The Role of School Administrators in Providing Early Career Teachers' Support: A Pan-Canadian Perspective

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Abstract This article is based on an extensive mixed-methods pan-Canadian study that examined the differential impact of teacher induction and mentorship programs on the retention of early career teachers (ECTs). It discusses the findings from the analysis of publicly available pan-Canadian documents detailing the mandated roles, duties, and responsibilities of school administrators in teacher induction and mentorship. It then describes the results of the Teacher Induction Survey (N = 1,343) and the telephone interviews (N = 36) that elicited the perceptions of Canadian early career teachers regarding the school administrator's role and engagement in effective teacher induction and mentoring programs.

Keywords Early career teachers; Pan-Canadian; School administrator; Teacher induction; Teacher retention

Introduction

Scholars have found that administrators' commitment to mentoring programs for new teachers either supports and promotes the retention of novice teachers or undermines the success of induction and results in teacher attrition (Bleach, 1998; Jones, 2002; Wechsler, Caspary, & Humphrey, 2008). Nevertheless, there is limited empirical evidence directly linking the role of the principal with the retention of

early career teachers within the pan-Canadian scope. As education is a provincial/territorial responsibility in Canada, with attendant variations in school systems and policies, responses to the needs and concerns of early career teachers tend to be compartmentalized and often remain unavailable to other jurisdictions.

This article discusses results that pertain to the mandated roles, duties, and expectations of school administrators and early career teachers' perceptions of school administrators' engagement in the teacher induction and mentoring processes. Upon detailing the review of the literature and research methodology, this article presents the findings from a pan-Canadian analysis of publicly available documents pertaining to school administrators' roles in teacher induction and mentoring, a Teacher Induction Survey ($N = 1,343$) with early career teachers (ECTs), and semi-structured interviews with a subsample of the survey participants ($N = 36$).

Review of the literature

The research literature clearly shows that due to the overall school leadership role, school administrators are responsible for ensuring that adequate teacher development and learning takes place in their schools. The principal's role thus becomes critical in directly supporting early career teachers and in creating a structure supportive of the induction process. Michael Totterdell, Lynda Woodroffe, Sara Bubb, and Karen Hanrahan (2004) suggested that the high quality of induction support, the district policy of and commitment to mentor assignment, working conditions, professional development for second-year teachers, and strong instructional leadership among principals had consequences for the retention levels in the districts involved in their study. Furthermore, scholars have argued that principals' engagement in induction and mentoring positively affects beginning teacher retention and the reduction of wasted resources and human potential associated with early career attrition. For instance, Susan Wynn, Lisa Carboni, and Erika Patall (2007) highlighted the importance of principal 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" (p. 222). However, as Julie Long and colleagues (2012) concluded, there was limited empirical evidence directly linking the role of the principal with the retention of teachers.

The literature revealed that the assignment of mentors to beginning teachers was the most widely detailed aspect of a school administrator's role in the teacher induction and mentoring processes (Abu Rass, 2010; Bianchini & Brenner, 2010; Bianchini & Cavazos, 2007; Bickmore, Bickmore, & Hart, 2005; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Gordon & Lowrey, 2016; Roberson & Roberson, 2009). School administrators were found to influence directly the frequency of novice-mentor interactions through mentor selection and assignment, the provision of mentor training, facilitating meeting times and guiding topics, the oversight and supervision of mentoring relationships, the evaluation of program quality (Pogodzinski, 2015), and in some cases directly mentoring beginning teachers (Tillman, 2005). Other direct duties included the implementation of a policy or program aimed at supporting beginning teachers, providing resources, managing workload, offering professional development opportunities, and assigning classrooms and supporting staff (Desimone, Hochberg,

Porter, Polikoff, et al. 2014; Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfin, et al., 2010; Gordon & Lowrey, 2017; Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009; Roberson & Roberson, 2009).

Indirectly, school administrator engagement in the development of ECTs is manifested through exhibiting supportive and shared leadership, promoting professional relationships among novice teachers and experienced teachers, building school culture, and creating the opportunity for shared values and vision. As a result, beginning teachers' morale can be improved and their self-concept strengthened (Cherian & Daniel, 2008; Wood, 2005; Wynn et al., 2007). Administrators need to ensure that structural supports for beginning teachers are realized in the intended manner (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2009. Administrators were found to indirectly shape mentoring through influencing general workload manageability, carrying out administrative duties, ensuring access to resources, and enhancing the quality of administrator-teacher relations (Pogodzinski, 2015). Administrators' beliefs, actions, and policies shape the work environment and school culture and, therefore, impact specific teacher outcomes (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Besides the supportive role of school administrators, several studies highlighted the expectations of school principals to supervise and evaluate the work of new teachers (Abu Rass, 2010; Chatlain & Noonan, 2005). Hence, there is potential for tensions between the principal's responsibility to foster growth-oriented professional development for new teachers and the principal's administrative or evaluative capacity (Cherubini, 2010). The dual relationship of mentor-evaluator can raise difficult issues for both school administrators and early career teachers. The distinctions between the constructs of formative and summative assessment can be blurred, ignored, or even misrepresented. On the other hand, relational trust and role clarity, together with timely, reciprocal communication can alleviate or ameliorate difficulties.

Research methodology

This multi-year pan-Canadian research project examined the differential impact of induction and mentorship programs on early career teachers' retention across the provinces and territories. This study used a mixed-methods approach to research methodology (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), namely document analysis, survey, and telephone interviews.

Document analysis

First, document analysis (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2003) was conducted in 2016 to examine the publicly available documents from provincial and territorial educational authorities, teacher associations/federations/unions, and individual school districts/boards to uncover the mandated roles, duties, and responsibilities of school administrators in teacher induction and mentorship processes in each jurisdiction. These publicly available policy, planning, and curriculum documents were considered external communication, and included government communiqués, websites, program/policy memoranda, newsletters, handbooks, agenda, and the minutes of meetings. The documents were analyzed in a complementary fashion and in relation to the research objectives; data were highlighted, recorded into charts, and organized according to themes related to the program type and level of provision.

Online survey

Second, this study used data from the pan-Canadian New Teacher Survey administered in 2016 (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2017). The online survey instrument was developed by the researchers, based on suggestions and recommendations from an expert panel of researchers and practitioners, the relevant literature, and adapted items from related instruments. Overall, the survey contained 77 closed and 12 open-ended questions. The invitation to participate in the online survey for new teachers within their first five years of employment in a publicly funded school in Canada was widely distributed through various venues (e.g., teacher associations, ministries, community organizations, social media), across all provinces and territories in the spring and summer of 2016. The researchers received over 2,000 survey responses with various degrees of completeness from all Canadian jurisdictions. The researchers removed surveys with minimal responses or missing data that did not allow for further analyses. For the final sample (N = 1,343), the researchers obtained descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and standard deviations for questions in the demographics section. The closed and open-ended responses were examined in a separate, but complementary, manner. A descriptive statistics analysis of closed items was conducted; whereas open-ended responses underwent thematic analysis. This article reports on the items related to the role of school administrators in teacher induction and mentoring programs.

Table 1. Demographic information for survey participants

Province currently teaching in		Province of accreditation	
Ontario	33%	Ontario	38%
Alberta	27%	Alberta	23%
British Columbia	18%	British Columbia	18%
Québec	5%	Québec	5%
Manitoba	4%	Manitoba	5%
Saskatchewan	6%	Saskatchewan	4%
Newfoundland and Labrador	2%	Newfoundland and Labrador	3%
New Brunswick	0.4%	New Brunswick	1%
Nova Scotia	0.4%	Nova Scotia	1%
Prince Edward Island	0.4%	Prince Edward Island	1%
Nunavut	1%	Nunavut	0.3%
Northwest Territories	1%	Northwest Territories	0.2%
Yukon	1%	Yukon	2%
Age range		**Overall years teaching**	
19–22	1%	In Their First Year	20%
23–26	34%	In Their Second Year	23%
27–30	35%	In Their Third Year	21%
31–34	14%	In Their Fourth Year	16%
35+	17%	In Their Fifth Year	20%
Gender		**Length of occasional teaching**	
Female	81%	Less Than One Year	28%
Male	19%	Full Year	19%
Occasional Teaching Experience		Two Years	22%
Yes	85	Three Years	15%
No	15	Four Years	8%
		Five Years	9%

The demographic data showed that the mean age of the respondents was 29 years, with 19 percent being male and 81 percent being female. Significantly, 96 percent of the respondents had a Bachelor of Education degree, and 27 percent of the respondents had other forms of credentials (Master of Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, etc.). While the current teaching location for the majority of participants represented three provinces, Ontario (33%), Alberta (27%), and British Columbia (18%), all of the provinces and territories were represented in this study. This trend also reflected the province in which the respondents obtained their teacher certification/accreditation. For the overall years of teaching experience, data showed an almost equal distribution of respondent teaching experience, across span of one to five years. Eighty-five percent had occasional teaching (OT) experience, with almost a third of ECTs having taught occasionally for less than one year, while the rest had taught for up to five years in OT positions. Over a third of the respondents (37%) had been at their current school for less than a year. Twenty-three percent had been at their school for a full year, 22 percent for two years, ten percent for three years, five percent for four years, and four percent for five years. Moreover, the majority of these schools were located in small cities (with a population of about 100,000). See Table 1 for detailed demographic information.

Telephone interviews

As part of the online New Teacher Survey, participants had an option to express their willingness to participate in the follow-up interviews. From the survey sample, volunteer participants were randomly selected with the purpose of pan-Canadian representation: 36 teachers from nine provinces (except Prince Edward Island) and three territories in Canada (33 in English, three in French). Table 2 provides the demographic information for interview participants.

Table 2. List of interview participants

#	Pseudonym	Province/territory	Language	Gender	Age	Teaching experience
1	Mike	NS	English	Male	33	5 years
2	Lise	ON	French	Female	26	2 years
3	Maira	NL	English	Female	27	5 years
4	Kamille	ON	French	Female	26	3 years
5	Mackenzie	ON	English	Female	24	2 years
6	Evelyn	AB	English	Female	26	Less than 1 year
7	Kandace	AB	English	Female	31	2 years
8	Alli	QC	English	Female	26	2 years
9	Stewart	SK	English	Male	29	4 years
10	Nick	SK	English	Male	27	3 years
11	Ashish	NT	English	Male	32	1 year
12	Charlotte	AB	English	Female	38	4 years
13	Maribelle	SK	English	Female	39	1 year
14	Christina	ON	English	Female	24	1 year

Table 2. (continued)

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#	Pseudonym	Province/territory	Language	Gender	Age	Teaching experience
15	Andrea	ON	English	Female	28	3 years
16	Mark	AB	English	Male	31	Less than 1 year
17	Ken	ON	English	Male	26	3 years
18	Lily	NS	English	Female	24	2 years
19	Lois	NB	English	Female	27	3 years
20	Myles	MB	English	Male	25	2 years
21	Cassie	MB	English	Female	51	3 years
22	Gladys	ON	English	Female	49	5 years
23	Tennae	BC	English	Female	49	4 years
24	Anya	NU	English	Female	24	1 year
25	Ruth	ON	English	Female	33	Less than 1 year
26	Edward	ON	English	Male	42	3 years
27	Shana	NU	English	Female	46	5 years
28	Jane	NU	English	Female	36	Less than 1 year
29	Marilyn	YT	English	Female	32	5 years
30	Noor	BC	English	Female	34	4 years
31	Helen	BC	English	Female	28	4 years
32	Alessandra	BC	English	Female	41	2 years
33	Barbra	BC	English	Female	55	4 years
34	Lebert	BC	English	Male	34	5 years
35	Shelle	BC	English	Female	29	3 years
36	Françoise	ON	French	Female	27	3 years

Interview questions were framed using the strengths-based, positive development approach of an appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). Five open-ended questions, pertaining to teacher experiences with development, resilience, mentorship, and leadership in schools, served as the initial organizing framework for the responses. Most of the interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, with all proper names changed to pseudonyms and all identifiers removed. Participants' responses were compiled by the researchers and analyzed both deductively and inductively following standard coding processes for etic and emic approaches to data analysis. Both etic and emic codes were then combined into categories, and from categories into patterns or concepts (Lichtman, 2010). The findings below include verbatim responses where possible.

Research findings

The following sections present key findings from each of the research phases: a) document analysis, b) survey, and c) telephone interviews.

Document analysis data: Mandated roles and expectations

Document analysis revealed that mandates and expectations for school administrator engagement in teacher induction and mentoring programs were evident in varying de-

grees across all four types of programs found across Canada: policy-mandated government-funded programs; programs offered by provincial teacher associations, federations, or unions; hybrid programs based upon cooperation between the provincial and territorial governments, teacher associations, universities, First Nations, or local communities; and decentralized models maintained by local school boards/divisions. However, not all documents from the provinces and territories included references to the school administrator role in ECT support. The levels of support for teacher induction and mentoring vary across the Canadian provinces, and a summary of these findings is outlined in Table 3. The columns include school administrator roles in relation to the type of program (i.e., induction (I), mentoring (M), or both (IM)), the number of school boards with decentralized supports (out of the total number of school boards in the jurisdiction), and specific roles (*), as identified in the documents.

**Table 3. Pan-Canadian scope of school administrator role
in induction and mentoring**

Provincially mandated /ministry support	Provincial teacher association/ federations/ union-level support	Hybrid programs	Decentralized programs (school district-level support)
Northwest Territories (IM) Ontario (IM) Nunavut (IM)	Nova Scotia (IM) Saskatchewan (IM)	Alberta (IM) Newfoundland and Labrador (IM) Yukon (IM)	Alberta (8/58) *3 as evaluator Manitoba (7/38) *5 as evaluator Newfoundland and Labrador (1/2) *1 as evaluator Québec (2/9) * undetermined role Saskatchewan (2/29)

The analysis indicated that the role of the administrator was inconsistently and infrequently mentioned in publicly available documents across Canada. The administrators in various jurisdictions were mandated to be responsible for mentor selection and mentor-protégé matching, for providing adequate professional development opportunities and release time for beginning teachers, for overseeing the mentorship process, for monitoring the progress of beginning teachers, and most importantly, for being mentoring role models in their everyday activities in schools. In some provinces and territories, the role and responsibility of the administrator in supporting beginning teachers and/or the implementation of mentoring programs were outlined (or at least suggested), while in others, the administrator's role was more implicitly mentioned within a larger context of early career teacher support.

Separate handbooks or sections in program resources were found specifically for administrators in working with early career teachers in documents from Saskatchewan, Ontario, Northwest Territories, and Newfoundland and Labrador. The handbook produced by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (2009) contains information on how the administrator can support new and beginning teachers. This comprehensive document includes a theory-based rationale citing relevant academic literature. The doc-

ument provides the administrator with detailed, monthly considerations of how to best support new and beginning teachers through a comprehensive policy implementation process. In Ontario, the *Resource Handbook for Principals* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010) outlines the roles and responsibilities of the principal in the implementation of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) at the school level. The principal's role encompasses responsibility for the consultation and development of individual NTIP strategy, school-level orientation, individual professional development and training, the selection of mentors, mentoring relationships, and teacher performance appraisal. The principal is also responsible for final approval in most of the same categories, except for mentoring relationship. However, the handbook contains a caveat stating that the use of the handbook material by principals is optional. The Northwest Territories Mentorship Program outlines specific responsibilities for school administrators, including matching experienced teachers with protégés, approving the mentorship plan developed by mentors and protégés (the superintendent must also approve it), informing potential mentors and protégés about the mentoring program, and identifying staff suitable to become mentors (Northwest Territories Teacher Induction, 2016). In addition, administrators are accountable for providing release time for the mentoring pairs and for arranging necessary training. Emphasis is placed upon administrators to create a culture of mentoring in their schools through the careful matching of mentor and protégé, offering support and encouragement for the mentoring process, intervening if the mentoring relationship is not working, and supporting team orientation to the community culture. Finally, and as foreshadowed earlier, school administrators have to ensure the mentorship is not associated with evaluation. In the Newfoundland and Labrador documents, there is a mention of an information and guidance booklet for administrators (Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, 2007); however, because the document is not available publicly, it was outside of the search parameters of this study.

Some of the provisions found in relation to new teachers include details about the administrator's role, but only in relation to evaluation. This mainly occurred at the decentralized level, where school districts would include individual administrative roles. In many cases, details provided regarding the role of the administrator were purely posed from an evaluative perspective toward new and beginning teachers' performance and competence (Beautiful Plains School Division, 2008; Mountain View School Division, 2011). In contrast, other documents identify the administrator's role as supportive (Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, 2007; Nova Scotia Teacher's Union, 2012; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2009), with the Northwest Territories specifically identifying the administrator's role within new and beginning teacher induction as being non-evaluative (Northwest Territories Teacher Induction, 2016).

Survey data: Administrator engagement in induction processes

The role and importance of the administrator in the induction process yielded mixed responses across Canada. A considerable number of participants (35%) could not comment about the administrators' engagement due to their lack of direct experience. Across Canada, one-fifth of the respondents (21%) strongly disagreed that their

school administrator had played a key role in their relationship with their mentor. Almost 45 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their school administrator took an active interest in their successful induction into teaching. As part of this active interest, 53 percent of respondents were in agreement that their administrator had observed their teaching, with approximately 47 percent agreeing that these observations had led to feedback that helped improve their teaching. When asked if they were encouraged to question their beliefs about teaching, 45 percent of respondents agreed and 40 percent indicated that they were given the opportunity to observe

Table 4. Perceptions of administration support

Perception	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	N/A %	M	StD
My school administrator plays a key role in my professional relationship with my mentor.	21	17	14	8	4	35	1.5	1.5
My current school administrator has taken an active interest in my successful induction to teaching.	12	15	18	28	16	11	2.9	1.6
My current school administrator clearly communicates school expectations.	6	13	15	38	22	8	3.3	1.5
My current school administrator values the role my mentor plays in my induction to teaching.	8	8	24	17	8	36	2.0	1.8
I believe my working conditions are appropriate for a beginning teacher.	15	20	14	31	12	8	2.8	1.5
I am encouraged to questions my beliefs about teaching.	6	16	26	34	11	7	3.1	1.4
I am given opportunities to observe models of good teaching and learning.	14	25	15	30	10	6	2.8	1.4
I have adequate time to reflect on student learning.	12	27	20	29	7	5	2.8	1.3
My mentor and I are given adequate time to meet.	15	18	15	13	6	33	1.8	1.6
My current school administrator shares leadership and promotes a collaborative culture in our school.	8	10	15	36	24	7	3.4	1.5
My current school administrator observes my teaching.	12	17	11	37	16	8	3.0	1.5
My school administrator gives me feedback based on observation(s) to help me improve my teaching.	13	18	12	31	16	11	2.9	1.6
My current school administrator is part of the reason I am still a teacher.	21	16	21	19	14	9	2.6	1.5
I feel comfortable talking to my school administrator(s) about problems I am experiencing.	10	12	11	38	25	5	3.4	1.5
As a new teacher, I feel supported by my school's administrative team.	9	10	17	34	25	5	3.4	1.5

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neither Agree nor Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, N/A = Not Applicable, M = Mean, StD=Standard Deviation.

other methods of teaching. Additionally, 60 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their school administrator shared leadership and promoted a collaborative culture in their school. Almost two-thirds (63%) of the respondents

agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable talking to their school administrator about problems they were experiencing, with 59 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that, generally, they felt supported by their school's administrative team (See Table 4).

In the open-ended survey responses, beginning teachers shared mixed feelings when asked about their school administrator and whether or not this person had shown evidence of wanting them to succeed. Some beginning teachers provided a *neutral* response by indicating that they did not know whether their administrator wanted them to succeed, but some felt their administrator did not care. The following quotation illustrates one respondent's experience:

> I honestly don't know that. I feel my administrators have their own agendas and I am just a piece of their puzzle. I feel that I am replaceable. I do have a good relationship with them and feel that I can ask them questions or advice; but I honestly feel that they only want me to succeed to make them look better, not for my own personal growth. (MB)

Beginning teachers shared that their administrators had *espoused* their desire for beginning teachers to succeed. Espoused desires entailed administrators giving beginning teachers advice, encouragement, and positive feedback. Some beginning teachers noted that their administrators had explicitly expressed their desire to keep them on staff, and many beginning teachers also noted that administrators were clear about their goals and hopes for beginning teachers. Administrators also verbally assured beginning teachers that it was okay when things did not go as planned in the classroom.

> She has checked in and asked about my future teaching plans/goals, where do I see myself, encouraging comments about my rapport with students and teaching style, offered positive and constructive feedback following an interview. (AB)

Beginning teachers also shared that their administrator had *demonstrated* their desired intentions to help beginning teachers succeed. Demonstrated desire included administrators providing support, collaborating with beginning teachers, observing their teaching, and assisting them through the evaluation process. Administrators who demonstrated this desire were available to talk, checked in regularly, listened to beginning teachers' concerns, and generally cared about them. Administrators also demonstrated desire by offering a contract, recommending a beginning teacher for work, and by covering classes and offering relief time when possible. Administrators gave beginning teachers opportunities for professional development, pushed and challenged them to improve, trusted them to succeed, and gave them freedom to experiment with their teaching. Some beginning teachers also reported that administrators wanted them to succeed because they wanted the school and students to succeed.

> They check in on my classes and ask what I needed. They volunteered their time to talk with me about challenges I might be facing with my kids. They're kind and involved. My current administration is awesome. (BC)

The mixed responses with respect to beginning teachers knowing whether their administrator wanted them to succeed shed light on the types of relationships that various administrators had with their novice staff members, as well as the styles with which they operated in leading their schools.

Interview data: Leadership and support from school administration

When study participants were asked about the administrative relationships or behaviours that supported their development, some of them shared stories about how school leaders played a supportive role; some suggested that school administration roles were supportive, but only in certain areas. Others indicated that their needs for support went unanswered. An analysis of their responses is presented below under two categories: *supportive roles* and *little or no support*.

Supportive roles

Interview participants emphasized that varied supports were both needed and appreciated. Principals have a role to play in the support of new teachers, from being accessible, to providing resources, to guiding teachers. Many teachers believed that principals should be approachable and accessible, responsive, and also be effective communicators. Maira appreciated judgement-free leadership: "they would give me every resource, and they would never judge me for saying I need help." Maira made the link between her needs as a teacher and sound pedagogy, stating, "that's the same thing I expect from my kids in my class. If I ask them a question, I want them … to feel comfortable enough to say, I don't know." Data showed that principals made a positive impact upon teachers in supporting them through "tricky" situations. Several teachers discussed the crucial role that a principal or vice principal had played in facilitating their interactions with parents. Jane stated that "having the principal stick up for you when the parents can be difficult, that's important." Christina appreciated the coaching that had taken place in her interactions with parents, "I had to make a few uncomfortable phone calls, and she [the principal] was very supportive about practicing what I could say and making sure that I came off in the most professional way." Evelyn liked her vice-principal's proactive approach since he guided her on how "to properly answer emails or phone calls. If I ever had to phone home for a parent, he said he could be there, with me just to be giving me tips and stuff, so I think that was great." Another participant, Charlotte, "really appreciate[d] that they make themselves available and they're always willing to take the time to help [her if she had] a problem."

For some new teachers, it was beneficial if principals checked in with them, visited classrooms, provided feedback, and challenged them to be better teachers. Ken praised his principals:

> They challenged me to be a better teacher, and they challenged me
> based on my individual goals. They didn't give me generic feedback.
> … Their comments were always authentic … they really made me
> want to work the extra mile for them.

Ken surmised that when principals supported teachers it was really a strategy to put students first; this was the case of professional relationships that affirmed the teachers and benefited students. A few teachers found their administration supportive with

time and money for professional development. Cassie benefited from a "budget that permitted her to attend one conference annually." Kandace benefited from a mentoring program that her school district was offering, noting that her administration "was very supportive, and [she] really appreciated that he allowed … to take that time to work with a mentor."

While many interviewees hoped for a supportive leadership team to assist them in finding their way, some teachers, such as Lise, identified having the freedom to experiment, and, indeed, to be able to make mistakes as part of a learning curve, without fear of reprisal. When she made mistakes, Lise trusted that her administrator would support and guide her throughout the experimental processes: « elle est là pour me soutenir, mais elle me laisse quand même essayer de nouvelles choses … qui nous soutiens qu'il y a des erreurs qui sont faits. » Similarly, Kamille wanted administrators to develop relationships of trust with teachers and to lead by suggestion and not by orders:

> Des relations de confiance, des relations de quelqu'un qui écoute à
> nos idées, mais … j'ai besoin vraiment des personnes qui suggèrent et
> qui font faire leur point de vue sans nécessairement donner des ordres.

In addition, the willingness of experienced leaders to help, guide, share, and support early career teachers proved invaluable in the development of their confidence and resilience.

Little or no support

Some of the interviewees conveyed that they had received little, limited, or no support in their early years of teaching. Their responses pointed to the complex relationships between new teachers and administrators. For example, Françoise believed that although most teachers aimed to please, the relationship with the administration was not fully transparent, thus causing problems. Her principal expected her to keep in touch, yet not approach him with needs, since he expected her colleagues to provide this kind of support:

> C'est toujours bizarre la relation avec les directeurs, on veut absolu-
> ment leur plaire. … J'ai pas l'impression que ce soit une relation à
> 100% transparent … la responsabilité d'accueillir les nouveaux en-
> seignants à d'autres enseignants plutôt que du directeur lui-même.

Françoise understood that her principal supported her growth by using the mentorship program, thus delegating mentorship tasks to another colleague. But the lack of transparency led her to pretend that she knew what she was doing in order to avoid administrative disapproval, which might, in turn, lead to nonrenewal of her contract. The lack of transparency and mixed messages eroded Françoise's trust in her employers. When she discovered her assigned mentor listening to her teaching her class out of sight from the hallway and without her knowledge, she did not know if the mentor's secrecy was being used to support her growth or to report her to the school board for reprisal. Thus, she concluded that the best mentorship support would come from a like-minded colleague with whom there were mutual values and trust.

Some teachers did not get a formal evaluation that might have helped them in terms of their development. Helen and Anya both needed more help than what was afforded by daily routines. Anya projected frustration when she noted:

> I didn't get any professional development from them. They didn't come and check me as I taught … I was in my first year … I know that they're busy, but I really found that I didn't get … any assistance with my actual teaching. No one ever came to watch me ever. No reviews or anything.

Nick received a formal evaluation, but not from his principal. A retired teacher was brought in to observe and write up the evaluation because "the superintendents were overloaded."

Alli, Françoise, and Maribelle each noted the work overload that characterized administrative roles, with the effect that leadership tasks became the obligation of colleagues. They observed that these supportive tasks were downloaded from administration to teachers who were already busy. Alli speculated, "I don't think that responsibility really lies with my grade-alike teachers." Her experience echoed the sentiments of a number of participants that principals were so busy that they assumed their teachers did not need support. For Mark, "it was more the other teachers in my department who really reached out and helped and gave suggestions and such." Teachers cited the lack of support in important areas such as low literacy, low socioeconomic status, and special needs. For example, Ruth argued for her need of increased "support in special education as well as socio-economic awareness."

Finally, several teachers cited a lack of support from school administrators as the reason they had considered leaving the profession. At the time of interviews, one teacher had already left (Andrea), two teachers (Alessandra and Nick) were in the process of leaving, and a few others were thinking about it. Alessandra shared that she considered leaving the profession because of the negative and challenging relationship she had with her principal:

> The lack of support from my administrators was a major issue for me and has been the largest factor in me considering leaving the profession. My school principal was dismissive of my concerns. She was not supportive. She did not set up any structure that would help a new teacher find their feet. Anytime I tried to take initiative, I was shot down. Anytime I tried to ask questions, I was dismissed.

It is clear, then, that just as the supports new teachers received had led to a sense of increased confidence and resilience in the face of this demanding profession, the lack of leadership supports was disempowering and demotivating.

Discussion of findings

The combination of data obtained from the analysis of documents, surveys, and interview responses afforded the creation of a pan-Canadian window into the mandated and perceived roles of school administrators in supporting early career teachers. Although acknowledged as vital in creating a structure supportive of the induction process (Cherian & Daniel, 2008; Wood, 2005; Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007),

the role of the administrator was inconsistently and infrequently mentioned in the documents examined. The role of a leader is seen to be crucial in supporting the implementation of a mentoring culture within an organization (Zachary, 2005), and the lack of publicly available information about the principal's role in ECT support would seem particularly relevant at the school district level. Given the empirical support for the importance of a leader's role in successful mentoring, there is the risk that a lack of information might be interpreted as a lack of mentoring, an important issue for new and beginning teachers undertaking job searches for their first teaching position. While it is assumed that administrators would have some level of involvement with the induction of ECTs, this study's findings suggest further examination is warranted. The inconsistencies regarding how administrators' roles are defined within the induction and mentorship of new and beginning teachers is concerning. Role identification and role clarity are crucial elements of school administrators' work with early career teachers. Administrators' commitments to mentoring programs for new teachers can either support or undermine the success of early career teachers (Bleach, 1998; Jones, 2002; Turner, 1994; Wechsler et al., 2008).

In particular, further investigation is needed to clarify the evaluative role of administrators, which was frequently identified in this study. Research highlights how tensions can arise between the principal's responsibility to support and nurture professional growth and development for new teachers when combined with an evaluative capacity (Cherubini, 2010). A deeper analysis of the evaluative role of administrators within new and beginning teacher support could help to ensure that future policy regarding teacher induction and mentoring concentrates on development and growth rather than performance and competence. Helpful insights might be gained if the conditions and the nature of the psychological contract between mentor-evaluators and the mentee-evaluated were better understood. This study found that early career teachers have uneven experiences of support from their school administrators; some perceive receiving support and some do not. Because administrators' beliefs, actions, and policies shape the work environment and, therefore, impact specific teacher outcomes (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003), these school leaders are instrumental policy interpreters, translators, and enactors for ECTs: "by understanding the complexities of doing policy work in schools, leaders are situated in powerful positions to support early career teachers as they face the recognized challenges during the transition to the profession" (Sullivan & Morrison, 2014, p. 616). Robert Shockley, Eliah Watlington, and Rivka Felsher (2013) reminded their readers that principals set the tone for the commitment to any professional development efforts in a school setting. Thus, they urged that principals create multi-level opportunities for teacher development through longer-term and more comprehensive induction programs. They concluded that sharing responsibility and authority, encouraging collaborative planning and reflection, offering team leadership roles, and building a school culture as a learning organization address motivational factors, demonstrate principals' trust in their teachers, and positively impact teacher retention in schools. The findings from this survey concur with these observations.

As noted by Ruth Baker-Gardner (2015), in order for principals to be able to lead and implement exemplary programs, they require specialized knowledge about

the process of induction, the components of the program, and the needs of the new teachers, as well as an in-depth knowledge of the mentoring process. If "specialized training is not provided for principals to garner such skills, they will continue to be at a disadvantage regardless of how good their intentions are" (Baker-Gardner, 2015, p. 58). Furthermore, in training educational leaders, relationships should be discussed and problematized to raise awareness of the influence of a principal's words and actions on teachers' work (Lassila, Timonen, Uitto, & Estola, 2017). The generous insights from the stories shared through this interview process of a cross-section of early career teachers across Canada, enrich our understanding of their experiences with leadership and supports from school administration in the formative years of their careers. Although not generalizable to a broader population of new teachers, interview findings add to the extant literature on the impact of principals' leadership on early career teachers' retention and attrition in Canada. The pan-Canadian narratives show that despite geographic, contextual, and policy differences in the lived experiences of the participants, there were striking similarities among experiences of many of the teachers.

The majority of teachers in the sample expressed their appreciation for their supportive and positive administrators; these were non-judgemental leaders who encouraged trusting relationships, were engaged in their development, provided feedback and resources, allowed experimentation, and created favourable working conditions. Positive relationships and interactions with administrations facilitated novices' development, increased their satisfaction and efficacy, and enhanced their confidence and resilience. Nienke Moolenaar, Alan Daly, and Peter Sleegers (2012) noted the relational reciprocity in which principals maximize teachers' skills and knowledge. In return, teachers seek out their principal more often for work-related and personal advice, and thus benefit from their knowledge, resources, and expertise. Researchers found that principals' personal interactions with individual teachers tend to promote positive school climate and student outcomes, whereas unsupportive or negative interactions may lead to teachers' dissatisfaction, attrition, or a move to a different school (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Scherff, 2008).

On the negative side, participants noted that a lack of administrative support, lack of transparency, lack of understanding of ECTs' needs, and off-loading administrative responsibilities onto beginning teachers resulted in some teachers battling stress and anxiety amid daily school events. Similar to others, this study found that when administrators were unresponsive to teachers' needs, their well-being was affected, and their sense of isolation and frustration increased (Brindley & Parker, 2010; Cherubini, Kitchen, & Hodson, 2008; Frels, Zientek, & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). These experiences had a common impact on teachers' predispositions toward professional growth and their decisions to stay or leave the profession. Therefore, beyond their direct involvement in the establishment and coordination of induction and mentoring programs, school administrators have an indirect impact on teacher retention and attrition by nurturing a supportive school climate characterized by shared values and trust (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Catapano & Huisman, 2013; Cherian & Daniel, 2008).

Conclusion

School administrators' engagement is vital for the socialization and induction of early career teachers; however, a high percentage of early career teachers in this Pan-Canadian study reported that they had not received direct or facilitative support. The manner by which novice teachers are acclimated to schools is commonly understood to be a part of the responsibility of the principal, who works with staff and community to establish and operationalize the vision, mission, and goals of the school (Delp, 2014). Programmatically, principal engagement is thought to be a critical aspect of induction and mentoring supports for ECTs, because the effectiveness of those programs depend on school context and the alignment of programs with the vision, instructional focus, and priorities stewarded by the principal (Moir, Barlin, Gless, & Miles, 2009). This article provides a description of the centralized and decentralized provincial and territorial policies with respect to early career teacher support. In documents examined, the role of the administrator was inconsistently and infrequently mentioned. There were varied accounts of ECTs' perceptions and experiences of support from school administrators from both survey results and interviews. Early career teachers appreciated supportive and positive administrators who encouraged trusting relationships, provided feedback and opportunities for their development, allowed experimentation, and created favourable working conditions. Positive and supportive administrators were credited with increasing the satisfaction, efficacy, confidence, and resilience of ECTs.

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