Hiring Practices and its Connection to the Conceptualization of 'a Good Teacher' in Diverse Classrooms

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Abstract: This article explores the role of hiring practices in the conceptualization of what makes a teacher 'a good teacher', especially in diverse classrooms. It is based on a multiple case study that examined the perceptions of the experience of four high school English language arts educators teaching in diverse classrooms in Alberta, Canada. These practitioners suggest that hiring practices are mostly unreliable as principals' hiring decisions are often strongly influenced by noticeable teachers' personal traits and their preconceived perceptions of what a 'good' teacher is. During the hiring process, such interpretation often relies on the sole perceptions of the experience of school principals, which are usually not supported by effective hiring practices research. Hiring 'the most suitable' teacher to meet the needs of increasingly complex classrooms is key to education. As education strives for responding to the needs of an increasingly diverse community of learners, reflecting on hiring practices is important to improve the quality of the education provided to students. Teachers' perspectives on hiring practices are important as they could potentially contribute and inform professional development initiatives, teacher preparation programs, and educational policies regarding a possible connection between administrative roles and teacher effectiveness.

Résumé: Cet article explore le rôle des pratiques d'embauche dans la conceptualisation de ce qui fait d'un enseignant « un bon enseignant », en particulier dans des salles de classe diverses. Il est basé sur une étude de cas multiple qui a examiné les perceptions de quatre enseignants d'anglais au secondaire sur leurs expériences dans des salles de classe diverses en Alberta.

Ces praticiens suggèrent que les pratiques d'embauche ne sont généralement pas fiables, car les décisions d'embauche des directeurs d'école sont souvent fortement influencées par les traits personnels des enseignants et leurs perceptions préconçues de ce qu'est un « bon » enseignant. Au cours du processus d'embauche, une telle interprétation repose souvent sur les seules perceptions des directions d'école, qui ne sont généralement pas appuyées par une recherche efficace sur les pratiques d'embauche. L'embauche d'enseignants « les plus appropriés » pour répondre aux besoins de salles de classe de plus en plus complexes est essentielle à l'éducation. Alors que l'éducation s'efforce de répondre aux besoins d'une communauté d'apprenants de plus en plus diversifiée, il est central de réfléchir aux pratiques d'embauche afin d'améliorer la qualité de l'éducation dispensée aux étudiants. Les points de vue des enseignants sur les pratiques d'embauche sont importants, car ils pourraient contribuer et éclairer les initiatives de perfectionnement professionnel, les programmes de préparation des enseignants et les politiques éducatives concernant un lien possible entre les rôles administratifs et l'efficacité du travail des enseignants.

Alberta classrooms have become progressively more diverse in the last decades. Diversity addresses the visible and invisible aspects of difference in schools such as English Language Learners, students with special learning needs, and students who are visibly part of minority destitute groups (Fontenele-Tereshchuk, 2019; Alberta Education, 2010). The increase in student diversity has impacted schools and presents a challenge to education as teachers strive to respond to the students' needs (Falkenberg, Goodnough, & MacDonald, 2014; Roessingh & Douglas, 2012).

As teachers are central to the implementation of any educational initiative, teaching effectiveness has also become more evident in the good teacher narratives during hiring processes (Kaufman & Ireland, 2015). The four Alberta teachers in this multiple case study reflect on their perceived assumptions based on their experiences and/or realizations as to what makes a teacher, 'a good teacher' through hiring practices, especially teaching in diverse educational contexts. The teachers point to the hiring process as an important piece in the puzzle of questions surrounding teaching effectiveness in the current diverse classrooms.

The study highlights key aspects related to these teachers' experiences going through hiring processes and how that informed their perception of what makes a teacher 'a good teacher', meaning

a teacher with the 'right' educational and professional teaching abilities to be hired to teach in diverse classrooms. It explores important narratives in teacher hiring in Alberta: Teacher qualification, teacher training, and teacher recruiting as well as its intersection to the complex transition of teachers into administrative positions, and how such narratives are presented in the understanding of what makes a teacher 'a good teacher' through hiring practices.

This article mainly focuses on the question: "Do you think teachers' perceived experiences and knowledge are validated through teacher hiring processes?" (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019, p. 70). Two themes emerged from this question: Teachers' professional education and its intersection with the good teacher narrative and Teachers' professional experiences of the hiring process and its intersection with the good teacher narrative.

Literature Review

The search for a definition for what 'a good teacher' is has led to a wide range of understandings of what are the professional qualities and skills necessary to describe a good teacher (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Cornell, 2009; Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019; Korthagen, 2004; Moore, 2004). The challenge may lie in the fact that "a good teacher cannot simply be described in terms of certain isolated competencies" (Korthagen, 2004, p. 79).

Although there are often guidelines aiming to regulate the standards to what makes a teacher, 'a good teacher' through the lens of hiring practices, they do not always provide 'measurable statements' (Rose, 2013, p. 7). In Alberta, for instance, the Teaching Quality Standard – TQS (TQS, 2020) provides an understanding of what are the professional standards expected from Alberta teachers, but such understanding can be subject to different interpretations as school contexts and teachers are often characteristically unique (Rose, 2013).

The conceptualization of 'a good teacher' through hiring practices is an important topic as it has a direct impact on educational practices in schools, especially in the increasingly diverse classroom environment (Connell, 2009; Hales & Clarke 2016; Moore, 2004). Diversity in the context of this study reflects the views of the Alberta Education (2010), that is to say, that "students come from a variety of backgrounds and have a wide range of interests, preferences, learning strengths and needs" (p. 9).

The Canadian student population has grown progressively more diverse and challenging. Some educational rankings such as Programme for International Student Assessment - PISA and the Fraser Institute suggest a tendency to stagnation or a decrease in student performance in math, science, and reading (Cowley & Easton, 2016; Chu, 2017; Richards, 2017; PISA, 2020). These results are not alarming but worth reflecting on how we can improve student performance in Alberta diverse classrooms.

Teacher effectiveness has permeated the hiring narrative discourses as teachers are essential in the implementation of educational initiatives responding to improving student performance. In the context of diversity Kaufman and Ireland (2015) cite some qualities to look for in a 'good' or successful teacher during hiring processes, they note that "a successful teacher has a combination of knowledge, attitudes, and skills including subject matter and pedagogical knowledge, supportive and caring attitudes, and skills in planning and managing classes with diverse student populations" (Kaufman & Ireland, 2015, p. 114). However, research suggests that hiring practices are not always guided by studies on teacher hiring effectiveness (Cranston, 2012; 2015; Kaufman & Ireland, 2015; Stewart, 2012).

There are some studies in hiring practices in a Canadian context but not nearly enough to understand the impact of such practices to respond to the sudden changes in our student demographic, which have grown significantly more complex (Alberta Teachers Association, 2014; Briscoe & Pollock, 2017; Cranston, 2015; Fredua-Kwarteng, 2013; Hales & Clarke, 2016; Mason & Schroeder, 2010).

Hales and Clarke (2016) argue that there has been a perceived surplus of teachers in some provinces and funding for teacher education has been on a decline. How do these events affect hiring practices and the conceptualization of 'a good teacher', in a time that education struggles to make sense of the daunting challenges to meet the diverse educational needs of a wide range of students? Hale and Clarke (2016) note that

> the construction of the teacher educator in current recruitment documents reflects a significant shift in institutional discourses and conceptualizations of the work of teacher educators, who have historically occupied a tenuous place in faculties of education on account of

their perceived status as "service providers" (i.e., the provision of teachers for elementary and secondary school systems) as opposed to scholars who contribute in multiple ways to teacher education, including both research and practice. (p. 321)

The fact that teachers might be seen as 'service providers' suggest that teachers are not hired based on their professional qualifications but rather their ability to accommodate the demands of administrators, stakeholders, and parents at the school level. Such understanding is part of the teacher preparation programs, and in some cases, is reflected in how teachers are actually being trained.

In some of the largest school boards in Alberta such as the Calgary Board of Education, their website suggests that the initial 'hiring' of teachers is performed centrally by recruiters where basic requirements must be met such as teachers' proper documentation, licenses, and background checks are required; teacher candidates usually go through a screening interview and are often initially hired as substitute teachers (CBE career, 2020). School principals are usually responsible for requesting the hiring of teachers for specific schools on a continuous contract basis or other kinds of long-term contracts. This process includes interviewing and ideally selecting the teacher applicant that best incorporates the qualities and abilities to meet the students' needs. However, teachers' professional qualities can be easily overlooked depending on the principal's understanding of what 'a good teacher' is, especially when such understanding is based on his/her personal views, they might be inclined to favor teachers' personal traits over professional qualifications (Cranston, 2012).

Another example can be seen in this teacher hiring advertisement by the Edmonton Public School Board: "As an applicant, you are not eligible to apply to a specific teaching assignment at a school. Instead, through this general teacher posting, you may apply to be added to our pool of active teaching applicants" (Edmonton Public, 2020). Similar to the CBE hiring system, this advertisement suggests that teachers often are not allowed to apply directly to the hiring schools as such information is not made available to substitute teachers, who depend mostly on School Board recruiters to find them potential teaching hiring interviews in schools.

Hales and Clarke (2016) note that the nature of advertisement does not always explain or details how hiring might actually take place. In other words, the fact that school board recruiters might primarily screen candidates to be part of the 'substitute teacher pool' and recommend teachers to schools, does not mean that an administrator cannot hire a teacher he/she knows or who is personally recommended by a colleague.

Aside from the general requirement such as basic education and the Alberta teacher license in order to be hired, another aspect of this advertisement that is vague is that it does not conceptualize what they mean by 'a good teacher'. That is to say, clearly laying out the needed teacher candidate educational and pedagogical requirements tailored to the different school contexts, for example, the specific position teaching skillset such as a grade five math teacher with experience and/or education with severe special needs students.

This appears to suggest a generalization of teachers' education and abilities that will be molded into the schools' contexts. That could be problematic as it could compromise the skillset suitability of teachers to match different school needs. For instance, a math teacher could end up teaching social studies, while other schools might lack that sort of specific skill set to meet the needs of their students. In some cases, the school just needs a math teacher and there is none available, but it may be also true that sometimes the principal chooses to place a teacher in certain positions that they may not be trained for, so he /she gains experience in another area as to promote a hands' on' kind of professional growth without provided training. This raises the question, is such practice meant as a kind of informal professional development or a belief that teachers' abilities can be molded by experience into the school context?

Even though the TQS stipulates an overview of what is expected of professional teachers in this province (TQS, 2020), the applicability of such 'good' teacher guidelines may be vague during hiring processes due to its generalized nature. The effectiveness of different approaches to hiring processes are mostly unclear. Many studies point to the need for developing and implementing research-based teacher effective standards in hiring processes (Cranston, 2012; 2015; Kaufman & Ireland, 2015; Stewart, 2012).

Generally speaking, Cranston (2015) suggests that the conceptualization of 'a good teacher' in hiring contexts, meaning the

analyzing of teaching abilities necessary to promote effective teaching results, is often based on assumptions made in less than a minute in which the principal meets the teacher. These initial impressions are often based on the principal's myth beliefs of "gut feelings" that may persist even after months of actually observing the teacher's performance (Cranston, 2015, p. 129). Such hiring practices are very common and supported by unreliable information and "very little attention is paid to the efficacy of the processes by which teachers are hired into schools" (Cranston, 2015, p. 129).

Classroom contexts are unique and play a key role in determining the combination of teachers' skillsets needed for teaching to be effective. In other words, there is no 'sure' recipe for 'a good teacher', but looking into the different contexts and focusing on the main needs of a community of learners and trying to match the teacher candidate's educational expertise and experience as they apply for a position might provide the school with a higher chance to find a more suitable teacher to successfully meet the needs of the students (Cranston, 2015; Stronge & Hindman, 2003).

Hamm (2015) argues that in a Canadian context "it is important for school leaders across Canada to attract teachers to their districts who bring with them a contemporary and diverse knowledge base and diverse set of abilities" (p. 40). Reflecting on how teachers are being conceptualized through hiring practices and how such a process could be more effective are essential to continue to appeal to excellence in teacher candidates. The diversity found in schools requires teachers who strive to continuously improve and grow their skillset and training, hiring practices are key to validate their efforts and keep such individuals motivated to pursue a teaching career.

Another important feature in hiring practices to be highlighted is the role of principals as administrators responsible to staff schools with effective educators and how their perceptions of what 'a good teacher' is and hiring expertise impact the overall performance of schools. The importance of how these principals are hired and trained are key to the success of education. Principals are usually teachers who were promoted to an administrative role, often not based on teaching performance excellence, but rather school leadership engagement and some further education as well as teaching seniority (Rose, 2013).

Education is in constant motion and the work of principals have become complex, especially in recent years. The ATA (2014) points

to some of the factors that exemplify such changes in the pace of education that have affected the role of principals such as increased workload, budget reductions, changes in school regulations, changes in student demographic, and pedagogical needs, advancement in technology, etc. These changes have impacted principals and contributed to the pressure that they might face performing their administrative role (Pollock & Hauseman, 2015). One of the many principals' roles is the complex hiring of teaching staff. More attention on the complexity of this principals' role is necessary to better understand and address the principals' need to develop their skills such as on "experiential learning, linking theory, and practice, and fieldwork in principal preparation and development programs" (Fredua-Kwarteng, 2013, p. 24), which could potentially contribute to improving teaching hiring practices, especially relevant in diverse classroom contexts.

Methodology

This is a multiple case study exploring the perceptions of experiences of four English language arts high school teachers teaching in diverse classroom contexts in Alberta (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019; Padula & Miller, 1999). I used an evolving understanding of a Constructive Grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which is more flexible in terms of structure, facilitating the coding of the extensive amount of information in this Multiple Case Study (Creswell, 2013, Padula & Miller, 1999). I chose to use a Grounded Theory approach to strongly focus on the data during the analysis process and address my bias as I am a researcher who is also a teacher in Alberta.

The study applied qualitative methods: 8 semi-structured questions questionnaire; 9 semi-structured questions – 30-45 minutes interview; and 11 open-ended questions - 2 hours focus-group interview with all four teachers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

The extensive data collected was sorted according to emerging common themes using a color-coded approach to data analysis in a wallmap format (Yin, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The findings allowed a theory to surface that "there is inadequate representation of the views of practicing teachers informing educational policy in Alberta at the present time" (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019, p. 204).

The participants were recruited through a participant recruitment post at the University of Alberta and networking. The

study required the participants to be Alberta Certified teachers, teaching high school in diverse classrooms in Alberta. The participants were provided with an informed consent stating the risks and benefits of the study as well as pseudonyms were used to keep the participants' identity confidential. The study is unfunded and received approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta.

Limitations

The study is statistically limited to four female teacher participants. Also, the study does not interview any principals or recruiters, relying solely on the available literature on school principalship.

Findings

The educators in this study suggest that the definition of 'a good teacher' through hiring practices is highly dependent on two main factors: Teachers availability and mainly on the principals' interpretation of the definition of what makes a teacher, 'a good teacher', which these teachers suggest is often based on the principals' personal beliefs, experiences and perhaps educational and professional background. They also indicate that due to the fact that schools are becoming more complex and teacher effectiveness is key to any attempt to improve the education offered to students, a review on hiring practices effectiveness, and perhaps how principals are trained to perform their responsibilities as administrators, especially hiring teachers to respond to the specific needs of schools and/or perhaps classrooms, is fundamentally important and may have a potential role in improving teacher effectiveness.

Participants and Themes

The participants who we will call Anna, Maria, Jane, and Jocelyn reflect on their perceived experiences of hiring practices and their connection to the complex understanding of what constitutes 'a good teacher'.

Teachers' Professional Education and its Intersection with the Good Teacher Narrative

Anna grew up in an urban-centered community and was accustomed to different languages, cultures, needs, and ways of

living so often commonly found in urban schools. Teaching was a career she chose due to her positive experiences taking on leadership roles as a high school student. She had only a few informal teaching experiences working as a tutor and what she had learned during her practicum when she applied for her first teaching position. In other words, Anna had little teaching experience, such a factor did not seem to have had a negative impact as she applied for her first teaching position. Anna shares her perceived experience with hiring practices based on how she was first hired:

> I was just thinking about my first job, and it was all random. I called the district that day, and they had an opening and I [pause], anyway, sorry [for contradicting the opinion or hiring experiences of other teachers]! I will definitely say that knowing someone would help in this profession. Because most often when a new person is hired, there is [pause], they have a certain kind of connection to someone who is already in that school. (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019, p. 91)

Anna believes she was hired due to meeting the teacher profile needed at the time at the school she applied for. She remarks that she was "in the right place at the right time" (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019, p. 91), but Anna agrees that 'knowing someone in the school' is often key for being hired.

Jocelyn reflects on her experience with hiring practices that have led her to realize that there is a lack of diversity in hiring. A diversity that is more inclusive taking into consideration other visible aspects besides race and culture. For instance, Jocelyn noticed that there are not enough male teachers currently teaching. She argues that this could suggest two things, teaching might not be a profession as appealing to men as it is for women, or simply that women are perceived through hiring practices as more suitable to the stereotype of 'a good teacher' due to the nurturing personal trait assumption often attributed to women.

Another aspect that Jocelyn points out is selective diversity, in other words, the hiring of someone is mainly motivated by the principal's views or need of a visually representative teacher of a minority group. She says

…[Or]You are the First Nations teacher who applies [in a
school for a teaching position]. My God! We'd love to have
you. But you know, what I mean? So, in some cases
diversity can work in your favor over experience as well.
(Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019, p. 92)

Jocelyn suggests that there are instances where there is a clear
connection between the 'good' teacher perception of hiring
administrators and the beliefs associated with gender and race in
hiring practices, where there is targeted hiring based on gender and
racial profiling. It is important to highlight that gender and racial
profiling often have a negative connotation as unable to equal
opportunities based on gender and racial discrimination, affecting
especially minority groups. However, Jocelyn suggests this is not
always true as in some cases being part of a minority group with
hardly any teacher 'representation' in diverse schools, might work
in favor of the teacher applicant. For example, she suggests that if
a member of a minority group is interviewed for a teaching position
in a school that does not have any of these specific under-
represented individuals in their staff, you might be hired to fill up
a 'gap' in the visible aspect of diversity representation in the school,
and not necessarily because you had the best teaching qualifications
compared to other teacher candidates.

Similar to Anna's comments, Jocelyn adds that the construct of
the good teacher narrative through hiring practices can also be
based on 'the luck of the draw' process. That is to say, that it does
not mainly depend on the teacher's training, pedagogical abilities,
and/or teaching experiences that would indicate that he/she is 'a
good teacher'. Jocelyn points to networking and knowing people in
a position to offer you a job and/or suggest your name to a trusted
principal colleague, and perhaps how well connected your recruiter
is as teachers often depend on them to be invited for job interviews.
Jocelyn argues that hiring practices usually do not validate
teachers' professional portfolio, as she says:

No [it doesn't validate experience], I think that the hiring
process values the luck of the draw. Have you called your
consultant? And who is that? You know, what I mean?
(Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019, p. 92)

Jane's experiences with hiring practices span thirty years. During this time, Jane experienced being hired many times at different K-12 school boards, at the university as an instructor in a teacher preparation program as well as teaching English as Foreign Language abroad.

Jane recalls vaguely the first time she was hired after finishing her teacher preparation program. She remembers fondly her first teaching assignment as a junior high teacher for a few years, since then she has had many other rich and diverse teaching experiences. Over time, however, Jane noted that "…to a certain point experience can start to work against you. There is a curve, I know people when they start approaching my age, they start to worry to even bother to apply for jobs…" (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019, p. 94). Jane suggests that it gets to a point in a teaching career that a long-running 'teaching experience', 'education' aligned to a 'mature understanding' of the teaching profession start to limit new hiring opportunities for these mature educators due to assumptions of the teacher being 'over trained', not malleable to adapt to the 'school' goal established by the administration and work well with other less experienced teachers. Cost may also be a factor in hiring opportunities for mature, experienced teachers as these educators are most likely at the top of the pay grid in comparison to other novice teacher candidates.

Maria echoes Anna's and Jocelyn's views on hiring practices. She thinks that hiring practices are mainly associated with 'who you know', in other words, the teacher candidate's networking within the school board he/she is applying for. She suggests that there is a significant connection between the conceptualization of 'a good teacher' and the influence of personal and professional teacher networking. That is to say, "who you know that recommends you" most likely will lead to a proposed teacher being hired by a principal (Maria, data extract). Maria's personal experience when she was first hired, seemed to have contributed to her perceptions of hiring practices, which may also be supported by the fact that, as she notes, there are very few teachers trained abroad working in schools in Alberta. Maria says

> … So, I was very lucky that way that I had someone who sort of got me under her wing and advocated for me. Had I not had that person; I would have been doing something else. (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019, p. 93)

The teachers in this study agree that while having a

professional recommendation could have been a positive asset to a proposed teacher, it should not be the main factor in the conceptualization of what 'a good teacher' is through hiring processes.

Teachers' Professional Experiences of the Hiring Process and its Intersection with the Good Teacher Narrative

An important aspect of this paper is to highlight the perspective of teachers on how they feel and perceive their experiences as being considered 'a good teacher' through hiring practices. What makes a teacher, 'a good enough' teacher to be hired? Such understanding is often portrayed by those who are responsible for hiring, referred here as principals, but rarely do teachers have the opportunity to share their views without being overshadowed by the overall principals' perspectives on hiring.

These teachers speak to viewpoints of the ones on the other side of the narrative as being hired, and not doing the hiring. These educators point to the fact that as classrooms have been increasingly requiring teachers to attend to complex classroom contexts, hiring the 'right' teacher has become key to teaching effectiveness, and a reflection on the current practices being implemented are essential to support the students' diverse needs.

The first aspect these educators discuss in the good teacher narrative, especially in the context of diverse classrooms, is the complexity of teacher professional experience factor in hiring processes. What role do teachers' experiences play in hiring practices? The teachers in this study give a broad perspective on how 'experience' is seen through the lens of hiring practices.

Jane learned in her many years of teaching that a long and diverse teaching experience, aligned with further education and additional skills such as speaking a plurality of languages are not always an asset. She explains that the myth of 'having' teaching experience is very complex as there is a 'curve', meaning a point in such experience, that it may become an obstacle for a teacher to be hired. A point in which, the combination of professional expertise and abilities of a teacher may exceed the expected and/or 'desired' skill set necessary for a teaching

position. Jane remarks

> … Because they[experienced teachers] have lots of
> experience and they feel like that works against them as
> opposed to help you because you are assumed to probably
> be settled in your ways, you are not malleable, you are
> not a young fresh teacher who has lots, lots of energy. You
> actually might have your own ideas about curriculum
> that you might push back on initiatives they are trying to
> impose on staff. You might have more influence over
> other staff members because of your experience, they
> might actually look up to you as a mentor, and that could
> be a threat. You are expensive, because [you are] at the
> top of the pay scale. You were educated in a different era
> and context. (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019, p. 94)

Jane addresses the problematic issue of teacher experience
validation such as the myth of "expiry date" in teachers' professional
experiences, which often favors novice teachers over more
experienced ones. It implies that hiring administrators may assume
novice teachers will have the energy and malleability of following
administrative policies without questioning. Some principals may
also believe that experienced teachers might be "outdated" and that
teachers' professional qualifications have "an expiry date" (Jane,
data extract), favoring novice teachers who may be assumed to be
more 'up-to-date' with new teaching practices.

Maria, an immigrant teacher trained abroad, offers an
international perspective of teacher hiring practices and the
validation of 'experience' and 'knowledge'. She recalls

> But that hasn't been my experience because I had
> to forget the things, I've learned in Bulgaria because
> this system wanted me to be a particular [kind of]
> teacher. And even now, some of my colleagues who
> are on probationary contracts and they are being
> observed by administration, and the things they have
> to do in order to be approved, are like sort of a checklist:
> Do you fit the profile? It's become even more narrow,
> and hard to fit into the mold, and even more it's like a
> cookie cutter almost. (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019,
> p. 93)

Maria suggests that hiring practices are often discriminatory of pedagogical experiences, prioritizing 'Canadian' teaching experiences over 'international' teaching experiences (Jack & Ryan, 2015). That is to say that even when the hiring post does not explicitly explain that the experience principals are looking for is 'Canadian' teaching experiences, it is what they mean often perceived more bluntly during the teaching interview.

In terms of recognizing teaching knowledge, Maria also suggests that often hiring processes are selective of what knowledge can be validated in the practices of a potential Canadian teacher. There is a system which she refers to as "cookie-cutter', in which administrators try to control and model the 'a good teacher' based on their own personal perceptions of what 'a good teacher' should be. She argues that principals quite often pressure the 'cookie-cutter' model on their newly hired teachers, especially inexperienced often when they are still on the probationary stage of their career.

One last point these four teachers make is how classroom teachers are hired or promoted into principals, a role that used to be much more of a teaching leadership role, but now is much more focused on administration. As Jane explains

> We [teachers] are placed in the position of consumers. That has become such a prevalent mindset, that I think that most people [teachers] are not even self aware of it, and not questioning it. So, you know people that I work with [think] PD [professional development] is a module that you can buy 'combined' online. And paying for your combined mindful leadership modules [pauses], that you will be that much closer to having all the modules that you need in order to be considered for a leadership position [makes sense]. PD [professional development] is considered as a way to build bricks to get somewhere, and you buy your way there [reflective pause]! The question is, whether you want to pay 77,000 dollars for your Ph.D., if you can just get there by doing whatever you want to do? (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019, p. 96)

These teachers point to the fact that the hiring of principals and/or administrative positions are often not based on pedagogical merit and/or teaching abilities excellence, but rather a combination of education, often long-distance modular education, and community

engagement such as being involved in school board committees. The teachers in this study suggest that often the main goal for teachers pursuing further education and/or getting involved in these committees is career advancement and not necessarily professional growth.

Maria, in particular, notes that this process is focused on a business model of education, dissociated from the classroom reality and the needs of students, and more aligned with professional ambitions like in business corporations. She argues that these principal administrators often lack the skills needed to understand dense research texts, which may lead to inappropriate use of academic studies to justify school-based educational initiatives, also impacting hiring practices and potentially teaching effectiveness.

Discussions and Recommendations

The four teachers in this study suggest that hiring processes are often guided by assumptions of what a 'good teacher is'. These practices are unreliable as they are based mostly on principals' personal impressions and beliefs of what 'a good teacher' is and are hardly supported by studies on effective hiring practices (Cranston, 2015; Kaufman & Ireland, 2015). To aggravate this apparent systematic problem in hiring processes, Canadian contextualized studies on teaching effectiveness through hiring practices are scarce. (Cranston, 2012; Kaufman & Ireland; 2015).

The teachers in this study point to some of the complex factors that might impact the conceptualization of what 'a good teacher' is through hiring practices. One of these factors could be the lack of representation of minority groups in the teaching force such as male teachers, indigenous teachers, and teachers trained abroad as well as the problematic screening of visible minority candidates based on profiling of teachers with the sole intent of representativity in schools. Research indicates that some principals argue that there are not many certified teachers from visible minority groups available for hire, but research also suggests that "70 percent of immigrant professionals, many of whom are racialized, have difficulty finding work in Canada" (Jack and Ryan, 2015, p. 63). This fact could be connected to the validation of knowledge and the prioritization of Canadian mainstream 'experience or knowledge' over other knowledges such as immigrant trained professionals' knowledge. Interestingly, educators trained abroad are often

required to take extra courses at Canadian institutions in order to earn an Alberta Teachers Licence.

Another impacting factor in hiring practices is a perceived use of a 'trust system', which goes beyond writing someone a reference letter, meaning that sometimes teachers are hired because of their network connections and not professional qualifications. Taking into consideration that there seems to be a surplus of teachers in the overall Canadian market in more recent years (Hale & Clarke, 2016), teacher employability may be influenced by the teacher's subject area as well as location (Galway, 2015). For instance, rural areas are more likely to suffer teacher shortages and perhaps, offer more hiring opportunities.

Currently, there are many teachers trained locally and internationally from different backgrounds unemployed, especially in large urban centers (Miller, 2019), but it is important to notice that the great majority of the ones currently employed are local teachers. Such fact could indicate that having 'the right' local connections and 'knowledge' would play a role in employability that could ultimately benefit local teachers over other teachers without similar networks. The teachers in this study suggest that regardless of the teacher applicant being a local or an immigrant, the professional qualification and experience of such teachers should be purposely analyzed in order to be considered relevant to the specific contextual classroom the teaching position requires.

Ultimately, the teachers in this study point to the detrimental potential effect to education of common unreliable hiring practices not supported by research, often used by principals, focusing on personal traits and first impressions of teacher applicants over professional qualifications and abilities during hiring processes (Jack & Ryan, 2015, Maynes & Hatt, 2015). They also draw attention to career advancement practices of teachers going into administrative roles. They suggest that principals are often hired not on performance merit but engagement in the school community committees and teaching seniority (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019; Rose, 2013). Even though many principals have pursued graduate degrees, often through online modular education, these teachers seem to suggest that most principals are undertrained as to manage schools performing hiring roles, especially lacking the skills to fully make sense of the applicability of research (Cranston, 2015; Rose, 2013).

In conclusion, hiring practices and the conceptualization of 'what a good teacher is' have serious implications for education. As schools become increasingly more diverse, hiring 'a good teacher', meaning a teacher that will have the suitable abilities to respond to the needs of a wide range of students is essential to promote positive learning outcomes. Reviewing the implementation of hiring practices and putting in place mechanisms to better guide these practices will most likely improve the pedagogical quality of the education offered in diverse schools. Further research looking at the effectiveness of hiring practices and current conceptualization of what are the important pedagogical abilities teachers should have to effectively teach in the current diverse classrooms is to be highly recommended.

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