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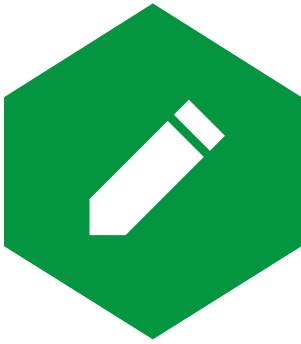
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Creating Supportive School  
Cultures for Beginning Teachers  
Mitigating the Cultural Contextual Factors

BENJAMIN KUTSYURUBA, KEITH WALKER, AND LORRAINE GODDEN

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# Creating Supportive School Cultures for Beginning Teachers: Mitigating the Cultural Contextual Factors

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*Abstract: Our internationally focused, systematic review of research literature explored a variety of contextual factors that affect experiences of beginning teachers and how these factors are addressed in the programs of support for new and beginning teachers. The transition and socialization processes that accompany early-career teachers, as well as efforts focused on acculturation to school contexts and the profession, are commonly noted in the literature and provide insights for those who support novice teachers. In this article, we report our findings that focus specifically on the cultural contextual factors. We view the cultural context as the eclectic environment wherein these early-career teachers learn to organize their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, based on shared norms, beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that are common to a group of people. Upon the initial review of the literature on teacher attrition, retention, induction, and mentorship, we discuss the overarching themes that we found from our exploration of the cultural factors affecting beginning teachers, the aspects of induction and mentoring programs that were designed to address these factors, and we offer conclusions and research implications.*

*Keywords: Cultural Context, Beginning Teachers, Induction and Mentoring Programs*

## Introduction

Undoubtedly, the entrance into the teaching profession is marked by an initial period of challenges and opportunities related to resources and support, time for planning, interaction with colleagues, work assignments, and role expectations. Salary, working conditions, teacher preparation, and mentoring support contribute to beginning teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the profession (Darling-Hammond 2003). Very often, teachers who do not receive adequate support in their first years leave schools and abandon teaching in favour of other professions (Boreen et al. 2009). What is even more discouraging is that the most talented beginning teachers are sometimes those most apt to leave (Gonzales and Sosa 1993; Colb 2001). Despite beginning teachers' heavy financial and educational investments to further their teaching careers, most teachers who quit the profession do so in their first two to five years. In extreme cases, some teachers drop out of the profession before the end of their first year (Black 2001). The phenomenon of teacher attrition spans international boundaries, including: the United Kingdom (Smithers and Robinson 2003), Australia (Stoel and Thant 2002), the United States (Smith and Ingersoll 2004; Darling-Hammond 2001; Ingersoll and Smith 2003), and other countries (OECD 2005). Internationally, the argument by those who wish to reduce attrition is that the first three to four years after initial training are the most crucial for teachers' decisions as to whether or not they will remain in the profession (Jones 2003) and so thoughtful initiatives, responsive to their needs, must be considered and implemented.

Due to the fact that teachers' qualities and abilities are the most significant school-based factors contributing to student achievement and educational improvement (Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain 2005; Darling-Hammond 2006; Cochran-Smith 2006), much attention must be given to the development of novice teachers. A growing consensus acknowledges the value of some kind

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of support for beginning teachers (Feiman-Nemser et al. 1999) to help mitigate these issues such as attrition and ineffectual practice. Induction is presented as an overarching support mechanism (Serpell 2000), with effective mentorship seen as one of the most crucial components to support the needs of individual beginning teachers (Doerger 2003). We see beginning teachers situated in a dynamic instructional landscape that both influences their development and practice and dictates an expectation to prepare students to enter increasingly demanding further education and work destinations. Accordingly, teachers need to be able to respond to local, state, and national policies and adapt to various organizational structures, mandates, and cultures within widely different contextual milieu as they seek to achieve excellence in their practice.

Consequently, the rationale for our international systematic review (Kutsyuruba et al. 2016) stemmed from our research team's desire to explore the implementation of induction programs within widely different contexts and to identify how successful induction programs have responded to the contextual challenges affecting early-career teachers worldwide. For the purposes of this review, the "beginning teacher" was defined to denote any educator who had completed a program of teacher education, who held a valid teaching certificate, and who was within the first five years of employment in a school. Contextual factors in this review 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. For our review purposes, cultural context entailed the eclectic environment wherein humans learn to organize their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, based on shared norms, beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that are common to a group of people. We begin this article with an initial review of literature on teacher attrition and retention, induction and mentorship, and organizational culture. From this review, we draw upon the overarching themes of teacher attrition and retention and teacher induction and mentoring programs as programmatic responses as lenses to examine cultural aspects of induction and mentoring programs within our international systematic review sample.

## **Review of the Literature**

The reviewed literature addresses the related areas of teacher attrition and retention and offers a scan of research on teacher induction and mentoring programs, with particular focus on the role of organizational cultures.

### ***Teacher Attrition and Retention***

The transition and socialization processes, as well as efforts focused on acculturation to school contexts and the profession, are commonly noted accompaniments to novices beginning their teaching careers (Howe 2006; Halford 1998; Kauffman et al. 2002) that are often fraught with difficulties. Some of the most significant challenges faced by beginning teachers include egg-crate structure of schools, isolation, reality shock, cultural adjustment, inadequate resources and support, lack of time for planning and interaction with colleagues, difficult work assignments, unclear and inadequate expectations, intergenerational gap, dealing with stress, lack of orientation and information about the school system, and institutional practices and policies that promote hazing (Anhorn 2008; Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon 2004; Andrews and Quinn 2004; Johnson and Kardos 2002, 2005; Patterson 2005; Darling-Hammond 2003). Attrition occurs when teachers who do not feel effective or do not receive adequate support in the first years leave schools and abandon teaching in favour of other professions (Moir et al. 2009).

Ingersoll (2001) called attrition a "revolving door"—where large numbers of teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement of veterans. In her seminal work, Macdonald (1999) discussed that teacher attrition is frequently positioned as either a problem for work force planning and resources or an indicator of the relatively poor quality of school life and teacher morale. At the same time, she posited counter perspective views of teacher attrition as a necessity, highlighting that low levels of teacher attrition may lead to stagnation of the profession

and schooling. Similarly, Ryan and Kokol (1988, 59) viewed teacher attrition as a “mixed blessing” for schools: On the one hand, it meant more room for recently trained teachers; on the other hand, “the people who are most equipped to orient young teachers as mentors and provide day-to-day guidance [would] also be gone.” While a certain level of attrition within the profession is both necessary and healthy (Ryan and Kokol 1988; Ingersoll 2001), the early-career loss of teachers is neither desirable nor sustainable (Plunkett and Dyson 2011), as it is generally costly to schools and detrimental to student learning (Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley 2006). Borman and Dowling (2008) noted that despite an increased research and policy rhetoric to explore the factors that may help retain a greater proportion of the existing teaching force, attrition and its associated costs to the system have not always been systematically addressed by formal policies and interventions.

Internationally, the problem of retention and attrition has been well-documented. Previous systematic reviews have revealed how induction programs have impacted upon teacher expertise, professional development, job satisfaction, and retention rates (Totterdell, Bubb, Woodroffe, and Hanrahan 2004) and the effects of mentors upon induction programs (Totterdell et al. 2008). Earlier reviews of research on teacher induction (Arends and Rigazio-DiGilio 2000; Darling-Hammond 2000; Gold 1996; Huling-Austin 1990) concluded that initiatives were beneficial if carefully constructed and managed. However, on an international scale, little is understood of how multifaceted this problem of construction and management might be. Our review sought to establish new understandings about how beginning teachers are formally supported in their first five years of teaching in different nations and varying contexts. In addition, this work aimed to describe the complexities linked explicitly or implicitly with teacher retention and attrition, and how various contexts have been included in beginning teacher induction and mentorship programs.

### *Teacher Induction and Mentoring Programs*

According to Breaux and Wong (2003), induction is a long-term process that helps new teachers acculturate to a school. Specific definitions of induction refer to formal and highly structured professional development programs that begin before the first day of school and continue for two or more years, while other definitions view induction as a fairly informal socialization process that varies from school to school. As induction programs vary as to their purpose, the type of support beginning teachers receive in induction programs also varies widely (Davis and Higdon 2008; Ingersoll and Smith 2004). With some prevalence, induction is viewed as a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process, organized by a specific jurisdiction to train, support, retain new teachers, and help them develop a lifelong learning program (Wong 2004). Ultimately, new-teacher induction programs and their component parts are aimed at solving the teacher attrition dilemma (Anhorn 2008).

A major component of many teacher induction programs is mentoring that matches experienced teachers with novices to help them survive and thrive in the beginning phase of a teaching career (Wong 2004). Mentorship involves facilitation of instructional improvement wherein an experienced educator (mentor) works with a novice or less experienced teacher (protégé) collaboratively and nonjudgmentally to study and deliberate on ways instruction in the classroom may be improved (Cumming-Potvin and MacCallum 2010). Mentors support the development of their protégés, providing coaching, guidance, advocacy, counseling, help, protection, feedback, and information that they would otherwise not have. Ultimately, a primary goal of mentoring is personal learning of the protégé (Bennetts 1995; Lankau and Scandura 2002; Portner 2008). In addition to professional benefits, mentoring has personal benefits for novice teachers, such as stronger self-confidence, reduced stress, and increased motivation and learning (Allen and Eby 2007; Lacey 2000).

Researchers have claimed that induction programs with effective mentoring in the early teaching years are capable of positively affecting beginning teacher retention and student achievement and reducing the waste of resources and human potential associated with early-

career attrition (Huling-Austin 1986; Darling-Hammond 2003; Huling-Austin 1988; Huling-Austin and Murphy 1987; Strong 2005, 2006; Laitsch 2005). Induction programs and high-quality mentoring programs have positive impact through increased teacher effectiveness, higher satisfaction, commitment, improved classroom instruction and student achievement, and early-career retention of novice teachers (Ingersoll and Strong 2011; Henry, Bastian, and Fortner 2011; Glazerman et al. 2010; Richardson, Glessner, and Tolson 2010; Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley 2006; Odell and Ferraro 1992).

Researchers have shown that there are inconsistencies and problems inherent in any induction program (Doerger 2003; Barrett et al. 2009). Incompatible matching of mentor with mentee, unsuccessful new teacher/mentor dyads, lack of willing and/or able mentors, lack of mentor training, or individual factors (e.g. burnout, lack of professional respect) are but a few factors that result in failed programmatic efforts (Johnson and Kardos 2005; Benson 2008). Variation in induction implementation and teacher experiences can be related to the unique structural, social and cultural factors, functional causes, and operationalization in schools (Cherubini 2009; Jones 2002).

### ***School Culture and New Teachers***

According to Stolp and Smith (1995, 13), organizational culture of a school can be defined as “historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, traditions and myths, understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community.” An organization’s culture has also been viewed as: “A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein 1992, 12). Therefore, understanding how new teachers are acculturated into schools is very important. In order to be effective, successful mentoring should be situated within an integrated professional school culture, should function alongside school-based induction programs led by experienced teachers, and should be coupled with ongoing professional development and teacher leadership opportunities (Kardos 2004; Smith and Ingersoll 2004; Johnson et al. 2004). New teachers become reflective thinkers and co-learners if mentoring conditions and understanding are based on principles of collaborative school cultures (Clandinin et al. 1993; Kochan and Trimble 2000). New teachers thrive in schools with collaborative cultures, where teachers can share ideas, materials, problems, and solutions in order to foster student learning (Kutsyuruba 2011).

## **Systematic Review Approach and Methodology**

### ***Review Purpose and Guiding Questions***

As indicated, our systematic review of international (English language) empirical research literature sought to establish the understanding of contextual factors affecting beginning teachers and to examine how formal and programmatic supports to beginning teachers are set to address them. Our review was guided by the following questions:

1. Which nations and regions are represented in research literature that details formal or programmatic support of beginning teachers in their first five years of teaching?
2. What international research evidence is there to describe various contextual factors that affect experiences of beginning teachers?
3. How do teacher induction and mentorship programs respond to the various contextual factors affecting beginning teachers?

### *Systematic Review Structure and Sample*

This systematic review was undertaken using the EPPI-Reviewer software (EPPI Centre, Institute of Education, London) to analyze and interrogate reports. Our research group initially defined the terms of reference and identified the critical focus of the review based upon the research questions. The search strategy for the 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. The citations we uncovered using the search strategies were stored on appropriate document referencing software; and titles and abstracts were screened against the criteria. Full texts of those articles that met the inclusion criteria were obtained for further screening. All items that satisfied the final stage of screening were then key-worded and included in the systematic map.

Our initial electronic database searches revealed 16,479 sources, and hand searching the journals uncovered further twenty-four entries for potential inclusion. Duplications of electronic searches were removed, which reduced the total number of entries to 6,538. Our second step was to screen titles and abstracts of the citations found by electronic means against the following inclusion criteria: to have been published between 2004–2014; to have relevance to the research questions; to include empirical data; were set in early years, primary, secondary, or compulsory education (K-12); and the study to be in English. A total of 4,768 were excluded: 1,696 were not focussed on the study context, 2775 were not focussed on our research questions, 315 were not empirical research, forty-four were not in English, and twenty-nine for being outside our date parameter. Following further exclusions of reports that proved to be unobtainable ( $n = 11$ ), the full texts of 734 studies were further screened against the inclusion criteria.

Our third step was to undertake full article screening of the 734 articles in our sample. The research group applied the same exclusion criteria as the first screening, this time to the full-text articles that were not excluded from the first screening ( $n = 734$ ). Of these, 113 were selected for inclusion in our systematic map. For the full in-depth review, only those 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 new and beginning teacher induction and mentorship programs, were included.

The geographic representation of the articles featured in our review was based on the location where the studies had been conducted. The largest portion of studies in our final sample were from the United States, a total of sixty-four out of 113 articles. Articles were also found in 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). In addition to highlighting the geographic regions, wherever possible, we also identified the locales within the regions where studies had been conducted.

### *Coding and Analysis of Final Sample*

Following the production of the systematic map, it was decided that the in-depth review should include studies key-worded as focusing on teacher retention, teacher attrition, new and beginning teacher support, induction, and mentorship, and that the population focus should be K-12 schools. Studies selected for the in-depth review were then rigorously analyzed based upon their overall suitability to respond to the research questions and then used accordingly in our synthesis. The ultimate results were subsequently used to inform our conclusions. To extract data, we completed a three-stage coding process of the 113 articles. In stage one, we established a set of descriptive data for each of the articles, as shown in Table 1.



Table 1: Stage One Coding Process for Descriptive Analysis

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographic location of program featured in article</li> <li>• Context of program being researched (particular district/sample setting, i.e. suburban with high level of minority students in low SES)</li> <li>• Description (program goals and composition, i.e. two year includes mentoring and induction)</li> <li>• Purpose of research study/article</li> <li>• Method (Quantitative/Qualitative/Mixed Methods)</li> <li>• Main findings of article</li> <li>• Role of administration/principal featured (Y/N)</li> <li>• Instrument is detailed (Y/N)</li> </ul>
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In stage two, each article was coded for social, cultural, political/structural, and individual contextual and environmental variances and nuances. The complete set of codes for stage two of the coding process can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Stage Two Coding Based Upon Deductive Themes

Contextual and Environmental Variances and Nuances				
Social (S)	Cultural (C)	Political (P)	Organizational/ Structural (O)	Personal/ Individual (I)
(S1) Peer relationships	(C1) Institutional culture (school, district, etc.)  (C2) State, nation (ideology, international movement of people)  (C3) Demographical diversity (religion, ethnicity, SES etc.)	(P1) Federal/national initiatives and or strategies	(O1) Programmatic Components' Impact	(I1) Sense of personal efficacy (for beginning teacher)  (I2) Background prior to teaching  (I3) Personal initiative
(S2) Emotional intelligence		(P2) State/province/county /municipal level initiatives and or strategies	(O2) Structural Conditions	
(S3) External Community relationships (external to school)		(P3) Teaching Unions/Federations	(O3) Admin Leadership	
		(P4) District school level	(O4) Teacher Leadership	
		(P5) School level	(O5) Facility Conditions	
		(P6) Wider community		

**Identifying and Describing Studies: Quality-assurance Results**

Each full-text study, which ended up in the in-depth review, underwent data extraction by a member of our research team, including an assessment of the weight of evidence. Where there were discrepancies in coding the full-text articles, the research team discussed these until a common appreciation was achieved. For all studies in the in-depth review, full agreement regarding included key issues and themes were established before the studies were analyzed in-depth.

**Findings: Cultural Contextual Factors**

This article is delimited to a review of our results that pertain to the cultural contextual factors for early-career teachers. As noted above, in a broader sense, culture refers to the eclectic environment wherein humans learn to organize their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors based on

shared norms, beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that are common to a group of people. The nature of this environment may be defined by race, gender, ethnicity, age, and other broad geographical and demographical contributing factors. Alternatively, cultural contexts can also be constrained to institutional and organizational frameworks within which individuals' social interactions occur. From the total of 113 articles examined, sixty-five sources contributed in various degrees to this theme.

Three overarching themes were seen within cultural aspects of induction and mentoring programs, institutional culture (i.e. school or district), state or nation (i.e. ideology or movement of people), and demographical diversity (i.e. religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status). Seven further sub-themes were then identified within these three main themes:

- Remaining in teaching
- Teaching philosophies and ethos
- Socialization with peers
- Role of mentors
- Influence upon career/professional development
- Exposure to diversity
- School demographics

### ***Remaining in Teaching***

There was evidence in three of the articles that schools had attempted to create a culture where all staff were encouraged and facilitated to remain either in their teaching jobs within the school or district, or more broadly, to remain in the teaching profession. Commenting on the influences of induction upon new teachers in Chicago, researchers commented that "...teachers working in classrooms with a higher percentage of students with behaviour problems are much less likely than their peers to report a good teaching experience, to intend to continue teaching, and to plan to remain in the same school" (Kapadia, Coca, and Easton 2007, 18). The notion that a culture could be created within a school or district that would help to retain new teachers in their jobs was put forward. For example, in a study of mentoring new teachers in urban schools in the northeast United States, it was stated "he [the mentor] believes he must contribute to creating a learning culture within his school in order to retain and develop novice teachers" (Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs, and Dana 2009, 37).

In another United States-based study, the focus was on examining teacher retention through a professional learning communities' framework. Researchers noted a significant positive correlation between school climate and teacher's decision to remain in the school district, suggesting that the improvement of working conditions positively affects teachers' predisposition to plan to remain in the school district (Wynn, Carboni, and Patali 2007). Hence, "working conditions, a component of school climate, was related to beginning teachers' decisions to remain at the school" (222).

### ***Teaching Philosophies and Ethos***

Several of the articles commented upon the philosophy of teaching held by beginning and new teachers and how this related to the overarching ethos of a school or school district. A common theme discussed was a lack of alignment or mismatch between the philosophy held by the novice teacher and the school where they taught. For example, a novice Canadian teacher had an ideal vision for the profession as the expectation for his new teacher experience; yet, in reality, the school culture that he experienced was in contradiction to his philosophy of education, and he described it as "the ugly side of teaching" (Fantilli and McDougall 2009, 821). In a different study, on the ethos of a department within a school, a participant noted: "There is a poor ethos in our department and I have no faith that my work is appreciated. At the moment I'm struggling to be a teacher" (Fenwick 2011, 332).

In a study of five newly qualified teachers in one school in England, researchers reported a philosophical mismatch between novice teachers and the school or school district, with one novice teacher stating “I don’t necessarily think we’re all going in the same direction” (Findlay 2006, 542). One study reported that the differences in philosophy between staff members within a school caused significant levels of tension. Researchers found that in one school district in the United States, novice teachers spoke of a “sometimes acrimonious divide among staff” and outlined the need for “coalition-building support” (Anderson and Olsen 2006, 367). In addition, a tension was seen between the philosophy of novice teachers and their mentors. For example, in one study of new teacher/mentor pairs in California, researchers reported that the mentor struggled to find a way that respected the new teacher’s values, while introducing some of her concerns (Achinstein and Barrett 2004). The authors explained how the novice teacher also recognized the challenges of a school culture (e.g. messages from principal and colleagues) and that this reinforced the mentor’s managerial frames and eclipsed the political frames. The authors also indicated that the mentor realized that her critical approaches might have brought the new teacher into conflict with her school culture.

Similarly, the aspect of “fitting in” occurred for novice teachers in New Zealand who found themselves in schools with a strong “craft knowledge” culture (Anthony, Haigh, and Kane 2011, 866). Novice teachers experienced differences between pedagogical practice experienced in their teacher training and pedagogical practices that they were exposed to in their induction year. The authors detailed how “the more ambitious pedagogies advocated in ITE [initial teacher education] were discouraged in favour of traditional safe approaches to teaching;” whereas, some NQTs [newly qualified teachers] further revealed how “an explicit awareness of the pull (and sometimes push) to abandon their initially desired practices for safer, less complex activities or actions” (Anthony, Haigh, and Kane 2011, 866). Reporting on a partnership between seven colleges and universities and three urban school districts that were part of the Massachusetts Coalition for Teacher Quality and Student Achievement, researchers summarized how “the process of developing a teaching philosophy requires a beginning teacher to identify firmly held beliefs about learning and examine them critically. Some beginning teachers came to the profession with a universalistic perspective of learning, and some teacher preparation programs even reinforce such a position” (Alkins et al. 2006, 68).

A study that focused on novice teachers in a western Canadian Catholic school district emphasized the impact of the induction process for novice teachers in a religious school (Chatlain and Noonan 2005). The researchers noted that all novice Catholic schoolteachers either shared Catholic beliefs, or were at least not hostile to them, and assumed that they had an understanding of and empathy for the core values and religious beliefs that guide Catholic education. However, the researchers also highlighted potential differences in learning with respect to how the beliefs and values of the faith applied in a classroom setting: “For example, a new teacher’s philosophy of education may have been greatly influenced by the secular undergraduate preparation; this secular perspective on education may be vastly different than what is espoused in Catholic education. Religious values must be internalized differently than social values, and these values cannot be simply handed on to new members” (510).

### ***Socialization with Peers***

The socialization of novice teachers was a prevalent theme across many of the 113 articles examined. However, within the cultural context, socialization was prevalent in six different articles. In some studies, focus was given to the challenges presented by a cultural context that did not facilitate social interaction. For example, in a study focused on the induction activities undertaken by a group of agricultural teachers in the United States, researchers described how beginning agricultural education teachers were not prepared for isolation and socialization issues that were often part of the organizational environment of schools (Greiman, Walker, and Birkenholz 2005). In a study of 700 beginning mathematics teachers in Germany, researchers described the challenge of limited opportunities for new teachers to socialize with their peers,

highlighting how many of their participants reported that either lunch or break-time was the only opportunity for them to get together and talk with other teachers in their school (Alharbi and Kinchin 2012).

In one study, the focus was on the needs of a mentor in helping protégés with their socialization needs, “as part of the socialization role, mentors identified needing knowledge of how to ‘navigate school contexts and work within different systems to mentor effectively’” (Achinstein and Davis 2014, 112). Further attention was given to the benefits of a culture of socialization within a school for novice teachers. For example, in a study of a successful small urban school, researchers reported how “establishing structured opportunities for interaction provides both early career and more experienced teachers with the chance to learn from each other and to address individual needs that arise out the various intersecting factors at the school site” (Ado 2013, 149). In addition, in a study of beginning teachers from three different education authorities in England, researchers asserted “it is evident that collaborative, collegial and supportive ways of working within groups of experienced teachers may compensate to some extent for any lack of formal structures for mentoring” (Harrison, Dymoke, and Pell 2006, 1062). Further comments upon the value of a culture of socialization in schools were seen in a study of New Zealand novice teachers’ experiences of the first six months of teaching. Researchers described how the novice teachers “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, 479). The researchers asserted that “such a collegial approach meant that the new teachers did not feel ‘threatened’ or ‘made to feel dumb’ when they needed help with addressing their own professional development needs because: The school philosophy is that no one is perfect; that we are all learning and that we are there to support each other. That means I can go to anyone, not just because I am a beginning teacher but because it’s school policy” (Grudnoff 2012, 479).

### ***Role of Mentors***

Three studies alluded to the role of mentors in creating a positive culture for novice teachers at the institutional level. One of the studies, focussing on the knowledge and practice base of mentoring in programs in California, described mentor roles as complex and in need of a culture of training and support. In particular, researchers highlighted how it is “often assumed that a good teacher will naturally be a good mentor regardless of subject matter, but, this study revealed the complex mentor knowledge/practice base needed to support novices’ content teaching which, current mentor development approaches may lack” (Achinstein and Davis 2014, 123). The researchers also explained the danger of programs that “recruit expert teachers and do not support their development as content mentors leave them ill equipped to guide novices’ subject matter teaching” (123). Citing the success of the programs in their case study, Achinstein and Davis reported how the participant mentors not only had a strong content and teaching background in their disciplines, but were also matched with mentees in their same subject area, and engaged in ongoing professional development focused on content mentoring. Moreover, another study illustrated “how they [the mentors] consider that they contribute to the maintenance of a positive climate and help the new teachers to feel members of the school family, when they see all the teachers equally and democratically, without any discrimination” (Iordanides and Vryoni 2013, 81). Yet, in spite of overwhelming understanding that mentors’ role is critical in creating positive collaborative learning cultures for novice teachers, another study, focused on novice teachers in a rural school in Australia, found that most mentors “continued to see themselves as the ‘expert’ teachers and their mentees as ‘novice’ teachers; failing to take into consideration the valuable skills and knowledge early-career teachers’ bring to the relationship” (Beutel and Spooner-Lane 2009, 357).

### *Influence upon Career and Professional Development*

Although evidenced in only a small sample of the articles examined, the potential for ongoing impact upon the novice teacher legitimates the significance and worth of reporting on this theme. In two of the articles, mentoring and induction activities in teachers in California were seen to directly impact the ongoing career and professional development of the novice teacher. In one study, focused on new teacher and mentor political literacy, both seen as essential skills for teachers, the author identified three critical domains of participant mentors' knowledge of political contexts: reading, navigating, and advocating. In each domain, the researcher's respondents reported, "that mentors need knowledge, skills and commitment themselves and the ability to foster these in new teachers" (Achinstein 2006, 126).

In a study that focused on new Israeli teachers' satisfaction with their first year of teaching, researchers presented empirical evidence that "...schools which do not assume that good teaching is an innate talent, purposefully and continuously engage new teachers in the culture and practices of the school" (Nasser-Abu Alhija and Fresko 2010, 1596). Exploring whether induction for new teachers matters, the authors of this study asserted that school staff that show a professional interest in their new teachers and help them deal with difficulties in teaching thus send implicit messages that novices are not alone and that their success in teaching is a shared effort.

### *Exposure to Diversity*

It was in this theme of exposure to diversity that the most overwhelming evidence was seen from many of the sixty-five sources that contributed to cultural contextual and environmental variances and nuances. Many of the novice teachers who participated in an assortment of the sixty-five research studies reported how their being exposed to a culture of diversity contributed to their knowledge of diversity issues relevant to their classrooms and ongoing professional development. In some instances, the diversity within their student cohorts impacted upon the novice teachers. For example, in one study of the induction of Dutch beginning teachers in urban environments, researchers described how "addressing language differences was experienced as difficult by several teachers...two teachers stated that it was more difficult to create a safe atmosphere in the classroom in a large city because so many children with different backgrounds and stories are placed together" (Gaikhorst et al. 2014, 31). However, the researchers clarified that this environment did not present overwhelmingly difficult problems for beginning teachers, as they perceived these as challenges rather than real problems because they had received adequate support as they worked through these issues.

In another study of the reality of teaching during the first year for novice teachers in England, researchers stated how one participant was "not alone in admitting that she had not anticipated the importance of understanding where they are coming from—family background, cultural background etc." (Hagger, Mutton, and Burn 2011, 396). In addition, researchers conveyed that novice teachers expressed being taken aback at the extent of their colleagues' knowledge, "They know these kids much more as individuals that I would have imagined it was possible to have done" (397). In a similar vein, in a study exploring the needs of beginning teachers in England who were teaching students with English as an additional language, researchers highlighted that novice teachers' students had helped them to overcome the challenges of teaching in culturally diverse environment (Hall and Cajkler 2008). Researchers described that the need to learn about different languages and cultures was a frequent theme, especially among monolingual NQTs: "I think I have increased my linguistic knowledge because you don't really think about how languages are structured before and now I really do...I feel I have learned a lot about Muslim culture. Just everything they tell you, what they did after school ... It really opens your eyes. You bring that into your teaching" (352). Other challenges were mentioned: predicting the country of origin and native language of the ELL student; feeling ill-

prepared to teach ELL students; and requiring more background knowledge on European (Portuguese and Polish), Asian, and African languages (Somali, Shona).

Some studies explored how cultural difference could cause tension in the relationships between novice teachers and their students. In one study concerning how novice teachers of colour negotiate the sociocultural challenges in their classrooms, researchers identified that “it is assumed in the literature that teachers of color will experience a cultural match with their students of color and thus have better connections and be more effective” (Achinstein and Aguirre 2008, 1513). However, the reality of the study findings was that 93 percent (14/15) of the novice teachers reported challenges about their sociocultural identifications from their students of color, viewing them as “culturally suspect, calling into question their sociocultural identifications and authenticity” (1513). The authors asserted “if teachers of color who expect to be cultural matches with their students of color find themselves culturally suspect and challenged by their students, this study suggests that induction supports are needed to help address a new form of practice shock” (1530–1531). To this end, the study suggested that beyond pre-service, induction programs, schools need to focus on developing and supporting multicultural capital among novices of color, should support novices in engaging students in meaningful exploration of sociocultural issues, and need to help new teachers of color negotiate the complexities of being a cultural match and a cultural suspect in their own classrooms.

Authenticity was also important in a study of Aboriginal novice teachers’ experiences. This study reported the experiences of novice teachers in Canada, emphasized the criticality of new teacher induction being adapted to the needs of Aboriginal educators in order to preserve Aboriginal languages and cultures and to enhance the future success of Aboriginal students. The researcher explained how, induction programs that heighten beginning teachers’ sensitivity toward Aboriginal students’ culture, language, and worldview furthered novice teachers’ professional competence (Cherubini 2008). Another study highlighted the implications for Aboriginal novice teachers’ given that Aboriginal knowledge is vastly underrepresented in Ontario schools. In this study, researchers stressed how their participants indicated a disciplined commitment to “self-identify as Aboriginal peoples first, and then as new Aboriginal teachers” (Cherubini et al. 2010, 550). In particular, fully aware of their new educational roles, participants “strove to establish their identity in order to better cultivate their students’ identity formation as Aboriginal peoples” (551) and “collectively spoke of their spirituality and how it was connected to the land, and how from this relationship their traditional values, belief, and epistemology emerged” (554).

### ***School Demographics***

The final sub-theme in our study was related to how the demographics of a school or school district have impact upon the culture at institutional level. Some studies reported how demographics did not impact the institutional culture of novice teachers. One study of the influences upon induction of novice teachers in Chicago public schools cited how “most school demographics, including poverty, did not appear to influence novices’ experience or future teaching intentions in our analysis” (Kapadia, Coca, and Easton 2007, 18). Others (Hager, Mutton, and Burn 2011, Hall and Cajkler 2008) noted novices’ realization of importance to consider the demographics of their students. Furthermore, mentors were found to be a mitigating factor for novice teachers who needed help in learning about curriculum and students in order to be effective instructional leaders in Californian schools (Fletcher and Barrett 2004). These researchers found that “most new teachers (95.7%) believed the mentors helped them to work effectively with students from diverse backgrounds” (327).

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The findings of our systematic review suggest there are many commonalities shared by beginning teachers across different geographic locations. Based on these findings, it is evident

that adapting and thriving within diverse cultural contexts can be problematic for new and beginning teachers. A positive working climate affects teachers' decisions to continue to remain in a school, school district, and in the teaching profession. It was important for beginning teachers to feel that their philosophy of teaching aligns with their school culture. This might be facilitated or hindered by an allocated mentor or formal induction program. Socialization with peers was an important mitigating factor that can support a beginning teacher with any contextual challenges in the school and broader community. The role of a mentor was particularly important, both in creating a positive learning culture and in helping a new or beginning teacher to participate in such a culture. In addition, the efforts of a mentor and or formal induction program can be instrumental in fostering a new or beginning teachers' commitment to their ongoing career and professional development. Being exposed to a culture of diversity in their teaching contributed to a new and beginning teachers' knowledge of diversity issues relevant to their classrooms and facilitates ongoing professional development in these issues. Mentors are often instrumental in guiding this process and helping new and beginning teachers to increase their cultural competence levels. Our systematic review found studies to suggest that there was value in moving away from expert and novice models of mentorship, to creation of an overarching culture of training and support. Because many of the articles in our review reported that mentorship and induction had influence upon the professional and ongoing career development of teachers, we see some significant implications of this for the type of mentorship adopted and enacted for supporting beginning teachers. Therefore, we suggest that mentorship models such as Adaptive Mentorship (Ralph and Walker 2010, 2011) have a potentially significant role here.

Finally, collaborative school culture is important to mitigate the contextual factors that may negatively influence beginning teachers' experiences. Scholars (Levine and Lezotte 1990; Fullan and Hargreaves 1996; Little 1990; Firestone and Louis 1999; Deal and Peterson 2009) have delineated the functions and benefits of a strong, positive, and collaborative culture and its effects on schools. Culture permeates every aspect of school life, from the casual interactions in the halls, to the type of instruction that is valued, to the importance of professional development, and to the effectiveness of the learning and teaching processes in school. Collegial relationships among staff members of different age and experience groups are an important feature of collaborative school cultures. Such norms and school structures provide the purpose and the opportunity for deeper involvement and interaction on professional issues of importance to teachers. When these qualities are present in a school, then it is obvious that the mentorship programs and relationships will also be enriched and enhanced.

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