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Teacher recruitment and selection methods and procedures

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Teacher recruitment and selection methods and procedures

Abstract

With fewer able young people entering the teaching field and the attrition of qualified people (minorities in particular) from the profession, the need for effective teacher selection is acute (Jenkins, 1984). Teacher selection is one of the most important managerial decisions made by school administrators today (Bredeson, 1983). Although it is true that declining enrollments have made staff cuts necessary, administrators do need to find replacements every year. Kopetskie (1983) stated that administrators cannot afford to repeat the mistakes made during the teacher shortages of the 1960s, where administrators were forced to accept any "warm body." Furthermore, a shortage of teachers has been forecast for the mid-eighties and beyond (Hogue, 1986).

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION
METHODS AND PROCEDURES

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With fewer able young people entering the teaching field and the attrition of qualified people (minorities in particular) from the profession, the need for effective teacher selection is acute (Jenkins, 1984). Teacher selection is one of the most important managerial decisions made by school administrators today (Bredeson, 1983). Although it is true that declining enrollments have made staff cuts necessary, administrators do need to find replacements every year. Kopetskie (1983) stated that administrators cannot afford to repeat the mistakes made during the teacher shortages of the 1960s, where administrators were forced to accept any "warm body." Furthermore, a shortage of teachers has been forecast for the mid-eighties and beyond (Hogue, 1986).

This paper examines the recruitment and selection challenges which confront those who must fill tomorrow's classrooms with competent teachers. Specifically, this paper offers a variety of suggestions for improving the recruitment process, for developing criterion in the selection process, for maintaining consistency in the interview format, and for training interviewers in the interviewing process. In addition, employer biases, legal considerations and the induction of new employees to a school system are also addressed.

Before administrators get too caught up in dealing with applicants, they need to broaden their overall recruitment strategies to attract and hire top-notch teachers. Teacher recruitment traditionally has been one of the most poorly practiced administrative arts (Renner, 1985). When a vacancy occurred, a job opening often was listed in various vacancy bulletins published by nearby colleges and in local newspapers. Renner stated that after the vacancy was listed, most administrators sat back and waited for telephone calls, letters, and resumes. A fundamental flaw in this procedure was the pool of potential candidates was artificially limited to people who lived relatively close to the school district.

In order to avoid the traditional teacher recruitment pitfalls, Renner (1985) has offered three strategies to widen the recruitment base. These include advertising more widely by listing with nationally circulated newspapers, using the telephone to let outlying college and university placement offices know about the school system, and taking teacher recruitment back on the road. Burnside (1987) noted that since the demand for teachers in California exceeds the supply, the school board in Morongo decided to go to different parts of the country to recruit teachers. In commenting upon this situation, Burnside suggested boards should target those states which have a teacher

surplus and reciprocal, or similar, teacher-credential arrangements. However, before going outside the area to recruit teachers, the district must make sure current teachers and residents of the community understand the recruitment process. Hogue (1986) pointed out that districts should not forget to include the field of experienced, re-entry and non-entry teachers in their teacher search. Herman and Stephens (1987) suggested asking current and departing employees and community members to refer possible candidates to the school district.

Once the recruitment base has been widened, selection criteria need to be investigated. Kahl (1980) observed that business and industry have long recognized the importance of choosing the right people for the right job. He recommended that schools follow the guidelines that have been developed by industry which include using predetermined interview formats and rating schemes designed to increase objectivity and reduce random error. He further stated the selection process could be made more reliable by involving administrators, teachers, parents, and school board members in consensus decision-making. Gips and Bredeson (1986) discovered that teachers do not want exclusive control over the selection process but have expressed a desire to observe and screen candidates,

evaluate teaching experience, and make recommendations for hiring. They also noted that higher levels of teacher participation may be positively related to greater satisfaction with both the selection processes and their outcomes. Young (1983) advocated the consistent use of either the panel or individual process in teacher selection. He suggested that if a panel process is used for one candidate, the same members should be kept on the panel throughout the selection process.

Along with involving more persons in the selection process, Jensen (1987) believed that because teaching requires proficiency in a number of interrelated skills, it is imperative hiring officials gather multiple information about candidates. This may include direct work samples, critical-incident tests, live demonstrations and video-taped presentations. Mickler and Solomon (1985) found that research indicated equally certified teachers achieve varying degrees of success in the classroom. Furthermore, Clark and Kyker (1985) found that people with the best technical skills do not necessarily make the best instructors. They found ample evidence that suggested those with the highest levels of expertise often make poor instructors, and their wealth of experience makes it difficult for them to appreciate the learning needs of novices. Such experts leave gaping holes in the

information they present and become impatient with trainees who, in turn, feel intimidated and fail to ask questions. Therefore, Mickler and Solomon (1985) insisted, it is imperative that administrators go beyond credentials in teacher selection.

On the other hand, Johnson and Prom-Jackson (1986) suggested that if achievement tests or a set of tests are used as the primary selection criterion in teacher selection, school districts may not be identifying individuals with the strongest skills and propensities that actually facilitate learning. When test scores or grade point averages are used for the initial screening of teacher candidates, prospective teachers with strong personal and realistic teaching skills may be prematurely eliminated. They suggested the use of several data sources in combination with the National Teacher Exam as one of the bases for selection.

Whether a district gathers multiple forms of information or not, according to Goldstein (1986), the two most critical procedures of teacher selection are the use of credentials and the interview. Yet, before administrators can effectively facilitate the interviewing of candidates, training in the use of various selection techniques to assess and evaluate candidates against pre-stated job descriptions and selection must be delivered.

Further, training must be developmental and on-going. One graduate course, workshop, or journal article will not be enough (Gips & Bredeson, 1986). Training interviewers with highly structured instruments and assessment techniques greatly enhances the reliability of the personal interview (Arvey, 1979).

Once administrators and teachers have been trained in interviewing techniques, they need to begin establishing criteria and screening devices deemed necessary for staff selection. In order for a district to make more effective personnel selection, Saville (1986) maintained, it must standardize the pre-interview phase. He believes structured consistency adds to the validity of the selection process. The interview program he endorsed begins with developing a job analysis plan, which should include job-relevant, observable, and measurable qualifications. A task analysis of the position should also be developed from a list of the key duties comprising that specific job. He believes this assists in defining the legal parameters and provides a frame of reference in planning one portion of the interview questions. Jinks (1985) found the district's curriculum guide offers several sources for questions. Content questions help verify applicants' knowledge of a specific subject. Philosophy of education should also be included in the criteria. By

asking applicants for a written response to a "what if" question, the interviewer looks for reasonable legibility, logical development and content (which should include expectations for student behavior). Jinks (1985) and Weitman (1983) believed that whether you have a small or large number of teaching applicants, the screening process should not differ. A common procedure for the initial screening of teacher candidates is to review resumes and paper credentials. Letters of recommendation are cited as key pieces of written information by secondary school principals for the purpose of screening teacher applicants (Bredeson, 1982).

Solid interview and documentation procedures do not have to be complicated, costly, or time-consuming, but they do require preparation, consistent application, and follow-through. Vornberg and Liles (1983) developed a checklist to facilitate the structure of the interview. The checklist is used not to evaluate one's techniques against a standard, but to help administrators include the items deemed most important by personnel directors. These techniques include preparing before the interview, knowing the job analysis plan, screening documents prior to the interview, and preparing a list of questions. To identify the best teachers, Caliendo (1986) designed a selection policy that incorporated an applicant's questionnaire, a

teaching demonstration, and an interactive group interview. Weitman (1983) and Saville (1986) maintained a needs assessment is elementary. They noted an interviewer must know the qualities desired in the position, the experience needed, the certification requirements, and desirable personality traits before the initial interview. In the end, whichever procedure is used, it is imperative the interviewer prepare in advance and know the material before conducting the interview.

The next step in determining appropriate criterion, according to Weitman (1983), is a review of the job description and evaluation forms. She feels the items listed on these forms can be turned into interview questions. As for the questioning aspect of the interview, Ferguson (1983), Jinks (1985), and Pellicer (1981), talked of the need for advance preparation, which is essential to the successful screening of applicants. They also stated that if all candidates are posed the same questions, a common base will develop from which to evaluate applicants. Bredeson (1985) suggested that administrators should give various kinds of applicant information different weights or values when making decisions. This type of formalization can help ensure that only factors "related to performance expectations and other job-related criteria" lead to the

identification of the best candidate (Bredeson, 1985, p. 14).

Once the pool of applicants has been screened and reduced to a manageable number, the administrator is ready to conduct interviews. Although the interview is one of the most widely used methods in teacher selection, Boucher (1984) felt the overwhelming evidence on human variability and the various "heuristics" employed in human decision making cause the employment interview to be a suspect procedure. However, Boucher (1984), Carlson, et al. (1977), Miner (1977), and Muller (1981) suggested three components that are necessary in order for interview procedures to be effective:

1. Reliability of the interview. Structured interviews will yield greater agreement among interviewers than more informal spontaneous procedures.

2. Validity of the interview. Validity increases when structure is imposed. A broad, somewhat nebulous, dimension such as "suitability for employment" usually can achieve high validity marks when it is included during the interview process.

3. Applicability of the interview. Does the procedure measure what is important for predicting job success?

Thus, the carefully structured interview increases the probability that solid evidence will be available on which to base a decision to hire or not to hire. By knowing the questions well, the interviewer becomes more confident and relaxed and knows the general responses to look for (Pellicer, 1981; Hobart, 1979). Further, the nature of the questions requires the interviewee to think and respond with substance. Weitman (1983) believed items included on a rating scale should correspond to the job description and evaluation form. Using a point system and short remarks would be an efficient way to complete an evaluation after the interview.

Regardless of how well the interview process may be developed, how closely normative procedures are followed, or how carefully the interview is conducted, interviewers must take the responsibility for drawing out data from the interviewees. If they do not do their job well, the interviewee cannot be assessed well. Techniques such as extending a friendly greeting and showing sincere interest in the candidate will help the candidate relax (Vornberg and Liles, 1983). Downs and Tanner (1982) also suggested that interviewers should set a supportive climate in the introduction, give the interviewee a thorough orientation, ask clear questions, listen for gaps in information, probe topics in depth (such as past experiences and self

assessment), and keep the interview organized so questions are related and reflect on total performance by the interviewer in making a decision. The interviewer should look for an attitude of professional caring, a genuine liking for people, and activities the applicant uses to make classes exciting.

Other considerations which should be attended to by the interviewer during or after the interview include:

1. record responses immediately.
2. complete all interviews for one position in a week's time.
3. inform applicants of when and how a decision and notification will be made.
4. ask the person interviewed to complete an interview evaluation form, leave it unsigned, and return it to another administrator. This is an excellent method of feedback about the techniques currently employed (Weitman, 1983).

The next area of concern to the interviewer should be an awareness of some major non-task related factors that may indirectly bias selection decisions. These include eye contact, interviewer stereotypes, attractiveness of the applicant, body language, reaction to positive and negative information and attitudinal and racial similarity (Engel & Johnston, 1983; Tessler & Sushelsky, 1978; Sterrett, 1978).

Engel and Johnston (1983) have found it is nearly impossible to eliminate all prejudice from the personnel selection process, but an awareness of the prejudices, combined with an effort to deal with them, should improve results.

Research conducted by Young and McMurray (1986), suggested that selection decisions made by public school administrators are influenced by the age of the applicant, as well as the quality of the applicant. Therefore, these results indicate the need for school districts to develop formal policies and administrative guidelines that prohibit discrimination in hiring on the basis of age. In the event any litigation occurs concerning charges of age discrimination, these policies will serve as the first line of defense. Young and Ryerson (1986) developed guidelines to formalize and refine selection procedures to reduce the chance of legal complications and select the most capable candidates. Bredeson (1983) found that a well-developed structure for the assessment and evaluation of candidates allows for a more reliable and legal method for comparing candidates.

A more subtle legal complication, discovered by Engel and Johnston (1983), is sexual bias. Interviewers tend to discriminate against both men and women who are seeking jobs that are not considered to be sex-role appropriate.

Affirmative action, Jarchow (1981) suggested, has not helped to erase discriminatory hiring practices. She stated that superintendents admit honestly that they wish to consider both the candidate's photograph and personal data on a resume.

Whenever administrators conduct interviews and make employment recommendations, they should document those decisions (Jinks, 1985) to avoid any legal complications. Administrators should provide clear data supporting the recommendation of the best candidate for the position. This documentation should begin with the letter of application and include notes on how well the applicant followed the procedures in the recruitment notice, an application form; a resume from the candidate; a copy of the teaching certificate; written and telephone references; an official transcript; results of written tests, if conducted; an interview summary, including responses to questions; and if available, a rating form. Should an investigation by government agencies such as EEOC or State civil rights divisions be conducted, Rooney and Pell (1979) suggested good records of the interview will be the most important defense. Where no records or inadequate records have been kept, the opinion of the hearing officer is dependent on the employer's word against the applicant. Good, consistent records give the employer solid evidence.

The final aspect of the hiring process encompasses the induction of new staff members into the system. Both administrators and teachers have a responsibility to bring new staff members into the organization by providing meaningful orientation programs and related services to newly hired staff members (Weitman, 1983, Gips & Bredeson, 1986). Orientation activities, which may vary from formal presentations to informal support systems, can provide valuable bridges between system expectations and the talents and expertise of newly hired staff while helping the district retain quality staff (Gips & Bredeson, 1986).

In conclusion, administrators need to be aware that no perfect predictor of future teaching success has been identified (Bredeson, 1983). However, this does not mean that selection decisions need to be based solely on gut-level feelings. Hiring practices range from scientifically complex to "seat of the pants," intuitive methods. Regardless of how administrators go about their hiring practices, deciding the procedures by which individuals are hired, determining the weight placed on the information given, and using consistency within the interviewing format are imperative to making sound hiring decisions (Boucher, 1984). Thus, administrators need to make the effort, take the time, and use good techniques to hire the right person for the position (Hobart, 1979).

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