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When Context Has Content: A Case Study of New Teacher Induction in the University of Chicago's Urban Teacher Education Program

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Abstract

Reviews of research evaluating the impact of beginning teacher induction suggest that the mixed results may be due to the fact that the programs do not fully address school context. We examine how one induction program for urban teachers explicitly addresses teachers' specific schools and students to illustrate how context becomes the *content* for teachers' learning and work. We argue that the program's "context-specific" supports may ease transition into the challenging role of urban teacher. In turn, this case suggests ways of addressing features of context that may help new teachers better understand and maintain a commitment to urban teaching.

Keywords

new teacher induction, urban teacher preparation, context-specific teacher education, teacher retention

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Introduction

Teacher turnover and new teacher retention in urban and other settings have been consistent education policy concerns for decades (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Lortie, 1975; Tyack, 1974; see also Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Recent research examining the linkages between teacher retention and school contexts has underscored even more substantially the singular and significant challenge of retaining strong teachers, particularly in the most challenging classrooms and school contexts (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2006; Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005). At the same time, research suggests that novice teachers are less effective in their impact on student learning than their more experienced peers (Murnane & Phillips, 1981; Raymond, Fletcher, & Luque, 2001; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2001), and often leave classroom teaching or move schools before they have the opportunity to develop their skills, establish good working relationships with students, and increase their level of impact on student achievement. After only the first year, 11 percent of new teachers leave the profession, while 16 percent move schools; by the fifth year, 40 to 50 percent of teachers have left the classroom (Smith & Ingersoll, 2003). In urban school districts, the statistics are still higher (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; DeAngelis & Presley, 2007). A recent study in Chicago demonstrated that only 30 percent of new teachers remained in their original school after five years (Allensworth, Ponisciak, Mazzeo, 2009). This high rate of new teachers entering and leaving their positions is costly for districts, creates instability in schools, and ultimately means that students have fewer opportunities to learn in classrooms with teachers who have long-term knowledge of their strengths and needs (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Berliner, 2000; Lopez, 2007). Given these conditions, questions about how to retain new teachers and support them in developing skills and sustained relationships with children have taken on increased urgency, particularly in the complex contexts of urban schools.

Teacher induction programs have been embraced as a key policy response to address the challenge of retaining and supporting beginning teachers (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999; Huling-Austin, 1990; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Mutcher, 2000). Over the last 20 years, induction programming has increased steadily, with the number of new teachers who reported participating in some form of induction growing from approximately 41 percent in 1990 to almost 80 percent in 2008 (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Only recently, however, has research begun to systematically examine particular features of induction programs in relation to their impact upon new teacher retention and to other

key outcomes such as teacher learning, student learning, and student achievement (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kapadia et al., 2007; Wechsler, Caspary, Humphrey & Kapadia Matsko, 2010).

Surprisingly, the research does not paint a clear picture of the benefits of beginning teacher induction (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, Wechsler et al., 2010). While many empirical studies suggest some impact upon retention and teacher efficacy, not all research finds such positive results (Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfin, Bleeker, Johnson, Grider & Jacobus, 2010). One possible explanation for the mixed results is that features of *school context* have not yet been fully accounted for in these studies (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). While recent research suggests a strong relationship between a teacher's school context and the impact of induction supports (Kapadia, 2008; Wechsler et al., 2010; Ingersoll & Smith, 2010), no study to date has systematically looked at those relationships or at the role of context in particular.

To better understand the relationship between context and induction, we conducted a case study of the induction component of an urban teacher preparation program that focuses directly on school context. The primary research question around which our case is organized is *What does induction look like when it takes context into account?* To examine this question, we draw upon our work in the Choosing to Teach study of preservice teacher education. This larger research project investigates the advantages that may exist in preparing teachers for particular contexts, such as Chicago Public Schools, urban Catholic schools, or Jewish day schools (Feiman-Nemser, Hammerness, Horowitz, Kardos & Tamir, 2008, Feiman-Nemser, Dallavis, Grinberg, Hammerness, Holter, Kapadia Matsko & Tamir, 2010, Feiman-Nemser, Tamir & Hammerness, in preparation). We are analyzing the potential value of providing teacher candidates with opportunities to learn about the economic, historical, and cultural particularities of their specific school setting in order to be effective with their students. While some might argue that good teacher education is generic, our project tries to understand if there are any teacher education practices that might be particularly important, appropriate, or effective within specific settings. We use the term "context-specific" to describe this type of focused teacher preparation (Feiman-Nemser, et al, 2008; 2010).

Our research builds upon existing scholarship in multicultural education that argues for the central importance for prospective teachers of learning about the role of culture, ethnicity, and educational background (Banks et al., 2005; Irvine, 1991, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001, Milner, 2003, 2011; Sleeter, 2008; Villegas, 2002, 2008) and in particular upon work on culturally-relevant teaching (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994; Lee, 1994;

Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Our investigations build upon that body of research, while turning the focus specifically to what might be different or unique about particular settings and to how we might support teachers for the *specifics* of such settings. The distinctive ways in which *place* matters has been a long-standing research insight in the social science fields of sociology (Park, Burgess and McKenzie, 1925) and more recently in economics (Krugman 1991; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012), politics (Shin 2001; Hiskey and Bowler 2005) and public health (McLafferty 2003; Zenk et al. 2004), across many geographic scales (Fotheringham et al. 2002; DeBlij 2009). However, scholars have pointed out that studies of academic performance rarely consider the influence of geography or the context of communities (Tate, 2008; Wilson, 1998).

We argue that the attention of preparation and induction programs to the specificities of different settings also remains underexplored. For instance, there has been increasing interest in programs that prepare teachers for particular settings such as urban residencies (Berry, Montgomery, Curtis, Hernandez, Wurtzel, & Snyder, 2008; Boggess, 2010; Solomon, 2009). However, few such programs have articulated how they prepare teachers or support those teachers for specific settings such as the particular districts or cities for which they are designed (Hammerness, 2012). We do not yet know how preparation for teaching in Boston or Chicago, for instance, might differ from preparation for San Francisco or Houston. Yet because the background and experiences of schoolchildren—as well as their communities and schools—vary substantially in urban settings across the country, understanding how such contextual differences could be reflected and addressed in different teacher induction programs in various settings seems critical. Thus, drawing upon the large body of research in multicultural education, we try to investigate the role that this kind of knowledge might be tailored to particular contexts—and the ways that teacher preparation and induction programs can support teachers for the specificities of such contexts.

The conceptual framework for the larger Choosing to Teach study has been guided by research on program vision, learning to teach, the development of teacher identity, and the influence of contexts. Yet as the study has developed, we have felt the importance of unpacking the nature of preparation for *particular* contexts even more carefully. Out of that effort, we have developed a framework for articulating the nature of preparation for particular settings that we describe below (Matsko & Hammerness, in preparation). This framework reflects both a literature review on multicultural teacher preparation and the aspects of context we find that the Choosing to Teach study's participating teacher education programs addressed.

In this paper, we use this framework to help us examine ways in which such context-specific features may be useful for conceptualizing the induction of new teachers. We draw from our study of one teacher education program, the University of Chicago Urban Teacher Education Program (UChicago UTEP), which specifically prepares teachers for Chicago Public Schools and then continues its support through a formal induction component (Matsko & Hammerness, in preparation). We analyze some of the ways in which this context-specific teacher education program has developed an approach to supporting new-teacher learning. In particular, we examine how UChicago UTEP support is conceptualized to focus on the urban school setting of Chicago.

Our case study highlights how UChicago UTEP's context-specific induction supports reflect features, or layers, of context within the environment of Chicago Public Schools. These features include the institutional context of urban public schools, the context of the district itself, and related cultural contexts that require teachers to traverse racial, linguistic, economic and social-class boundaries. Each feature helps illustrate how key knowledge and understandings identified in literature on multicultural teacher education are particularized for the specific context of the Chicago Public Schools. In this way, we illustrate ways in which context is not simply the *setting* for new teachers' work and their learning. Rather, we assert that context has *content* when induction programming directly focuses on the urban school setting and tailors supports for new teachers accordingly (Foster, Dahill, Goleman & Talantino, 2006).[1] Specifically, rather than treating the Chicago Public Schools as simply the 'setting' in which new teachers are continuing to learn about teaching, we argue that there are features of the setting itself that are important to understand. The setting is not simply a 'site' for learning, but the setting itself represents important and unique content. To that end, in this paper, we illustrate the specific features of the Chicago Public Schools context that have particular relevance for learning to teach that might serve as some of the *content* for teacher induction around context.

In this paper, we argue that context-specific teacher induction is a means of looking at general issues through a lens of the particular—such as how race, ethnicity and language can influence one's teaching decisions; or the philosophies and approaches of different school types can influence attitudes and approaches towards learning—in relationship to how these issues play out in the particular setting of the Chicago Public Schools. We try to demonstrate how this teacher induction program provides important opportunities to learn about for instance, critical concepts around culturally relevant teaching

(Ladson-Billings, 2004, Villegas & Lucas, 2002) but also how these approaches are then particularized to the specific setting of the Chicago Public Schools. Opportunities to learn about the ways in which such ideas, issues, practices and experiences are enacted and how they 'look' or 'work' in Chicago then represent the *content* of context.

Method

A case study approach lends itself to these efforts particularly well because of the specificity of the contexts and the particularities of the preparation (Yin, 1989). An over-reliance upon case studies, and the absence of larger-scale, comparative studies of programs, has been an acknowledged weakness in teacher education research (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Grossman, 2008; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini Mundy, 2001; National Research Council, 2010). At the same time, researchers have also argued that case studies represent a continued source of important empirical data especially if the design includes efforts to look across and be informed by case studies at other institutions (Zeichner, 2005). In order to address the acknowledged limitations of case study approaches, this in-depth examination is undertaken in light of a larger program of research that is identifying features of 'context-specific' preparation across other programs in different institutions (Feiman-Nemser, Hammerness & Tamir, in press).

   This case of UChicago UTEP is based on a review of documents collected for all the programs in the larger Choosing to Teach study, which include program descriptions, syllabi, and information from programs' websites. The data for this analysis also include transcriptions of two interviews: an interview with the program director, and a focus group with the faculty and staff. The primary data source for this analysis was a focus group interview with three UTEP coaches. Two of the three coaches are non-White; all three coaches have spent their adult lives living in the city of Chicago. The coaches are all former Chicago Public School teachers with 4-7 years of classroom teaching experience on the south and southwest sides of Chicago. Their classroom teaching experience ranges from early childhood to middle school. All three coaches were trained in New Teacher Center Mentor Academies and had at least 2 but as many as 7 years of prior coaching experience at the time of the interview. While the small number of sources represents a limitation for this study, the case study approach allows us to investigate the efforts of one program in more depth. At the same time, the grounding of this case within a multi-institutional research project helps address questions of generalizability.
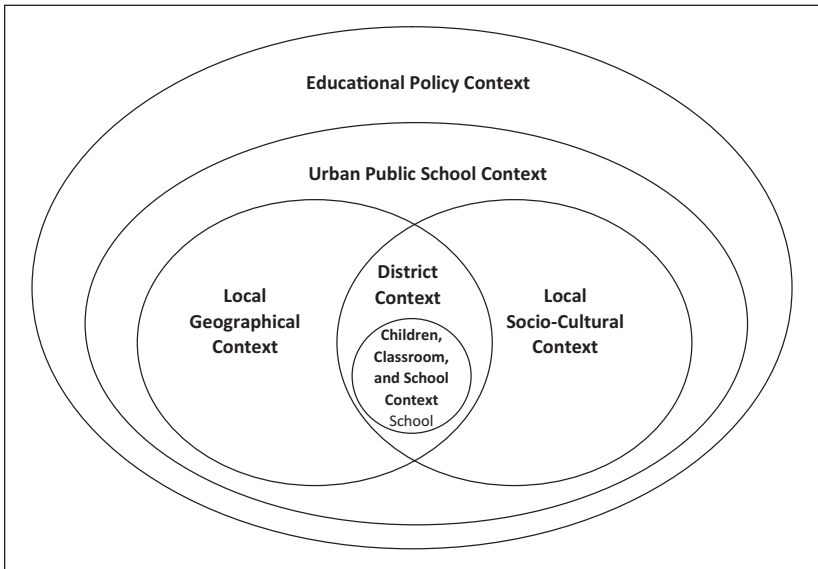
Figure 1. Features of context-specific teacher preparation.

The focus group interview was conducted in the spring of the school year, and was approximately 90 minutes in length. The interview protocol consisted of a series of open-ended questions about the opportunities and challenges they face in their work and time for them to discuss their coaching experiences over the prior week. At the end of the conversation, coaches were asked to reflect on their progress with their mentees. The data from the conversation were analyzed both inductively and deductively; once in an open-ended manner, and then again using our Features of Context-Specific Teacher Preparation framework as a lens for analysis (see Figure 1). The examples and descriptions offered by each coach were organized into categories according to the context framework and checked by coaches for accuracy. The other data sources were originally coded by the Choosing to Teach research team with attention to specific mentions to features of context, and then re-coded by the authors with attention to the themes related to new teachers, induction, and making the transition into the workforce.

This figure illustrates the features of context that are explicitly addressed in the preservice and induction phases of the University of Chicago Urban

Teacher Education Program, and identified as important factors in the development and enactment of high-quality classroom instruction.

While the UChicago UTEP program was designed purposefully to prepare teachers for a particular setting, these features were not explicitly part of the program design. Rather, they have emerged through our empirical research in the Choosing to Teach study, from our analysis of interviews, program documents, and classroom observations.

Thus, in this diagram, the educational policy context layer refers to opportunities to learn about the broader educational and policy context in which the Chicago Public Schools are situated. This layer reflects a large body of existing literature that points to the challenges of achieving equitable education for all students within a context of pervasive lowered expectations for students of color and in urban settings (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Milner, 2003, 2011; Sleeter 1996; 2012). This aspect of the context also reflects work by educators who argue for the importance of learning about the context of standardized testing and how such testing may amplify the challenges for equitable teaching (Sleeter, 2005; Sleeter & Cornbleth, 2011). The urban public school context layer refers to opportunities to learn about the unique features of public schooling in the United States, and draws upon work by teacher educators such as Weiner (2000, 2006) and Hollins (2012) who call particular attention to the specific features of urban schools that are especially important for new teachers to understand. The local geographical context layer refers to opportunities to learn about the particular history, demographics, and cultural and physical landscape of the setting. This aspect of the context draws upon work by scholars who have argued for community-based field experiences that help pre-service teachers develop their commitments, understandings and practices for teaching in diverse settings (Buck & Skilton-Sylvester, 2005; Boyle-Baise, 2002; McDonald et al, 2011; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). The local socio-cultural context layer refers to opportunities to learn about the ways in which culture shapes and interacts with teaching and learning. Reflective of the work of scholars who have argued for the importance of understanding the relationship between culture and learning for teachers (e.g., Au, 1980; Grant & Secada, 1990; Sleeter; Irvine, Gay, 2000; Garcia, 1993; Lee, 1995; Ladson Billings, 2001, 1994, 1996; Milner, 2003; 2011), this layer of the context calls attention to the ways in which the program offers opportunities to learn about strengths of the particular socio-cultural demographics of the community and the relationship to teaching and learning. The district context layer refers to the specific setting of the school district and refers to the policies, regulations, and mandates within

that district context and also reflects the history of the district. Finally, the children, classroom, and school context layer refers to opportunities to learn about the strengths, needs, resources and educational backgrounds of the specific students with whom the teachers will work. This layer of the context also calls attention to the relationship between real classroom pupils and their particular classroom and school settings and reflects an understanding of the importance of learners as individuals. This layer also captures the interaction between the socio-cultural context in which one teaches, works and learns, reflecting work by scholars who have looked closely at the classroom interactions and the nature of teaching in diverse settings (Delpit 1986, 1988; Lee, 1995, 2007).

A Case of Context-Specific Induction

The Urban Teacher Education Program (UChicago UTEP), part of the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute, is a 2-year teacher education program that prepares elementary teachers and secondary mathematics and biology teachers. UChicago UTEP launched in 2003 with the mission to develop educators of the highest caliber for Chicago Public Schools while empirically testing a model for urban teacher preparation. UChicago UTEP draws interested candidates from across the country, and has an applicant pool that includes both recent college graduates and career changers who have been in the workforce in roles other than teaching. Successful candidates exit the program with a graduate degree (MAT) and an approval for a state teaching certificate. Although the degree-granting portion of the program spans 2 years, UChicago UTEP candidates commit to a 5-year experience upon entry, which includes 3 years of post-graduate support beyond the preparation years.

Induction as Formalized Extension of the Program

Our case study illustrates several ways in which UChicago UTEP's induction work is a formalized extension of the program. All UChicago UTEP graduates leave the program paired with an induction coach who will help them transition into the CPS teaching force by providing individualized in-classroom, formative-assessment based coaching and other assistance for 3 years. UChicago UTEP graduates can also participate in inquiry groups, quarterly professional development sessions, and opportunities for developing leadership skills that prepare them to be clinical instructors in the program.

Every soon-to-be UChicago UTEP graduate is assigned an induction coach during the final quarter of the program. UChicago UTEP induction

coaches are full-time staff members who also teach in the preservice program. This means that teacher candidates and induction coaches typically are somewhat known to one another before the one-to-one coaching relationship begins. Contact with coaches is also integrated into the final course of the program when they co-teach with UTEP residency instructors, and facilitate final assignments that require planning for a new classroom together.

The induction coach gains additional insights into the needs of the beginning teacher by participating in the candidate's final evaluation conference. Instructors, the candidate, and the coach come together to review the candidate's progress by looking at data from former observations and evaluation notes, and discussing the candidate's and instructors' first-hand experiences together. The outcome of this session is a collaboratively developed action plan for the first few months of school that builds on the candidate's stated strengths and identified areas of need. The plan is developed with specific reference to the school in which the candidate will be working. The purposeful integration of the induction coach into the final stages of the degree-granting phase of UChicago UTEP, in addition to built-in opportunities to build a relationship, prior to the work of coaching are powerful examples of how induction is a formalized extension of the program. Once in the classroom, UChicago UTEP coaches and their first-year teachers engage in two activities: biweekly in-classroom coaching (at a minimum) and monthly small-group gatherings, facilitated by coaches called FYI (First-Year Induction) meetings. UChicago UTEP faculty see the regularly scheduled, school-based coaching sessions as a way for coaches to become partners with receiving schools, which enables coaches to build relationships with principals and the new teacher's closest colleagues; they are widely seen as steady, reliable sources of support and collaborative contributors to their school's development. Reinforcing this supportive presence are FYI meetings, which are held on a rotating basis in the classrooms of the first-year teachers who trained together. FYI meetings function as a place where new teachers can discuss and plan for key, predictable events in a school year, such as parent night, completing report cards for the first time, and being observed by one's principal. UChicago UTEP staff contend that this combination of individualized and collective support complement and strengthen each other. The first provides alumni with targeted assistance from an expert practitioner and experienced coach, while the latter enables the beginning teacher to stay connected to UChicago UTEP peers who share trusting, "critical friend" relationships and a history of professional growth. Both venues are sources of social-emotional backing—which UChicago UTEP staff acknowledges that beginning teachers often need to normalize the challenges of being new to the profession.

Second- and third-year graduates continue to receive in-classroom coaching, and are also encouraged to participate in inquiry groups that are co-facilitated by staff and alumni. We found that coaching interactions during induction years 2 and 3 tended to move from scheduled, biweekly meetings to interactions based on coaching cycles around specific aspects of practice. For instance, instead of four visits spread across 2 months, second- and third-year teachers might receive three visits in a period of 5 days to support a more complex implementation of professional practice, for instance, guided reading or extensive unit planning. Inquiry groups are designed as an additional opportunity for professional learning and collaboration with peers. Graduates come together early in the school year to determine topics of common interest and form groups. Selected topics are typically concepts or practices emphasized in UChicago UTEP, such as identifying interesting and inspiring math problems, developing a writer's workshop curriculum, exploring how to integrate time for play in the early grades, or cultivating teacher leadership skills.

Regardless of induction format, all beginning UChicago UTEP teachers have two conferences annually with their coach, which keeps them in a productive mindset of looking forward, setting goals, and articulating developmental needs. This meeting replicates the style and structure of the check-in conferences they had throughout their UChicago UTEP preservice experience. All graduates are also invited to showcase one aspect of their development at an end-of-the-year alumni event—another familiar experience that parallels the requirement for UChicago UTEP teacher candidates to present their learning at the end of each year in their 2-year preparation. Such presentations of practice are another example of teacher-leadership development opportunities encouraged by the program.

We found a common thread in all UChicago UTEP induction activities to be that each is embedded in the context of Chicago Public Schools and adheres to a particular vision for advancing teaching and learning in that setting. We identify UChicago UTEP's approach as an urban, context-specific teacher preparation that entails attending to the racial, economic, historical and cultural particularities of the city of Chicago, and one that applies localized knowledge about the routines, procedures, and curriculum of Chicago Public Schools. In this case study we contend that UChicago UTEP graduates continue to receive context-specific assistance, in a manner that is consistent with their preparation years.

Features of Context-Specific Induction

In this section, we offer examples of what context-specific induction looks like in UChicago UTEP and demonstrate how the program's post-graduation

supports address, reveal, or highlight problems of practice in relation to the local setting. In other words, we demonstrate ways in which UChicago UTEP induction treats context as *content*, specific knowledge, skills, dispositions and practices that teachers learn.

Educational policy context. In this age of accountability, the pressure of standardized testing is alive, particularly in urban schools where they are used as high-stakes assessments. UChicago UTEP coaches uniformly recognize that their graduates palpably feel the weight of the tests' influence in their schools, particularly in how they affect schools' curriculum choices. One coach notes how the pressures of testing are pushed all the way down to Kindergarten. "The NWEA test is the new testing demon . . . teachers are asked to specifically teach the skills assessed, such as alphabetizing, instead of taking more comprehensive and holistic approach to literacy instruction." Another commented, "I have to remind graduates not to feel guilty about their decision to help students practice the mechanics of an 'extended-response,' but to do so in a way that it is not reduced to 'test-prep.'" Our case study suggests that UChicago UTEP coaches often find their work involves helping graduates integrate required testing strategies into a curriculum that offers interest and relevance to their students instead of letting test-preparation drive their curriculum. Helping both children and teachers feel efficacious about standardized tests—administered in Chicago Public Schools—while keeping an eye on larger, purposeful instructional goals is a context-specific feature of UChicago UTEP induction coaching.

Urban public school context. Urban schools tend to have higher concentrations of students who, for a variety of reasons, are not achieving at grade level. This often results in incorrect generalizations that suggest urban school students have a lower capacity to learn (Gay, 2010; 2000). UChicago UTEP's induction staff feels the danger of this kind of institutional belief, which translates into a need for a razor-sharp focus on what children in urban schools *are* capable of accomplishing. For instance, a coach conveyed an incident in which one of her novice teachers was having difficulty advocating for a more rigorous kindergarten writing curriculum to her grade-level partner. Her more experienced colleague embodied a "these kids can't . . . " attitude and, in the opinion of the new teacher, used an oversimplified approach to the teaching of writing. In addition to the difference in age and experience, it is worth noting that the teachers are of different ethnicities. (The novice teacher is Latina, the more experienced teacher is Caucasian.) Moreover, the school encouraged this collaboration as a support for the new teacher, which made her advocacy even more complex.

The UChicago UTEP coach worked with the new teacher to try assignments from both writing curricula and to compare student output, assuming that a focus on evidence would help cut through some of the complex dynamics of the collaboration. Using work samples to analyze student learning is generally considered a high-quality teaching practice. What is context-specific about this example—in addition to the differences in the ethnicities of the parties and the manner in which that affected their negotiations—is that the writing samples were used to challenge assumptions about student capacity in the novice teacher's traditionally low-performing school. In this case, the coach and graduate were actively working against the low student expectations perpetuated by the school setting to advocate for a more rigorous approach to instruction. Using content—samples of student work as evidence of student capabilities and the methods used to amass the evidence—was critical to the coach's strategies in this particular event.

This example illustrates what coaches view as "a hallmark of UTEP's induction work--the work of advocacy and change agency." UTEP coaches work with teachers to critically analyze the culture and practices of the urban school as well as their own. Without questioning their surroundings, they risk perpetuating low expectations and the "pedagogy of poverty" (Haberman 1991).

Local geographical context. A recent UChicago UTEP graduate changed schools between her first and second years of teaching. Her first school was in a high-poverty area, with a predominantly African American student body. Her second school is in an area undergoing the early stages of gentrification, and has a predominantly Mexican American student population. In an interview, her coach recalled,

> Not only [did] I have to do lots of coaching this year around what it means to teach Latino students versus African American students, but we've also talked a lot about what it means to teach in a school that isn't as challenging [as] her first school, in that it has relatively more resources and parent involvement.

This particular feature of UChicago UTEP's context specific coaching relies heavily on coaches' prior teaching experience through which they gain knowledge about the community and families there. For example, a coach who taught in a predominantly Latino school is often intentionally paired with teachers working in similar environments. She explains,

. . . as a result of my experience with [my school] . . . I was able to help my new teachers build relationships with families and reach out to the community in ways that made sense. Having background on the Mexican-American population of the community was also helpful in coaching the new teachers at that school.

In addition to working with specific neighborhoods, coaches intentionally learn about the communities in which their novices work. One coach elaborates,

. . . knowing that the Pilsen neighborhood is quickly gentrifying, or that West Lawndale is an area of the city where many new turnaround schools are opening and charters have infiltrated . . . affects my knowledge of the community and often, my work with the school and beginning teachers.

Getting to know the students one is responsible for teaching can be seen as universal practice for preservice or induction programs. However, UChicago UTEP coaches frame their work by drawing upon their knowledge about individual schools, the children within, and the Chicago communities in which they reside—all of which have particular histories and trends. This effort to draw upon and recognize context, however, does not mean treating race, culture or religious identity as "essential" features of students, teachers, or community identities—but rather that these aspects of identity play important roles in teaching and learning, along with multiple factors that help create and support individual learning. We argue that this kind of content knowledge is another means by which induction work becomes context-specific.

Local socio-cultural context. UChicago UTEP coaches' understanding of the cultural aspect of schooling also represents a kind of "content" that they frequently draw upon in their interactions with graduates. In the following examples, we argue that knowledge of students' cultural and familial norms is a form of content that UChicago UTEP coaches address in their work with beginning teachers. In an interview, one coach recalled a series of conversations with a white first-year middle school teacher who works in a predominantly African American community:

The new teacher and I had several conversations last year and a few this year about "classic" literature. I've been pushing her to examine her definition of "classic," and more important, her perception that

literature that may be accessible to her students by way of race or urban experiences can also foster rigorous study. Last year, I encouraged her to use *Bronx Masquerade* by Nikki Grimes, as opposed to a text from Hawthorne or Dickens.

Another UChicago UTEP coach we interviewed recalled collaborating with a white novice teacher about how to increase student engagement in her predominantly African American classroom during reading discussions. According to the coach, the new teacher she was working with was frustrated because kids "didn't listen" to directions, they "kept talking during lessons," and she didn't understand why this was so difficult since "she was able to do this as a kid." Instead of immediately moving to discussions about pacing or participation structures, the coach first helped her see her expectations were based on her own schooling and that she was using herself as a model for what students should be able to do. She then proceeded to work with the new teacher to consider the explicit ways in which her discussion topics incorporated knowledge of the students' home and familial background. We argue that this strategy for fostering student engagement is context-specific because it draws upon the knowledge of students' backgrounds and home lives and the effectiveness of bringing those factors into discussions.

Children, classroom, and school context. This context-specific aspect of UChicago UTEP's induction focuses directly on work in the classroom with students. We found a number of ways in which a typical challenge for new teachers—classroom management—was addressed in a context-specific way in UChicago UTEP by attending to the intersection between cultural knowledge and classroom management. In one example, a UChicago UTEP graduate—like many new teachers—wanted her middle school students to experience freedom of movement and freedom of expression in her classroom. As her coach recalls, the resulting complications stemmed not only from the teacher's need to be comfortable using her "teacher voice" to establish consistent norms and routines, but also from the fact that "she, a white teacher, was teaching a group of African American students who hadn't had these kinds of freedoms in the past in their school setting. For her students, this approach to classroom management was instead interpreted "as the absence of safety and stability."

Many novice teachers, regardless of their own racial/ethnic identity or that of their students, struggle with issues of voice and authority in their new classrooms. However, this coach focused on moving the new teacher to rethink her definition of freedom, and to recognize how her perception of its importance didn't match her students' perceptions or needs. She noted,

This means that she has to more explicitly teach students how to enact freedom of movement and speech, and be willing to assume authority when the classroom feels unsafe due to the absence of structure in those periods of freedom.

We argue that what makes this example context-specific is that UChicago UTEP coaches recognize issues of classroom management as the upshot of asynchronous cultures or differences in cultural or social expectations between students and teachers (Irvine, 1991)—while making clear that culture is also just one aspect of a complex setting. They do not immediately attribute management challenges to stereotypical cultural "norms"; nor do they immediately attribute new teachers' shortcomings in expectations, routines, norms, and consequences. Rather they use various aspects of localized knowledge to interpret the situation. Again, this kind of coaching approach requires knowledge about students' backgrounds and teachers' backgrounds—knowledge that draws from experience with the diverse cultural and social expectations of students within the school and the community in which the new teacher works.

Discussion: Context Has Content

The examples in the previous section illustrate typical conversations between UChicago UTEP coaches and their beginning teachers. Indeed, our case study indicates that UChicago UTEP coaches' propensity to draw on their knowledge base about what it means to successfully teach in Chicago Public Schools aligns with the context-specific approach of the overall program. In general, we found that UChicago UTEP coaches often use strategies that encourage novices to unpack their relationships with their students—especially their most challenging students—with an eye toward employing strategies that leverage children's strengths (a strategy consistent with literature on culturally relevant teaching). This process typically involves asking the novice teacher such questions as "What does the child do well? What are the child's interests and motivators? What have you learned about the child's friends and home life?" but also draws upon coaches' specific knowledge of the students, local schools, and communities. The resulting conversations provide guidance for teachers and give induction coaches opportunities to emphasize the importance of reflecting on one's own racial/ethnic, cultural, and class-based perceptions, in addition to those of the students. This persistent lens on how issues of race, class, and culture play out within the particular settings of the Chicago Public Schools makes UTEP's coaching

context-specific, and operates as a useful tool for graduates as they seek to translate universal teacher stances and practices into effective instructional strategies for Chicago Public Schools. Together, these examples demonstrate how UChicago UTEP provides induction support that is context-specific by conveying content that reflects particular knowledge about the communities, school, and children in Chicago schools.

UChicago UTEP graduates enter the profession with a theoretical understanding of the range of economic and political forces that affect urban schooling, having read research by scholars who address the structural underpinnings of poverty and the complex relationship of race, class, economics, social forces, politics and schooling (Labaree, 2000; Noguera 2003). They also read about how these forces play out in Chicago specifically (Wilson, 1996; Patillo 2007). But acquiring the ability to see and respond to these forces appropriately as they play out at the classroom level requires another level of nuanced understanding and support. We argue that UChicago UTEP's context-specific approach, in contrast with other forms of induction, provides new teachers with guidance in accessing and interpreting context-embedded data that will drive teaching and learning in the urban setting of Chicago in particular. In other words, through UChicago UTEP's induction work, graduates continue to learn content (about their particular students, about effective instructional strategies for them) that helps them better work within their specific schools and classrooms. And, they learn to interpret and use data from their particular settings that further allows them to make effective and useful instructional decisions.

Undoubtedly, coaches' experience as teachers in Chicago Public Schools and the extensive knowledge they acquire about the schools where they work as UChicago UTEP coaches, support the program's capacity to continue a context-specific approach in its induction activities. This study reveals the critical role that mentors play in this context-specific work. UChicago UTEP purposefully draws mentors from a population of teachers who teach or have taught in the Chicago Public Schools. The mentors have particular and specific knowledge of students, curriculum, communities and faculty: they are familiar with both the resources and the challenges of the CPS system. For those programs attempting to provide more context-specific preparation, then, our work points to the importance of drawing mentors from the local school system who not only possess this 'context-specific' knowledge but can appropriately use it and bring it to bear upon their work with new teachers. Drawing upon local teachers who have been successful in the system to serve as mentors and teacher educators is an approach that has been advocated by scholars like Haberman (1995); this case provides support for such

arguments. At the same time, our findings also suggest that the careful selection of mentors is critical as well—simply having spent time in the Chicago Public Schools would not be enough for instance. Rather, the program has to ensure that coaches demonstrate both cultural sensitivity and cultural competency, and commitments to social justice and equity, for instance, so that they can use their knowledge appropriately and productively with their mentees.

Yet the careful coordination and continuity between preparation and induction also seems to be an important element in this context-specific approach. Our case study suggests that UChicago UTEP graduates are assisted in their transition into teaching by being surrounded by important familiarities. These coordinated links between preparation and induction are illustrative of Feiman-Nemser's argument (2001) that teacher development is a continuum. Like Feiman-Nemser, UChicago UTEP sees the first years of teaching as a critical period in learning the profession, and treats those years as a time for continued learning. One coach speaks to this point directly:

> I find myself able to rely on shared frameworks and assumptions about practice with my UChicago UTEP graduates . . . in other situations, I had to spend time crafting a shared vision of instruction . . . . With UChicago UTEP graduates, we can just go right to the work of instruction.

Although this continuity is not the focus of this case, we maintain that this examination also demonstrates how a preparation program may be more effective in its induction work by taking a long view of teacher development. In this way, an extended relationship with novices and the possibility to take advantage of frameworks that were seeded during the preservice years enables even more targeted work on instruction, and induction support.

Implications and Conclusion

This case study of UChicago UTEP's induction structure reveals ways in which new teacher support, assessment and development were uniquely targeted to teachers' classroom settings in the Chicago Public Schools. In particular, this case illustrates how challenges associated with beginning teaching were addressed through context-specific supports that built on and further developed graduates' knowledge about economic, geographic and cultural features of their district, and knowledge about routines, procedures, and curriculum specific to their schools. Our research builds upon the long tradition of scholarship in multicultural teacher education that has pointed to

the necessity of taking culture and context into account. Concurrently, some evidence is emerging that teachers prepared for particular contexts have higher retention rates (Quartz et al., 2004; Quartz et al., 2008; Freedman & Appleman, 2009; see also Tamir, 2009). Yet as interest in preparing and supporting teachers for particular settings increases (Berry et al., 2008; Boggess, 2010), we need to understand more about *how* programs attend to such knowledge in a way that reflects the specifics of settings. This research represents an initial step towards addressing that gap, by demonstrating some of the ways that knowledge about context can and might be *particularized* for specific settings. This exploratory work suggests promise for induction programs that establish mechanisms that that explicitly acknowledge the features of context in teaching and student learning. We argue that induction programs that treat *context as content* may be addressing particularly important aspects of new teachers' settings that are critical to their continued success with students and teaching. This seems a potentially fruitful strategy in light of findings that suggest that the impact of induction appears to differ by school context (Ingersoll & Strong, 2010). Our initial work reveals some of the ways that induction can directly address the multifaceted layers of context: considering those features as part of the *content* that new teachers need to understand and learn about as they start work in classrooms.

Furthermore, recent research on novice teachers' career decisions suggests that key aspects of school environment matter more to teacher satisfaction and student learning than prior studies suggested (Boyd et al, 2011; Ladd, 2011; see also Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012). These studies have been particularly important in revealing that the apparent relationship between teacher turnover and student demographics may not in fact be due to teachers' responses to their students, but rather may be due to the working conditions and the school environments in which teachers have to teach and their students have to learn (Johnson, et al. 2012). However, these studies have focused mostly upon organizational features such as school culture, principal leadership and relationships among colleagues (Johnson, et al. 2012). While our case also suggests the importance of taking features of school settings into account, in turn, we highlight additional aspects of context that may matter for new teachers. For instance, while the layers our case illustrated included features of the urban institutional layer (which may include routines, policies and procedures of local schools), it also calls attention to other layers of context such as students and classroom that may equally make a difference for new teachers. This case suggests an approach to addressing these layers of context that may help new teachers better understand and maintain a commitment to teaching in the specific urban contexts in which they are working.

Furthermore, learning about the features of school context through induction may be important for novice teachers in any setting. But it may be particularly essential for new teachers in urban contexts who are even more likely to leave or move schools. Scholars like Weiner (2006) have pointed out that novice teachers are often surprised and overwhelmed by the organizational and bureaucratic complexities of urban schools. Yet she also points out that few teacher education programs directly teach such "organizational knowledge." This case suggests some of the ways that explicit attention to features of specific urban school settings could help new teachers to better understand aspects of their school setting and the institutional 'layer' that could be critical to their success with students.

Indeed, the Features of Context-Specific Teacher Preparation framework that we have used to analyze UChicago UTEP's induction support may be a useful tool for other induction programs that intend to prepare teachers for particular settings. Although these features were used to examine a single program's efforts, drawing upon a limited number of data sources, the features of context that we used in our analysis are drawn from a larger program of research that includes multiple institutions (Feiman-Nemser et al., in preparation) and many of the features represented in the diagram reflect a long tradition of research in multicultural teacher education. In concert with this tradition of research, the different layers of context could be used as a means of exploring and identifying types of context-specific knowledge that new teachers may need in their particular settings. Programs interested in taking a 'context-specific' approach to preparing and supporting new teachers might consider using these layers in relationship to research on multicultural teacher education as a means of examining their own context and identifying knowledge that may be specific or particularly important in their setting. This work has begun in other programs that are using the conception of 'context-specific teacher education' to help examine, for instance, how a program supporting new teachers in New York City can focus upon or attend to particular aspects of the context of the New York City context (Hammerness, 2012). Such analyses may help reveal particular features of a setting or context that may not only be unique, but also be especially important for new teachers to learn about. Taken together, an approach to supporting new urban teachers that takes the *specifics* of context into account may help teachers do what matters most in successful teaching—understanding their students better; developing stronger working relationships with colleagues, parents, and students; learning how to navigate public schools effectively; and ultimately, teaching in more powerful, and engaging ways.

Authors' Note

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Note

1. We would like to acknowledge that the phrase "context has context" emerged from a study of preparation for the clergy, one of the studies of professions at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Foster, Dahill, Goleman & Talantino, 2006).

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