Counting What Counts

Measuring Impact in a Comprehensive Induction Program

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Impact measurement remains the Holy Grail by which most programs are judged, and comprehensive induction programs are no exception. Program designers and implementers must use data, not just to prove, but also improve program effectiveness. There are three main purposes for measuring impact (see Figure 1). A strong data and impact strategy serves these purposes and includes appropriate performance metrics to focus on best practices resulting in improved efficiency.

The NTC Impact Spectrum

What data should induction programs collect? The NTC Impact Spectrum (Figure 2) provides a useful framework to answer this question. Programs need both data of implementation and impact.

Data of Implementation includes two major categories:

1. **Counting:** Data about who is reached: students, teachers, mentors, principals, etc.
2. **Program Quality:** This data measures to what extent the program is implemented as planned (i.e., fidelity) and how it aligns with program standards. It may include satisfaction data.

Data of Impact includes three components:

1. **Retention:** An explicit outcome of many induction programs is to improve teacher retention. Increasingly, a key focus for many districts is not just overall retention, but *differentiated retention* of high performing teachers.
2. **Practice:** Induction programs have the capacity to accelerate the quality of practice. These data measure the extent to which teachers (and mentors and principals) demonstrate effective practice.
3. **Student Learning:** The ultimate outcome of a comprehensive induction program is better student learning. Hence, it is important to collect data that measure multiple dimensions of student learning—student achievement, certainly, but also student engagement, interest, and motivation.

A Roadmap for Measurement

It is essential for comprehensive induction programs to consider impact measurement from day one. Establish systems to track implementation data, while gathering baseline data around impact measures. Comprehensive programs should not underestimate the time and resources needed. If possible, partner with the district research and evaluation unit or local universities.

Once a basic foundation is in place (and this may take most of the first year), programs can focus on deeper analysis, sharing with stakeholders, and use for decision-making. It may take a year or more for indicators such as retention and practice to improve, and potentially longer for student learning. Table 1 provides a three-year roadmap for impact measurement.

Guidelines to Consider

Albert Einstein observed that "not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts." Measuring impact is both an art and a science, and while we may never come close to absolute certainty, we can attempt to minimize uncertainty. A few guidelines to keep in mind:

1. **Triangulate, Triangulate, Triangulate:** Incorporate data from multiple sources (e.g., teachers, students, mentors) using multiple methods (qualitative and quantitative). (Met Project, 2012.)

FIGURE 1: WHY MEASURE IMPACT?

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2. **Explore the "So What?" and "Now What?":** It is tempting to rest on our laurels once the data is gathered and analyzed. However, that just represents the "what?" piece of an adaptive action cycle, which should also include "so what does this mean?" and "what do we do about it?"

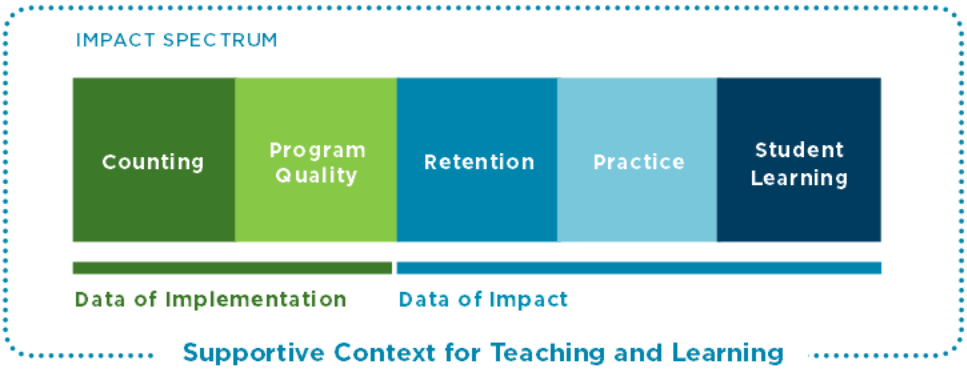

FIGURE 2: NTC IMPACT SPECTRUM

3. **Engage Stakeholders in the Process:** Kurt Lewin, a pioneer in the field of group dynamics, observed that "diagnosis is not about finding the problem; it is doing so in a way that builds ownership for action" (as quoted in Weisbord, 2004). The more we engage stakeholders from the beginning to build support and ownership for data and impact, the more likely the data will be used for improvement and action.

4. **Have an Impact Plan Worked Out in Advance:** An impact plan identifies the right data to collect, ways to collect it, and processes to analyze and reflect. (see NTC Practice Brief, 2011). While the impact plan will evolve every year based on what is learned, start a comprehensive program with a well thought-out plan that is shared with stakeholders.

As more and more districts around the country adopt a comprehensive induction model as part of an effective human capital system, it becomes imperative that impact is threaded into these programs as integral to program strategy. Just as an effective teacher uses data to make the right instructional decisions, so can programs make evidence-based decisions that enhance impact.

References

MET Project Policy and Practice Brief (2012). *Gathering Feedback for Teaching: Combining High-Quality Observations with Student Surveys and Achievement Gains.* Seattle, WA: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Weisbord, M.R. (2004). *Productive Workplaces Revisited: Dignity, Meaning and Community in the 21st Century.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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TABLE 1: A THREE-YEAR ROADMAP FOR IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Set up systems and processes for tracking data of implementation	Go deeper with analysis	Develop robust reporting systems to share data with different stakeholders
Gather baseline data for impact measures such as retention, teacher practice, and student learning	Share data with stakeholders and use in decision-making	Connect student learning data to other impact measures and to implementation data
Form partnerships with research and evaluation experts	Start connecting impact data such as retention and practice to implementation data	Build sustainability to continue impact measurement