The Role of School Administrators in the Induction and Mentoring of Early Career Teachers

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Summary and Keywords

Teachers’ quality and abilities are the most significant school-based factors contributing to student achievement and educational improvement. Helping new teachers in their transition and socialization into school contexts and the profession is important for their teaching careers. However, despite heavy financial and educational investments to enable their teaching careers, a large number of beginning teachers quit the profession in their first years. Researchers claimed that induction programs with effective mentoring in the early teaching years are capable of positively affecting beginning teacher retention and student achievement as well as reducing the waste of resources and human potential associated with early-career attrition. Due to the overall school leadership role, school administrators are responsible for ensuring that adequate teacher development and learning takes place in their schools. School administrators’ engagement is vital for the success of the induction and mentoring processes in schools. Implicit in much of the literature is that school administrators have an “overseer” or “manager” role in the teacher induction and socialization processes. In order to explore the administrators’ specific roles and responsibilities in induction and mentoring programs, the empirical literature that directly or indirectly makes reference to the formal or informal involvement of in-school or building-level administrators (e.g., school leaders, principals, head teachers, headmasters, and vice and assistant principals) in the beginning teacher induction and mentoring programs was reviewed.

The review of the literature on role of the school administrator in teacher induction and mentoring programs elicited the emergence of the following four categories: (1) objective duties and responsibilities for early career teacher support; (2) types, patterns, and formats of support; (3) benefits and impacts of school administrators’ involvement; and (4) leadership and commitment to programs. Implicitly and explicitly, the majority of the sources indicated that school administrators had an overall objective responsibility for supporting beginning teachers’ personal and professional development due to their legal and rational role of duty as leaders for teacher development and support in their schools. Various formal and informal duties of school administrators were discussed in the reviewed literature, varying from informal interactions with beginning teachers to scheduled formal meetings and teacher supervision, whereas assignment of mentors to begin-
The Role of School Administrators in the Induction and Mentoring of Early Career Teachers

ning teachers was the most widely detailed aspect of the school administrator’s role. School administrators were found to play an important role in teacher induction and mentoring program implementation through the provision of various types of support to beginning teachers. School administrators’ core tasks in terms of teacher induction program success included recruiting, hiring, and placing new teachers; providing site orientation and resource assistance; managing the school environment; building relationships between school administrators and teachers; fostering instructional development through formative assessment; providing formative and summative evaluation; and facilitating a supportive school context. Studies noted direct and indirect impacts of the school administrator on the effective outcomes of teacher induction and mentoring programs and ultimately, teacher retention and development. In contrast, researchers also found negative outcomes of school administrators’ perceived lack of involvement or provision of support for early career teachers. Finally, literature noted the significance of school administrators’ leadership and commitment to the program if teacher induction and mentoring programs are to succeed.

Keywords: teacher induction, early career teachers, mentoring program, school principal, school administrator, school leader, principal engagement in induction, teacher attrition, teacher retention, teacher development

Introduction

Due to the overall school leadership role, school administrators are responsible for ensuring that adequate teacher development and learning take place in their schools. In regard to the most vulnerable teacher population, early career teachers, school administrators’ engagement becomes vital for success of the induction and mentoring processes in schools. School administrator engagement is critical for induction and mentoring programs as their effectiveness depends on a school’s context and alignment with vision, instructional focus, and the priorities set by the school administrator (Moir, Barlin, Gless, & Miles, 2009). Research shows that when school administrators serve as the builders of the school culture, exhibit supportive and shared leadership, create the opportunity for shared values and vision, and promote professional relationships among novice teachers and experienced teachers, morale is improved and beginning teachers’ self-concept is strengthened (Cherian & Daniel, 2008; Wood, 2005; Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007).

Reviews of the literature have found attention given to school administrators’ impact upon school culture, school administrators’ role as instructional leaders, school administrators’ support of new teachers, their involvement in mentor selection, and the flexibility shown by school administrators in meeting school needs (Long et al., 2012). In their systematic review, Totterdell, Woodroffe, Bubb, and Hanrahan (2004) suggested that the high quality of induction support, the district policy and commitment to mentor assignment, working conditions, professional development for second-year teachers, and strong instructional leadership among school administrators had consequences for the retention levels in these districts. Nevertheless, as Long et al. (2012) concluded, there is limited empirical evidence directly linking the role of the school administrator with retention of
The Role of School Administrators in the Induction and Mentoring of Early Career Teachers

teachers. What is often implicit in much of the literature is that school administrators usually have a general role, or that of an “overseer” or “manager,” in relation to teacher induction and socialization processes. However, it is also necessary to explore school administrators’ specific duties and responsibilities in induction and mentoring processes. An increased understanding of these roles will enable school administrators to positively impact the level of success of induction programs (Baker-Gardner, 2015) and to grasp the factors associated with new teacher effectiveness during the process of hiring novices (Shepherd & Devers, 2017). We posit that role identification and role clarity are crucial elements entailed in school administrators’ work with early career teachers.

In this article, we describe the role of the school administrator in the beginning teacher’s induction and mentorship. For this purpose, we examined the extant empirical literature that encompassed direct or indirect references to the formal or informal involvement of in-school or building-level administrators in teacher induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers. Due to the plethora of terms uncovered in the literature in relation to this role, we use the term “school administrator” and do so to include those who serve by other titles, such as school leaders, principals, head teachers, headmasters, and vice or assistant principals. Upon situating the article within the broader context of early career teaching (namely, teacher turnover, attrition, retention, induction, and mentoring), we detail the themes found in the literature on the role of the school administrator in teacher induction and mentoring programs.

The Context of Early Career Teaching

Teachers’ quality and abilities are the most significant school-based factors contributing to student achievement and educational improvement (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Therefore, helping new teachers in their transition and socialization into school contexts and the profession is important for their teaching careers (Howe, 2006; Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002). However, teaching has often been described as an occupation that “eats its young” and in which the beginnings of new teachers’ journeys are similar to “make or break,” “sink or swim,” “trial and baptism by fire,” or “boot camp” experiences. Some of the most significant challenges faced by beginning teachers include an egg-crate structure of schools, isolation, reality shock, inadequate resources and support, a lack of time for planning and interaction with colleagues, difficult work assignments, unclear and inadequate expectations, intergenerational gaps, dealing with stress, a lack of orientation and information about the school system, and institutional practices and policies that promote hazing (Andrews & Quinn, 2004; Anhorn, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004; Johnson & Kardos, 2002, 2005; Patterson, 2005). Being unable to cope with challenges, feeling ineffective or unsupported, many beginning teachers abandon the profession, depressed and discouraged (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2009; Moir et al., 2009), with the most talented beginning teachers among those most apt to leave (Colb, 2001). Despite their heavy financial and educational investments to enable their teaching
careers, a large number of teachers quit the profession in their first 2 to 5 years; in some extreme cases, teachers drop out even before the end of their first year (Black, 2001).

Teacher Turnover and Attrition

Teacher turnover is a complex phenomenon and an interdisciplinary problem that can be viewed from an economic, organizational, psychological, or educational perspective (Karsenti & Collin, 2013). Most often, two types of teacher turnover are discussed in the literature: migration and attrition. Whereas migration refers to teachers leaving one school to take a job at another and does not result in an overall permanent loss of teachers, attrition refers to leaving the teaching profession altogether (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006). Migration of teachers is seemingly less harmful and harder to track, allowing for continuity in the profession. Most studies have focused on attrition and the consequences of the loss of teachers who leave the profession.

Research on teacher socialization has highlighted immense challenges for novices that stem from multilayered and often complicated expectations for teaching, evaluation, and professional learning from their employers, school administration, colleagues, parents, and students (Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Whisnant, Elliott, & Pynchon, 2005). In fact, “almost instantly, a beginning teacher has the same responsibility as a teacher with many years of service” (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009, p. 814). Not surprisingly, early career teachers (ETCs) become vulnerable to work–life imbalance and stress. As a result, stress and inadequate support, difficult working conditions, and certain limitations in education policies prompt a significant number of beginning teachers to leave the profession (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Teacher attrition spans international boundaries, including the United Kingdom (Smithers & Robinson, 2003), Australia (Stoel & Thant, 2002), the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), and other countries (OECD, 2005). Meta-analyses of early career teaching pointed out that attrition is associated with individual or contextual factors (Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012). Individual factors included burnout, resilience, demographic features, and family characteristics, whereas contextual factors entailed teacher support, salary, professional development, collaboration, the nature of context, student issues, and teacher education. Internationally, the argument is that the first 3 to 4 years after initial training are the most crucial for teachers’ decisions as to whether they will remain in the profession (Jones, 2003).

While a certain level of attrition within the profession may be healthy (Ingersoll, 2001; Ryan & Kokol, 1988), the early career loss of teachers is neither desirable nor sustainable (Plunkett & Dyson, 2011), as it is generally costly to schools and detrimental to student learning (Guarino, Santibañez, & 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 Role of School Administrators in the Induction and Mentoring of Early Career Teachers

the system have not always been systematically addressed by formal policies and interventions.

Teacher Retention, Induction, and Mentoring

The first 3 to 4 years after initial training are the most crucial for teachers’ decisions with respect to remaining in or leaving the profession (Jones, 2003). A growing consensus acknowledges the value of some kind of support for beginning teachers to help mitigate the issue of attrition (Le Maistre, Boudreau, & Paré, 2006). Many new teachers make tremendous improvements during their first years of teaching; therefore, the attrition issue should not be addressed by prioritizing new recruitment but rather by efforts to retain high-quality teachers and by teacher development investments (Farrell, 2012). Clandinin et al. (2012) further urged for increased focus on how to sustain new teachers in their teaching life careers rather than on merely retaining them in the profession.

Researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Huling-Austin, 1986, 1988; Huling-Austin & Murphy, 1987; Laitsch, 2005; Strong, 2005, 2006) claimed that induction programs with effective mentoring in the early teaching years are capable of positively affecting beginning teacher retention and student achievement as well as reducing the waste of resources and human potential associated with early-career attrition. Induction and high-quality mentoring programs have positive impacts through increased teacher effectiveness, higher satisfaction, commitment, improved classroom instruction and student achievement, and early-career retention of novice teachers (Glazerman et al., 2010; Guarino et al., 2006; Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Richardson, Glessner, & Tolson, 2010).

Induction programs aim to provide instruction in classroom management and effective teaching techniques, reduce the difficulty of the transition into teaching, and maximize the retention rate of highly qualified teachers (Anhorn, 2008; Wynn et al., 2007). Researchers have shown that there are inconsistencies and problems inherent in any induction program (Barrett, Solomon, Singer, Portelli, & Mjuuwamariya, 2009; Doerger, 2003). Advantages of induction programs have been reported as uneven, with the finding that much of the variation lies within the capacity and willingness of school-level administrators to support novice teacher induction (Youngs, 2007). This variability is related not only to school administrators’ implementation and oversight of novice teacher induction policies, but also to administrators’ ability to cultivate a school-wide climate of support for novice teachers to promote instructional growth (Pogodzinski, 2015).

Variation in induction implementation and teacher experiences is related to unique structural, social, and cultural factors, functional causes, and operationalization in schools (Cherubini, 2009; Jones, 2002). Neophyte teacher mentoring can be an effective support when used in conjunction with other components of the induction process (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wong, 2004); however, failure to appropriately match mentor with mentee, unsuccessful new teacher–mentor dyads, a lack of willing and able mentors, a lack of mentor training, or individual factors (e.g., burnout, lack of professional respect) may result
The Role of School Administrators in the Induction and Mentoring of Early Career Teachers

in failed efforts (Benson, 2008; Johnson & Kardos, 2005). New teachers become reflective thinkers and co-learners if the mentoring environment is based on collaboration (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, 1993; Kochan & Trimble, 2000). As noted in the extant literature, school administrators’ level and degree of commitment to mentoring programs for new teachers can either support and promote the retention of novice teachers or erode and undermine the success of induction and mentoring, and thus contribute to teacher attrition (Bleach, 1998; Jones, 2002; Turner, 1994; Wechsler, Caspary, & Humphrey, 2008). We proffer that timely and appropriate mentorship of early career teachers by school administrators may ameliorate the force of factors that lead to teacher turnover and attrition. Therefore, understanding of school administrators’ roles is important not only for the process of induction, but also for the positive impact and success of programs in meeting the needs of beginning teachers (Baker-Gardner, 2015).

School Administrator’s Role

The review of the literature on the role of school administrators in teacher induction and mentoring programs elicited the emergence of the following four categories: (1) objective duties and responsibilities for early career teacher support; (2) types, patterns, and formats of support; (3) benefits and impacts of school administrators’ involvement; and, (4) leadership and commitment to programs.

Duties and Responsibilities for Early Career Teacher Support

Implicitly and explicitly, the majority of the studies indicated that school administrators had an overall objective responsibility for supporting beginning teachers’ personal and professional development due to their legal and rational role of duty as leaders for teacher development and support in their schools. In no uncertain terms, Delp (2014) declared “how novice teachers are acclimated to the school is primarily the responsibility of the principal as she or he publicly establishes the vision, mission, and goals of the school” (pp. 198–199).

This responsibility was directly related to the need of school administrators to be informed about the needs of novice teachers and various supportive structures and programs available to them (Rhodes, Nevill, & Allen, 2005). In a Cyprus study, school administrators were kept up-to-date about the program in order to offer support and protection to teachers who participated in the program, thus ensuring that the program initiative would actively contribute to the efforts of reshaping school culture through school administrators’ attentions (Angelides & Mylordou, 2011). In addition, embedded within the overall responsibility of administrators was the need to address specific contextual expectations for teachers through the provision of support and learning opportunities (Ado, 2013; Greiman, Walker, & Birkenholz, 2005). School administrators were seen to be responsible for clear communication regarding expectations for beginning teachers.
The Role of School Administrators in the Induction and Mentoring of Early Career Teachers

(Greiman et al., 2005). However, the onus to be informed and up-to-date about beginning teachers’ development was imputed to school administrators. Delp (2014) articulated this onus as follows:

Leaving so much of a novice’s induction up to the established cultural norms of the subject department could be a misstep due to the fact that some novices will find themselves in departments that are dysfunctional or not focused on novice development. Having a systematic approach to induction for all novices within the building is a better choice than leaving so much of a novice’s experiences to the chance that he or she lands in a supportive department. (p. 202)

Achinstein (2006) highlighted the importance for beginning teachers to also be aware of and to understand the overall role of school administrators for teacher development, as well as the administrator’s position in relation to the beginning teacher’s support within the broader context of schooling.

Various formal and informal duties of school administrators were discussed in the reviewed literature, varying from informal interactions with the beginning teachers to scheduled formal meetings and teacher supervision. School administrators were found to affect new teacher mentoring directly and indirectly (Pogodzinski, 2015). Directly, they influenced the frequency of novice–mentor interactions through mentor selection and assignment, provision of mentor training, facilitating meeting times and guiding topics, and oversight and supervision of mentoring relationships and evaluation of program quality. Indirectly, administrators shaped mentoring through influencing workload manageability, administrative duties, access to resources, and the quality of administrator–teacher relations.

Assignment of mentors to beginning teachers was the most widely detailed aspect of the school administrator’s role in teacher induction and mentoring processes (Abu Rass, 2010; Bianchini & Brenner, 2010; Bianchini & Cavazos, 2007; Bickmore, Bickmore, & Hart, 2005; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Gordon & Lowrey, 2017; Roberson & Roberson, 2009). One study suggested that it would be beneficial if administrators played a more active role in selecting a pool of qualified mentors from which new teachers can select their mentor (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Bickmore et al. (2005) found that matching mentors and mentees in the same content area was beneficial. Others recommended that mentors and mentees be matched based on close proximity, similar teaching assignments, opportunities for common meeting times, and a match in gender, age, teaching philosophies, and complimentary personality types (Abu Rass, 2010). Researchers also suggested that school administrators may also assist in the areas of designing and implementing induction programs, pairing mentors and mentees, assigning classrooms, and supporting staff (Desimone et al., 2014; Gordon & Lowrey, 2017; Roberson & Roberson, 2009). Finally, it was found that administrators’ “ability to make good personnel decisions directly impact the success of novice teachers” (Gordon & Lowrey, 2017, p. 181).
As found in a U.S. study of beginning and mentor teachers’ perceptions of psychosocial assistance, similarities, and satisfaction, mentors and induction teachers with similar values, attitudes, working styles, and teaching philosophies were more likely to have a positive mentoring experience, a successful relationship, and satisfactory interactions (Burris, Kitchel, Greiman, & Torres, 2006). These authors posited that this finding implies the importance of similarity when selecting dyad partners and presents administrators and mentoring program coordinators with the challenge of making a mentorship dyad assignment before the two participants have met and established a rating of similarity.

Development and implementation of mentor training programs in school was one of the ways to enhance the mentoring experiences of beginning teachers. For example, in a study within the rural Australian context, the principal and the deputy principal initiated mentor training for experienced teachers so that they could provide “informed professional support and guidance to the beginning teachers where necessary” (Beutel & Spooner-Lane, 2009, p. 352). By their involvement in a mentoring role, school administrators may realize such benefits as clear expectations, unification in mission and implementation, lack of intimidation, the development of a clearly identified avenue for communication, and the provision of comprehensive emotional and pedagogical supports (Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014). However, some limitations for a school administrator’s involvement could include “the lack of availability of time, resources, or a clearly defined plan to use in mentoring” (Gordon & Lowrey, 2017, p. 180).

Within an induction program for rural U.S. special educators (Irinaga-Bistolas, Schalock, Marvin, & Beck, 2007), professional development goals within the mentor partnership were identified based on a self-assessment, and an implementation plan was developed to guide the partnership. Based on their study of formal and informal mentoring programs, Desimone et al. (2014) recommended increasing formal mentor training in order to maximize the potential of its role. Harrison, Lawson, and Wortley (2005) argued for tailored mentor training that can assist in developing critical reflective practice and a new teacher’s increasing professional autonomy.

Widely mentioned in the literature was the key role of school administrators in ensuring that beginning teachers are provided with mentoring, time to observe each other, and opportunities to reflect on practice. In this sense, Delp (2014) noted that school administrators as formal leaders of the school have an influence on the ways that induction components are made available and presented to novice teachers. Several authors argued that it is crucial for school-level administrators to set aside more time for mentoring, planning for instruction, observations, discussion of student achievement, and feedback (Catapano & Huisman, 2013; Certo, 2005). School administrators may initiate “mentoring webs” (Gordon & Lowrey, 2017, p. 179), which are groups of supports around a teacher that involve school administrators, mentors, induction programs, college preparation, and relationships established with paraprofessionals, students, and parents.

In a U.S.-based study, peer observation was deemed by beginning teachers as the highest valued support (Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin, 2007). However, as these researchers noted,
there was a noticeable discrepancy in perceptions; whereas a fairly low percentage of new teachers responded that they were given opportunities to observe other teachers, a high percentage of administrators said this support was provided for their new teachers. One of the duties was implementation of policies or programs aimed at supporting beginning teachers (Glazerman et al., 2008; Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009), with decentralized mentorship policies being implemented at the school level at the discretion of the school administrator.

Besides the supportive role of school administrators, several studies highlighted the expectations of school administrators to supervise and evaluate the work of new teachers (Abu Rass, 2010; Chatlain & Noonan, 2005). Related to the administrators’ evaluative role was the duty to maintain confidentiality. For example, in a study of two U.S.-based programs, mentors were strongly cautioned against sharing specific information with school administrators that could affect the beginning teachers’ job evaluations and compromise confidentiality and openness in the mentor–mentee relationship (Glazerman et al., 2008).

Hence, research points to the potential tensions between the school administrators’ responsibility to foster growth-oriented professional development for new teachers and administrative or evaluative capacity (Cherubini, 2010).

Types, Patterns, and Formats of Support

School administrators play an important role in teacher induction and mentoring program implementation through the provision of various types of support to beginning teachers. According to Carver (2003), core tasks for the school administrator in terms of teacher induction program success included recruiting, hiring, and placing new teachers; providing site orientation and resource assistance; managing the school environment; building relationships between school administrators and teachers; fostering instructional development through formative assessment; providing formative and summative evaluation; and facilitating a supportive school context. Summarizing the findings from several large-scale studies, Youngs, Hyun-Seung, and Pogodzinski (2015) noted that

principals can promote beginning teachers’ satisfaction, commitment, and retention by enacting useful approaches to student behavior, working with them on instructional issues, evaluating them in rigorous and equitable ways, and fostering teacher-principal trust … school leaders can [also] influence beginning teachers’ satisfaction, commitment, and retention by structuring their collaboration with mentors and colleagues, linking them to PD [professional development], and shaping the policy messages that they receive. (p. 164)

For the programs to be beneficial, adequate structural supports were crucial. As described by Cherubini (2009), “support systems and the induction program infrastructure itself needs to be well expressed and communicated to not only new teachers, but to mentors, administrators, board personnel, and school faculties in a high degree of clarity and specificity” (p. 192). Administrators needed to ensure that structural supports were realized in the intended manner. Explicitly discussed was the need for a person to be as-
signed to clearly communicate the structure and expectations to all participants, including beginning teachers, mentors, and staff. Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2009) described the importance of the role as follows: “the schools that made the most progress in developing comprehensive and school-wide systems of induction were those that assigned a skilled and well-respected faculty member to the role of induction leader … structural supports will fall flat unless embedded in a professional culture that values collegial collaboration” (p. 71). The school administration set the tone of collaboration among teachers and administrators and among teachers themselves, and “the extent to which they can shield novice teachers from burdensome administrative work increases the likelihood that they engage in meaningful interactions with their mentors” (Pogodzinski, 2015, p. 55).

The resources included assigning experienced teachers to help novices (Sabar, 2004), provision of shared in-school planning time, and allocation of scheduled planning days into the calendar for beginning teachers to observe other teachers, to attend workshops, to develop units and lessons, and to try out new software or other technology available at the district level (Clausen, 2007). Other forms of school administrators’ support included bimonthly and monthly meetings with new teachers and mentors, regular professional development for new teachers in addition to professional development activities for the entire staff, and in-school and district-wide orientation activities for new teachers (Bickmore et al., 2005).

In some cases, studies mentioned a lack of resources and supplies in school (Bang & Luft, 2013) and differential access to resources by beginning teachers in multiple-teacher programs as opposed to single-teacher programs (Burris & Keller, 2008). In such instances, advocating for resources represented another important form of help-seeking among beginning teachers who utilized colleagues and administrators as resources for overcoming obstacles (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010). In this study, if the school administration did not provide or promised to provide resources, then beginning teachers went higher up the chain of command. As noted by one of the teachers, after researching the legal issues associated with special education, she presented her findings and the legal issues to her school-level administration and was able to receive support in the form of two additional teacher aids to assist her at various times during the day (Castro et al., 2010). As evidenced from a study of the support structures for mathematics and science teachers in one of the U.S. states, administrative support was one of the two most frequently described sources of support (Friedrichsen, Chval, & Teuscher, 2007). In this study, participants sought out their administrators to help resolve conflicts with individual students and parents and viewed their school administrators more as problem-solvers rather than as curriculum consultants or as teaching mentors.

School administrators’ support of beginning teachers through the assigned workload contributed to positive or negative perceptions of program elements. If not properly managed, workload issues can lead to poor relationships among staff (Sabar, 2004) or compound mentoring engagement where “part of the teachers’ responsibility became managing both the interactions with the multiple mentors and the time this required” (Carter &
The Role of School Administrators in the Induction and Mentoring of Early Career Teachers

Keiler, 2009, p. 450). However, a balanced and targeted workload that takes into consideration novice teachers’ development was deemed a positive factor. Interestingly, the naturally increased workload of a new teacher meant that they were spending more time at work and therefore more time in an environment where they were able to ask questions to colleagues (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010).

Another form of support gleaned from the literature was in the form of school administrators’ attendance of the initial orientation for administrators or professional development sessions specifically designed for administrators (Glazerman et al., 2008). These events were intended to gain administrators’ support for their beginning teachers’ participation in the induction program and for the involvement of the mentor assigned to their school. The orientation events also provided brief overviews of beginning teachers’ needs for support and development and the induction program’s purposes and activities. These efforts were also aimed at minimizing conflicts that could impede mentors’ efforts to schedule time with beginning teachers.

In rare instances, the school administrator provided direct mentoring to the beginning teacher. For example, Tillman (2005, p. 264) found that one “teacher’s indecisiveness provided an opportunity for the school administrator to personally mentor her by encouraging her, implementing support structures, and reducing the isolation she felt.”

Benefits and Impacts of Support

Several of the reviewed studies provided empirical data on the direct and indirect impact of school administrators on the effective outcomes of teacher induction and mentoring programs, and ultimately, teacher retention and development. Glazerman et al. (2008) noted that schools and districts evidenced wide variation in the level of school administrator support, ranging from school administrators who were extremely supportive, actively encouraging teachers to make the most of the induction opportunities, to school administrators who actively resisted participation and would not permit teachers to be released for program activities. Further exploration of the impact of school administrators’ involvement in the program and support for beginning teachers revealed two subthemes.

Provision of Support

A number of studies reported that school administrators’ support was found to be helpful by beginning teachers (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007; Rhodes et al., 2005). However, it is important to note that this appreciation for school administrators’ assistance was usually discussed as part of an eclectic supportive system consisting of program providers, administrators, mentors, and colleagues. More specifically, administrator actions perceived as helpful by beginning teachers in various studies encompassed a warm welcome and orientation to the school (Sabar, 2004), encouragement (Abbott, Moran, & Clarke, 2009; Kapadia et al., 2007), informal interactions and formal meetings with school administrators (Chatlain & Noonan, 2005), instructional sup-
The Role of School Administrators in the Induction and Mentoring of Early Career Teachers

port (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Cherubini, 2007), creating supportive structures in the school (Roberson & Roberson, 2009), clearing challenges that beginning teachers face in quite a direct fashion (Ingersoll, 2002), and creating conditions in which teachers could build good emotional and pedagogical relationships among themselves (Lassila, Timonen, Uitto, & Estola, 2017).

Similarly, a study of mentors and new teachers showed that people—mentors, interdisciplinary teams, and administrators—had greater positive influence in the induction of new teachers than activities (Bickmore et al., 2005). Main (2008, p. 126) found that beginning teachers who believed that “the principal, deputy principal, and other teachers are improving their teaching in the context of a high-quality induction programme in which the principal holds the tutor teacher accountable are more likely to report that their induction was useful and pedagogically oriented. They also reported higher levels of efficacy and satisfaction.” Kapadia et al. (2007, p. 30) reported three supports that had the greatest influence on new elementary school teachers and made them more likely to report a good teaching experience and intention to remain in the same school: “encouragement and assistance from their principal, regularly scheduled opportunities to collaborate with peers in the same field, and participation in a network of teachers.” In another study, participants mentioned they needed help and support from the administrator and other sources in order to respond successfully to critical incidents at the school (Lambeth & Lashley, 2012).

Novices’ professional development, increased satisfaction and efficacy, and enhanced confidence and resilience can be attributed to the presence of positive relationships and interactions with school administrations. Moolenaar, Daly, and Sleegers (2012) noted the relational reciprocity in which school administrators maximized teachers’ skills and knowledge. When they experienced growth-oriented and career-building efforts from administrators, new teachers sought out their support more often for work-related and personal advice, and thus benefited from their knowledge, resources, and expertise. Researchers found that school administrators’ personal interactions with individual teachers tended to promote a 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).

Research exploring the personal needs support function of school administrators for new teachers in the United States found that novice teachers positively viewed school administrators as key to establishing personal needs of respect, belonging, self-esteem, confidence, and autonomy (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Similarly, Blömeke and Klein (2013) examined the effects of school management and teacher support on teaching quality in Germany as perceived by middle school mathematics teachers in their third year in the profession and found that beginning teachers positively rated the school administrators’ support and the quality of school management. All indicators of teaching quality improved if the teachers perceived more autonomy and more frequent appraisal. They concluded that school administrators had a key role in providing high-quality management
through administrative leadership and a climate of trust if they wanted to support their teachers in terms of autonomy and appraisal. Overall, these authors argued “principals have a crucial role in all respects if the quality of a school’s environment is to be improved” (Blömeke & Klein, 2013, p. 1044).

Cherubini (2009) found that intentional directedness of school administrators’ partiality for the induction program, as perceived by participants themselves in sustaining school cultures, affected the meanings attributed to programs by beginning teachers. Similarly, the findings of a study that sought to determine the relationship between the presence of administrator-facilitated support for mentoring and perceived helpfulness of mentoring suggested that novice teachers perceived their experiences with mentors as more likely to occur and more helpful when administrative support was built into the mentoring program (Clark & Byrnes, 2012). Another finding from this study suggested that if an administrator needed to choose between different forms of support (i.e., common planning time and release time for observation), common planning time was the more important administrator-facilitated type of mentoring support to provide.

### Lack of Support

In contrast to positive impacts described in studies where teachers received supports from school administrators, a number of the studies noted negative outcomes of school administrators’ perceived lack of involvement or provision of support. For example, researchers found that new teachers rarely found curriculum support from their administrators as departments rarely had an administrator in their own field (Carter & Keiler, 2009). Pogodzinski (2015) indicated that when novice teachers perceived their relationships with administrators as being negative, they were significantly less likely to interact with their mentors at least once a week with regard to curricular matters. Negative relations between administrators and teachers were likely reflected in the extent to which teachers were willing not only to engage with the administration in work to meet organizational goals but also to work with each other to meet organizational goals.

Similarly, Morris and Morris (2013) discussed overall perceptions of school administrators’ lack of communication, lack of assistance in improving student behavior, and lack of sufficient resources in support of beginning teachers. In other cases, novice teachers described situations where their administrators failed to provide support during student conflicts or disagreed with the participant’s teaching philosophy (Friedrichsen et al., 2007), made decisions that surely impinged upon their professional development and emotional well-being (Brindley & Parker, 2010), or failed to fulfill or satisfy beginning teachers’ personal needs (Haigh & Anthony, 2012). Frels, Zientek, and Onwuegbuzie (2013) noted feelings of frustration and isolation in beginning teachers who wanted the administration to “make more effort to talk to the new teachers, ask how everything is going, offer advice and support” (p. 47). Cherubini (2009) found a sense of genuine disconnect between the importance of the induction program as it was communicated by the board personnel and the lack of preference that school administrators had attributed to it.
The Role of School Administrators in the Induction and Mentoring of Early Career Teachers

at the local school level. Furthermore, this negative impact was amplified by the perceptions of novice teachers being at the bottom of the totem pole when they observed school administrators’ arbitrary modifications to induction program schedules by reducing the structured time that the induction programs offered protégés at the expense of other school priorities. Cherian and Daniel (2008) argued that one of the most frequent reasons given for leaving the profession was the poor quality of support from school administrators, especially when they failed to insure that a culture of induction and support for novices was embedded within their schools.

Leadership and Commitment to Programs

Finally, literature noted the significance of school administrators’ leadership and commitment to the program if teacher induction and mentoring programs are to succeed.

First, school administrators’ commitment to and recognition of the program may positively or negatively influence the beginning teachers’ justification of their own commitment to and understanding of the need for the program (Cherubini, 2009). As Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2009) noted, the success of a school-based induction program relies on the commitment and investment of school leaders who strive to develop a supportive professional culture by fostering a school-wide appreciation that learning to teach well takes time and by promoting the idea that the entire school is responsible for helping new teachers succeed; by educating board members and parents about the importance of helping new teachers develop their practice; and by prioritizing induction activities in the budget (such as protected time for mentors and new teachers to meet and release time for induction leaders). As Sullivan and Morrison (2014) concluded, systems and school leaders are key policy actors and they are able to insure access to appropriate ongoing support, resources, and learning opportunities for all early career teachers. They stated, “leaders can strategically support early career teachers by promoting their resilience through the artful and coherent enactment of relevant policies” (p. 616).

Furthermore, Wynn et al.’s (2007) findings highlighted the importance of principal leadership because teachers who were more satisfied with principal leadership in their schools were more likely to report planning to stay in the school district and at their school site. Peters and Pearce (2012) noted that “having a collaborative school principal who is ‘open to questions and at the disposal of new teachers’ is one of the most effective supports for people in their first years of teaching” (p. 258). Effective school leaders, according to Sullivan and Morrison (2014), “were able to position early career teachers to make the most of the professional supports available. These leaders managed and mobilized resources on behalf of early career teachers. They also interpreted the needs of early career teachers and the expectations of the profession” (p. 617).

Of course, a critical aspect of the overall organizational context relates to the expectations school-level administrators have for teachers’ work and the extent to which they support their teachers’ work directly and indirectly (Pogodzinski, 2015). Administrators’ beliefs, actions, and policies shape the work environment and therefore impact specific
teacher outcomes (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). School leaders are also instrumental policy interpreters, translators, and enactors: “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). Shockley, Watlington, and Felsher (2013) reminded their readers that school administrators set the tone for the commitment to any professional development efforts in a school setting. Thus, they urged that school administrators needed to create multilevel opportunities for teacher development through longer-term 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 addressed motivational factors, demonstrated school administrators’ trust in their teachers, and positively impacted teacher retention in schools.

Administrative and structural leadership was deemed important for the success of the induction programs in various settings and geographical locations. For example, school administrators’ active engagements in conjunction with quality interactions were deemed integral to not only keeping special education teachers in the field but also cultivating their successes (Correa & Wagner, 2011). Early career special educators within rural school settings have also stressed the importance of collegial support from school administration and colleagues who were “available to answer questions and acculturate them into the culture, community and procedures of the school” (Irinaga-Bistolas et al., 2007, p. 21). Similarly, Kono (2012) argued that school administrators can create meaningful teacher induction programs that incorporate diverse and unique features to help new teachers adjust to their new rural schools.

Cherian and Daniel (2008) outlined a number of roles for the school administrator related to teacher induction, with recognition of the collective responsibility for induction. The school administrator plays a vital role in creating supports for the induction process by focusing on structure, strategy, environment, implementation, experimentation, and adaptation. In addition, principals are called upon to manage the political issues that affected power relationships and status. School administrators’ instructional leadership also plays an important role in novice teachers’ ability to make sense of their new curricula and acquire knowledge of instructional strategies (Youngs et al., 2015). Finally, although the notion of instructional leadership was important to the participating school administrators, their educational leadership roles were often reduced to management of people, budgets, and behavior (teachers’ and students’). They concluded that administrators’ roles in the induction program were imbued with strong tensions between personal intentions, individual politics, and contradicting institutional objectives (Cherian & Daniel, 2008).

**Conclusions**

As evident from the literature reviewed in this article, the role of the school administrator is seen as integral to the success of the induction and mentoring processes in schools in
The Role of School Administrators in the Induction and Mentoring of Early Career Teachers

their efforts to reduce attrition and increase retention of early career teachers. Based on key findings revealed through our review of the extant literature, we created a heuristic visualization (see Figure 1) of the multifaceted aspects of the school administrator’s role in mentorship and induction programing and support for beginning teachers. As demonstrated in this heuristic, the role of a school administrator is complex and entails not only objective duties and responsibilities, tools and patterns of supports, but also an understanding of potential benefits and impacts and a demonstration of noticing and nurturing leadership and commitment to the programs.

School administrators’ positive impact on early career teachers’ development occurs through their work devoted to building up school culture and ensuring supportive work conditions, provision of instructional leadership, and involvement with mentorship processes and programs. Further research that describes the practices of positive school administrators in relation to early career teachers and their attention to these teachers’ well-being is suggested. Beyond general program oversight, principals serve to make expectations explicit, together with clarifying the various professional roles in school contexts (including roles of school administrators and teachers). Selecting, matching, and monitoring developmental relationships were seen as supportive and professional enhancement functions provided to teachers by school administrators. Moreover, guiding mentorship program goals and assisting with critical reflection of practices, through observation and planning, were deemed helpful for early career teachers’ growth. At the same time, we noted the formative and summative (growth vs. evaluation) tensions in school administrators’ roles and responsibilities that were evident in the extant literature.

Figure 1. The role of the school administrator in teacher induction and mentorship. Author’s original figure.
School administrators can provide accountability, encouragement, and program infrastructure support along with assignments of good-fit mentors and release time in schedules for meeting and observations. School administrators’ timely presence with early career teachers at support-related and general events is a powerful means of demonstrating the importance of teachers’ efforts. The impact of administrators may also be negative when there is a lack of communication (communication is too often assumed to have taken place), insufficient timely support, insensitivity or lack of empathy to beginning teacher work pressures, and failure to support teachers in situations of differences of opinion or philosophy.

The school administrators’ leadership and their displayed recognition of and commitment to any and all mentorship, socialization, and support programs were deemed important by those contributing to the extant literature. However, as noted by Baker-Gardner (2015), in order for school administrators to be able to lead and implement exemplary programs, they require specialized knowledge about the process of induction, the components of the programs, 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 school administrator’s words and actions on teachers’ work (Lassila et al., 2017).

The implications of the foregoing literature regarding school administrators’ roles in supporting early career teachers demonstrate a need for leaders to be “wide-awake” to the challenges and support requirements of these beginning teachers. Future research that is designed to capture promising school administrator practices and the effect of these practices on early career teachers would highlight the importance and benefits of this supportive role. Sponsoring, endorsing, noticing, facilitating, monitoring, and attending to early career teachers is an investment in teacher retention, teacher well-being, and sustained and enhanced quality of teaching and learning in schools. A general observation from the literature concludes that paying attention to early career teachers pays a disproportionately high ratio of benefits compared to the energy expended. In other words, small acts and attitudes of support, engagement in system-level advocacy, provision of reliance structures (programmatic or informal mentoring and resourcing), and brokering emerging, episodic, and periodic needs are ways that school administrators can tangibly and meaningfully support early career teachers.

References

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