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The Effect of Contextual Factors on School Leaders' Involvement in Early-Career Teacher Mentoring: A Review of the International Research Literature

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Abstract

School administrators are expected to undertake a variety of roles and responsibilities with regard to facilitating the ongoing professional development of teachers in their schools. Administering formal or informal mentoring initiatives is a typical strategy employed for supporting early career teachers [ECTs] as they adjust to school culture, contexts, and individual responsibilities. Implementation of mentoring programs happens within a dynamic contextual landscape that both influences the development of educational and professional expectations for instruction and professional learning and shapes the school's culture. In this article, drawing on the international multi-factor systematic review of research literature, we sought to establish how contextual factors, such as culture, political systems, social practices and organizational structures, influence the early career teaching and describe the implications of these contextual factors for

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school leaders' involvement in and administration of mentoring programs. After a brief description of theoretical framing and our systematic review method and sampling procedures, we synthesize the findings from the extant literature on each of the contextual factors and discuss their influence on school leaders' involvement in mentoring. Finally, we discuss the complexity of contexts and practices in mentoring ECTs and conclude with the implications for policy, practice, and future research.

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Introduction

Among a myriad of professional tasks, school leaders are responsible for teacher development and support in their schools. This responsibility includes induction, mentoring, and early career teachers' [ECTs] personal and professional development. Teacher induction programs aim to help, guide, and support ECTs through challenges and stresses of first years of teaching and provides them with the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful in the profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008). Mentoring (whether a part of induction or a standalone program) typically includes pairing of ECTs with more experienced colleagues to provide coaching, guidance, advocacy, counselling, help, protection, feedback, and information critical for ECTs' success, professional development, and retention (Hobson & Malderez, 2013; Waterman & He, 2011; Wong, 2004). While various benefits of ECT mentoring have been described at length in the literature (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009), the benefits are not without

limitations, including: inappropriate mentor-mentee matches, lack of mentor training, evaluative stance or "judgementoring," and personal factors (i.e., personality tensions, stress, and burnout) that may lead to failed mentoring efforts (Hobson, 2016; Johnson & Kardos, 2005; Towers, 2012). Overall, mentoring success depends on interpersonal interactions and the social context within which it operates (Du & Wang, 2017).

How ECTs socialize and acclimate into the school culture rests within the scope of the principals' role as they publicly establish the vision, mission, and goals of the school (Delp, 2014). A school administrator's leadership is critical in directly supporting ECTs and in creating a structure supportive of the induction and mentoring processes. Moir and colleagues (2009) claimed that principal engagement is critical for induction and mentoring supports because effectiveness of those programs depends on a school's context and their alignment with vision, instructional focus, and priorities set by the principal. Moreover, scholars have argued that administrators' commitments to mentoring programs for new teachers either supports and promotes the retention of novice teachers or undermines the success of induction and leads to teacher attrition (Bleach, 1998; Jones, 2002; Turner, 1994; Wechsler, Caspary, & Humphrey, 2008). To this end, school administrators need to be informed about the needs of novice teachers and various supportive structures and programs available to them (Rhodes, Nevill, & Allen, 2005). However, because ECTs' work is situated in a dynamic contextual landscape that both influences their development and practice and dictates professional expectations for instruction and professional learning, we also argue that school principals need to understand the contextual factors that affect the experiences and needs of ECTs.

Our extensive international systematic review explored the implementation of induction programs within widely different contexts and to identify how successful induction programs have responded to the contextual challenges affecting ECTs worldwide (Kutsyuruba, Walker, & Godden, 2019). In this article, we seek to establish how culture, political systems, social practices and organizational structures influence early career teaching and describe the implications of contextual factors for school leaders' involvement in and administration of mentoring programs. In particular, we present: a) an overview of the contextual factors (social, political, cultural, organizational, and personal) that influence the mentoring and professional practices of ECTs; and b) a description of potential influence of these contextual factors on the school administrators roles as they seek to create and implement effective mentoring supports for the ECTs in their schools. Following our brief description of the systematic review method and sampling procedures, c) we synthesize the findings from the extant literature on each of the contextual factors and discuss their influence on school leaders' involvement in mentoring. Finally, d) we offer a heuristic model as a visual representation of the complexity of contexts and practices in mentoring ECTs and conclude with the implications for policy, practice, and future research.

Systematic Review Approach and Methodology

Our original systematic review (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019) was undertaken using the EPPI-Reviewer software (EPPI Centre, Institute of Education, London) to analyze and interrogate international (English language) empirical research entries which were defined by terms of reference and the original research questions. We sought to

find out: a) geographic representation in the research on formal or programmatic support of ECTs; b) international research evidence on contextual factors that affect experiences of ECTs; and c) programmatic responses to the various contextual factors that affect ECTs.

Our conclusion from this initial systematic review was that the contextual factors were anchored in the various societal (e.g., cultural, economic, social, and political), organizational, and personal forces that influence the professional practices of teachers at the early stages of their career. We deemed this to be a significant finding. Subsequently, this article extends that work to examine the contextual factors more closely in relationship to the leaders' roles.

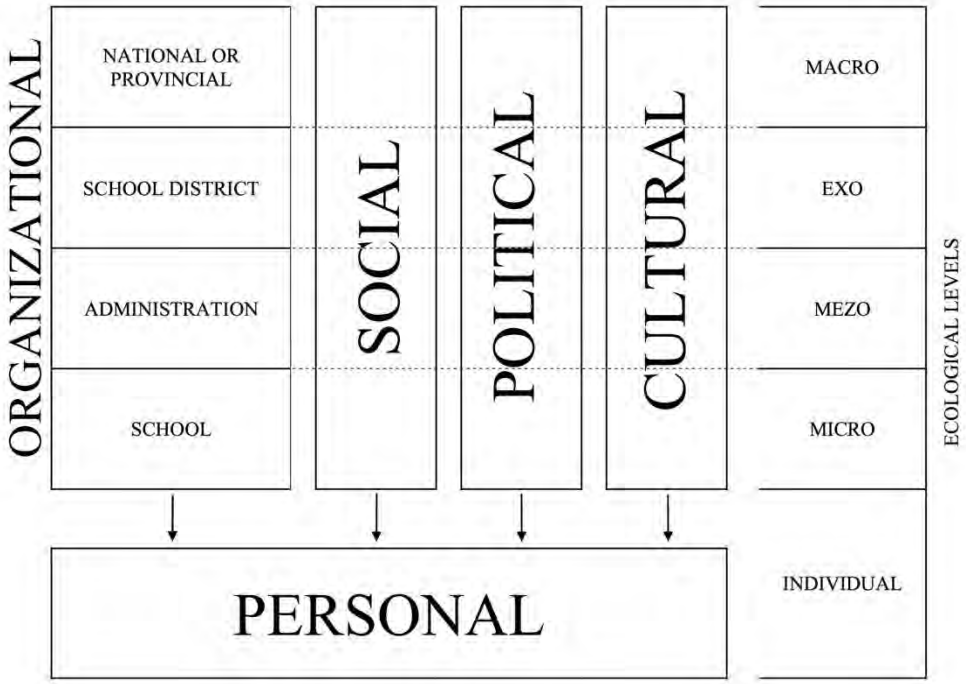
Theoretical Framing

Based on the key findings from the systematic review (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019), and using Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory, we mapped out the complex and multi-layered contextual factors identified in our systematic review and used these as a framework to examine both their influence upon mentoring for early career teachers and their influence upon school administrators responsible for overseeing such mentoring and support activities. When employed in this framework, Bronfenbrenner's theory directs attention toward the interaction between the personal/individual, the social, political and cultural, the organizational contextual and environmental variances and nuances, and the potential sources of influence and impact upon induction and mentorship programing (see Figure 1).

Within our framework, ECT's personal factors are situated at the core; being both distinctive, and dependent on, and shaped by, organizational, social, political, and cultural contextual factors. Personal factors comprise the social identity of an individual ECT. The beginning teacher's personal factors were constantly shaped by both the individual environment and by encounters with other individuals situated within the immediate microsystem environment. The microsystem consisted of interpersonal features at the school organizational level. These factors included the school culture, and the ethical values and practices that were embedded into that culture. In addition, they included individual groups of factors relating to the entire school staff, who were unique to that school. Mezosystem refers to the school administration and their management of duties and responsibilities towards ECT support. Exosystem refers to organizational or institutional factors at school district level that shape or structure the environment within which the ECT's experiences of mentoring occur. These factors include the policies, procedures, community relationships, organizational structure, and overarching institutional culture of the school district. Macrosystem includes federal/national/provincial and state politics and initiatives, national ideologies and identities, and demographical diversity, including religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The overarching purpose of this study was to use Bronfenbrenner's work to establish how culture, political systems, social practices and organizational structures influence early career teaching and describe the implications of contextual factors for school leaders' involvement in and administration of mentoring programs.

Figure 1.

Theoretical Framework of Ecological Levels and Contextual Factors



Data Collection and Analysis

Whereas a full description of our original systematic review methodology, including inclusion criteria, has been detailed elsewhere (Kutsyuruba, Walker, & Godden, 2017; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019), we briefly describe the key research phases here together with the additional steps taken for this study. The search strategy for the original systematic review involved rigorous electronic and hand searching of key electronic databases and relevant journals, for which

titles and abstracts were screened for relevance to the research questions, as defined by our inclusion criteria. Databases we searched included ERIC, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, and Education Source. Search terms included: beginning teachers, new teacher support, beginning teacher support, teacher retention, new teacher retention, beginning teacher retention, teacher attrition, teacher mentoring, mentoring new teachers, mentoring beginning teachers, teacher mentorship, teacher induction, new teacher induction, beginning teacher induction, new teacher transition, beginning teacher transitions, new teacher development, beginning teacher development, new teacher support, beginning teacher support, NQT, NQT "and" development, NQT "and" support, NQT "and" induction, NQT "and" mentorship, NQT "and" retention, NQT "and" attrition, early career teachers, early career teacher mentorship, early career teacher induction, early career teacher retention, early career teacher support, and early career teacher development. After three phases of rigorous screening of the entries against the inclusion criteria and removal of duplicates and unobtainable files, the initial electronic and hand database search result of 16,503 sources yielded a final sample of 113 entries. These were studies key-worded as focusing on social, cultural, political, and organizational contexts, with a population focus of compulsory education in the K-12 sector (students aged four to twelve) and featuring induction and mentorship programs for ECTs. Geographically, our final sample included studies from the Unites States (64), the United Kingdom (15), Canada (12), Europe (8), Australia and New Zealand (6), the Middle East (6), combined nations (more than one nation examined in one study) (2), and the Far East (1). Each entry in the final sample underwent data extraction by a member of our research team, including an assessment of the weight of evidence. Where there were

discrepancies in coding of the full-text articles, the research team discussed these until a full agreement regarding the key issues and themes was achieved before the studies were analyzed in-depth.

For the purposes of this article, we re-analyzed the 113 entries to explore the interaction between the personal/individual, the social, political and cultural, the organizational contextual and environmental variances and nuances, and the potential sources of influence and impact upon induction and mentorship programing applying the heuristic figure shown in figure 1 in a deductive process (Patton, 2002). The findings from 113 articles were organized into five contextual factors. The data were then inductively analyzed as we sought to establish the influence upon school administrators.

Systematic Review Findings

The systematic review findings from our analysis revealed the following categories of contextual factors in mentoring of early career teaching: a) *social*; b) *political*; c) *cultural*; d) *personal/individual*; and, d) *organizational.* Upon summarizing review findings on how each of the types of contextual factors affects early career teaching, we discuss how they can also influence school leaders' involvement in mentoring of beginning teachers.

Contextual Factors

Social context. Social contextual factors referred to the immediate physical and social setting in which people live or in which something happens or develops. It included the interpersonal interactions, social institutions, and people's behaviour and relations within broader society, communities of people, or other social structures. Research studies showed that ECTs valued professional

and social peer relationships and supports. Professionally, formal and informal mentoring relationships facilitated mutual sharing of ideas (Evans-Andris, Kyle, & Carini, 2006) and offered "just-in-time" assistance to beginning teachers (Davis & Higdon, 2008). Mentoring was seen as a social support, with mentors being role-models both as a teacher and staff member, and generally assisting novices to navigate the school within and beyond the school (Achinstein, 2006; Burris, Kitchel, Greiman, & Torres, 2006; Fletcher & Barrett, 2004; Friedrichsen, Chval, & Teuscher, 2007; Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010; Tillman, 2005). Emotional supports were cited by ECTs as an important factor in helping them through tough times in the new role (Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Dempsey & Christenson-Foggett, 2011; Fox, Deaney, & Wilson, 2010; Friedrichsen et al., 2007; Gellert & Gonzalez, 2011). ECTs that did not have formal mentors emphasized powerful feelings of isolation (Brindley & Parker, 2010; Cherubini, Kitchen, & Hodson, 2008). Furthermore, ECTs identified community members (Brindley & Parker, 2010), including parents of their students (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010; Perry & Hayes, 2011) as important non-professional social relations.

Political context. Political context in a broader sense referred to the arenas where policymaking in various civil, national, and public environments led to action. These factors included such organizing aspects as structure, order, and behaviour at the government and local levels, the power distribution of power, the range and interests of involved organizations, and the formal and informal rules that govern the interactions among different stakeholders. Because many mentoring programs and their elements were the result of governmental mandates and policies at the national/federal (Anthony, Haigh, & Kane, 2011; Fresko & Nasser-Abu Alhija, 2009; Parkinson & Pritchard, 2005) or state/provincial levels (Cherubini,

2009; Youngs, Holdgreve-Resendez, & Qian, 2011), ECTs' mentoring supports depended on parameters, guidelines, and constraints set by those programs. Mentoring of ECTs was also found framed by school district organization of programmatic supports in the forms of hiring and assigning instructional facilitators as full-time mentors (Kamman & Long, 2010), district evaluations conducted by superintendents (Chatlain & Noonan, 2005), and district administrators working directly with mentors (Achinstein, 2006). At the school level, ECTs were affected by micropolitics related to accessing resources (Anthony et al., 2011), political agendas of administration (Grudnoff, 2012), policy limitations (Sabar, 2004; Youngs, 2007), workload and relationships issues (Sabar, 2004), and social justice issues (Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs, & Dana, 2009).

Cultural context. In a broader sense, cultural contextual factors referred to the eclectic environment wherein humans learn to organise their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors based on shared norms, beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that are common to a group of people. Culture as a way of life is defined by race, gender, ethnicity, age, and other broad geographical and demographical contributing factors. Cultural contexts can also be constrained to institutional and organizational frameworks within which individuals' social interactions occur. It was found to be important for ECTs to consider the cultural diversity and demographics of their students (Hagger, Mutton, & Burn, 2011; Hall & Cajkler, 2008); whereas mentors helped them to work effectively with students from diverse backgrounds (Fletcher & Barrett, 2004). In terms of institutional culture, lack of alignment or mismatch was found between the philosophy held by the ECTs and the school culture where they taught (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Fenwick, 2011). Mentor were found instrumental in helping protégés with their

socialization into school cultures (Achinstein & Davis, 2014; Harrison, Dymoke, & Pell, 2006). Research studies highlighted the need for the culture of mentorship and the key role of mentors in creating such culture for ECTs at the institutional level (Achinstein & Davis, 2014; Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007). A significant positive correlation was found between school climate and teacher's retention decision, suggesting that the improvement of working conditions, a component of school climate, positively affected teachers' predisposition to plan to remain in the school (Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007).

Personal/individual context. Personal/individual contextual factors referred to issues that matter and were unique to individuals based on their circumstances, interests, characteristics, and experiences. ECTs' sense of personal efficacy, prior background, and mentorship experience were pivotal in their professional growth and development. Studies found that personal efficacy, confidence, and competence of novice teachers increased when mentors and experienced colleagues validated and respected their decisions (Cherubini, 2009; Lambeth & Lashley, 2012). Taking initiative, developing autonomy, and using creativity were highly beneficial for the success of ECTs (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Haggarty, Postlethwaite, Diment, & Ellins, 2011). Emotional intelligence among novice teachers, as manifested through self-reflection, reading of others, and recognition and management of stress, stemmed from mentoring relationships (Achinstein, 2006; Irinaga-Bistolas, Schalock, Marvin, & Beck, 2007) and professional development opportunities in schools (Angelides & Mylordou, 2011; Forbes, 2004; Irinaga-Bistolas et al., 2007; Rhodes et al., 2005). Furthermore, ECTs' personal experiences were impacted by the quality and structure of mentorship (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Forbes, 2004; Griffiths, 2011; Nasser-Abu

Alhija & Fresko, 2010), the type of support provided to them (Abu Rass, 2010; Anderson & Olsen, 2006; Gardiner, 2011), and the levels of mentors' preparation (Gardiner, 2012).

Organizational context. *Organizational context* referred to the dimensions represented in and shaped by the structure, size, functions, and nature of organization within which a group of people works together to achieve specific goals. Organizational context encompassed the operating environment determined by the internal characteristics of the organization and external orientations of the organization. Early career teaching experiences were affected by the structure of induction programs, which predominantly consisted of multiple elements (Glazerman et al., 2008), of which mentoring is usually the most common included component (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Implicitly and explicitly discussed was that the success of the mentoring relationship was driven by how involved, reliable, and accessible the mentor was to the new teacher (Catapano & Huisman, 2013; Gardiner, 2011) and how well the program elements were matched to ECTs' needs (Irinaga-Bistolas et al., 2007; Unruh & Holt, 2010). Finally, the success of program and mentoring elements were all contingent upon being situated within a supportive community that welcomed ECTs and related to the way program established the sense of belonging, offered sufficient time to focus on their needs, and to the longevity of the support (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Forbes, 2004).

Discussion: School Administrator Role in Supporting Mentoring of ECTs

Implicitly and explicitly, the preponderance of literature examined indicated that school leaders had an overall responsibility

for teacher development and support in their schools. As school administrators implement mentoring programs for ECTs, their efforts are affected by the dynamics of the contextual factors that both shapes their school's culture and influence the development of educators and the professional expectations for instruction and professional learning. We have divided the findings regarding the school administrators' role into the following sections: provision of mentoring support; administrators' impacts on the outcome of mentoring; and importance of leader's commitment to mentoring. Throughout these sections, we discuss the relevance and potential impact of the five contextual factors upon school leaders' responsibilities.

Provision of Mentoring Supports

Literature revealed that principals played an important role in the responsibility for supporting ECTs through the set-up of mentoring structures and organizing supports and venues through mentoring program.

Structures for mentoring. Assignment of mentors to beginning teachers was the most widely detailed aspect of school administrator's role in teacher induction and mentoring processes (Abu Rass, 2010; Bianchini & Brenner, 2009; Bianchini & Cavazos, 2007; Bickmore, Bickmore, & Hart, 2005; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). One study suggested benefits for ECTs when administrators played a more active role in selecting a pool of qualified mentors, providing ECTs with choices in who to work with (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Bickmore et al. (2005) found that matching mentors and mentees in the same content area was beneficial. Others recommended that mentors and mentees be matched based on close proximity, similar teaching assignments, opportunities for common meeting times, and

a match in gender, age, teaching philosophies, and complimentary personality types (Abu Rass, 2010). The *social contextual* factor of peer relationships was a crucial source of professional, social, and emotional peer support. Through professional peer support, ECTs are able to receive the maximum benefit through mentoring, however, sufficient time for this must be provided by the school leader.

Time for mentoring. Many factors that support ECTs' positive development have implications for school leaders in how they allocate sufficient time for effective mentoring of ECTs (Sabar, 2004). In an exploration of the school contexts and professional roles of ECTs of Mexican descent (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011), authors revealed that the *personal and individual contextual* factors of novice teachers' commitments were "inspired by teachers who served as role models and motivated them to do the same for their students" (p. 2536). All of these mentoring selection strategies have time considerations for school leaders if they are to be managed effectively. Other time-taking responsibilities for school leaders included bi-monthly and monthly meetings with ECTs and mentors, and regular professional development for ECTs and the entire school staff (Bickmore et al., 2005).

A key responsibility included the provision of shared in-school planning time for ECTs and their mentors, including scheduled planning days for ECTs to observe peers, attend workshops, develop units and lessons, and experiment with new software or other technology (Clausen, 2007). This speaks to the benefits of *cultural contextual* factors of socialization for ECTs. For example, researchers noted that collaborative, collegial and supportive ways of working in groups with experienced teachers may compensate to some extent for any lack of formal mentoring (Harrison et al., 2006). A New Zealand

study highlighted the value of a culture of socialization and collegiality, whereas ECTs "appreciated 'knowing that they were not alone' in terms of receiving professional support and talked about the value of working in a school that 'shares information, resources and ideas' and where other teachers 'talk openly about their teaching and what is going on in their programmes'"(Grudnoff, 2012, p. 479). Cultural socialization for ECTs is easier to achieve if a culture of mentorship is apparent in a school.

Organizational contextual factors such as the school leaders' attendance at their own designated orientation (Glazerman et al., 2008) added additional time implications for school leaders, not only through their required attendance, but in the implementation of their subsequent responsibilities to providing support for ECTs. These events provided school leaders with valuable information to support ECTs' participation in mentoring and corresponding involvement of mentors they might assign. The orientation events also provided overviews of ECTs' needs for support and development, and were aimed at helping school leaders to minimize conflicts that could impede efforts to schedule time with beginning teachers. In rare instances of *personal and individual contextual* factors, the school administrator used their own personal time to provide direct mentoring to the beginning teacher. For example, Tillman (2005, p. 264) found that one "teacher's indecisiveness provided an opportunity for the principal to personally mentor her by encouraging her, implementing support structures, and reducing the isolation she felt."

Resources for mentoring. The implications for school leaders falling at *organizational contextual* level included providing a culture of socialization and collegiality where ECTs can benefit from the

sharing of "information, resources and ideas" (Grudnoff, 2012, p. 479). In some cases, studies mentioned a lack of resources and supplies in school (Bang & Luft, 2013) and differential access to resources by beginning teachers in multiple-teacher programs as opposed to single-teacher programs (Burris & Keller, 2008). In such instances, ECTs are supported when school leaders are able to address the issue and secure what is needed by the ECT in the form of supplies or resources (Castro et al., 2010). If the school administration did not provide or promised to and not provided resources, ECTs went higher up the chain of command. For instance, after researching the legal issues associated with special education and presenting her findings to the school level administration, one ECT was able to secure support from two additional teacher aids to assist her at various times during the day (Castro et al., 2010). ECTs often had to negotiate complex organizational contexts beyond the classroom level that included considerable variability in access to resources appropriate to the needs of individual teachers (Anthony et al., 2011). Helping ECTs navigate the *political contextual* factors and ensuring adequate district funding for facilities and resources needed for them to effectively do their job was deemed an essential positive role for school leaders (Wynn et al., 2007).

Places and spaces for mentoring. School leadership was deemed important for supporting ECTs in both the broader geographical location or place of schools, and spaces within schools. For example, early career special educators within rural schools' settings stressed the importance of collegial support from school leaders and colleagues who were "available to answer questions and acculturate them into the culture, community and procedures of the school" (Irinaga-Bistolas et al., 2007, p. 21). Similarly, Kono (2012) argued that school administrators can create meaningful teacher mentoring

programs that incorporate diverse and unique features to help new teachers adjust to their new rural schools. Such *political contextual* factors as district size, policies, and funding either promoted or hindered the effectiveness of mentoring for ECTs at the district level. A small district size can be perceived by ECTs as friendly, engendering the sense of community, being conducive to curricular freedom and tight-knit professional network, whereas the large district could potentially lead novices to "get lost and swallowed up" (Anderson & Olsen, 2006, p. 367). In understanding the place within which mentoring programs are implemented, school leaders can adapt features accordingly to support the place-based needs of ECTs.

Buckley, Schneider, and Shang (2004) highlighted the value of the physical spaces within schools for ECTs, suggesting benefits of facility improvement for teacher retention were equal or above pay increase value while also being cost-effective over the long term. More specifically, *culturally contextual* actions undertaken by school leaders perceived as helpful by ECTs encompassed a warm welcome and orientation to the school (Sabar, 2004), encouragement (Abbott, Moran, & Clarke, 2009; Kapadia et al., 2007), informal interactions and formal meetings with principals (Chatlain & Noonan, 2005), and instructional support through mentoring (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Cherubini, 2007). Attention to the *cultural contextual* factors allowed school leaders to create positive spaces for addressing and embracing cultural diversity in their schools. In a study in England, teachers admitted not anticipating the importance of understanding of students' family, cultural backgrounds and being taken aback at the extent of their experienced colleagues' knowledge of individual students (Hagger et al., 2011). Implications for school leaders working with Indigenous ECTs' are situated at the *political contextual* level in regard to providing a space for Indigenous ECTs to self-identify as

Indigenous peoples first, and then as new Indigenous teachers. Researchers confirmed that ECTs need spaces to establish their own identity as Indigenous teacher they seek in turn to better cultivate their students' identity formation as Indigenous peoples (Cherubini, Niemczyk, Hodson, & McGean, 2010). Furthermore, ECTs working with students with English as an additional language, highlighted the role played by students themselves in helping ECTs to overcome the challenges of teaching in culturally diverse environment (Hall & Cajkler, 2008). Challenges faced by ECTs in learning about different languages and cultures, especially among monolingual new teachers, predicting the country of origin and native language of the ELL student; feeling ill-prepared to teach ELL students; requiring more background knowledge on European (Portuguese and Polish), Asian, and African languages (Somali, Shona) all spoke to important roles for school leaders in creating mentoring spaces within their schools, through allocation and employment of suitable resources (such as students in their schools) where ECTs are supported. Subsequently, such challenging environments did not present overwhelmingly difficult problems for ECTs when they had received adequate support from school leaders and mentors as they worked through these issues (Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Korstjens, & Volman, 2014, p. 31).

Administrator's Impact on the Outcome of Mentoring

Several of the reviewed studies provided empirical data on the direct and indirect impact of school leaders engagement on the effective outcomes of mentoring programs and ultimately, teacher retention and development.

Impact of school leaders on mentoring. Glazerman et al. (2008) observed variation in the level of school leader support, ranging from extremely supportive and actively encouraging teachers to make the

most of the mentoring opportunities, to school leaders who actively resisted participation and would not permit teachers to be released for program activities. School leaders' support was one of the two most frequently described *social and personal contextual* sources of support (Friedrichsen et al., 2007) where ECTs sought out school leaders to help resolve conflicts with individual students and/or parents. In these instances, ECTs viewed school leaders as problem solvers rather than curriculum consultants or mentoring managers. Main (2008) found that ECTs who believed school leaders and other teachers were using supportive and accountable *organizational and structural contextual* mechanisms aimed at improving the ECTs' capacity to teach were more likely to report the mechanisms as useful and pedagogically oriented. ECTs also reported *personal and individual contextual* outcomes of higher self-efficacy and satisfaction with mentoring.

Kapadia et al. (2007, p. 30) reported three supports that had the greatest influence on new elementary school teachers and made them more likely to report a good teaching experience and intention to remain in the same school: "encouragement and assistance from their principal, regularly scheduled opportunities to collaborate with peers in the same field, and participation in a network of teachers." Principals were seen as being responsible for the *social context* factor of clear communication regarding various expectations for ECTs (Greiman, Walker, & Birkenholz, 2005). However, the onus to be informed and up-to-date about ECTs' development was not solely the responsibility of school leaders. Achinstein (2006) highlighted the importance for ECTs to also understand their school's *organizational and political contexts* and be aware of the overall role of school leadership for overall teacher development, as well as their position in relation to ECTs' support within the broader context of schooling.

The school leaders' role in the pairing of a mentors and ECTs were important. When mentors and ECTs pairing was not optimised, this contributed to challenging and difficult experiences for the ECTs in their beginning days of teaching, to the extent that the ECTs actively sought teaching positions outside of their school districts and eventually accepted positions other school districts (Youngs, 2007). School leaders need to be mindful of variations in district policy related to mentor selection and assignment, together with their and other educators' understandings of mentoring support.

Cherubini (2009) found that intentional *culturally contextual* directedness of school leaders' partiality for mentoring and sustaining school cultures, affected the meanings attributed to programs by ECTs (Cherubini, 2009). Similarly, determining the relationship between the presence of school leader-facilitated support for mentoring and perceived helpfulness of mentoring suggested that ECTs perceive their experiences with mentors as more likely to occur and more helpful when leadership support is built into the mentoring program (Clark & Byrnes, 2012). Another finding from this study suggested that if a school leader needs to choose between different forms of support (i.e., common planning time and release time for observation), common planning time was the more important school leader-facilitated type of mentoring support to provide.

Outcomes of school leaders' role in mentoring. Besides school leaders undertaking a *social context* supportive role, several studies highlighted the expectations of school principals to supervise and evaluate the work of the ECTs (Abu Rass, 2010; Chatlain & Noonan, 2005). Related to the school leaders' evaluative role was the duty to maintain confidentiality. For example, in a study of two US-based programs, mentors were strongly cautioned against sharing specific

information with school leaders that could affect the ECTs' job evaluations and compromise the confidentiality and openness in the mentor/mentee relationship (Glazerman et al., 2008).

Exploring the *personal contextual* needs support function of school leaders, revealed that ECTs positively viewed school leaders as key to meeting their personal needs for respect, belonging, self-esteem, confidence, and autonomy (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Lambeth and Lashley (2012) found that the support of on-site administrators could facilitate effective teacher development across a school. As a result of this, researchers highlighted progress in the development of one novice teacher who "alluded to her tenacity, her emerging sense of happiness in her work, and her growth as a teacher, which they witnessed" (p. 45). Similarly, Blömeke and Klein (2013) examined the effects of school leaders and teacher support on teaching quality in Germany and found that ECTs positively rated the school leaders' support and the quality of school management. All indicators of teaching quality improved if the teachers perceived more autonomy and more frequent appraisal. They concluded that principals have a key *social and cultural contextual* role in providing high-quality management through their leadership and ability to build a climate of trust if they want to support their ECTs in terms of autonomy and appraisal. Overall, these authors argued "principals have a crucial role in all respects if the quality of a school's environment is to be improved" (Blömeke & Klein, 2013, p. 1044).

Cherubini (2009) found that intentional *culturally contextual* directedness of school leaders' partiality for mentoring and sustaining school cultures, affected the meanings attributed to programs by ECTs (Cherubini, 2009). Similarly, determining the relationship between the presence of school leaders'-facilitated

support for mentoring and perceived helpfulness of mentoring suggested that ECTs perceive their experiences with mentors as more likely to occur and more helpful when leadership support is built into the mentoring program (Clark & Byrnes, 2012). Another finding from this study suggested that if a school leader needs to choose between different forms of support (i.e., common planning time and release time for observation), common planning time was the more important school leader-facilitated type of mentoring support to provide.

Besides school leaders undertaking a *social contextually* supportive role, several studies highlighted the expectations of school principals to supervise and evaluate the work of the ECTs (Abu Rass, 2010; Chatlain & Noonan, 2005). Related to the school leaders' evaluative role was the duty to maintain confidentiality. For example, in a study of two US-based programs, mentors were strongly cautioned against sharing specific information with school leaders that could affect the ECTs' job evaluations and compromise the confidentiality and openness in the mentor/mentee relationship (Glazerman et al., 2008).

Importance of School Leaders' Commitment to Mentoring

School leaders' commitment to and recognition of mentoring may positively or negative influence ECTs' justification of their own commitment to and understanding of mentoring (Cherubini, 2009). As Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2009) noted, the success of school-based support for ECTs relied on the commitment and investment of school leaders who strove to develop supportive professional *cultural contexts,* fostered school-wide understandings that learning to teach well takes time, and the entire school shared in the responsibility of helping ECTs to succeed. School leaders, through *organizational and*

structural contexts educated the wider stakeholders (including board members and parents), about the importance of helping ECTs to develop their practice, through prioritizing mentoring in the school budget (such as protected time for mentors and ECTs to meet, and release time for mentors). Irinaga-Bistolas et al. (2007) described the full extent of the time and financial commitment needed by school leaders to fully meet the needs of ECTs; including not only time for ECTs and their mentors to meet, but also including the time needed for observations and attending professional development seminars. Furthermore, Wynn et al. (2007, p. 222) highlighted the overall importance of effective school leadership, finding that "teachers who were more satisfied with the principal leadership in their schools were more likely to report planning to stay in the school district and at their school site."

Cherian and Daniel (2008) outlined a number of roles for school leaders related to mentoring with the recognition of the entire school collective responsibility and commitment to supporting ECTs to develop teaching practice. The principal played a vital role in creating supports for the successful mentoring process, through a focus on *organizational and structural contextual* facets of mentoring including its structure, strategy, environment, implementation, experimentation, and adaptation. In addition, school leaders were called upon to manage the *political contextual* issues that affected power relationships and status. Finally, although the notion of instructional leadership was important to school leaders (Cherian & Daniel, 2008), their leadership roles were often reduced to management of people, budgets, and behaviour (teachers' and students'). They concluded that school leaders' role in providing and managing effective support for ECTs was imbued with strong tensions between *personal and individual contexts*, *organizational and*

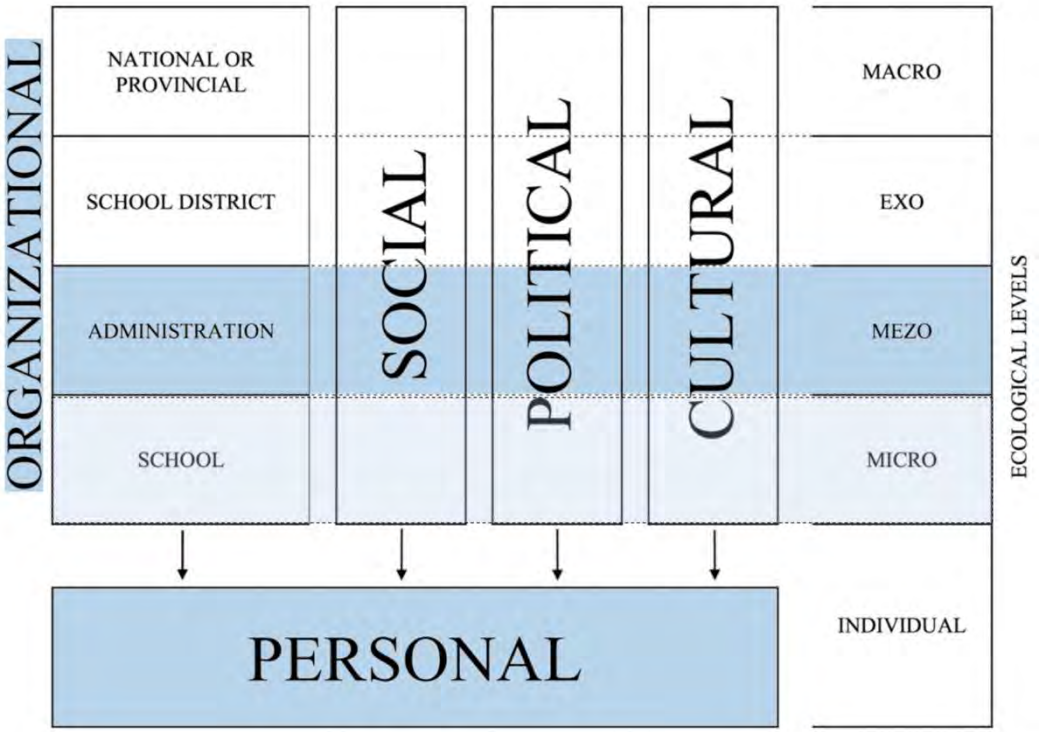
political context tensions, and contradicting institutional objectives (Cherian & Daniel, 2008).

Conclusions and Implications

The analytical approach undertaken in this article was to revisit the original systematic review looking specifically at the role of school leaders' involvement in and administration of mentoring programs, with particular focus on how this involvement was determined and affected by the five categories of social, cultural, political, organizational/structural, and personal/individual. For this purpose, we further refined our heuristic to draw attention to how school leaders' responsibilities, impact, and commitment to mentoring support of ECTs cuts across the five categories, as shown in the highlighted section of Figure 2. As depicted, the school administrator's primary level of influence on ECT mentoring occurs at the mezo level through the direct enactment of organizational factors embedded in their roles, responsibilities, and mandates for professional growth and development of teachers (shown in darker shading). In addition, school administrator's secondary level of influence occurs indirectly at the micro level, through their work devoted to building up school culture and ensuring supportive conditions of work, provision of instructional leadership, and involvement with mentorship processes and programs (shown in lighter shading).

Figure 2.

A Heuristic Framework of Contextual Factors Influencing School Leaders' Roles in Early Career Teacher Mentoring



In sum, the above heuristic framework represents a conceptualization, evident from the extant literature, of the sources and levels of influence and relationships between the contextual factors and school leaders' roles in mentoring of ECTs. It can be used for a purposeful, intentional recognition of the full richness of formal, facilitated, and spontaneous avenues of mentoring programing that support early career development of teachers.

Practically speaking, we see the heuristic as a helpful means for the assessment and evaluation of the existing or planned programs.

Considering the instrumental role of school administrators in the mentoring processes, it may offer an assistive lens to school administrators by identifying the areas where ECTs' needs are being or not being met by the programs. The heuristic also provides school leaders with a better understanding of the source and type of challenges faced by an ECT, so that they can then measure the respective alignment or misalignment of the program supports necessary to mitigate those challenges.

We suggest that this heuristic framework is helpful for policy makers and educational leaders in the process of designing, implementing, and maintaining the mentoring programs. Application of the framework allows for the planning, analysis, and evaluation of program development and implementation cycle by offering a broad picture of the gamut and nature of factors that have an impact on effective programming and successful mentoring of ECTs. We contend that the policy environment surrounding the mentoring processes matters, and that this heuristic brings it into focus by examining the increasingly diverse contexts of schooling and the ever-increasing policy requirements for an administrator's role.

In terms of further research, we encourage colleagues to adopt, adapt, and apply this heuristic in their research endeavours. With the empirical support for the significance of mentoring within the induction programs, we emphasized the need to further explore the role of mentoring in mitigating contextual challenges (especially through forming effective and long-lasting mentoring relationships). While it is evident that school administrators have an important role in terms of involvement within mentoring program provision, further examination of the specific role of administration in mitigating contextual challenges is warranted. Further studies would do well to

examine the mechanisms and structures that can help school administrators develop trusting and collaborative relationships with mentors and beginning teachers. Stemming from this point is the need to explore the effect of mentoring and supporting structures available for new administrators and the subsequent shaping of their role as supportive figures for ECTs in their schools. Finally, we highlight the need to take this research further and deeper into examining the role of mentoring in developing the wellbeing capacity of school administrators who will in turn promote the wellbeing of ECTs with whom they work and whom they assist with professional growth and development.

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