ball, A.; Garcia-Carrion, R.; Burnett, B. Poverty and schooling: Three cases from Australia, the United States, and Spain. *Asia Pac. J. Teach. Educ.* **2020**, *48*, 60–78. [[CrossRef](#)]
10. European Commission. *Tackling Early School Leaving: A Key Contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda*; COM (2011) 18 Final; European Commission: Brussels, Belgium, 2011.
11. Flecha, R. Social Impact of Community-Based Educational Programs in Europe. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*; Oxford University Press: Oxfordshire, UK, 2017; pp. 1–21.
12. Garcia-Carrion, R.; Gomez, A.; Molina, S.; Ionescu, V. Teacher Education in Schools as Learning Communities: Transforming High-Poverty Schools through Dialogic Learning. *Aust. J. Teach. Educ.* **2017**, *42*, 44–56. [[CrossRef](#)]
13. Avalos, B. Teacher professional development in Teaching and Teacher Education over ten years. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2011**, *27*, 10–20. [[CrossRef](#)]
14. Aspfors, J.; Fransson, G. Research on mentor education for mentors of newly qualified teachers: A qualitative meta-synthesis. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2015**, *48*, 75–86. [[CrossRef](#)]
15. Cullingford, C. *Mentoring in Education: An International Perspective*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2016.
16. Hudson, P. How can schools support beginning teachers? A call for timely induction and mentoring for effective teaching. *Aust. J. Teach. Educ.* **2012**, *37*, 70–84. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Feiman-Nemser, S. Helping novices learn to teach: Lessons from an exemplary support teacher. *J. Teach. Educ.* **2001**, *52*, 17–30. [[CrossRef](#)]
18. Louws, M.L.; Meirink, J.A.; van Veen, K.; van Driel, J.H. Understanding teachers’ professional learning goals from their current professional concerns. *Teach. Teach.* **2018**, *24*, 63–80. [[CrossRef](#)]
19. Brock, B.L.; Grady, M.L. *From First Year to First Rate: Principals Guiding Beginning Teachers*; Corwin Press: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2007.
20. Fox, A.; Wilson, E. ‘Support our networking and help us belong!’: Listening to beginning secondary school science teachers. *Teach. Teach.* **2009**, *15*, 701–718. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. März, V.; Kelchtermans, G. The networking teacher in action: A qualitative analysis of early career teachers’ induction process. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2020**, *87*, 1–15. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Mansfield, C.F.; Beltman, S.; Price, A. ‘I’m coming back again!’ The resilience process of early career teachers. *Teach. Teach.* **2014**, *20*, 547–567. [[CrossRef](#)]
23. Thomas, L.; Tuytens, M.; Moolenaar, N.; Devos, G.; Kelchtermans, G.; Vanderlinde, R. Teachers’ first year in the profession: The power of high-quality support. *Teach. Teach.* **2019**, *25*, 160–188. [[CrossRef](#)]
24. Van Daal, T.; Donche, V.; De Maeyer, S. The impact of personality, goal orientation and self-efficacy on participation of high school teachers in learning activities in the workplace. *Vocat. Learn.* **2014**, *7*, 21–40. [[CrossRef](#)]
25. OECD. *Teaching in Focus #17. Do New Teachers Feel Prepared for Teaching?* OECD Publishing: Paris, France, 2017.
26. Voss, T.; Kunter, M. “Reality Shock” of Beginning Teachers? Changes in Teacher Candidates’ Emotional Exhaustion and Constructivist-Oriented Beliefs. *J. Teach. Educ.* **2020**, *71*, 292–306. [[CrossRef](#)]
27. Lindqvist, P.; Nordänger, U.K.; Carlsson, R. Teacher attrition the first five years—A multifaceted image. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2014**, *1*, 94–103. [[CrossRef](#)]
28. Pillen, M.T.; Beijgaard, D.; Brok den, P.J. Tensions in beginning teachers’ professional identity development, accompanying feelings and coping strategies. *Eur. J. Teach. Educ.* **2013**, *36*, 240–260. [[CrossRef](#)]
29. Beltman, S.; Mansfield, C.; Price, A. Thriving not just surviving: A review of research on teacher resilience. *Educ. Res. Rev.* **2011**, *6*, 185–207. [[CrossRef](#)]

30. Castro, A.J.; Kelly, J.; Shih, M. Resilience strategies for new teachers in high-needs areas. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2010**, *26*, 622–629. [[CrossRef](#)]
31. Ebersöhn, L.; Loots, T.; Eloff, I.; Ferreira, R. In-service teacher training to provide psychosocial support and care in high-risk and high-need schools: School-based intervention partnerships. *J. Educ. Teach.* **2015**, *41*, 267–284. [[CrossRef](#)]
32. Johnson, B.; Down, B.; Le Cornu, R.; Peters, J.; Sullivan, A.; Pearce, J.; Hunter, J. Promoting Early Career Teacher Resilience: A Framework for Understanding and Acting. *Teach. Teach.* **2014**, *20*, 530–546. [[CrossRef](#)]
33. Leroux, M.; Théorêt, M. Intriguing empirical relations between teachers' resilience and reflection on practice. *Reflective Pract. Int. Multidiscip. Perspect.* **2014**, *5*, 289–303. [[CrossRef](#)]
34. Ungar, M. *The Social Ecology of Resilience: A Handbook of Theory and Practice*; Springer: New York, NY, USA, 2012.
35. Mansfield, C.F.; Beltman, S.; Broadley, T.; Weatherby-Fell, N. Building resilience in teacher education: An evidenced informed framework. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2016**, *54*, 77–87. [[CrossRef](#)]
36. Anderson, L.; Olsen, B. Investigating early career urban teachers' perspectives on and experiences in professional development. *J. Teach. Educ.* **2006**, *57*, 359–377. [[CrossRef](#)]
37. Heimbecker, C.; Medina, C.; Peterson, P.; Redsteer, D.; Prater, G. Reaching American Indian Special/Elementary Educators Through a Partnership with a Navajo Nation School District. *Remedial Spec. Educ.* **2002**, *23*, 373–379. [[CrossRef](#)]
38. Kraft, M.A.; Papay, J.P.; Charner-Laird, M.; Johnson, S.M.; Ng, M.; Reinhorn, S.K. Educating amidst uncertainty: The organizational supports that teachers need to serve students in high-poverty, urban schools. *Educ. Adm. Q.* **2015**, *51*, 753–790. [[CrossRef](#)]
39. Rosenkoetter, S.E.; Irwin, J.D.; Saceda, R.G. Addressing personnel needs for rural areas. *Teach. Educ. Spec. Educ.* **2004**, *27*, 276–291. [[CrossRef](#)]
40. Zeichner, K.; Payne, K.A.; Brayko, K. Democratizing teacher education. *J. Teach. Educ.* **2014**, *66*, 122–135. [[CrossRef](#)]
41. Gilroy, P. Editorial. Special Issue: Poverty Discourses in Teacher Education: Understanding Policies, Effects and Attitudes. *J. Educ. Teach.* **2016**, *42*, 373. [[CrossRef](#)]
42. FRA. *A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion*; Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, 2018.
43. Zubiri-Esnaola, H.; Vidu, A.; Rios-Gonzalez, O.; Morla-Folch, T. Inclusivity, participation and collaboration: Learning in interactive groups. *Educ. Res.* **2020**, 1–19. [[CrossRef](#)]
44. Lopez-De Aguilera, G. Developing School-relevant Language and Literacy Skills through Dialogic Literary Gatherings. *Int. J. Educ. Psychol.* **2019**, *8*, 51–71. [[CrossRef](#)]
45. Hargreaves, A.; Lieberman, A.; Fullan, M.; Hopkins, D. *Second International Handbook of Educational Change*; Springer: New York, NY, USA, 2009.
46. Gómez, A. Communicative methodology and social impact. In *Qualitative Inquiry in Neoliberal Times*; Denzin, N., Giardina, M., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2017; pp. 166–178.
47. Hsieh, H.F.; Shannon, S.E. Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qual. Health Res.* **2005**, *15*, 1277–1288. [[CrossRef](#)]
48. Darling-Hammond, L.; McLaughlin, M. Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan* **2011**, *92*, 81–92. [[CrossRef](#)]
49. Rodriguez, J.A.; Condom-Bosch, J.L.; Ruiz, L.; Oliver, E. On the Shoulders of Giants: Benefits of Participating in a Dialogic Professional Development Program for In-Service Teachers. *Front. Psychol.* **2020**, *11*, 5. [[CrossRef](#)]
50. Caddle, M.C.; Bautista, A.; Brizuela, B.M.; Sharpe, S.T. Evaluating mathematics teachers' professional development motivations and needs. *J. Res. Math. Educ.* **2016**, *5*, 112–134. [[CrossRef](#)]
51. Martínez-de-la-Hidalga, Z.; Villardón-Gallego, L. Using metaphors to know the conceptions about the teaching profession in initial teacher education. *Int. J. Educ. Psychol.* **2017**, *6*, 183–208. [[CrossRef](#)]
52. Carton, A.; Fruchart, E. Sources of Stress, Coping Strategies, Emotional Experience: Effects of the Level of Experience in Primary School Teachers in France. *Educ. Rev.* **2014**, *66*, 245–262. [[CrossRef](#)]
53. Tatto, M.T.; Richmond, G.; Carter Andrews, D.J. The Research We Need in Teacher Education. *J. Teach. Educ.* **2016**, *67*, 247–250. [[CrossRef](#)]
54. Antonelli-Ponti, M.; Crosswaite, M. Teachers' perceptions about the etiology of intelligence and learning difficulties. *Int. J. Educ. Psychol.* **2019**, *8*, 162–187. [[CrossRef](#)]

55. Valencia, R.R. *The Evolution of Deficit Thinking: Educational Thought and Practice*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2012.
56. Johnson, S.M.; Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. *Finders and Keepers: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive in Our Schools*; Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA, USA, 2004.



© 2020 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).