A COMPARISON OF TEACHER PERCEPTIONS BETWEEN A MENTORSHIP MODEL IN BRITISH COLUMBIA AND THE NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHER INDUCTION YEAR IN ENGLAND

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to examine the experiences of two teachers who experienced different mentorship models – the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year in England and a mentorship program in British Columbia (BC). This narrative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with the two participants, which were "restoried" into a chronological narrative. Descriptive and second level-coding were used to find themes between both experiences. The findings of the study reveal three similarities between the teachers' experiences of mentorship: personal relationship between mentor and mentee, practical support, and additional support. The data also revealed three significant differences: the starting point of mentorship for both participants, the role of mentor and the difference in release time. The findings of the study suggest that a wide gap exists between the need and the level of mentorship programming offered for novice teachers in the BC school system. This study contributes to the existing scholarship on teacher mentorship by examining teachers' perceptions of mentorship supports. The study provides several recommendations for mentorship practices, which are particularly timely as BC moves forward with implementing new mentorship models across the province. These recommendations include proving release time, scheduling time for observations and encouraging TTOC's to participate in mentorship programs.

Dedication

Karen, my mentor and friend, thank you. Thank you for listening to me. Thank you for challenging me. And thank you for reminding me that I can achieve whatever I put my mind to. I truly would not be the teacher I am today if it were not for you.

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Glossary

i. BCTF   The British Columbia Teacher's Federation is a union of professionals representing 45,000 public school teachers in the province of British Columbia, Canada.

ii. NQT   A Newly Qualified Teacher is a teacher who has just attained Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and is now undertaking an induction programme that enables them to be legally employed as a teacher in a school.

iii. PGCE   The Post Graduate Certificate in Education is a one-year higher education course in the United Kingdom which provides training in order to allow graduates to become teachers.

iv. PPA   All teachers in the UK are entitled to a minimum of 10% of their regular teaching hours for Planning, Preparation and Assessment.

v. QTS   Qualified Teaching Status is a professional qualification which enables teachers to be legally employed as a teacher in a school.

vi. TTOC   Teacher Teaching on Call. TTOCs are qualified teachers who replace a contract classroom teacher for the purpose of continuing the instructional program, maintaining discipline, and generally promoting the educational welfare of the students.

It is sad. It is frustrating.

Watching young teachers depart.

Truth be told the situation-

Well, it hurts my very heart.

It is so unbelievably hard.

To look a parent, or worse, a student in the eye.

And tell them with a grin,

"I won't be back, but I'll try." (Alcock, 2017, p. 136)

Introduction

This is an extract from a poem written by Keith Alcock (2017), who shares how alone he felt in his first three years of teaching and how he fought against the desire to leave the profession. He used words like "sad", "frustrating" and "unbelievably hard" to describe his experience. His story is just one voice among many in Kutsyuruba and Walker's (2017) book *Bliss and Blisters of Teaching*, which includes stories from early career teachers across Canada. I found it fascinating to read through the lived experiences of these teachers, learning about the unique difficulties they faced depending on what province they worked in. These experiences were eye-opening, as I was surprised to find that my own experience was very different from any one of them.

Context

I grew up in a small town in Ireland, surrounded by my large family. Three of my siblings became teachers and enjoyed travelling around the world and teaching along the way.

Growing up, I loved hearing their stories and discovering how different school environments were between Singapore, Holland and China. Following in their footsteps, I began my teaching career in England, where I completed my Bachelor of Education and taught my first full-time Grade 5 class.

I absolutely loved my first year of teaching and felt very supported by my mentor, principal, and other teachers in the school. In England, all first-year teachers are expected to complete a mandatory year of induction, called the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year. This is an evaluative year, which all new teachers need to successfully pass in order to gain Qualified Teaching Status (QTS) which enables them to be legally employed as a teacher in a school. As an NQT, the school I worked at was required to provide a variety of supports for me, including extra release time for planning, marking and observing other teachers. There was also additional training I could attend, and professional development sessions designed for new teachers. Most importantly, I was assigned a mentor who guided me through my first year, offering me support and challenging me where she saw strengths.

I accepted the position in June, knowing I had the summer months to prepare my classroom for September. During those months, teachers in the school reached out to me, offering to go for coffee and answer any questions I had about the school. I spent many summer days in the school, decorating my classroom, gathering resources and chatting with other teachers about the school procedures. Before I had even started teaching, I already felt a sense of belonging to the school and the staff. The week before school started, the staff were invited to optional collaboration sessions where we could plan our first few weeks of school together. I had many teachers offering me USB sticks and binders filled with years' worth of planning, presentations and activities. I felt confident going into those first few weeks of teaching,

knowing I had a network of more experienced teachers that I could turn to for help. My classroom was in a central location of the school, so teachers would often pop in during recess and lunch, offering me resources, cups of tea and a listening ear.

I would meet with my mentor regularly to reflect on our days and discuss any changes to our plans for the following day. She was required to observe my lessons eight times throughout the year and would provide me with detailed feedback after each observation. We would use that feedback to create attainable goals together and a step-by-step process for how I would reach those goals. Twice in the year, this involved finding training around a specific topic and asking the principal for release time to attend those sessions. My principal agreed to these days, on the condition that I would share what I had learned during a staff meeting. Moments like these filled me with confidence, knowing I was a valued and respected member of the staff. The relationship I had with my mentor was built on trust and honesty. As time went on, my mentor began to share her struggles with me too, and we would support each other in those times. As I reflect on our time together, I believe it was the reciprocal nature of the relationship that made it so meaningful. As a result, I have aimed to be relational in my leadership and mentorship roles ever since.

Although I felt very supported in my first year, I still faced some difficulties. There were times where I felt overwhelmed, feeling as if my to-do list was never going to end. I struggled with behaviour management, which left me feeling drained and exhausted by the end of the week. I found differentiating the learning for each lesson quite demanding and struggled with feelings of inadequacy at times. In times like these, I valued the extra release time I had each week to focus on planning, preparation and assessment. I can only imagine how amplified my stress would have been without that extra time. I also used the release time to observe other

teachers in the school and witness different teaching styles, behaviour management techniques and assessment strategies. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my first year of teaching and remember frequently smiling to myself at the end of the day, knowing I had found my dream job.

After travelling to Canada one summer, and meeting my husband, it wasn't long before I moved to BC and continued my teaching career here. I had no idea that two seemingly similar countries could have such vast differences in terms of curriculum expectations and education systems. I soon learned that my credentials did not meet the requirements for a BC teaching certificate, despite my three years being solely dedicated to education, rather than the one-year program Canadians are required to complete. As a result, I worked as a Special Education Assistant (SEA) in a private school for two years while completing the required courses.

Those valuable years taught me patience, humility and grace. I went from classroom to classroom and witnessed many different teaching styles and classroom environments. I became friends with two first-year teachers in the school and noticed how stressed and anxious they were that year. I was disappointed to discover that there were no additional supports put in place for them, and instead, it appeared that they were given the most difficult and undesirable classes to work with. Their classrooms were both in portables, so they felt quite isolated and segregated from the more experienced staff. On one particularly challenging day, one of those teachers shared that she did not feel that the teaching profession was for her. She questioned how much longer she could cope with such high-stress levels and lack of sleep.

Having had such a rich year of mentorship previously, I felt confident that I had the knowledge and tools to make a difference for those first-year teachers. When I was scheduled to provide SEA support in their classes, I had the opportunity to team-teach with them, offer feedback, and provide practical support with behaviour management. It could be very frustrating

at times, watching others teach and wishing I could return to having my own classroom, so I found moments like these very valuable. At the end of each day, I would check in with the teachers to hear how they were doing. During lunch, I would encourage them to join the staffroom and get to know more experienced teachers. By the final term, it felt like we had an informal collaboration group, where we would meet once or twice a week after school to talk through ideas and hear how we could help one another. I have no way of proving whether my input made a difference in those teachers' lives, but it was clear to me that they needed someone to hear their concerns and offer some support.

When I finally received my BC teaching certificate, I decided to leave private education and took a Grade 6 position in a Lower Mainland school district. Again, I noticed a similar pattern, of early career teachers feeling anxious and overwhelmed with the difficult classes they had been given and a lack of support to help them cope. After a few months, I learned that the district offers an optional mentorship program, where first-year teachers have an opportunity to be matched with a mentor from the district. This raised some questions for me, as I was unsure why I had not learned about the program previously and why the new teachers in my school were not part of the program.

Research Question

These experiences have led me to believe that there needs to be better support systems for early career teachers, in BC. I believe it is unreasonable to expect a new teacher to take on the same workload as an experienced teacher, without providing them adequate time and support to adapt to their new role. How can we expect early career teacher retention rates to improve if we do not provide the support they need?

The British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) recently negotiated a twelve-million-dollar mentorship fund in the new collective agreement in BC (BCTF Teacher Magazine, 2020). Given my own successful induction year in England, I believe this opportunity has the potential to strongly influence the experiences of early-career teachers across BC. The purpose of my research study is to compare the lived experiences of two teachers who experienced different mentorship models – one in England and the other in BC. I believe it is an opportune time to examine how teachers in BC feel about mentorship supports that are already in place and determine what recommendations may be appropriate as the province moves forward with its new mentoring program. The central research question for this study was: What comparisons are there between teacher perceptions of a mentorship model in British Columbia and the Newly Qualified Teacher Induction year in England?

Literature Review

A substantial amount of research has been conducted on the topic of teacher mentorship. For the purposes of my research, I will focus on three areas in the literature. First, I discuss the research behind why attrition rates are so high in the teaching profession. Second, I review what the literature says about how mentorship and induction programs can potentially combat this issue. Third, I narrow my focus on the literature surrounding mentorship support in BC, and the NQT induction program provided in England, in order to compare induction models. Lastly, I identify areas lacking in the available literature and propose further research in specific areas.

Attrition Rates

Teacher attrition within the first five years of classroom in-service practice is a concern at a global level. National and regional studies reported by Weale (2016) in the United Kingdom,

by the European Union (2013) in Europe, and by Sutcher et al (2016) in the United States provide evidence that 15–50% of newly-hired teachers leave within the first five years. Although there are no conclusive statistics about the attrition rates in Canada, researchers have found that early-career attrition rates vary from high to low across provinces and territories (Clandinin et al., 2015; Clark & Antonelli, 2009) and findings suggest that this attrition also occurs mainly within the first five years (Karsenti & Collin, 2013).

The reasons for teacher attrition are varied. Feiman-Nemser (2012) explains that the challenges of early career teachers have been documented for decades. Johnson (2004) found that new teachers often feel "lost at sea," with little or no guidance from colleagues or curriculum (p. 119). Shields et al (2003) also highlight that reduced workloads for new teachers are basically nonexistent, and instead, new teachers are more likely to get larger classes, more students with special needs or behavioural problems, extracurricular duties, and classrooms with fewer textbooks and equipment. As a result, new teachers often experience stress because they feel under-supported as they work to meet the demands of standards, new assessments, and meeting the needs of individual students (Stone 2015; Whalen et al, 2019).

The Role of Induction/Mentorship for New Teachers

Induction programs which involve formal mentorship have been seen as a possible way to combat these high attrition rates. Kutsyuruba et al (2018) have dedicated years of research into reviewing the experiences of new teachers in Canada and finding strategies that could potentially prevent high attrition rates. Their research suggests that there is great value in having a support system for beginning teachers to help mitigate the issue of attrition. Research from Le Maistre et al (2006), also acknowledges that there is value in support for beginning teachers to help mitigate the issue of attrition. Similarly, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) believe that teacher induction, and

mentoring programs foster confidence, best teaching practices, improved job satisfaction, and increased teacher retention. Kelly et al (2018) support these studies regarding the need for the implementation of mentoring programs and suggest that orientation programs, structured opportunities for reflection, reduction in teaching load, and follow up from the teacher education institution should also be considered when offering support for new teachers.

Similarly, Goldrick (2016) found that teacher effectiveness and commitment to the profession increased when induction programs and high-quality mentoring programs are in place and that these programs result in improved instruction and higher student achievement. Everston and Smithey (2000) found that teachers who were supported by a mentor could more effectively organize and manage instruction at the beginning of the year and could establish more workable classroom routines. These researchers also found that the students had better behaviour and engagement. After reviewing research into new teacher experiences across Canada, Whalen, Majocha and Nuland (2019) concluded that the combination of induction and mentoring programs tend to increase retention rates of early-career teachers and indicate that the data should also inform all levels of school systems in Canada of the importance of making mentorship a priority "if the nation wants to avoid early career leavers" (p. 598).

It is important to note that mentoring programs do not benefit all teachers, particularly if the induction is implemented poorly. Hobson et al (2009) acknowledged that "on occasion, mentoring may even have the potential to do harm" (p. 213). They explain that when mentoring programs serve as governance mechanisms, beginning teachers may lose the opportunity to establish themselves as professionals in their own right. However, extensive research shows that strong induction programs and high-quality mentoring programs have positive impacts through increased teacher effectiveness, stronger self-confidence, higher levels of satisfaction,

motivation, and commitment, reduced stress, improved classroom instruction and student achievement, and early career retention of novice teachers (Guarino et al., 2006; Henry et al, 2011; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Mentorship in BC

Many school districts across BC are in different stages of developing mentorship among staff members. Davies and Hales (2017) give an insight into what mentorship looks like in BC in their chapter of *Bliss and Blisters of Early Career Teachers*. They explain that, historically, induction and mentorship support for new teachers has been "as varied and precarious as BC's geographical landscape" (p. 353). Unlike Ontario's New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), BC does not have a systemic, government-funded provincial framework for early career teacher mentorship (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). A survey, *Mentoring: The BC Picture* (2012) indicated that just under half of the province's sixty public school districts provided aspects of mentorship in a variety of forms (British Columbia Teachers Federation, 2012). The authors highlight that the lack of an overarching framework means that consistent funding, systemic vision, and program sustainability are the primary issues in BC. As a result, the New Teacher Mentorship Project (NTMP) was established in 2012, in order to explore potential provincial models of mentorship. This project has now supported mentorship program development in over 40 districts offering different mentorship models, including one-to-one partnerships, cohorts of mentoring groups, and technology-enhanced peer collaboration that cater to teachers in remote communities (Mentoring BC, 2016a). Unfortunately, a change in government resulted in a loss of funding for the NTMP, which stopped research and government-funded support for mentorship in BC. Some districts chose to continue the mentorship programs that were already started, but others lacked funding and support to keep them running.

Early career teachers in BC have faced challenges with mentorship programs in the past. In Whalen et al's (2019) phenomenological study into the challenges that novice teachers face in Canada, the participants revealed that "very little effort" went into formal mentorship programming within their school districts (p. 592) and that mentorship programming is optional and "very loose" in its implementation (p. 599). One participant shared that she signed up for the volunteer mentorship program and appreciated that her mentor was in the same school as her. She explained that this was not the case for many other mentees in the program. Other participants indicated a lack of awareness for the district support that was available to them. A Teacher Teaching on Call (TTOC) shared that he did not receive an invitation to participate in the school district mentorship program, which he found disappointing. Some of the participants, like this TTOC, ended up finding their own mentor, which the researchers believe should indicate to the BC school districts the need to make mentorship a priority through policy and additional resources for teacher retention.

Finding teachers who are willing to become mentors has also been a challenge. The Whalen et al (2019) study revealed that many experienced teachers were not willing to give up their time to mentor due to the strained relationship with the government of the day and how the teachers have been treated. One teacher stated:

> There's no incentive for teachers to want to be mentors other than the goodness of your heart because the people who are mentors right now have been in the system for at least 10 to 20 years. They are bitter at the government. They've done three or four union strikes and they're paid the second lowest out of Canada and don't want to give up the extra time. (Whalen et al., 2019, p. 601)

Overall, the study concludes that a wide gap exists between expressed needs and the level of mentorship programming offered for novice teachers in the K-12 school system. The researchers believe that the Canadian school system will continue to lose teachers through attrition until this issue is addressed as a priority. They argue that the data findings emphasise the need to develop a process for mentorship to increase retention rates for all early career teachers. These findings are similar to those of Kutsyuruba and Walker (2017) who argue that significant change is required in how the government views the importance of mentorship and that mentorship programming must be supported by the province and the local school district in order to have an impact.

The NQT Induction Year in England

The Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) program is relatively new. Cross (1995) explains that until 1992, there was no formal induction provided for new teachers in England, and any support they did receive was considered "haphazard" (p. 92). He explains that there was an obvious need for a structure to support new teachers during the initial stages of their teaching career. As a result, the government declared new legislation that required all principals to identify a member of staff to act as a mentor to any new teachers that were joining their school. Mentors typically volunteer to take on this responsibility and are not paid extra for this role. By 1999, the NQT induction year was created and is now an essential requirement that all new teachers must complete in order to achieve Qualified Teaching Status (QTS) which enables them to be legally employed as a teacher in a school.

The NQT induction is an assessment period lasting 3 terms and is designed to ensure that new teachers have a solid ground on which to build their skills throughout their teaching career. According to the Department for Education (2018), the purpose of the NQT induction year is to offer personalised support and guidance through the first year of teaching, as well as:

- A 10% reduction in the teaching timetable for the NQT to develop skills outside of the classroom. This is in addition to 10% planning, preparation and assessment time.

- Daily support from a mentor who is situated in the same school. The mentor is responsible for introducing the NQT to the school and staff, conducting frequent observations, providing feedback and support, co-creating monthly goals and helping the NQT find relevant professional development to help the NQT reach those goals.

- Reviews on progress, together with formal and informal meetings each term with the principal and mentor. The mentor observes and evaluates the new teacher's lessons on a regular basis, with time for reflection and feedback before a final evaluation is given.

- Release time to observe other teachers in the school, teachers in other schools, and/or professional development sessions.

- Regular contact with a member of the university faculty (usually where the teacher was trained) who is available to offer any additional support and advice that may be needed for both the mentee and mentor. (Mellish et al., 2021)

Although there is extensive support in place for NQTs, it is important to note that the year is evaluative in nature. The mentor and university representative provide a grade at three points in the year, which indicates whether the teacher is considered "Outstanding", "Good", or "Required to Improve." If the teacher has been graded as the latter, they risk failing their induction year and are forbidden from repeating it (Department for Education, 2018).

There have been mixed reviews on the NQT year as a whole. Newman (2010) interviewed a variety of NQT's who shared that although the induction year was stressful at times, the participants appreciated the extra support. One participant appreciated the "empathetic connection" she had with her mentor and recognised the time she took to get to know "what

mattered in my life as an NQT" (p. 470). She felt that this support, alongside the reduction in workload, helped create a strong work life balance. In contrast, another participant experienced significant struggles during his NQT year and felt that he lacked meaningful feedback from his mentor, because of time constraints.

Despite the extensive support provided during the NQT year, there is still a growing concern for the numbers of teachers who leave the profession shortly after qualifying. Williams et al (2005) interviewed a group of elementary school teachers to gain insight into how the NQT year could be improved, to combat the levels of attrition. Similar to Newman's (2010) findings, some of the NQTs had a very positive experience with their mentor and felt supported in their workload. Others felt that more consideration should have been put into who was chosen as their mentor, as some were either too busy to dedicate themselves to the role or were given the responsibility without volunteering for it. Another suggestion that came from their research was being mindful of the physical location of the NQT's classroom. Many NQTs appreciated having their classroom close to their mentor, so they could contact them with ease. One NQT reported feeling "physically isolated" (p. 38) because her classroom was situated outside of the main school. She recognised that this could have been a big issue, but she was proactive in making sure she joined the staff during break times.

Areas for Further Research

As evidenced in this literature review, there is a variety of research that looks into the role of mentorship and induction programs in combating attrition rates in the teaching profession. Despite the mentorship and induction programs implemented in BC and England, attrition rates are still considered high in both countries, which raises the question, how effective is the NQT induction year and the NTMP in BC in combating these attrition rates? The research in teacher

perspectives of both programs is either very limited, or outdated. The current study seeks to address this gap in the literature on teacher perceptions of mentorship. With the recent funding for the mentorship in BC, I believe it is an important time to investigate how teachers feel about supports that are already in place and see what recommendations may arise as BC moves forward with implementing mentorship across the province.

Methodology

For my research inquiry, I aimed to gather a deeper insight into the perceptions of two early-career teachers, one from a Lower Mainland school district in BC and one from England. As both places offer different mentorship programs, I chose to compare the experiences of both in order to see what similarities and differences arose and what recommendations could be considered going forward.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) explain that the constructivist worldview is formed "through participants and their subjective views" (p. 22). They discuss how this research is built "from the bottom up" by gathering participants' understanding, which has been shaped by their personal histories (p. 22). Personally, I believe a variety of mixed experiences have shaped who I am as an educator and have taught me lessons I will never forget. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) note that a constructivist approach recognizes how our individual experiences shape and affect our perceptions. This results in what is ontologically referred to as multiple realities. This resonates with me and has led to my interest in understanding the participant's life stories.

Considering my constructivist worldview, I decided that qualitative research was the best way for me to gain a deeper understanding of my research question. Yilmaz (2013) describes qualitative research as a "naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases [and] phenomena" in

order to "reveal in descriptive terms the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world" (p. 312). As I wanted to understand the perspectives of new teachers, I thought that hearing directly from the participants would help me gain an understanding of their experience, perceptions, and beliefs. This supports my epistemological view that it is important to get as close to the participants as possible; by interviewing them in a place that is comfortable for them and listening to their stories, I would get a true sense of who they are as educators. Creswell and Poth (2017) explain that narrative research consists of "collecting stories from individuals about their lived and told experiences" (p. 67). The researcher and the participant work collaboratively to analyze and reorganise their experiences into a framework called "restorying" (p. 72). Therefore, I chose to conduct narrative research.

Method

Creswell and Poth (2017) outline the steps of narrative research, originally introduced by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). I begin by discussing how I followed the first three steps in order to conduct my study. The final four steps are discussed in the data analysis of this study.

The first step is to determine if the research question best fits narrative research. I chose to conduct a narrative study, rather than phenomenology because it allowed me to truly get to know the stories of each participant. Hearing about each participant's first year as a whole allowed me to analyze how the different experiences shaped their view of mentorship. By conducting narrative research, I believe I gained a deeper understanding of their beliefs surrounding mentorship than if I had just focused on their mentorship experiences in isolation.

The second step is to select one or more individuals who have life experiences to tell and spend considerable time with them to gather their stories. I held in-depth interviews with each

participant. The interviews were about an hour long and consisted of open-ended questions to invite them to share as much as they wanted to without interruption.

The third step is to consider how the collection of data and their recording can take different shapes. I chose to voice record and transcribe the interviews so that I could hear their stories several times to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences.

Data Sources

I used convenience sampling (Patton, 2002) to find two participants who had experienced a form of mentorship in their first year of teaching. I met the UK participant while attending university together and I met the BC participant from working together in a Lower Mainland middle school, in the past. The UK participant, "Olivia" was enrolled in the NQT induction program for the duration of her first year, which she needed to successfully pass in order to achieve QTS. The participant worked full time in a four-form entry elementary school, teaching a Grade 3 class and was supported by a mentor assigned to her. The mentor worked in the same school as the participant and was also the year group leader. Olivia was given a 10% reduction in her teaching timetable that year, in order to give her additional planning and preparation time, as well as other supports. The BC participant, "Sophia," began her first year as a TTOC and later took a full-time Grade 8 position in a Lower Mainland middle school. She was informally supported by a teacher who worked in the same grade as her, who officially become Sophia's mentor once the participant joined the mentorship program the following year. The mentorship program offered optional training sessions and a book club outside of school hours.

Data Tools

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants individually, for approximately one hour each, using Zoom (see Appendix B and C for interview questions). I

tried my best to make the online interviews as relaxed as possible, as narrative research aims to do (Creswell & Poth, 2017). I asked open-ended questions such as "tell me about your first year of teaching" and "how did you feel supported in your first year?" Yimez (2014) explains that inviting open-ended responses lets the researcher understand and present the world as it is seen and experienced by the participants without predetermining their standpoints. By hearing the participants' responses to each question, I had the opportunity to actively listen to their stories and learn from their reflections, thought processes, and conclusions. I also had the opportunity to learn from the unheard responses they gave, such as what they were communicating through their pauses, silences, and body language.

I used the Otter app to record and transcribe the interviews so that I could listen to them again as needed. Once I had checked and edited any errors from the transcription of the interview, I conducted a member check by sending it to each participant and giving them time to review their answers. I also invited the participants to add, change, or retract anything they had shared so that I had a clear, accurate picture of their story rather than my interpretation of their story. I then used the transcripts to "restory" the participants' experiences and collaborated with them to ensure I had conveyed their story truthfully and accurately.

Data Analysis

The data collected was anonymized by removing specific names of teachers and schools. Instead, I referred to the participants as "Olivia" and "Sophia" as well as their preferred pronouns of "she/her" throughout. As outlined by Creswell and Poth (2017), the final four steps when conducting narrative research refer to the analysis of the data.

The fourth step is to embed information about the context of these stories into data collection, analysis, and writing. Czarniawska (2004) explains that being content sensitive is considered

essential to narrative research, so I situated the individual stories within participants' personal experiences, culture, and historical contexts. I intentionally asked questions about the participants themselves and used this background information to inform my analysis and interpretation of the data.

The fifth step is to analyze the participants' stories using the process of reorganizing the stories into a framework called "restorying." Cortazzi (1993) highlights that the chronology of narrative research sets it apart from other genres of research. Once the member check was complete, I read over the transcript several times in order to gather a clear picture of each participants' story. I followed Carter's (1993) framework by using basic elements of good storytelling to restory the participants' experiences chronologically. This involved forming a beginning, middle, and end to the story, with a focus on time and place, as well as including a protagonist (the participant) and a conflict or struggle that they faced within their first year of teaching. Besides the chronology, Huber and Whelan (1999) suggest detailing themes from the story to provide a more detailed discussion of the meaning of the story in the data analysis. Therefore, I used descriptive coding to find themes and areas of interest that stood out to me (Saldana, 2009). I then conducted second-level coding, by looking for any similarities or differences between both experiences. Finally, I coded the transcripts for any recommendations I thought could be valuable moving forward.

The sixth step is to embed a collaborative approach in the collection and telling of the stories. Creswell and Miller (2000) highlight the importance of a "validation check" between the researcher and the participant. Therefore, once I completed my analyses of the data, I shared this with the participants and invited them to discuss the themes that arose. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) explain that in narrative research the collaborative approach allows for both the

researcher and the participant to learn and change from the encounter. By working alongside the participants in this way, I felt I had gathered an authentic picture of their story.

The seventh and final step is to resent the narrative in written form. Both participants signed a consent form detailing the nature of the study and outlining their rights as participants. After completing the member check and discussing the restorying and themes that emerged from the interview with the participants, I began writing this paper.

Managing Bias. As I have had personal experiences with mentorship, both in England and BC, I was careful to manage my bias during the interviews. I did this by only asking the interview questions I had prepared in order to prevent me from asking any questions that I knew could elicit a positive or negative response. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed me to focus on listening to the story of the participant, rather than interjecting with my own opinions. I also took time before the interviews to answer the questions myself in a journal so that I could remind myself of my own experiences and actively keep my responses separate from theirs. Conducting the member check and gathering feedback from the participants also helped ensure that my findings were an accurate representation of the participants' stories and their answers had not been altered by me.

Strength of Study. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) highlight the importance of the "triple crisis" with regards to qualitative research (pp. 19-20). The first element they discuss is the importance of representation. I believe I have represented the participants well by intentionally getting to know each of them as individuals during our interview. I intentionally asked open-ended questions in order to hear a detailed account of their first year of teaching and how that has affected who they are and what they value. I have also described who the participants are in detail so that the reader would have a clear understanding of who these teachers are.

Secondly, the authors highlight the importance of legitimization in a qualitative study. By providing the interview questions, the reader can look into the details behind how the data was gathered. In the analyses and discussion of the data, I made sure to include direct quotes from the participants in order to provide evidence for the claims I made. I also gathered feedback from the participants before finalizing my "restorying" of their experiences, including the sharing of my themes to make sure I had represented the participants accurately.

The final element of the triple crisis is praxis. As the BCTF recently negotiated a twelve-million-dollar mentorship fund in the new collective agreement in BC (BCTF Teacher Magazine, 2020), I believe my research came at an opportune time to make a difference in the professional lives of early-career teachers. After comparing the experiences from the participants, I gathered a variety of recommendations that the BCTF could consider when planning their mentorship and induction programs in the future. I planned to share the findings of my study with the BCTF and the local Teachers' Association with the hope that my participants' voices will be heard and taken into consideration as they plan to implement changes to the current mentorship model in the school district.

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Restoried Experiences

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After interviewing both participants, and coding and analyzing the transcripts, I followed Cortazzi (1993) and Carter's (1993) narrative research framework to "restory" their experiences chronologically. These restorying process uses basic elements of storytelling to create a chronological beginning, middle and end to the participants first year of their teaching career. I begin with Sophia's story.

Sophia's Story

Sophia, the participant from British Columbia, is a teacher who has gained three years of experience teaching middle school students. She describes herself as a first-generation Indo-Canadian and has lived in British Columbia her whole life. She believes in giving students a voice and creating opportunities for them to bring their own identity into the learning environment. She models that by bringing her own culture into the classroom and she is also passionate about Indigenous studies and reconciliation.

Sophia had a stressful start to her teaching career. She began as a TTOC for five different districts and spent her first month "struggling back and forth" commuting hours to and from work each day. After a few months, she started her first full-time job covering a maternity leave position in Grade 8, which she found very challenging. Unlike the schools she had experience in previously, this school focused much more on health and wellness, rather than academics. Sophia found that "feeding kids" was her main concern, and that "education came secondary." Although she found this job very rewarding at times, some days were incredibly difficult, which would occasionally reach the point of tears by the end of the day. She said that she "really thrive[s] with community and clear communication and collaboration" but as she had joined the school later in the year, she felt that the staff had already created their own community, which she didn't feel a part of. She felt "really alone" as a new teacher and found the beginning of the year "really hard" and "really lonely."

Sophia found talking to parents "really nerve-wracking" and would often feel anxious and lose sleep. She remembers one particular experience with a student who was being disrespectful towards her and would lie regularly. After building up the courage to speak to the child's parents, she was "accused of not being a good teacher" and they demanded to see her teaching licence and asked to observe in her classroom. She felt very intimidated by the

situation. Thankfully, the principal and vice-principal of the school supported her by helping her type up an email response, and by reminding the parents about the expectations of the school.

Eventually, Sophia connected with two teachers who reached out to her and ended up "kind of being my mentors and took me under their wing." They shared their resources and helped her with "the things that they don't teach you, like, how to work a photocopier." One of these teachers was a mentor for a student-teacher at the time, so Sophia felt that she could approach her with any questions she had. Sophia had heard about various mentorship programs while at university, but as she was a TTOC for five different districts, she felt that she wasn't ready to reach out to a specific program. She was worried that she wouldn't have the energy to keep up with the meetings for more than one mentorship program.

Once Sophia started her first full-time job with the district, she received a welcome email from the coordinator of the mentorship program. The coordinator followed up this communication by also sending her a welcome package, with some teacher necessities, like post-it notes and a water bottle, which she sends to all new teacher in the district as an invitation to the mentorship program, every year. Once Sophia replied to thank her, the coordinator came to visit Sophia at her school and asked her questions to learn more about her, what she was struggling with and what her goals were for the year. The coordinator then used this information to pair Sophia with possible mentors in the district, who shared similar values. She provided two options, but both were teachers who worked in different schools. Sophia was hoping to find a mentor in the same school as her and shared that she had already connected with another Grade 8 teacher in her school. The co-ordinator spoke with that teacher, who agreed to officially mentor Sophia, and they began their formal involvement with The Mentorship Program in September the following year.

The year began with a big welcome session of over sixty mentors and mentees, "brainstorming, collaborating and networking." This was followed by some sessions that were just for mentors, where they received training and support for their role. The mentees were invited to a variety of different sessions, "some were community builders, where you could hang out, go for a meal with your mentor, and some of them were around lesson planning or focusing on whatever you want to focus on." Every week, the co-ordinator invited the mentees to optional "coffee and chat" sessions, which focussed on any topics the mentees hoped to learn more about. The coordinator also organised a book club for the mentees, where they would meet weekly to discuss different pedagogies. Sophia enjoyed the book club and appreciated how it was organised. She found the coordinator to be very personable as she took time to get to know each of the mentors and mentees in the program.

Sophia believes that having a mentor with whom she could truly connect was the most helpful aspect of the mentorship program. She appreciated that their pedagogies were aligned, and their teaching styles were very similar. Her mentor was always "willing to try new things" and would check up on her each day, asking how things were going and would follow up with any challenges Sophia was facing. She felt that they were truly "working as a team instead of having one person telling me everything to do." Sophia appreciated that they could be "really honest with one another" and felt that she "could trust her 100%" which was important during her most stressful times. She shared, "sometimes I would be crying in my mentor's classroom… and my mentor would just be my shoulder to lean on." She found that over the months, her mentoring relationship became more of a friendship. During tough days, she found "the only thing I would look forward to was seeing my mentor." Sophia was thankful that she was paired with a mentor who was so easy to connect with, but she mentioned that not all mentees felt the

same way, "I do know of some friends that are in the mentorship program who didn't get along with their mentor and they didn't feel supported."

Sophia found it particularly beneficial to have her mentor in the same school as her, which is not the case for all the mentees in the program. If she had a quick question during the day, she could ask her without having to organise a meeting. In addition, she felt that if she "just needed a pep talk during the day" her mentor was close by, and usually available. Working in the same school also meant that her mentor could direct her to any other teachers who could help her with any specific questions. Sophia also valued having her mentor in the same year group as her, as she found the cross-curricular planning "quite rewarding." They would "collaborate all the time- during our team meetings, after school and during our mentor meetings." Lastly, her mentor would also support her practically, for example, doing a mock parent-teacher interview or a mock meeting with a parent. She valued being able to "have a debrief with my mentor during or after a challenging time. I really, really, really needed the debrief."

Although Sophia really appreciated the support the mentorship program offered her, she also described the program as "a lot." She highlighted that "for mentees, it's just, we're constantly learning, and it is a lot of time out of our day, like I'm thinking of people that have kids, pets or other commitments." She shared that she would have appreciated some release time from her teaching schedule to attend sessions. Sophia also noted that she would have liked more opportunities to observe other teachers. She explained that she is aware this is a possibility but felt that it wasn't advertised very well and that this was more of a "word of mouth type of network." Overall, Sophia felt "really supported" by the two-year mentorship program. She still has a close relationship with her mentor and plans to continue that relationship for as long as she

can. She looks forward to becoming a mentor one day so she can support young teachers who may be going through what she went through.

Olivia's Story

Olivia, the participant from the United Kingdom, is a teacher, who began her career in a four-form entry school in the outskirts of London. After completing her degree in Physical Education, she went on to complete a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) to become a teacher. Olivia describes her teaching style as "firm but fair" as she strives to facilitate and scaffold learning through differentiated tasks and activities to suit the needs of her students. She received her first full-time teaching job in a Grade 3 classroom, where she worked alongside a team of three experienced teachers, including her mentor who also had the role of Year Group Leader.

Receiving adequate support during her first year was very important to her. During the interview process, the principal outlined what supports would be in place for her and NQT, which gave Olivia the confidence she needed to accept the position. Olivia's mentor was assigned by the principal of the school and was expected to support Olivia through her first year of teaching. Her mentor was responsible for observing Olivia six times a year, in order to support her growth and development as a teacher and to decide if she could successfully pass the year and receive QTS.

Olivia described her first year of teaching as "really positive" because of the support she received. She said, "in a way, [my first year] was easy, because they really supported me." Her mentor believed that, at the start of the year, Olivia should simply focus on the day to day running of the classroom, so she provided her with lesson plans in each subject, for the first term. She felt as though the other teachers in her year were "running the ship" and she was free to "sail

alongside them." "They really carried the year group, which made it so much easier, because they knew exactly what they were doing, when things were coming up, and planning was basically all in place."

In addition to having an assigned mentor, the school was also required to provide additional supports for Olivia, as an NQT. One of those supports was an additional 10% Planning Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time for the teacher to use to complete tasks outside of teaching. Olivia explained:

> So I was basically teaching four out of the five days in effect, if you put the PPA time and extra NQT time together, which was really nice because it meant that I had that time to sort myself out and mark my books or catch up on marking or planning or whatever I need to do.

She also had the option of using the time to observe other teachers. Twice a month, all of the NQTs from schools in the area were invited to optional training sessions. These sessions were held during Olivia's release time, so she was free to leave the school building at that time. She explained, "all the NQT's in the borough would go and have some training around things like planning, classroom management, behaviour management, things like that."

As an NQT, Olivia was required to be observed by her mentor six times a year. She felt confident going into these observations because she had planned the lesson with the help of her mentor. She believed that "when she gave me feedback, it was more realistic feedback for me, not just what the school would think was good and bad." For three of those observations, either the principal or vice-principal were also invited to attend, and occasionally a specialist subject coordinator would join. She would feel "more tense" and "anxious" during those observations and explained that she felt "more judged" when she was being observed by someone "more

senior" than her mentor. She felt the need to "try and cram everything into one lesson to try and show them everything that you can possibly do." Although being observed was a stressful time, Olivia could still see the value in them, because they allowed her to focus on areas she needed to improve in, as well as being encouraged in areas she excelled.

Olivia appreciated the support from her mentor and described her as "lovely, helpful and genuinely nice." They would meet on a regular basis, before or after school, to plan lessons or to assess students' work. In her most stressful times, she felt she could go to her mentor for help. During a particularly busy time of year, they worked together to discuss Olivia's to-do list, and her mentor helped guide her into deciding which were the most important things and which she could leave until a later time. She supported her by "structuring what I needed to do and when to do it, which definitely helps when you've got so much on and you just don't know what to do first." As the year went on, Olivia gained more and more responsibility over the planning of lessons until she was confidently planning for every subject by the end of the year. She felt like she could ask her mentor anything and that she would always help her. She really appreciated the times when her mentor would come to her for advice or ideas.

Although she felt very supported by her mentor, Olivia still faced some challenges throughout the year and said, "in those first eight weeks, you are literally just like, you're a zombie the whole time." She explained that teaching in England can be very demanding, and in particular, she found the expectations around assessment very time-consuming.

> The marking in our school was ridiculous at one point. We had to do pink for this and green for this, write in the margin for this. And I was like, I just don't have time to mark 90 books a day in this way.

She had a difficult relationship with her principal and didn't feel supported when dealing with behaviour issues involving a child in her class. Olivia asked the administration for help several times, but the principal only intervened after the child had physically harmed Olivia. She described that time as "one of my darkest moments" because her headteacher "just didn't believe how bad he was and nothing was done." She felt that the principal looked down on her teaching abilities because she was an NQT and felt she was not supported well by her "because she said, 'Oh, you're an NQT, you're inexperienced, you can't manage behaviour.'" Olivia was often referred to as "The NQT" rather than by her name, especially at the beginning of the year. She explained that "some teachers are really like 'ugh NQT's' but my mentor wasn't like that at all, she just sort of, accepted me!" During that difficult time, Olivia's mentor encouraged her to send the child to her classroom when they were misbehaving. Unfortunately, the child would usually refuse to leave the room. Instead, her mentor would usually join Olivia during recess and lunch when she would take time to follow up on consequences or take time to discuss the behaviour with the student.

When asked if she thought the NQT year was necessary, she said she couldn't imagine not having that year of transition to figure things out and wouldn't change anything about it. She believes that "new teachers would just sink [without the NQT year] because there's so much to do in that first year and it's all so new, and you're doing everything as a class teacher." Olivia believes that new teachers rely on having extra time to get to know the expectations of the school without feeling judged.

> With [the NQT] year, you're basically given like a grace period of being rubbish, if you're allowed to be, kind of thing. And then it's like, 'hey, why don't you try this next time?' Instead of 'why didn't you do this?'

She found that having a mentor assigned to her was the most helpful support during that year:

> Just to have someone who is always there for you when you need them, who you can go and ask questions to... I don't know, I guess you could form that relationship with someone in the school, but it wouldn't be the same because it wouldn't be like they had to do it.

Overall, Olivia believes she was very supported during her NQT year and felt prepared and confident to teach the following year independently. She has been teaching at that school for five years now and loves her job and the people she works with. She looks forward to becoming a mentor for an NQT one day.

Findings

After comparing the experiences of both participants, it is clear that both the NQT and BC mentorship programs have very helpful aspects, but both also have areas they could improve in. Both programs succeeded in making their new teachers feel supported, and both provided strong mentorship relationships and additional training, which resulted in early career teachers feeling supported in their first years of teaching. It is clear that both programs value mentorship, and executed this value well, to the point where both mentees shared that they aspire to become mentors in the future. Overall, the BC participant saw her time in the mentorship program as a helpful support but very demanding of her time. The UK participant saw her NQT year as a necessity and felt that she may not have survived her first year of teaching without it. Both teachers are now successfully and confidently teaching, but it would appear that the BC participant had to overcome many more obstacles in her first year that could have been avoided if she had more support as soon as she was hired.

As discussed in the following sections of this paper, I found three similar themes that emerged between the participants experiences of the NQT year in the UK and the mentorship program in BC. Both participants valued the personal relationship that developed with their mentor, as well as the practical support they received from their mentor. Both programs offered additional supports during their first year of teaching, which the participants appreciated. There were also significant contrasts between both programs, which include the starting point for both participants, the role of mentor that they experienced, and the difference in release time.

Personal Relationship between Mentor and Mentee

Both participants discussed how much they valued the personal relationship that developed with their mentor over time, and each described their relationship as a "friendship" by the end of the year. They both described their relationship as if they were a team. Sophia said, "When we were collaborating, we were actually working as a team instead of having one person telling me everything to do." She explained, "It wasn't a one-way street. It works both ways… [w]e were colleagues, and we were equals." Similarly, Olivia said, "it was a working relationship" and explained that they would have conversations about different approaches she could take to teaching, instead of telling her what to do. Olivia also highlighted that she felt valued when her mentor would ask her for opinion, "even as an NQT, she still valued what I thought."

Sophia talked about how she felt she could trust her mentor and valued her honesty. She shared that she could be vulnerable with her mentor and said "[m]y mentor would just be my shoulder to lean on" which led to times when she "would be crying in [her] mentor's classroom." That relationship became a very important part of her day. "Some days were really hard and the only thing I would look forward to was seeing my mentor and having that tea in the morning."

Similarly, Olivia appreciated being cared for by her mentor, "[s]he really cared about my teaching and wanted to develop me as a teacher." During times where she was feeling overwhelmed, her mentor would take the time to sit with her and help her organise the things she needed to do so that her to-do list felt more manageable. She felt "accepted" by her and recognised that "[s]he really invested her time into me being an NQT and training me" knew that she could ask her mentor anything, and that "she'd always be there to help [her]."

Practical Support

Both participants appreciated the practical support they received from their mentors. For Sophia, this was usually in the form of daily check-ins. She said, "it would just be so lovely to just to chat and check-in. It became a routine where every morning we had a cup of tea together." She appreciated discussions about events that were coming up or debriefing events that had happened.

For Olivia, her mentor's main support came in the form of observations. Her mentor would help her plan a lesson, watch her teach it, and then reflect together on how it went. She appreciated "having someone who's not looking for the faults in your teaching but someone who's looking to develop you." She recognised that, although the observations could be stressful at times, "they're actually quite valuable because you've learned where your weaknesses are and what you need to improve on." Olivia's mentor also provided her with lesson plans for each subject in the first term, which she really appreciated. "I had a solid term where I literally just got my head around teaching, classroom behaviour, classroom management and things like that, which was amazing." Once Olivia felt confident in those areas, her mentor helped scaffold the lesson planning responsibility over to her. "Then [the planning] was kind of like, dripped in kind of thing, so I started off with one small subject and went from there."

Both participants worked in the same school as their mentor, as well as the same grade group. Sophia appreciated simply "knowing someone was available" if she had a "quick question" or needed a "pep talk." Similarly, Olivia appreciated having her mentors support "during break times and lunchtimes" when she was managing student behaviour. She also noted how important it was to have someone who "knows the school really, really well" to show you "this is how we do it here" as well as having a "guide" who can help you with things like "structuring your week."

Collaboration was another key aspect of both relationships. As they both worked in the same grade group as their mentor, they would both plan together and reflect on how their lessons went. Sophia said, "[w]e would collaborate all the time- during our team meetings, after school, during our mentor meetings etc." Olivia said "[s]he'd plan with me and she'd show me what the lesson should look like." Olivia's mentor would also take time to collaborate over the assessment portion of the lesson too. "We would mark at the same time, so we could bounce off what we're going to write for feedback and things like that."

Additional Supports

Both participants received optional training that was specifically for new teachers. For Sophia, she had the option of emailing the coordinator of the mentorship program and asking for training in specific areas such as "how to log an absence, report card writing, assessment, etc.," The coordinator would then organise optional "coffee and chat" sessions after school each week for any mentees in the program who may also want to learn more about a certain topic. Olivia's additional training was held twice a week, and she was given release time from her school in order to attend the training. These sessions were held for all NQT's in the area and were organised around popular topics that the new teachers would potentially be interested in.

Sophia also had the opportunity to join a book club, which was organised by the coordinator of the program. These sessions were all held outside of school hours, usually between 4 pm-6 pm. Each member of the group read two chapters each and would meet once a week to share what they had learned. Lastly, Sophia and her mentor were given a fifty-dollar budget, which they could use on resources that "foster life-long learning."

For Olivia, the 10% release time she was given each week was incredibly valuable to her, and she said that this was the support she missed the most the following year. This time, in addition to the Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time that all teachers are entitled to in England, added up to almost a whole day of release time. "[That time] was really nice, because it meant I had that time to sort myself out and mark my books or catch up on marking or planning or whatever I need to do or go to that training." She could also use that time to observe other teachers:

> Observing other teachers allowed me to see where the children needed to go and where they were coming from. For example, I watched a few guided reading sessions in school so I could see where the children needed to get to, and where they were coming from to help support the whole system.

Olivia was also observed three times by her principal, vice-principal and occasionally by a subject specialist who offered her feedback on her teaching.

In contrast, Sophia did not receive any release time or observations. When she chose to meet with her mentor, attend the training sessions and join the book club, these were all outside of school hours. Sophia was never observed by her mentor, or by her principal or vice principal and she did not observe any other teachers during her time in the mentorship program. She

mentioned that this may have been a possibility, but it was more of a "word of mouth" type network. See Figure 1 for the similarities and differences offered by both programs.

Figure 1

Additional Supports
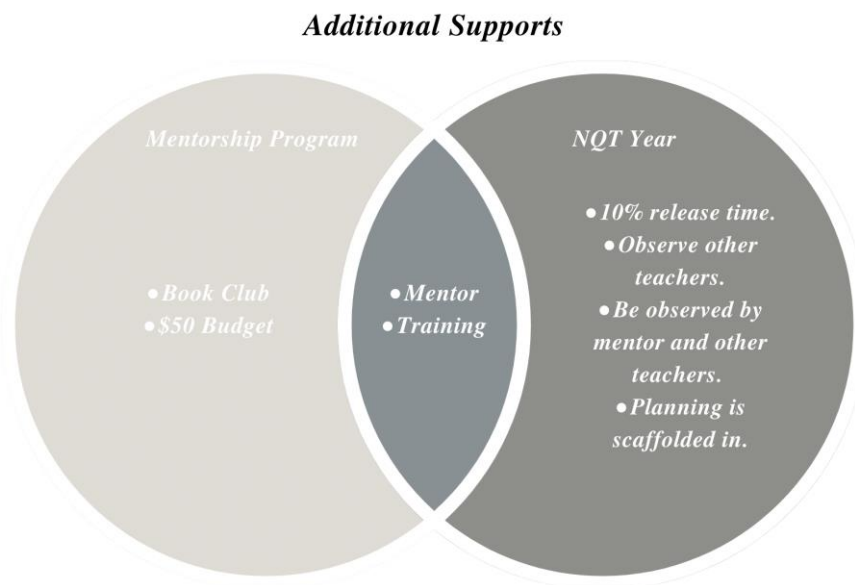
Starting Point

The journey that both participants experienced before their first day of teaching was vastly different. Unfortunately, new teachers in BC are given a rough starting point as soon as they begin applying for jobs. Like many teachers with no seniority in BC, whenever Sophia applied for a job she desired, she was not considered for the position because she always had to compete with teachers who had more experience than her. As a result, she felt she had to work as a TTOC across five different districts in order to build up seniority, with the hope of eventually receiving a full-time position. Months later, Sophia received her first position, covering another teacher's maternity leave. By the time she taught her first day with her own class she had missed out on valuable time to get to know the staff, students, and school procedures.

In England, the hiring process for new teachers is completely different. NQT's are seen as desirable teachers to have in a school because they are paid less than a teacher with years of experience. Therefore, as NQT's are interviewing at different schools, they have a lot more agency in which school they work at, what class they would like to teach, etc. For Olivia, she asked the principal of each school to explain exactly how she would be supported as an NQT, and their answer was a big deciding factor in whether or not she would accept the position. This has created a culture where schools aim to entice NQT's with supports, whereas Lower Mainland teachers are more inclined to take any job they can get in order to build their seniority, and then they need to go out of their way to find extra support. This leads me to believe that the lack of support for new teachers in BC is a systemic issue and changes need to be made to the hiring process, to give new teachers a stronger start. However, this is a complicated political issue, as the BCTF have fought to keep seniority as a valuable aspect in hiring processes and uphold this as a non-negotiable in all collective agreements. Therefore, changing the hiring process to favour novice teachers would be a complex task that would necessitate the coordination of several stakeholders, including the BCTF.

As the NQT induction year is mandatory, new teachers become acquainted with their mentor before teaching in the classroom begins. This provides time for the NQT to become familiar with the school, collaborate with their mentor and prepare for their first weeks of teaching. Olivia appreciated knowing what supports are available for her beforehand and knowing that her mentor was available to support her. I believe the timing of this system sets new teachers up for success before they have even started their first day of teaching. In contrast, Sophia didn't receive her invitation to participate in the mentorship program until she had received her maternity leave position later in the year, so she missed out on the first few months

of support from the program. Perhaps if the program gave invitations to TTOCs, Sophia would have had a stronger foundation to begin with. I believe the timing is key here, and if the mentorship program could get in contact with the new teachers a few weeks *before* they begin their first day of teaching, I think the new teachers would be better set up for success.

The Role of Mentor

In the Lower Mainland, mentors volunteer to be a part of the mentorship program. In England, mentors are often assigned their role. This leads me to believe that the mentors in the Lower Mainland must genuinely want to provide support for early-career teachers, whereas mentors in England may experience feelings of resentment or apathy towards their assigned role. Newman (2010) found cases of apathetic mentors in his study, but this was not the case for Olivia, as her mentor appeared to genuinely enjoy supporting her through the year despite being assigned the role. Another possible issue with being assigned the role, is that it would appear that little consideration is given to ensuring the relationship is well matched. In comparison, the coordinator of the Lower Mainland mentorship program takes time each year to get to know both the mentors and mentees and matches them based on their personalities, teaching styles and values.

Mentors in England have a long list of ways they are required to support their mentee, so appear more action-oriented when compared to the mentors in the Lower Mainland mentorship program. Olivia's mentor observed her lessons, provided detailed feedback, invited her to view her own lessons, provided her with planning and supported Olivia as she gained the confidence to plan her own lessons independently. For Sophia, her mentor appeared to hold more of an emotional support role by checking up on her, discussing any difficulties she was facing, and often being her "shoulder to lean on." Sophia often collaborated with her mentor, discussing

different lesson plans they could both teach at the same time. This may not be the case for all mentoring relationships in the Lower Mainland, as mentors are often in different year groups than the mentee, and occasionally work in different school buildings.

Mentors in the NQT year are responsible for deciding whether or not the mentee has successfully passed the year. This has the potential to create a power dynamic in the relationship, which could lead to the mentee feeling they cannot be truly honest about struggles they may be experiencing. However, this does not appear to be the case with Olivia, or with any of the participants in Newman's (2010) study. However, the evaluative nature of the observations did cause Olivia to feel "tense" and "anxious" at times. As the mentoring relationship is not evaluative in the Lower Mainland mentorship program, this is not an issue.

Release Time

One of the biggest differences between the programs is the release time. First-year teachers in the Lower Mainland are expected to teach a full timetable with no extra time given for planning, preparation or assessment. These teachers are also not given any designated release time to observe other teachers or time to attend any of the additional supports given by the mentorship program, such as the additional training and book club. In contrast, NQT's are given a 10% reduction in their teaching timetable and can use that time to make use of the additional supports they are given, like observing others teach, attending training sessions etc. Olivia stated that the 10% release time was the support she missed the most the following year and shared that she could not imagine surviving her first year of teaching without it. Sophia described the Lower Mainland mentorship program as "a lot" and would have appreciated having release time to make use of the supports provided. She hopes that the district provides release time for new teachers in the future, and by doing so, she believes they would be

demonstrating that mentorship is something they value and that investing in their teachers is important to them.

Discussion

I began this study curious about induction programs involving early career teachers in both the UK and in BC. After comparing the stories of two teachers, I gained a deeper insight into the programs they both experienced and their perceptions of each one. This study confirmed some ideas I had in my mind before conducting this study and also raised a number of questions I hope to research more in the future.

The findings of my study reflect the findings of Ingersoll and Strong (2011) who found that induction and mentoring programs foster confidence, improve job satisfaction, and reduce stress. Both participants in this study highlighted just how essential the support from their mentor was in relation to surviving their first years of teaching, as Evertson and Smithey (2000) highlighted in their studies on mentorship. Similarly, Goldrick (2016) indicated that when high-quality mentoring programs exist, commitment to the profession increased. Both study participants valued the support they received from their mentors in their first year of teaching and are both currently still teaching and feel confident in their roles.

Olivia's experience confirms the statements of the Department for Education (2018) and Mellish et al (2021). She did in fact receive personalized support and guidance as well as a 10% reduction in her teaching timetable, frequent observations, and release time to observe others or attend additional training. Olivia appreciated the personal relationship she developed with her mentor, which echoes the opinions of a participant in Newman's (2010) study of NQTs.

Whalen et al (2019) described BC Mentorship programs as "very loose" in their implementation and that "very little effort" went into the formal mentorship programming (p. 599). I would argue that this is not the case for the Lower Mainland program that Sophia described. It is clear that the coordinator of the program works diligently to invite all new teachers into the voluntary program as well as taking the time to get to know them and provide them with a suitable match for a mentoring relationship. However, the authors also highlighted that one participant in their study, who was a TTOC, did not receive an invitation to participate in the mentorship program. Sophia had a similar experience as a TTOC, which leads me to believe that this is an area that BC mentorship programs may need to address in the future.

Sophia shared similar views to Kutsyuruba and Walker (2017), who questioned the governments views on the importance of mentorship. The authors believe the mentorship programming needs to be supported by the province and the local school district in order for it to make an impact. Sophia mentioned how she believes providing release time is a practical way that the district could show their support. "By providing release time, I think they would be kind of putting it out there that [they] are investing in our teachers, [they] are supporting our teachers, and this is something [they] really value." Overall, the findings of my study further confirm Whalen et al's (2019) argument that there is still a wide gap that exists between the need and the level of mentorship programming offered for novice teachers in the BC school system.

Implications

As the BCTF recently negotiated mentorship funding in the new collective agreement in BC, I believe my research has come at an opportune time to make a difference in the lives of early-career teachers. As Cross (1995) explained in his study of the NQT year, it was in 1992 that the British government decided the "haphazard" (p. 92) nature of formal mentorship was no

longer adequate and decided to dedicate time and money to creating a uniform induction year, to ensure that all new teachers were being supported well across the country. My findings, along with Cross (1995) and Newman (2010) suggest that this decision, made almost twenty years ago, has had a positive impact on early-career teachers ever since. Perhaps it is time for the BC government to make a similar decision and create a mandatory induction program that reflects the provinces beliefs around valuing and supporting early career teachers?

After comparing teacher perceptions between the NQT year in England, and a mentorship program in the Lower Mainland, I created a list of recommendations. I plan to share the findings of my study with the BCTF and the local Teachers' Association with the hope that my participants' voices will be heard and taken into consideration as they plan to implement changes to the current mentorship model in school districts.

Recommendations

1. *Provide release time.* The findings of this study are consistent with the results of Feiman-Nemser (2012), Johnson (2004) and Shields et al (2003), which show that the learning curve for new teachers is incredibly challenging. The UK participant in this study shared how crucial the 10% reduction in her teaching timetable was for her to be successful in her first year of teaching. Expecting new teachers to perform at the same level as experienced teachers is unreasonable, and therefore, I recommend that school districts consider making release time a priority, as this is key in supporting new teachers.

2. *Schedule time for observations.* New teachers should have the opportunity to learn from more experienced teachers. The data from this research study confirms that new teachers value the opportunity to observe, and be observed by their mentors. I believe this should be a strong focus in BC's plans for mentorship programs.

3. *Encourage TTOC's to Participate.* TTOC's tend to miss out on mentorship opportunities, as evidenced by Sophia's experience and participants in Whalen et al's (2019) study. I believe this is a good time for new teachers to get to know the district, and most importantly, connect with other teachers who are in a similar place in their career and learn from more experienced teachers. Therefore, I suggest that once a TTOC is hired into a district, they should also be invited to an information session about the mentorship program offered so they can learn about what supports are available to them.

Limitations

This study has two potential limitations. Firstly, my findings are based on two participants, which is a small sample. I purposefully invited participants who had positive experiences with their induction program, in order to get a fair comparison. Therefore, caution when generalizing is important. Secondly, I have had personal experiences with the NQT year and the Lower Mainland mentorship program, so there is potential for bias in my findings. In order to combat this, I took steps to manage any bias that could have occurred, as outlined in my methodology.

Questions for Further Research

Davies and Hales (2017) describe the induction and mentorship support for new teachers "as varied and precarious as BC's geographical landscape" (p. 353). Therefore, I am curious about the mentorship programs across the province. How do they compare to the Lower Mainland mentorship program that I have researched? This research could be expanded further by gathering the stories of new teachers across the province and comparing the supports given across the 60 districts in BC. It would also be beneficial to research the stories of teachers who

may have had negative experiences in their first year, both in BC and in England. The attrition rates in both places are still alarmingly high, which begs the question, is mentorship a strong enough support to combat that?

Closing Thoughts

Conducting this research has really brought to light just how fortunate I was to have had such a supportive, encouraging first year of my teaching career. The NQT year, with its vast supports, set me up for success. I truly believe I would not be the teacher I am today if I had not experienced such a strong start to my career. Which leads me to wonder, why do some new teachers receive better supports than others? What will it take for governments to learn that new teachers should not be expected to perform at the same rate as an experienced teacher? This is my first step in making a change for early-career teachers across the province. So, for all of the early career teachers who are struggling right now, I want to say hold on. Hold on because it will all be worth it. Hold on because help is on the way.

Try. That's what I tell myself. Try.

Don't let yourself be disposed of.

Because the fact is,

I'm doing something I truly love.

So, I will continue to build my island.

And make bridges out of palm tree wire.

I will seek opportunities

And continually build my fire. (Alcock, 2017, p. 138)

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Appendix A

Ethics Approval

UFV

Research, Engagement, & Graduate Studies   Tel: (604) 557-4011
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Abbotsford BC V2S 7M8   Website: www.ufv.ca/research-ethics

Human Research Ethics Board - Certificate of Ethical Approval

HREB Protocol No: 100543
Principal Investigator: Mrs. Danielle Zonneveld
Team Members: Mrs. Danielle Zonneveld (Principal Investigator)
Mr. Ian Levings (Supervisor)
Dr. Sheryl MacMath (Course Instructor)

Title: A Comparison of Teacher Perceptions between a Mentorship Model in British Columbia and the Newly Qualified Teacher Induction year in England.
Department: Faculty of Professional Studies\Teacher Education

Effective: December 15, 2020
Expiry: December 14, 2021

The Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) has reviewed and approved the ethics of the above research. The HREB is constituted and operated in accordance with the requirements of the UFV Policy on Human Research Ethics and the current Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2).

The approval is subject to the following conditions:
1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Approval is for one year. A Request for Renewal must be submitted 2-3 weeks before the above expiry date.
3. Modifications to the approved research must be submitted as an Amendment to be reviewed and approved by the HREB before the changes can be implemented. If the changes are substantial, a new request for approval must be sought. *An exception can be made where the change is necessary to eliminate an immediate risk to participant(s) (TPCS2 Article 6.15). Such changes may be implemented but must be reported to the HREB within 5 business days.
4. If an adverse incident occurs, an Adverse Incident Event form must be completed and submitted.
5. During the project period, the HREB must be notified of any issues that may have ethical implications.
*NEW 6. A Final Report Event Form must be submitted to the HREB when the research is complete or terminated.

**Please submit your Research Continuity Plan to REGS@ufv.ca before beginning your research. The plan can be found here: https://www.ufv.ca/research/

Thank you, and all the best with your research.
UFV Human Research Ethics Board

Do not reply to this email

Appendix B

Interview Questions for BC Participant (possible extending questions in italics).

1. Tell me about your first year of teaching.

   1a. Tell me a little more about the school you worked at.

2. Describe your experience with the Lower Mainland Mentorship Program.

   2a. How did you hear about the Lower Mainland Mentorship Program?

   2b. How many years have you been a part of it?

   2c. How has your experience changed over the years?

3. Did you feel supported? How?

4. Tell me about a difficult time in your first year.

5. How did you overcome that?

6. What was your relationship like with your mentor?

   6 a. What did you find helpful about your mentor's support?

   6 b. Was there anything you found not helpful about your mentor's support?

7. What would you say was the most helpful aspect of your mentorship year?

8. If you could change anything about your mentorship year, what would it be?

   8a. What do you think mentorship should look like?

9. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix C

Interview Questions for BC Participant (possible extending questions in italics).

1. Tell me about your first year of teaching.

   1a. Tell me a little more about the school you worked at.

2. Describe your experience during your NQT Year.

   2a. What specific supports did you receive as an NQT?

   2b. Tell me more about experience with lesson observations.

3. Did you feel supported? How?

   3a. How did you utilise your personal professional development days?

   3b. How would you use your additional 10% planning time?

   3c. What support did you miss the most when you transitioned into your second year of teaching?

4. Tell me about a difficult time in your first year.

   4a. Tell me about your experience with the evaluative nature of the NQT year.

5. How did you overcome that?

6. What was your relationship like with your mentor?

   6 a. What did you find helpful about your mentor's support?

   6 b. Was there anything you found not helpful about your mentor's support?

7. What would you say was the most helpful aspect of the NQT year?

8. If you could change anything about the NQT year, what would it be?

9. Do you have any questions for me?