

The impact of mentoring on the Canadian early career teachers' well-being

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact that mentoring has on Canadian early career teachers' (ECTs') well-being. The authors describe findings from a pan-Canadian Teacher Induction Survey ($n = 1,343$) that examined perceptions and experiences of ECTs within K–12 publicly funded schools, with particular interest in retention, career interests and the impact of mentoring on well-being.

Design/methodology/approach – An online survey was used to examine perceptions and experiences of ECTs within publicly funded K–12 schools across Canada. For this paper, the authors selectively analyzed 35 survey questions that pertained to mentorship and well-being of ECTs, using quantitative and qualitative procedures.

Findings – The findings revealed a strong correlation between the mentoring experiences and well-being of the participating Canadian ECTs. The teachers who did not receive mentorship indicated significantly lower feelings of well-being, and conversely, teachers who participated in some kind of mentorship demonstrated much higher levels of well-being.

Research limitations/implications – This paper draws on the selective analysis of the data from a larger study to elicit the connections between the mentoring support and perceived well-being. Due to inconsistencies in terminology and multifaceted offerings of induction and mentoring supports for ECTs across Canada, there might have been some ambiguity regarding the formal and informal mentorship supports. A longitudinal study that is designed to specifically examine the connection between the mentorship and well-being of ECTs could yield deeper understandings. A comparative study in different international contexts is commended.

Practical implications – The findings showed that the ECTs who did not receive any mentorship scored significantly lower feelings of well-being from external, structural, and internal well-being sources, and conversely, the ECTs who participated in some kind of mentorship scored much higher levels of feelings of well-being. Policy-makers should therefore continue to confidently include mentorship as an intentional strategy to support and help ECTs to flourish. However, inconsistent scoring between individuals and their levels of external, structural and internal well-being suggest that more research on the connection between mentoring and well-being of the ECTs.

Social implications – Work-life imbalance seems to be more challenging for ECTs than policymakers who provide these expectations are aware. Therefore, excessive work demands and intensive workloads need to be given proper attention for their potential negative effects (such as stress, burnout and absence) on the beginning teachers' health and well-being. Likewise, purposeful strength-based approaches should be undertaken to establish generative and pro-social efforts to enhance the connectedness, collaboration, collegiality and resilience-building opportunities for novice professionals within flourishing learning communities.

Originality/value – In this paper, the authors have undertaken the first steps in exploring the impact that mentoring has on Canadian ECTs' well-being. The study increases the understanding of how mentoring can be used as a purposeful strategy to support the well-being of ECTs and retain them in the teaching profession in Canada and potentially in different international contexts.

Keywords Teacher well-being, Canadian teachers, Mentorship of early career teachers

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

At the beginning of their professional journeys, early career teachers (ECTs) across the world often face immense challenges related to personal relationships, organizational structures, and professional expectations for teaching, evaluation and professional learning from their employers, school administrators, colleagues, parents and students (Guardino and Fullerton, 2010; Kyriacou and Kunc, 2007; Whisnant *et al.*, 2005). As a consequence of stresses from challenging working conditions, inadequate support, and limitations of certain



education policies, many ECTs (including the most talented) choose to leave the profession (Borman and Dowling, 2008; Colb, 2001). In varying degrees, teacher attrition is present and affects the educational systems in the UK (Smithers and Robinson, 2003), Australia (Stoel and Thant, 2002), the USA (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Ingersoll and Smith, 2003; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004) and other countries (OECD, 2005). Internationally, studies show that the majority of teachers who quit the profession do so in their first two to five years, and in some cases, even before the end of their first year (Black, 2001). While Canadian statistics about the attrition rates are not conclusive, during the period from 1995 to 2004, attrition ranged from 30 to 40 percent for teachers in the first five years of service (CTF, 2003, 2004). More recently, studies showed that ECT attrition rates across Canada varied from high to low across provinces and territories (Clandinin *et al.*, 2012; Clark and Antonelli, 2009), unevenly affecting segments of the teaching profession (Karsenti *et al.*, 2008; Valeo and Faez, 2013). It is clear, though, that teachers across Canada quit the profession mainly within the first five years (Karsenti and Collin, 2013). Moreover, due to provincial/territorial control over education, induction supports as mechanisms for retention of ECTs vary across Canada with multilayered supports provided by provincial/territorial governments, teacher associations and unions, school boards and individual schools, or hybrid formats as a combination of supports from several sources (Kutsyuruba *et al.*, 2014). The nature and length of induction supports also vary considerably across the country. Some jurisdictions offer one or more years of induction through centralized programs that may or may not include mentoring, while other programs are organized in a decentralized manner (Kutsyuruba *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, a route to permanent employment is long and circuitous in some parts of Canada, with the occasional teaching (OT) route being the only one available for ECTs (Broad and Muhling, 2017). Occasional teachers are usually employed by the school board as substitutes for regular or temporary teaching staff on daily casual and long-term occasional teacher contracts (Kutsyuruba *et al.*, 2013).

To mitigate the attrition issue, it is instrumental to offer induction support for beginning teachers (Le Maistre *et al.*, 2006). Mentoring is considered an integral and crucial component of induction programs, intended to support individual beginning teachers' needs (Hobson *et al.*, 2009). Effective induction programs and high-quality mentoring programs can have positive impacts on early career teaching. These effects are manifested 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 and Strong, 2011; Wynn *et al.*, 2007).

Teacher well-being has also been viewed as a pivotal condition for increased teacher effectiveness and improved teacher retention (Day, 2008; Day and Kington, 2008). Scholars argued that attrition should be primarily addressed through efforts directed at ensuring continual professional development, renewal and reinvigoration of practice for ECTs (Farrell, 2012; Yonezawa *et al.*, 2011). Creating a school climate that is inviting, supportive and conducive for new teachers' learning, development, collaboration and connection is an important aspect of growing well-being and organizational health. Focus on well-being is also important to mitigate new teachers' high levels of stress, burnout and dropping out of the profession (CTF, 2011). Hobson and Maxwell (2017) noted that despite the crucial importance of the early formative years in the profession, there is limited empirical research on the well-being of ECTs. Our research directly responds to their call for enhanced understanding of how policymakers, school leaders and practitioners can create conditions for the optimization of ECTs' well-being through proper attention to mentorship.

Our multiyear pan-Canadian research project examined the differential impact of teacher induction and mentorship programs on ECTs' retention, as perceived across the provinces and territories. In this paper, we outline the results from one of the research study phases,

a pan-Canadian Teacher Induction Survey ($n = 1,343$), that examined Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) ECTs' perceptions of induction and mentorship programs, with particular interest in retention and career issues. In particular, we were interested in exploring the impact of mentoring on the Canadian ECTs' well-being. Upon reviewing the literature with respect to mentoring and well-being in the teaching profession, we describe our research methodology and share the analysis of the survey responses from the Canadian novice teachers. We conclude with the discussions of our pan-Canadian study research findings and offer implications for policymakers, academics, and practitioners who work with ECTs across international settings.

Review of the literature

In the following sections, we offer brief reviews of literature related to provision, benefits and nature of mentoring for ECTs, as well as discussions of teacher well-being, stress, work–life balance, and flourishing school cultures.

Mentoring in early career teaching

A major component within provision of support for ECTs is mentoring where experienced teachers are paired with novice teachers to help them survive and thrive in the beginning phase of their teaching career (Wong, 2004). Based on the premise of “critical friend,” (Costa and Kallick, 1993, p. 49), mentorship involves facilitation of instructional improvement wherein an experienced educator (mentor) works with the ECT (protégé) to examine and mutually plan ways instruction in the classroom may be improved (Cumming-Potvin and MacCallum, 2010). Although ECT mentoring has traditionally been framed as a one-on-one relationship, it has grown to include group mentoring and mentoring networks. In addition, mentoring has often been conceptualized as and categorized into formal and informal (e.g. formal would include planned and intentional mentoring programs whereas informal would include mentoring that happens between two individuals without any additional support or involvement from other individuals or organizations) types (Desimone *et al.*, 2014). Whatever the format, mentors aim to support the ongoing development of their protégés, providing tailored coaching, guidance, advocacy, counseling, help, protection, feedback and information that the ECT would not readily have access to. ECTs can have different energy, commitment, and motivation toward teaching; for some, teaching is a passionate vocation, and for others, teaching is merely a job (Day, 2017). Ultimately, a crucial task of mentors is to respond to ECTs' personal learning needs (Bennetts, 1995; Lankau and Scandura, 2002; Portner, 2008) and to intentionally differentiate support to address varying needs (D'Souza, 2014).

To try to ensure that ECTs flourish, support provided should include mentorship and collaborative approaches to continued growth and learning (Carroll, 2005; Howe, 2006) that consider beginning teachers' stages of development. Mentoring, when provided for novice teachers at the early stage, creates a positive learning environment from the outset that supports individual learning and development and successfully fosters beginning teachers' competence and well-being (Richter *et al.*, 2013). Mentoring also improves ECTs' work satisfaction (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Stanulis and Floden, 2009), enhances feelings of competence (Lindgren, 2005), and reduces the likelihood that teachers will leave the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll and Smith, 2003). As such, mentoring can bring personal benefits for ECTs, including stronger self-confidence, reduced stress, and increased motivation and learning (Allen and Eby, 2007; Lacey, 2000), as well as reciprocal benefits to mentors (Ghosh and Reio, 2013). Research has shown that the most effective mentors possess a deep knowledge base, experience, and expertise that is needed to guide the ECT in their professional growth (Efron *et al.*, 2012).

Effective mentoring also includes a personal dimension, a capacity for forming successful interpersonal relationships. Of particular importance is mentors' ability to establish productive relationships with school administrators (i.e. school leaders in supervisory roles), students, staff and other mentors (Gardiner and Weisling, 2018). Subsequently, the affective dimensions of the mentoring relationship between ECT and mentor should be nourished to create effective and mutually beneficial mentoring pairings (Hudson and Hudson, 2010; Kilburg, 2006). Trust is crucially important within interpersonal relationships and is reliant upon open lines of communication between mentor and ECT (Levin and Rock, 2003; Yendol-Hoppey and Fichtman, 2007). In addition, mentors should be supportive, good listeners, non-judgmental, and accepting of the ECT's pedagogical practice, even if it differs from their own (Johnson, 2002; Marable and Raimondi, 2007). An effective mentor is able to instill hope and an optimistic outlook in the beginning teacher, conveying a sense that any challenge can be overcome (Rowley, 1999).

Mentors often take on an evaluative role over their protégés, which can be an anxiety-provoking process for the ECT. The conflation of mentoring support and evaluation roles has been termed "judgementoring," which amongst other detrimental impacts has been found to impede mentees' willingness to openly share their concerns with and seek support for their learning needs from mentors (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). To overcome this, mentors should clarify that their primary role is to assist and support professional growth with the ECT rather than evaluate their teaching or performance (Efron *et al.*, 2012). Only when ECTs sense their mentors' non-judgmental support and trust have been established do they feel sufficiently secure in revealing their concerns and challenges (Daresh, 2001).

Some practices identified as important components of effective mentoring programs are: selecting mentors with the same certification, geographically located in proximity to their mentees; providing the mentoring pair with flexible enough schedules that they are able to find time to plan together; reduced workloads for the ECT; and program induction being available for both mentors and mentees (Barrera *et al.*, 2010). More recently, attention has turned to identifying innovative mentoring that adopts ethical approaches to supporting ECTs. For example, Nahmad-Williams and Taylor (2015) described the READ model where mentors and mentees reflect on mentoring experiences through a series of journal entries. This model is based upon the three themes (identity, fear of being judged and respect), which in turn become dimensions of the mentoring model (relational dimension, affective dimension, and ethical dimension). Another model (Langdon and Ward, 2015) focuses on educative mentoring, where both mentors and mentees construct a collaborative partnership by reconstructing their practice with the aim of transforming student learning. Both the READ model and educative mentoring approaches call for a commitment to continued professional development for mentors as well as ECTs.

Teacher well-being

The literature on teacher well-being has multiple foci, including the need to mitigate the negative effects of stress (Farber, 2000; Vesely *et al.*, 2013), enhance work-life balance (Burke and Mcateer, 2007), increase resilience (Gu and Day, 2007), and, more recently, develop prosocial behaviors and flourishing cultures (Cherkowski and Walker, 2013; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009).

Framing teacher stress as a crisis, Greenberg *et al.* (2016) called for more attention to organizational and individual interventions to help reduce stress and promote well-being for teachers. Negative effects of stress on teachers include reduced self-efficacy, strained teacher-student relationships, burnout, and higher rates of teacher absenteeism and teacher turnover (Fives *et al.*, 2007; Harris, 2011; Klassen and Chiu, 2010; Kyriacou, 2001), as well as reduced morale, thwarted educational goals and increased probability of quitting (Leroux and Théorêt, 2014; Yong and Yue, 2007). Multiple studies have acknowledged the negative effects of stress

(Achinstein and Davis, 2014; Beutel and Spooner-Lane, 2009; Dempsey and Christenson-Foggett, 2011; Fletcher and Rhodes, 2013; Helms-Lorenz *et al.*, 2012), isolation and anxiety (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009) and some tension in relationships (Forbes, 2004; Grudnoff, 2012; Helms-Lorenz *et al.*, 2012) on new teachers' well-being and professional socialization.

Workload and work–life balance are deemed closely aligned to well-being, and the well-being of teachers today affects the well-being of society tomorrow (Bubb and Early, 2004). However, maintaining teacher well-being and work–life balance is problematic across the teaching profession in general and early career teaching in particular. As an extensive work–life balance study showed (Froese-Germain, 2014), most Canadian teachers struggle with work–life imbalance and increased workplace stress that negatively affect their ability to teach. In their research in England, Hobson and Maxwell (2017) noted that the single most prominent individual factor inhibiting ECTs' well-being was the perception of having an unmanageable workload or a poor work–life balance (often as a consequence of unmanageable workload). Further adding complexity to the issue is the expectation for teachers to play a major role in a transformed child and youth mental health system, requiring ECTs among others to have skills in identifying and providing mental health support for their students (Kirby, 2013). As Bubb and Early (2004) noted, unless teaching is perceived to be a rewarding and less stressful career, there can be little doubt that recruitment and retention of ECTs will continue to be a major challenge.

ECTs need support to not only survive but also thrive and build their capacity to maintain and sustain well-being (personal and of others). Teacher resilience enhances motivation and commitment of teachers to deal with work–life challenges and positively affects teaching effectiveness, heightens career satisfaction, builds working relationships, and prepares teachers to adapt to changing conditions in education (Gu and Day, 2007; Howard and Johnson, 2004; Le Cornu, 2013). Having synthesized five decades of research on resilience, Luthar (2006) concluded that resilience fundamentally rests on relationships. Furthermore, resilience and successful adaptation despite stress and other challenges help teachers maintain their personal well-being (Howard and Johnson, 2004). In this regard, self-care is critical for ECTs due to its focus on engaging in reflective practices and maintaining positive mindset (Wood and Stanulis, 2009).

Roffey (2012) posited that literature often describes teacher well-being in deficit terms – how stress is impacting teacher burnout and problems with retention. Recently, the focus on well-being has changed toward a positive, prosocial outlook, describing it as an “overarching term that encapsulates an individual's quality of life, happiness, satisfaction with life and experience of good mental and physical health” (Noble and McGrath, 2012, p. 17). Suggesting a mindset shift in studying teacher well-being, Walker and Cherkowski (2018) argued for the need to approach the work of teaching from a different, positive, strength-based, appreciative and affirmative perspective of flourishing. Flourishing refers to the optimal ways of functioning characterized by goodness, wholeness and high levels of well-being that result in resilience, self-fulfillment, contentment, happiness and mental health (Frederickson and Losada, 2005; Haybron, 2008; Huppert and So, 2013; Martin and Marsh, 2006). Within a positive organizational scholarship field, a number of models for well-being have been suggested that can be applicable to the study of early career teaching. The most well-known is PERMA: Positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). Noble and McGrath (2015) proposed a similar model, positivity, relationships, outcomes, strengths, purpose, engagement and resilience. Both models highlight the importance of well-being in building and improving schools as enabling institutions.

Methodology

This paper describes the findings from the survey phase of a multiyear pan-Canadian research project that examined ECTs' experiences and the differential impact of induction

and mentorship programs on teachers' retention across the provinces and territories of Canada (Kutsyuruba and Walker, 2017).

Research instrument

An online survey was developed to examine the perceptions and experiences of ECTs within publicly funded schools across Canada. The survey was developed based on relevant literature and instruments, as well as the input generated from a pan-Canadian expert panel comprised of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. The survey questions covered such aspects as demographics, teacher induction, mentorship, school administration, work environment, and career and professional development. Of 89 questions, 77 were quantitative (multiple-choice and Likert scale) and 12 were qualitative (open-ended).

Research sample

The survey instrument was field-tested with the expert panelists, principals and teachers prior to distribution. The invitations to participate in the online survey were distributed through teacher federations/associations, ministries of education, community organizations and social media platforms. Survey participants needed to be beginning teachers (within their first five years of employment) in a publicly funded K–12 school in Canada. The survey was distributed in the Spring/Summer of 2016. With varying degrees of completion, the researchers received over 2000 responses to the survey from ECTs across all provinces and territories in Canada. Due to the nature and modes of survey distribution, survey return rate calculation was not possible. Processes of data cleaning and removing incomplete data sets afforded researchers a final sample of 1,343 usable responses, with some variation in responses to individual survey items.

Data analysis

This paper reports the outcomes of selective analyses of survey questions that pertained to ECTs' mentorship and well-being. For this purpose, we finalized a workable data set with 35 questions (33 quantitative Likert-scale questions and two open-ended qualitative questions). The analytic software SPSS was used for the quantitative analysis of the 33 quantitative questions, which included simple descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations and inferential statistics), as well as a series of analysis of variances (ANOVAs) to determine different levels of variance and significance for the more in-depth analysis of the data. The open-ended responses were analyzed qualitatively using emergent and *a priori* coding procedures (Creswell, 2012), whereupon codes were combined into themes. As a team of researchers was involved in analyzing the data, we followed the general guidelines for assessing and reporting inter-rater reliability (Creswell, 2012).

Research findings

Demographic information

The demographic data showed that the mean age of respondents was 29 years old, with 19 percent being male and 81 percent being female. Significantly, 96 percent of the respondents had a Bachelor of Education degree, and 27 percent of the respondents had other forms of credentials (Master of Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, etc.). While the current teaching location for the majority of participants represented three provinces, Ontario (33 percent), Alberta (27 percent) and British Columbia (18 percent), all 13 provinces and territories were represented in this study. This trend also reflected the province in which the respondents obtained their teacher certification/accreditation. For the overall years of teaching experience, data showed an almost equal distribution of respondent teaching experience, across span of one to five years. Teaching experience at all

grade levels from Kindergarten to 12 was represented in the sample. In total, 85 percent had OT experience, with almost a third of ECTs having taught occasionally for less than one year, while the rest had taught for up to five years in OT positions. Over a third of respondents (37 percent) had been at their current school for less than a year. In all, 23 percent had been at their school for a full year, 22 percent for two years, 10 percent for three years, 5 percent for four years and 4 percent for five years. Moreover, the majority of these schools were located in small cities (with a population of about 100,000). See Table I for detailed demographic information.

Quantitative analysis

Mentorship

A number of survey questions related to the ECTs' experiences with receiving mentorship. In our analysis, we first analyzed four general questions about mentoring support (i.e. How have you been supported as you started your career as a teacher? Who provided that support? Which source of support has been the most beneficial? and Has the support you have received met your needs as a beginning teacher? Why or why not?). We noted that participation in mentoring differed across the survey participants. When asked about the type of support they had received as a beginning teacher, 73 percent responded about receiving informal mentorship, compared to 27 percent receiving formal mentorship (among other supports). The two types of mentorship (as part of multiple-choice options) were defined for survey participants as follows: informal mentorship (between colleagues) and formal mentorship (established through a program). Regarding the question about the most beneficial types of support, 44 percent mentioned informal mentorship and 6 percent mentioned formal mentorship as the most beneficial supports (among other supports). When the respondents were asked if they ever had a mentor, 33 percent responded negatively and

Province currently teaching in		Province of accreditation	
Ontario	33%	Ontario	38%
Alberta	27%	Alberta	23%
British Columbia	18%	British Columbia	18%
Québec	5%	Québec	5%
Manitoba	4%	Manitoba	5%
Saskatchewan	6%	Saskatchewan	4%
Newfoundland and Labrador	2%	Newfoundland and Labrador	3%
New Brunswick	0.4%	New Brunswick	1%
Nova Scotia	0.4%	Nova Scotia	1%
Prince Edward Island	0.4%	Prince Edward Island	1%
Nunavut	1%	Nunavut	0.3%
Northwest Territories	1%	Northwest Territories	0.2%
Yukon	1%	Yukon	2%
Age range		Overall years teaching	
19-22	1%	In their first year	20%
23-26	34%	In their second year	23%
27-30	35%	In their third year	21%
31-34	14%	In their fourth year	16%
35+	17%	In their fifth year	20%
Gender		Length of occasional teaching	
Female	81%	Less than one year	28%
Male	19%	Full year	19%
Occasional teaching experience		Two years	22%
Yes	85%	Three years	15%
No	15%	Four years	8%
		Five years	9%

Table I.
Demographic
information for
survey participants

67 percent responded positively. Of those who had mentors, 29 percent had multiple informal mentors, 26 percent had multiple formal and informal mentors, 22 percent had a single informal mentor, 21 percent had a formal mentor and 2 percent had multiple formal mentors (see Table II).

Further analysis was conducted on 11 questions that elicited responses about specific impacts of mentorship. The responses to these items were on a five-point Likert scale (see Table III).

A principal axis factor analysis was run on the above mentorship items pulled from the survey to determine if these items aligned with a larger concept of positive mentorship. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, $KMO = 0.96$. Only one factor had an eigenvalue over Kaiser’s criterion of 1 and explained over 70 percent of variance. The scree plot also agreed with the one-factor analysis. Therefore, it appears that all 11 mentorship items from the questionnaire can be factored into a larger concept. This concept was called the mentorship score and related to the constructive impact a mentor may or may not have on the new teacher. The higher an individual’s mentorship score, the higher the perceived impact a mentor had on this individual. This value was calculated by combining the 11 scores of the individual mentorship questions. See Table IV for the list of the 11 mentorship items.

An ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the type of mentorship received (formal mentorship, informal mentorship, or a mix of formal and informal mentorship) and an individual’s mentorship score. Note that if an individual

Table II.
Participation in mentorship

Have You Ever Had a Mentor?			
Mentor ?	%		%
Yes	67	Multiple Informal	29
		Multiple Formal Mentors	2
		Multiple Formal/Informal	26
		Single Informal Mentor	22
		Single Formal Mentor	21
No	33		

Table III.
Mentorship experiences

Question/Statement	N (%)	R (%)	S (%)	O (%)	VO (%)	N/A (%)
1. How frequently do you and your mentor meet?	4	15	30	21	12	18
2. My mentor provides constructive feedback about my practice	9	15	29	20	8	20
3. My mentor provides constructive feedback about my students’ learning	10	16	30	18	5	21
4. My mentor clearly communicates school expectations	9	9	22	26	10	23
5. My mentor observes my teaching to enable more effective practice	34	20	16	6	3	21
6. My mentor encourages me to try out different teaching approaches	7	8	22	29	15	19
7. My mentor guides me to set goals related to student learning	11	11	22	25	10	21
8. My mentor and I have professional conversations	3	4	15	32	28	18
9. My mentor and I discuss my ongoing career planning	16	18	21	16	9	20
10. My mentor helps me to communicate with school administration	18	15	20	14	10	23
11. Mentoring helps me with my personal development	9	9	21	25	18	19

Notes: N, Never; R, rarely; S, sometimes; O, often; VO, very often

indicated they did not have a mentor then their mentorship score would obviously be 0. Thus, this group was not included in this analysis (see Table V).

The ANOVA shows that the mentorship score of those who had only a formal mentorship was significantly ($p < 0.05$) lower than those with an informal mentorship or a mix of formal and informal mentorship. There was no significant difference in mentorship score between the informal mentorship group and the mix of formal and informal mentorship group.

Overall, these findings indicate that over the three types of mentorship (formal, informal or a combination of the two), if an individual had only a formal mentor then they reported a poorer reception to their mentorship experience. It appears that combining informal mentorship with the formal mentorship or having only informal mentorship led to a better mentorship experience for ECTs.

Well-being

We also analyzed participants' responses to 14 items on the survey that were related to ECTs' well-being. The responses to these items were on a five-point Likert scale (see Table VI).

A principal factor analysis was run on the 14 well-being items pulled from the survey to determine if these items aligned with a larger concept of general new teacher well-being. I regularly consider leaving the teaching profession was reverse coded as a high score in this item and would indicate a negative association with well-being. The KMO measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, $KMO = 0.919$. Three factors emerged with an eigenvalue over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and collectively explained over 62 percent of variance. The scree plot also indicated three factors. With these measures as well as the large sample size, three factors were retained. The three factors are external well-being, school structure and internal well-being. See Table VII for the factors and their corresponding well-being items.

Factor 1 – mentorship score

How frequently do you and your mentor meet	My mentor provides constructive feedback about my practice
My mentor provides constructive feedback about my students' learning	My mentor observes my teaching to enable more effective practice
My mentor clearly communicates school expectations	My mentor encourages me to try out different teaching approaches
My mentor guides me to set goals related to student learning	My mentor and I have professional conversations
My mentor and I discuss my ongoing career planning	My mentor helps me to communicate with school administration
Mentoring helps me with my personal development	

Table IV.
Mentorship factor

Type of mentorship	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	Significance to formal	Significance to informal	Significance to formal and informal
<i>Mentorship factor</i>						
Formal	207	29.56	11.33	X	0.001	0.001
Informal	474	32.84	9.708	0.001	X	0.702
Formal and informal	245	33.52	11.27	0.001	0.702	X

Table V.
Mentorship factor: types

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	D/A (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	N/A (%)
1. I believe my working conditions (e.g. class size, planning time, case load) are appropriate for a beginning teacher	15	20	14	31	12	8
2. I have adequate time to reflect on student learning	12	27	20	29	7	5
3. I feel I am well integrated into my current school community	2	9	14	44	27	4
4. Other teachers listen to my thoughts and opinions	1	5	11	55	25	2
5. I feel respected as a colleague in this school	1	5	10	53	28	3
6. I feel I have earned the trust of my fellow staff members in this school	1	3	12	52	29	4
7. My school has an inclusive and supportive culture	3	7	15	45	26	4
8. My successes are regularly acknowledged	7	17	24	36	12	4
9. In my school, teachers are engaged in decision-making processes about matters that affect them	6	12	15	43	17	6
10. There is informal peer-mentoring (or group mentoring) in my school	11	16	14	34	15	9
11. In general, I enjoy working as a teacher at this school	1	4	8	42	41	4
12. In general, I thrive as a teacher	1	6	13	47	32	1
13. I regularly consider leaving the teaching profession	33	31	14	15	8	1
14. I am proud to tell others that I am a teacher	1	3	8	36	51	1

Table VI.
Wellbeing perceptions

Notes: SD, Strongly disagree; D, disagree; D/A, neither agree nor disagree; A, agree; SA, strongly agree

Factor 1 – external well-being

I feel respected as a colleague in this school

I feel I have earned the trust of my fellow staff members in this school

Other teachers listen to my thoughts and opinions

My school has an inclusive and supportive culture

I feel I am well integrated into my current school community

In general, I enjoy working as a teacher at this school

Factor 2 – school structure

My successes are regularly acknowledged

My successes are regularly acknowledged

There is informal peer mentoring (or group mentoring) in my school

In my school, teachers are engaged in decision-making processes about matters that affect them

I believe my working conditions (e.g. class size, planning time, case load) are appropriate for a beginning teacher

Factor 3 – internal well-being

I regularly consider leaving the teaching profession

In general, I thrive as a teacher

I am proud to tell others that I am a teacher

Table VII.
Wellbeing factors

These three factors of well-being were created by adding the scores of the individual questions. Each individual was then given three separate scores on well-being: external well-being (with a maximum score of 30), internal well-being (with a maximum score of 15) and school structure (with a maximum score of 25).

Well-being and Mentorship

An ANOVA was run to determine if there was a significant difference between the type of mentorship received and their level of well-being received from external sources (Factor 1). The analysis showed that the group that received no mentorship scored significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) than the other three groups. (It is worth mentioning that the other three groups had no significant differences between each other in the analyses.) This shows that the new teachers who did not have any mentorship at all had a significantly lower feeling of well-being that came from external sources (see Table VIII).

An ANOVA was run to determine if there was a significant difference between the type of mentorship received and their level of well-being from the school structure (Factor 2). The analysis showed that the group that received no mentorship scored significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) than the other three groups. This shows that the new teachers who did not have any mentorship at all had a significantly lower feeling of well-being that came from the structure of the school (see Table IX).

An ANOVA was run to determine if there was a significant difference between the type of mentorship received and their level of well-being received from internal sources (Factor 3). The analysis showed that the group that received no mentorship scored significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) than the other three groups. This shows that the new teachers who did not have any mentorship at all had a significantly lower feeling of well-being that came from internal sources (see Table X).

A paired sample *t*-test was used to compare the mentorship score of an individual with their level of external well-being (Factor 1; see Table XI). The test showed that the mentorship score and external well-being factor were weakly positively correlated ($r = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$). A paired sample *t*-test was used to compare the mentorship score of an individual with their level of school structure well-being (Factor 2). The test showed that the

Type of mentorship	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	Significance to no mentor	Significance to formal	Significance to informal	Significance to formal and informal
<i>Factor 1 – external well-being</i>							
No mentor	417	16.39	10.903	X	0.001	0.001	0.001
Formal	207	21.36	8.188	0.001	X	0.863	0.242
Informal	474	21.90	8.236	0.001	0.863	X	0.495
Formal and informal	245	22.78	7.882	0.001	0.242	0.495	X

Table VIII.
Wellbeing factor 1

Type of mentorship	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	Significance to no mentor	Significance to formal	Significance to informal	Significance to formal and informal
<i>Factor 2 – school structure</i>							
No mentor	417	9.70	6.927	X	0.001	0.001	0.001
Formal	207	13.36	5.699	0.001	X	0.915	0.103
Informal	474	13.67	5.7	0.001	0.915	X	0.170
Formal and informal	245	14.59	5.705	0.001	0.103	0.170	X

Table IX.
Wellbeing factor 2

Type of mentorship	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	Significance to no mentor	Significance to formal	Significance to informal	Significance to formal and informal
<i>Factor 3 – internal well-being</i>							
No mentor	417	10.35	3.303	X	0.001	0.001	0.001
Formal	207	11.37	2.994	0.001	X	0.921	0.182
Informal	474	11.52	2.879	0.001	0.921	X	0.278
Formal and informal	245	11.92	2.806	0.001	0.182	0.278	X

Table X.
Wellbeing factor 3

mentorship score and school structure well-being factor were positively correlated ($r = 0.345, p < 0.001$). A paired sample t -test was also used to compare the mentorship score of an individual with their level of internal well-being (Factor 3). The test showed that the mentorship score and internal well-being factor were weakly positively correlated ($r = 0.248, p < 0.001$).

Overall, these analyses indicate that for well-being experienced through supports from external sources, school structure and from internal sources, any form of mentorship is beneficial. Our analysis shows a significant decrease in well-being in terms of all three factors if the individual has no mentorship in place at all. Additionally, there is a positive correlation between all three well-being factors and an individual and their mentorship score, thus suggesting that positive mentorship increases an individual's well-being.

Qualitative analysis

Well-being, flourishing and thriving

Emergent coding (Creswell, 2012) was used for the responses to the question: What helps you to sustain your own well-being and “flourish” or “thrive” as a beginning teacher? From the responses ($n = 868$), 998 pieces of information were coded into 11 emergent themes (see Figure 1). The two codes colleagues and work–life balance had by far the highest occurrence with 248 and 239, respectively, which we have chosen to describe in detail below.

Colleagues

Individual responses in the colleagues code related to the notions of both formal and informal mentorship. The data elicited from the responses suggest that when an ECT needs support or is going through a time of struggle, they often turn to their colleagues for support. For some, this support came in the form of helping with planning and resources: “sharing ideas and resources with other new teachers,” “conversations with fellow teachers

Table XI.
Relation of mentorship score to well-being scores

Pair with mentorship score	Correlation	Significance
<i>t-Test</i>		
External well-being	0.290	0.001
School structure	0.345	0.001
Internal well-being	0.248	0.001

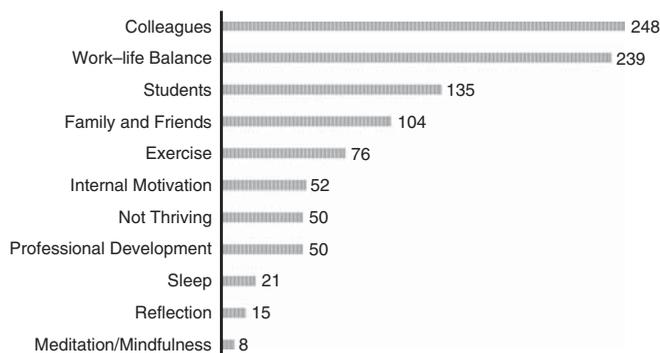


Figure 1.
Well-being categories

to share ideas and resources,” “the other teachers around me supporting me and giving me resources.” For others, support was manifested via emotional help and mental health: “hearing from my colleagues who face similar frustrations is immensely comforting,” “creating my own professional relationships with people I can discuss difficult situations with and find support from,” “talking with my colleagues and knowing that everyone goes through the same things that I do.”

Several comments were made about the direct relation of mentorship to flourishing and thriving: “as for flourish and thrive, I would say my mentor and friendly colleagues at the school,” “reaching out to my mentors when I need support or encouragement,” “my mentors help motivate me at a time when long-term occasional and permanent positions seem so far away,” and “regular talk with peers and mentors.” Other indicators of flourishing and thriving included “continued support from colleagues,” “teaching in teams and having other teachers to talk with, complain to, and share resources with,” “experienced teachers who tell you that what you are doing in the classroom is good,” and “talking with my colleagues and knowing that everyone goes through the same things that I do.” While these sorts of experiences did not directly mention a mentor, they all shared characteristics with an informal mentorship.

Interestingly, multiple pieces of data addressed the importance of colleagues who were also starting their teaching career. Things like “talking with other new teachers,” “interactions with other new teachers,” “knowing other new teachers go through similar periods of turmoil, stress, reflection, and exhaustion and that I can get through my own trials,” and “communicating with other beginning teachers” pointed to the benefits of establishing and maintaining friendships and connections with their peers and colleagues.

Work–life balance

The importance of leaving work at work and creating a separation between work life and home life seemed to be crucial to many new career teachers. For instance, one teacher shared “focusing on everything but teaching after I leave school. I try to leave work at work.” Often, ECTs mentioned a time when they did not have this balance and how important maintaining this balance had become.

Striking a balance: I spent probably 15 h a day working (both at school and at home) in my first year, and it was impossibly difficult. Now, at the end of my third year, I don’t spend as much time at school before and after the school day and while I still routinely bring work home at night, I rarely pull it out. Instead, I spend that time with my family or on myself.

Some ECTs discussed the importance of having this work–life balance for their mental health and well-being and acknowledged that it also helped them perform better as a teacher. For instance, one teacher noted the need for:

[...] making sure I have healthy work–life balance. This is something that I have struggled with since the start of my teaching career. I only recently started to take more time for my life and relationships outside of work. Having the balance helps me feel rejuvenated and gives me the motivation to continue learning and thriving as a teacher.

Critical in this regard was maintaining a positive mindset: “I need to have my own down time to maintain a healthy lifestyle and continue being a positive person – if I get down on myself and become stressed then I do not perform well in the classroom.” Many teachers identified the positive impact that a sufficient work–life balance had on the reduction of stress in their lives: “having hobbies that I work on outside of school helps in stress reduction,” “finding the balance between work and life. It’s challenging, but once you find an outlet for frustration or stress, things get much easier,” and “I make sure I leave some time for family/hobbies so that the job doesn’t consume my life. I find these moments help lower my stress and well-being.”

Mentors' impact on teacher well-being

To examine the impact a mentor might have on an ECT's well-being, we analyzed the following question: In what way(s) has your mentor been most valuable to you and your teaching? We used a combination of emergent and *a priori* coding procedures (Creswell, 2012). Based on the analysis of the responses to this question ($n = 753$), results were organized into three major themes: general impact of mentorship, increased confidence and self-efficacy, and improved teacher–student relationships.

General impact of mentorship

With regard to the general impact of mentorship, respondents considered mentorship valuable through collaborating, guiding teaching and guiding non-teaching. Mentors that provided value through collaborating with beginning teachers did so with report cards, planning for teaching and developing resources to use in teaching. Mentors that guided beginning teachers in teaching provided resources, modeled their own teaching practices, and modeled communication practices to students and other individuals within the school community. In addition, mentors' guidance in non-teaching contexts was deemed beneficial by participants. For instance, mentors provided feedback and advice, and assisted with a number of first-time experiences including speaking with parents and how to handle students failing courses: "by supporting me in situations where I've had to make tough calls – failing a student, contacting parents about plagiarism, etc." and "[offering] a model for building positive relationships with students and classroom management." ECTs appreciated when mentors advocated on their behalf (especially when working with administrators), assisted with understanding routines and procedures within the school and profession, and provided encouragement and emotional support when needed. Many beginning teachers felt that mentors had helped develop their network and specifically assisted with both the transition to the profession and the school community. Mentors were considered valuable in providing information about students, listening to beginning teachers' concerns and thoughts, answering questions and pushing beginning teachers to continually improve their practice.

Increased self-efficacy and confidence

There were multiple examples of ECTs sharing the perceived impact their mentor had on their self-efficacy or confidence as a teacher. These responses focused around issues from inside the classroom – "provided me with new ways to differentiate and has also helped boost my confidence level within my classroom" – in addition to challenges outside of the classroom – "provide a confidence boost when I'm flagging or worried (about parental involvement)." One participant described:

Overall, it was the confidence she [the mentor] instilled in me [...]when I brought new ideas and my creativity into the classroom and she encouraged it; when she would tell me that I had a great idea, she liked it and that she felt she learned as much from me, as I did from her. That always made me smile and realize that our mentorship meant as much to her as it did to me.

This boost in ECTs' self-efficacy levels attributed to mentors' direct actions provided clear next steps and encouragement to ECTs.

Improved teacher–student relationships

A swathe of comments revealed the impact mentors had on ECTs' teacher–student relationships. The concept of the teacher–student relationship can be viewed on a large scale (the interaction and relationship a teacher has with their class) or on an individual scale (the interaction and relationship a teacher has with individual students). While multiple responses discussed the positive impact a mentor had on the large-scale teacher–student

relationship (mentor helping with differentiated instruction, lesson planning, etc.), mentorship effect was evident on the teacher–student relationship at the individual scale.

For instance, one participant shared, “In my first year of teaching my mentor knew the students I was working with and was able to provide me with some background information and insights on strategies that worked for her with some more challenging students.” Another respondent similarly identified how their mentor had helped with “knowledge of students in my classroom in regard to their strength, needs, and interests.” These insights from the mentoring interactions were seen to be very valuable for some individuals and helpful for ECTs’ early efforts to forge successful teacher–student relationships.

Interestingly, there were also cases of mentoring being helpful in bolstering individual teacher–student relationships by providing the ECT with information and context regarding issues outside of the classroom that might impact particular relationships with students. These included the “bigger picture” of the school where “my mentor has an understanding of my students and the school which really helped me as a new teacher to the school” and the broader community within which the school was located: “She has an understanding of the community and the students that I, as someone from a very different life, do not have.” Many instances of such information sharing between mentor and protégé would be difficult to surface through a more impersonal and standardized new teacher induction program.

Discussion

Our findings revealed a strong correlation between the mentoring experiences and well-being of the participating Canadian ECTs. In general, we note that participation in mentoring differed across the survey participants, with an alarming finding that close to one-third of the respondents reported that they had not experienced any mentoring support in their early career teaching. Mentorship support for new teachers should be considered a “must-have resource” (Glazerman *et al.*, 2010; Guarino *et al.*, 2006; Henry *et al.*, 2011; Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). In relation to the connection between mentorship and well-being, our results show that ECTs who did not have any mentorship at all had a significantly lower feeling of well-being that came from external sources, from the structure of the school, and internally.

For most of the participants who benefited from mentoring, supports mostly came from informal mentorship arrangements with colleagues rather than from a formal mentor assigned as part of the program. Quantitative data analysis showed that the mentorship score of those who only had formal mentorship experiences was significantly lower than those with an informal mentorship or a mix of formal and informal mentorship. Previous research in education and other fields has similarly revealed that informal mentorship is more frequently accessed and sometimes deemed more beneficial than formal mentorship (Desimone *et al.*, 2014; James *et al.*, 2015; Ragins and Cotton, 1999). Du and Wang (2017) found that ECTs are more likely to develop informal mentoring relationships if they have opportunities to interact with colleagues within and outside of their immediate work unit in a positive, trustful, open, and stable social environment. Qualitative responses from those ECTs who experienced mentoring highlighted the importance of the strength of the relationship in mentoring, regardless of whether it was an informal or a formal mentoring relationship. As Desimone *et al.* (2014) found, complementary roles of informal and formal mentors point to the desirability of having both: while informal sources of support can help address the personal needs of teachers, the formal mentoring structures are often directed at meeting their professional needs.

Both quantitative and qualitative data revealed the importance of collegial relationships through mentorship for the overall well-being, flourishing and thriving of new teachers. Collegial support for our respondents came in the form of help with planning and resources

or manifested via emotional help and mental health. These findings are consistent with those of Hobson and Maxwell (2017), who noted that the presence, absence, nature and intensity of teachers' relatedness (i.e. social connections to others in and around schools) are key factors in enhancing or impeding ECTs' well-being. Our participants emphasized the need for connection with other beginning teachers for professional and emotional support. Interpersonal relationships amongst peers have been found to lead to greater satisfaction, ability to develop professionally, more effective and confident decision making, and increased sense of belonging and efficacy (Grodsky and Gamoran, 2003). In general, collegial relationships enabled ECTs to operate within the culture of open access to knowledge and expertise, collective problem solving, and trusting school climate, particularly reflected in their courage to share their frustrations (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001). Collaboration with other teachers thus is critical, as it helps them to mobilize knowledge without having to "reinvent the wheel" and to develop a higher sense of connectedness (Swars *et al.*, 2009), which in turn can translate to pedagogical well-being (Soini *et al.*, 2010). Mentoring also afforded development of strong teacher-student relationships that enhanced ECTs' feelings of flourishing. Building positive teacher-student relationships is deemed strongly related to effective classroom management and instructional quality of beginning teachers (Kwok, 2017) and an ethos of community and caring in the classroom (Wentzel, 2012). In addition, collegiality and connection between school administrators and teaching staff could provide school administrators with increased opportunities to meaningfully interact with, support, and ultimately retain high-quality educators (Barnatt *et al.*, 2016). To this end, Hobson and Maxwell (2017) argued that school administrative teams should include a member of staff with overall responsibility for teacher well-being.

Mentorship and collegial support allowed our participants to expand their understandings of school structures, policies, routines and procedures and thus gain confidence in their everyday decisions. Similarly, other researchers found that personal confidence and efficacy depend on supportive relationships that help ECTs with socialization into the teaching profession (Fenwick, 2011; Long *et al.*, 2012; Tillman, 2005). For beginning teachers, making independent decisions could be one of the most challenging tasks; with no prior experience, they might feel vulnerable or hesitant to make choices. Having a mentor, formal or informal, helped some of our participants make decisions with assurance, thus increasing their self-efficacy (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009; Tschannen-Moran and McMaster, 2009). To support the promotion of ECTs' well-being, Hobson and Maxwell (2017) recommended that all novice teachers be allocated a mentor or another colleague whose remit included a specific concern for the promotion of their well-being. For the ECTs in this study, mentors exhibited positive impact on their learning by being competent, knowledgeable, and willing to guide, enable, and share resources. These practices and actions align with main roles of mentors evident in the literature: guiding, leading, advising, supporting; coaching, educating, enabling; organizing, managing; and counseling, developing interpersonal relationships (Harrison *et al.*, 2006).

Mentoring in our study was found to mitigate feelings of stress. Stress in teaching often results in "teacher turnover, low teacher satisfaction, and high teacher burnout, along with negative physical and psychological health outcomes" (Harris, 2011, p. 105). In order to deal with stress by growing resilience, Kyriacou (2001) distinguished between two approaches: direct action techniques that a teacher enact to eliminate the sources of their stress; and palliative techniques that engage teachers in mental or physical strategies aimed at lessening the feeling of stress that occurs. Certainly, the findings of this study seem to support Kyriacou's first assertion that direct action type approaches support the ECT in becoming more resilient to stress. ECT participants in this study reported that their mentors helped to reduce stress by providing supportive pedagogical advice and the sharing of resources.

For ECTs in our study, the mentoring relationships provided opportunities for them to pause and have a conversation with a trusted colleague. This in turn prompted deeper reflection, as mentors modeled reflective practices through the questions posed to their protégés. While serving as a prominent feature in teacher induction and mentorship programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Wang *et al.*, 2008), reflection (and especially critical self-reflection) also has significant and beneficial implications for the development of ECTs' resilience (Cook-Sather and Curl, 2014; Le Cornu, 2013; Leroux and Théorêt, 2014). According to Harrison *et al.* (2005), tailored mentoring can assist in developing critical reflective practice, in a form of researching from the inside, and thus provide a valuable route for mentees to re-enter past experiences and to facilitate both the deconstructing and constructing of their practice.

In addition to this support structure from within the school, finding healthy levels of work–life balance was also important for the ECTs in this study. In particular, having hobbies or interests outside of school, spending time with family and friends away from the work environment, and ensuring that school life and home life were kept separate were all felt to be positive ways of managing work–life balance. These findings support Burke and Mcateer's (2007) assertion that more people want a life beyond work, and thus work can become more effective if employees are able to find ways to integrate their work, families and personal lives in more satisfying fashion. Critical in this regard for ECTs was the need to maintain a positive mindset. Being positive enables educators to understand their impact on students to help them be focused and feel competent, to build healthy relationships with colleagues and students, and to apply a strength-based model that targets every student in the classroom (Brooks and Goldstein, 2008). The ECTs in our study turned to colleagues for support when they recognized feeling overwhelmed or struggling in their working role. Again, our findings suggested that informal mentoring was most valued by ECTs in this respect, which might speak to potential benefits of mentor and protégé pairings that evolve through collegial working friendships rather than formally imposed mentorship pairings. Furthermore, as Guarino *et al.* (2006) found, mentoring, collaboration, and networking with other teachers have significant benefits for retention of ECTs.

To best support well-being and flourishing of ECTs, it is important to develop sustainable learning communities characterized by wholeness, connectedness, meaning, commitment and depth of collaborative relationships (Cherkowski, 2012). As noted above, long-standing connections with other empathetic beginning teachers were important for the ECTs in this study. Nieto (2003) argued that collaboration is vital for new teachers to solve the problems of their practice, to build critical and long-standing relationships with colleagues, and to belong to a school community. Connection and collaboration with like-minded peers are beneficial processes that augment beginning teachers' professional capacity (Anderson and Olsen, 2006) and represent a generative effort to well-being, with teachers expressing renewed motivation, realistic attribution of value to the professional role and good interpersonal bonds (Gozzoli *et al.*, 2015). Overall, our findings revealed a critical role for such aspects as positive emotions (mindset), engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment (outcomes) and resilience (Noble and McGrath, 2015; Seligman, 2011) for ECTs' well-being. As we noted from the findings, mentoring can be the vehicle through which the flourishing learning climates (Cherkowski and Walker, 2013) can be established, maintained and sustained for beginning teachers to thrive in.

Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research

In this paper, we have undertaken the first steps in exploring the impact that mentoring has on Canadian ECTs' well-being. First, this paper draws on the selective data analysis of the data from a larger study to elicit the connections between the mentoring support and perceived well-being. A study that is designed to specifically examine this connection

is commended. We found that multiple forms of mentoring were being used to support ECTs with differing levels of success. However, as we found earlier (Kutsyuruba *et al.*, 2016), due to inconsistencies in terminology and multifaceted offerings of induction and mentoring supports for ECTs across Canada, even with our suggested definitions regarding the formal and informal mentorship, there might have been some ambiguity regarding those kinds of mentoring supports for ECTs. A more longitudinal and larger study of teachers, from preservice through the first five years, could yield deeper understanding of the connection between the mentorship and well-being that we have begun to uncover in this paper. Furthermore, connecting the dots between ECTs' needs, hopes, and concerns, and those of their school administrators, many of whom are also dealing with excessive workloads and demands, would be illuminating. This broader scope could potentially reveal solutions for leadership and administration of mentorship programs. Finally, the lessons learned from our large sample-size pan-Canadian study could be examined and contrasted with other international contexts in a comparative study.

Conclusions and implications

Based on the findings of this study, we draw several conclusions and suggest implications for policymakers, practitioners and researchers. Our findings showed that the ECTs who did not receive any mentorship indicated significantly lower feelings of well-being from external, structural and internal well-being sources, and conversely, the ECTs who participated in some kind of mentorship demonstrated much higher levels of feelings of well-being. Policymakers should therefore continue to confidently include mentorship as an intentional strategy to support and help ECTs to flourish. However, inconsistent scoring between individuals and their levels of external, structural, and internal well-being suggest that more research should be undertaken to reach a clearer understanding of the nature of factors that impact the effective organization and delivery of mentoring supports and subsequent impact on the well-being of the ECT. This would allow mentoring to be purposefully crafted as a factor in supporting the well-being of ECTs and retaining them in the teaching profession.

In terms of practice, this study has identified that multiple forms of mentoring are being used to support ECTs in the early stages of their careers with differing levels of success. However, there seemed to be some ambiguity as to whether formal mentoring was in place for teachers as they started their careers, with far more informal mentoring being identified than formal. The literature shows that formal mentorship programs are helpful, and yet one cannot often mandate a fitting connection between mentor and mentee. Given that the ECTs noted many instances of benefiting from informal mentorship, we suggest increased efforts to establish a clearer picture of which staff in schools are providing mentoring and what form this mentoring takes. Given that informal mentoring strongly depends on relationship building and social interactions, further studies would do well to explore the impact of changes in workforce, contextual factors, and relational ties on short- and long-term well-being outcomes. Given the instrumental role of school administrators in the induction and mentoring processes of ECTs, such insights may offer an assistive lens to school principals, vice-principals and other administrators by identifying where mentoring is optimally being utilized to help ECTs survive and thrive.

In spite of increased attention to the need for a balanced work–life focus for teachers in policies, the perceived imbalance between work and life demands seems to be more challenging for ECTs than policymakers are aware. Excessive work expectations and intensive workloads need to be given proper attention for their potential negative effects (such as stress, burnout, withdrawal and absence from work) on the beginning teachers' health and well-being. Likewise, purposeful strength-based approaches should be undertaken to establish generative and prosocial efforts to enhance the connectiveness,

collaboration, collegiality, and resilience-building opportunities for novice professionals within flourishing learning communities. Consequently, building a support network with peers during initial teacher training programs could be a valuable asset for ECTs to develop and utilize as an ongoing support mechanism.

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