

Teacher Career Cycle

The professional career development of teachers is a non-linear process that occurs within the context and interaction with elements of the personal and organizational environments of the teacher as noted in Figure 1. Personal environment variables that influence the career stages include family support structures; positive critical incidents such as marriage, birth of children, or religious experiences; life crises such as illness, death, financial loss, or legal problems; individual dispositions related to behavioral traits, aspirations, and values; avocational outlets such as hobbies or travel; and life stages. Organizational variables having an impact upon career development include: student assessment requirements directed by state and federal government; administrator influence; policy decisions like NCLB; level of public trust in education and the teachers; societal expectations placed upon the local school; fiscal support of education; activities of the professional teacher organizations; access to quality professional development activities, and the activities and benefits of the local teacher union.

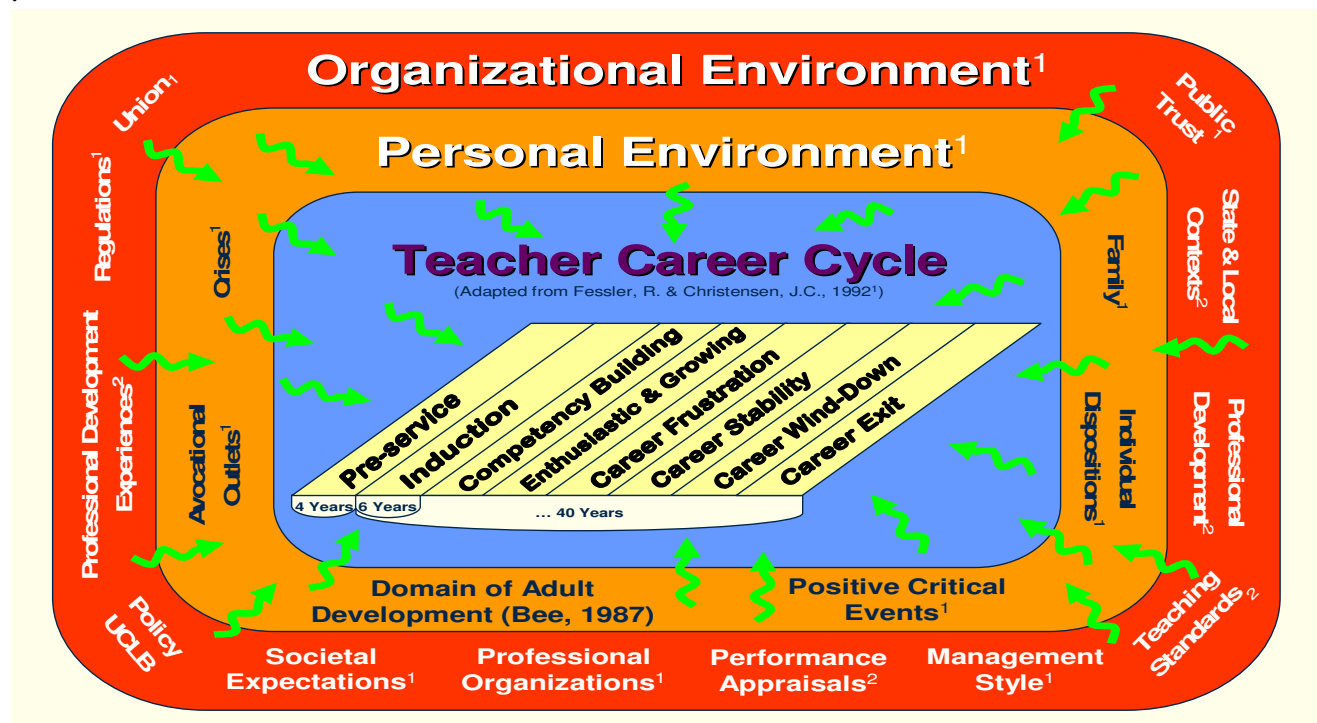


Figure 1. The Teacher Career Cycle showing the tensions of personal and organizational environmental variables. Note. Diagram developed by R. Joerger (2004) based on *The Teacher Career Cycle* (p. 36), by R. Fessler and J. Christensen, 1992, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Individual teachers proceed through eight life-long career stages in a varying manner, spending more or less in a stage due to personal and organizational environment influencers. The eight stages of the Fessler and Christiansen Teacher Career Cycle include: preservice, induction, competency building, enthusiastic and growing, career frustration, stability, career wind-down, career exit. Preservice teacher preparation involves educational experiences occurring before the

teacher initiates their first teaching job. Induction involves the time and activities that occur for the first 1-6 years that lead to complete socialization and acceptance as competent teachers into the profession. The focus of the teacher in the induction phase moves from less attention to self, to more focus upon the needs of the learner and how they can effectively use the subject matter to assist the learner in meeting their goals and capacity. Completely inducted teachers are regarded as effective teachers who make a difference in the educational experience of the students. During the competency building phase, teachers continue to acquire, experiment with, and further refine effective teaching strategies. Merging next into the enthusiastic and growing stage, teachers enjoy the teaching experience and value the impact they have upon student learning. Teachers in this stage are often more involved in their profession.

The preservice stage begins this process and represents the period of initial teacher preparation at a college or university, while the career exit stage represents the period of time after the teacher leaves the profession.