

Teacher and Administrator Shortages in Changing Times¹

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Against a backdrop of demographic change and world-wide educator shortage, we examined the case of British Columbia and found teacher shortages by region, level, and subject. Unexpectedly, we found that a shortage of administrators is also imminent. The emphasis on management and the adversarial climate in B.C. schools seem to make it difficult to recruit experienced teachers into administration. Younger, less experienced candidates are aligning themselves with the managerial nature of administration in today's adversarial conditions. These findings clearly have important implications for teacher education and for the working conditions and recruitment of administrators.

L'étude porte sur la question de pénurie des enseignants en Colombie-Britannique. Contre toute attente, les auteurs ont découvert qu'une pénurie d'administrateurs était également imminente. L'accent mis sur la gestion et le climat conflictuel dans les écoles de la C.-B. semblent compliquer le recrutement d'enseignants chevronnés pour des postes en administration. Des candidats plus jeunes et moins expérimentés s'alignent sur l'aspect gestion de l'administration. Ces constatations ont évidemment des implications importantes pour la formation à l'enseignement et pour les conditions de travail et le recrutement des administrateurs.

BACKGROUND

Society has become increasingly confused, fragmented, and disoriented. The context is one of change. The rapid pace of change has affected all institutions. The last two decades have brought economic and cultural restructuring guided by a neo-conservative worldview emphasizing individual enterprise and free-market competition. Education is increasingly regarded as a commodity, not a public good.

But this market-driven world is characterized by continual and relentless disequilibrium. Contestation is everywhere. The traditional boundaries between home and work, between children and adults, between public and private, between home and institution, and between teaching and parenting have become porous (Elkind, 1997). Widespread societal change has been accompanied by frustration and cynicism. In public life, there is

profound distrust of politicians and experts; devolution of budgets but weakening financial provision; devolved responsibility but new forms of accountability and performance indicators.

Youth culture has changed dramatically, influencing students' attitudes to learning (Hargreaves, 1997). Educators are expected to achieve more, including dealing continually with diversity, with fewer resources. Demographic changes affect everything from purchasing preferences to pension provision and human survival. In schools, these changes affect the supply and demand of teachers and administrators.

Issues in Teacher Supply and Demand

Teacher supply and demand is problematic in many countries around the world. Both student enrollments and teacher retirements are increasing at a time when potential teachers are attracted to higher-paying careers and the standards for teacher certification are being raised. Popho (1998) predicts that the United States is facing the largest teacher shortage in its history. The U.S. National Council for Education Statistics (NCES) projects a 21% growth in demand for teachers in that country in the next decade, or 200,000 teachers per year for the next decade (Gerald & Hussar, 1999). This translates into a demand for 2 million teachers in the United States by 2006. Ten of the largest U.S. school districts faced a shortage of 26,500 teachers in Fall 2001.

Australia faces a similar shortage. The number of individuals entering the teaching profession is not adequate to meet the demand created by increasing student enrollment. The Australian Council of Deans of Education (1998) predicts shortages of both elementary and secondary teachers in each of the years up to 2004. Specifically, they predict a shortage of 347 elementary teachers in 2001 and 1,439 in 2004, and a shortage 1,467 secondary teachers in 2001 and 3,097 in 2004. Moreover, it is estimated that approximately 3,000 teachers will reach retirement age during the period ending in 2004. The shortfall could be further increased if "discouraged" teachers currently in the workforce decide to leave.

Other parts of the world are also experiencing dire teacher shortages. For example, the United Kingdom is facing unprecedented shortages. BBC News Online reported in 1999 that an already bad situation was rapidly getting worse; in 2001, it cited a 75% rise in teacher vacancies as of April 2001.

The situation is no different in Canada. The 1995 Labour Force Survey by Statistics Canada (Tremblay, 1997) showed that 60.8% of teachers in Canada were over 40 years of age. Because most teachers retire at or around age 60 (the average age for teacher retirement is 57.9 across the

country), Canada will likely face a serious teacher supply and demand problem around 2015.

Not surprisingly, studies by Vector Research and Development, Inc. (as cited in Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1999) and Statistics Canada (Tremblay, 1997) project the possibility of a teacher shortage in different regions of Canada early in the new millennium. These studies suggest that Ontario will be particularly affected, and this is confirmed by a recent study from the Ontario College of Teachers (McIntyre, 1998) predicting a dire teacher shortage in that province by 2003. Teacher retirements in Ontario increased from 4,650 in 1997 to more than 10,000 in 1998, with 41,000 projected to retire in 2003 and 77,000 (almost half the province's teaching force) by 2008. Meanwhile, the number of applicants to teacher-education programs in the province declined from 20,000 in 1990 to 8,000 in 1997, although this figure rose to 15,500 in 2000 due to additional funding and attention. Shortages are predicted province-wide at both elementary and secondary levels, particularly in specialized areas such as French-as-a-second-language (FSL), mathematics, sciences and technology, and computer technology.

Despite the very real possibility of a teacher shortage in Canada, the majority of the general public is against lowering the standards for entry into the profession (Vector Research and Development, as cited in Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1999).

Issues in Administrator Supply and Demand

School administrators come, by and large, from the ranks of experienced teachers. Huberman's (1989, 1991) study mapped career stages of teachers. Younger teachers typically have a lot of energy, few responsibilities, and a willingness to work long hours, fired by an idealistic view of teaching. Teachers in mid-career have much life experience behind them, are more aware of their mortality, and tend to be more focussed on establishing a balance between work and their personal lives. Teachers in late career tend to disengage. In Huberman's study, those who had disengaged positively had steered clear of school-wide innovation. They defined and stuck with their areas of professional (and outside) interests. By contrast, those who disengaged with negativity and disenchantment had been heavily involved in school-wide renewal. Huberman (1991) sums it up thus: "Tending one's private garden, pedagogically speaking, seems to have more payoff in the long haul than land reform, although the latter is perceived as stimulating and enriching while it is happening" (p. 183).

The increased work load, the low hourly pay, the adversarial conditions, and the managerial nature of school administration all combine to make

administration unattractive and potentially harmful to personal health and life-style. Consequently, experienced teachers rarely seek administrative positions.

FOCUS AND METHOD

Against this backdrop, we began by investigating the extent to which changing demographics are affecting teacher supply and demand in British Columbia. In the first part of our study, we asked the following questions: What is the basis for emerging concerns about supply and demand? How do system-wide projections correspond with district needs in differing local contexts? How do retirement patterns and practices affect teacher supply? How are teachers recruited to and retained in the system? How do recruitment patterns and practices correspond with (a) student demand for educational programming, and (b) the ethnic diversity of the student population?

Having found that not only teachers but also school administrators are in short supply, we added a second part to our study, in which we asked two further questions: What is the new/emerging role of administrators in schools? What calibre of teachers are currently applying for positions in administration?

To get answers to both sets of questions, we conducted qualitative interviews, following a common protocol,² with key informants: local union presidents, teachers, administrators, and school district officials. For the interviews, we made site visits³ to three agencies with a province-wide mandate – the Ministry of Education, the British Columbia College of Teachers, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation – and to 12 school districts.⁴ These districts were selected, using a purposive sampling technique, on the basis of size, geography, and stability of enrollments. For analytical purposes, we categorized each district as metropolitan, urban, or rural. The four metropolitan districts were in the Greater Vancouver and Victoria areas, the four urban districts were in cities with populations of more than 50,000, and the four rural districts were located in the northern and interior parts of the province.

PART I: TEACHERS

Findings

We found evidence of shortages that vary by region, level, and subject.⁵ Although some of these were an outcome of legislation, most were the result of changes in student population and workforce demographics.

Local District Needs: Shortages and Surpluses

We found shortages in all 12 districts we investigated. Shortages were particularly acute at the secondary level, where we found across-the-board shortages (that is, in each metropolitan, urban, and rural district) in Fine and Visual Arts, French, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Business Education, Home Economics, and Technology Education. At the elementary level, we found similar shortages in French immersion, French-as-a-second-language (FSL), English-as-a-second-language (ESL), Special Education, and Music.

We found additional specific shortages in each of the three categories of district. Metropolitan districts lacked teachers of Spanish and Chinese, as well as librarians and psychologists; urban districts lacked teachers of German, Italian, and Hindi; and rural districts had lacked teachers of Computer Science. Both metropolitan and urban districts had shortages in English-as-an-additional language (EAL) and Japanese; metropolitan and rural districts needed counsellors; and urban and rural districts lacked teachers in Biology and First Nations languages and cultures.

We also found some surpluses in metropolitan and urban districts but none in rural districts. Urban and metropolitan districts had surpluses in English and Social Studies, and metropolitan districts reported surpluses in Biology and the Humanities.

We wanted to know what was precipitating these shortages. Initial responses signalled government policy; subsequent responses pointed to changing demographics.

Government Policy or Changing Demographics?

Particular policy decisions at the provincial level have affected teacher supply and demand at the local level. The introduction or expansion of different programs (e.g., Special Education, ESL) and changes to funding formulae have required districts to add to their teaching complement or move it around. Many of the individuals we interviewed said districts were often caught short by decisions that came down without any lead time to ensure that qualified people could be found to meet the demands.

At the same time, most respondents acknowledged that the shortages had more to do with changing demographics than with government policy. They cited the following as contributing factors: an aging teaching force, difficulties in recruiting appropriately qualified teachers, a changing student population and demand for courses, the need to respond to diversity and multiculturalism, and the lack of fit between teacher-preparation programs and the needs of the field.

An Aging Teaching Force and Retirement Patterns

Fifty-five percent of British Columbia educators were between 40 and 54 years of age in the 1997–98 school year. The average retirement age of British Columbia teachers is 58.7. According to figures provided by the Ministry of Education (B. Littler, personal communication, January 21, 1999), 3,583 educators retired during the five-year period 1994–1998. Almost 80% retired between the ages of 55 and 60; 42.6% retired between the ages of 55 and 57; 5% retired at age 65.

What would be the effect of extrapolating these rates to future retirements? By 2003, 7,364 educators will be 55–59 years of age; according to the preceding rates, two-thirds of them will have retired. By 2008, most of the current 50–54 cohort and two-thirds of the current 45–49 cohort will have retired; another 13.4% will retire in 2009 at age 60. The total estimated loss to retirement is 13,300 educators. On the supply side, there are three active source pools: graduates of provincial teacher-preparation programs (1,700 per year), in-migrating teachers seeking employment in British Columbia (once 800 per year), and teachers on the Teacher-on-Call (TOC) lists (around 5,100). However, according to the B.C. College of Teachers (1999), the number of in-migrating teachers decreased by a quarter (from 912 to 688) from 1995 to 1998 (there are shortages elsewhere), and the TOC list must remain stable for the provincial school system to function. Nevertheless, because the Teachers' Federation argued that the TOC list was a primary source of teacher supply, we investigated how districts associated TOC lists with the demand for teachers.

Teacher Recruitment and Teachers-on-Call (TOC) Lists

Respondents in all three categories of district confirmed that the TOC list is a major source of teacher supply. In metropolitan districts, hiring for teaching positions is done directly from the TOC lists. Recruitment and hiring for the TOC lists is rigorous because appointment as a TOC typically represents the first step towards a permanent teaching position. This rigour tends to limit the number of TOCs on metropolitan lists and has led to TOC shortages. In urban districts, hiring for teaching positions is also done directly from the TOC list, but is less likely to be formally written into contract language. Although the TOC list is capped, district personnel conduct interviews for the list all year round. Urban TOCs are also on several lists so that they accept teaching positions in any of three or four districts.

In rural districts the TOC list is more likely to include individuals not seeking a permanent position. Because it is difficult to make a living as a TOC, individuals have other jobs or other sources of income. Rural areas

often have difficulty obtaining certified teachers for the TOC list as well as individuals who are subject-matter specialists. The TOC pool is made up of generalists, with the elementary pool considered to have the strongest teachers.

Respondents in metropolitan and urban districts spoke of their frustration with teachers being on several lists simultaneously and having no loyalty to a particular district but rather staying in the district with most work available. They also regretted the competitiveness and secrecy this multiple-list approach created both among the districts and the teachers on call themselves. Whereas teacher representatives argued strongly in favour of recruitment from TOC lists, district personnel claimed that this limited their ability to recruit in response to changing student demand for courses, leading to increased instances of teachers teaching out-of-field and the need for re-alignment of existing teachers.

Changing Student Demand: Re-alignment of Existing Teachers

Many respondents from metropolitan and urban districts reported that they have had to relax criteria for specialty positions because they could not get enough qualified people with the requisite academic qualifications and additional preparation. Respondents in all three categories of district (metropolitan, urban, rural) were concerned about this and called for universities to collaborate with them in providing field-based opportunities for teachers to re-educate themselves for subjects in which shortages of qualified teachers likely will occur, thus curtailing instances of out-of-field teaching.

Out-of-field Teaching and Appropriate Qualifications

Out-of-field teaching is highly problematic for student learning, particularly at the secondary level but also at the elementary level in subjects such as French. Respondents suggested that out-of-field teaching occurs because of legislated changes and curriculum compression, and sometimes because teachers presume they can teach subjects for which they are academically unqualified. District personnel emphasized that they prefer to hire specialists in subject fields for teaching situations in which the curriculum has a disciplinary emphasis.

Diversity in the Student Population and the Teaching Force

We investigated whether districts use recruitment to meet the needs of an ethnically diverse student population. In rural districts, respondents

reported little knowledge of and even less action about discrepancies that exist between the ethnic make-up of the teaching force and that of the student population. In metropolitan and urban districts, the situation was somewhat different. Respondents reported an important shift over the last four to five years towards TOC applications from non-Caucasian people, particularly representatives of the Asian and East Indian communities in metropolitan districts. Although a shift in the number of applications is evident, no district reported tracking the relationship between ethnicity of applicants and actual hiring. Few districts have affirmative action programs, insisting instead on the need to select the best person for the job, regardless of age or cultural background. Thus, it is not possible to say whether the increase in applicants from varied ethnic backgrounds will contribute to making the teaching force more representative of the diversity in the society and student population they serve.

Field-University Relationships and Teacher Education

Respondents said they looked to universities to help them deal with the issues of teacher supply and demand, so we asked for their perceptions of the relationship between the field and teacher education.

Many respondents viewed the major players in teacher education as being reactive, responding to shortages *after* they had occurred, instead of being proactive and planning for teacher shortages *before* they occurred. Some felt strongly that part of this planning should include provision for programs to deal with shortages that arise in local education contexts. This would involve a better fit between what universities do, what government wants, what districts can deliver, and what the qualification requirements of the College of Teachers are, and more consistency between teacher-education programs and the school system's requirements for teaching in secondary content areas.

Some respondents were also concerned about preparation not providing concrete instructional strategies for teachers to respond to the challenges they face in today's world, such as inclusive education, literacy, and the teaching of reading.⁶ The preparation of Technology Education teachers was raised as a serious concern.

Despite their criticisms, many respondents expressed strong support for collaboration in designing teacher-education programs and a strong desire for internship and mentoring programs for new entrants to the profession that would also be handled collaboratively.

The Organizational Conditions of Schools

Respondents surprised us by associating a possible teacher shortage with a shortage of administrators. They did this by talking about the organizational conditions in schools and the difficulty that already exists in recruiting experienced teachers into administration. Teachers, district personnel, and administrators all characterized the organizational conditions of schools in terms of a managerialism that has led to a deep-seated adversarialism between teachers and administrators that ultimately manifests itself in a battle over who represents the interests of students.

For example, central office personnel in all districts, but particularly in metropolitan and urban districts, frequently claimed they were in the business of providing educational programs for children, not work for teachers. They regarded contractual obligations towards seniority and the TOC list as obstructing their capacity to appoint people with the most appropriate qualifications and experience for any given position. Teachers, by contrast, claimed that they are the ones who stand for the interests of children because they are not bound by the political machinations of the district board. They viewed district references to “most appropriately qualified” with suspicion. These stances illustrate an adversarialism that has become deeply embedded in the organizational conditions of schools in British Columbia, impeding the necessary collaboration (which respondents desire) for dealing with the current supply and demand difficulties.

The 1988 School Act separated administrators from the ranks of teachers, creating a governance structure peculiar to British Columbia and, more recently under the Harris government, Ontario. Districts rely on principals to help administer the collective agreement at the school level. In addition, principals now deal more frequently with parents and the issues that they raise. Thus, the primary goal appears to have become one of having good relations with parents and the community; curriculum is of secondary importance. Teachers and administrators alike view these changes with concern.

The increased work stress experienced by both teachers and administrators also affects schools' organizational conditions. Some administrators are taking stress leave and retiring early. How districts deal with the consequences of these work stresses frequently exacerbates the tension between teachers and administrators. For example, at one site we visited, district personnel lauded the merits of a “work attendance program” that teachers disparagingly referred to as “the sick police.” Teachers and administrators appeared to blame each other for the difficulties that currently characterize the organizational conditions of schools in British Columbia.

Difficulty Recruiting Administrators

Adversarial organizational conditions has aggravated an apparent shortage of school administrators. Most respondents reported it was difficult to recruit appropriately experienced teachers into school administration – perceived in some quarters as the most demoralizing part of the system – at a time when positions are opening up. When asked why, they indicated that the changing nature of the principalship, with its emphasis on managerial tasks and the administration of the collective agreement, was largely responsible for this difficulty.

The number of applications for administrative positions in metropolitan districts is lower than it was two or three years ago, but not significantly so – on average, the total of internal and external applications for the position of elementary principal is 40, and for elementary vice-principal, 50–60. In urban and rural districts, the numbers are problematically lower: 10–12 applicants on average for an advertised administrative position. But district personnel in all three areas – metropolitan, urban, and rural – reported finding the calibre of applicants for both principalship and vice-principalship disappointing. They indicated a lack of depth both in the range of applications received and in the specific people they ended up interviewing. They reported that many applicants are not driven by a key set of personal and professional educational ideas and values; rather, their philosophical orientation aligns itself strongly with the managerial nature of administration in today's adversarial conditions. The collective view of the respondents was that some people going into vice-principalships could probably use three more years' experience in the classroom. All 12 districts reported difficulty in coming up with a short list of three appropriate candidates for recently advertised positions.

Discussion

Our study showed that teacher shortages varying by region, level, and subject already exist. Whereas some needs are common across regions of the province, many immediate needs are local and pressing but not long-term. Thus, we differentiate between acute and chronic demand for teachers, concluding that the province needs to develop strategies to deal with: (a) immediate, local, and time-bound demand for particular kinds of teachers, and (b) the long-term demand for teachers in all subjects and at all levels both within and across the various regions of British Columbia. It is important not only to increase the current active supply pool of teachers, but also to address chronic shortages of specialty subject areas at both the elementary and secondary levels.

We see the shortages we have found as a beginning indicator of a long-term trend. Based on the number of new graduates annually certified by the B.C. College of Teachers, the average retirement age of 58.7, and the likely reduction in teachers moving to the province as a result of worldwide shortages, we project that British Columbia will experience a teacher shortage beginning in 2003 that will become most acute between 2005 and 2010. Indeed, a recent survey (Overgaard, 2001) showed that there is already a shortage of 212 teachers across 45 districts, with 5 of 8 metropolitan districts reporting shortages. The same demographics are also affecting other provinces and countries; thus provinces and countries that have been sources of supply in the past will be facing their own shortages in the future. This widespread shortage will reduce the number of teachers migrating into Canada and British Columbia.

All respondents seemed aware of the potential shortage of teachers but no one reported taking steps to deal with it. We infer that districts are so busy coping with daily demands that an impending shortage of educators is not an immediate concern. Hence, careful planning for and a robust policy about teacher supply and demand are needed to ensure that individuals without appropriate teacher qualifications will not be placed in classrooms in the event of a serious teacher shortage. In this way, policy makers can prevent a teacher shortage from negatively affecting the quality of education and undermining the professional recognition of teachers.

We found signs that some districts are making gains in terms of gender equity in science teaching and administration. However, we heard only expressions of hope when it came to the possibility of a more balanced representation among teachers of the ethnicities well represented in the student population. Although this issue may work itself out over time, it is nevertheless remarkable that teacher-education institutions and schools currently fail to attract many people of diverse backgrounds into teaching. In the 1996–99 College of Teachers survey of teacher-education graduates, 14.7% of persons certified were visible minorities. Why do so few individuals from the ethnicities represented in the student population enter teaching? We speculate that cultural and systemic barriers are at work. Culturally, some ethnic groups view teaching as a low-status occupation. Systemic barriers include the cost of financing a university education, the language and grade-point average requirements for university entrance, and the fact that it takes five years to qualify to be a teacher. It may become necessary to consider some carefully crafted, temporary fast-track alternatives. For example, where there is a need for teachers of First Nations or other languages (e.g., Mandarin, Japanese), a one- or two-year program combined with some kind of internship (analogous to the Teaching Chef program) could be piloted (as has been done in Ontario) for personnel who have the appropriate expertise but lack a teaching certificate. This may

make it possible both to deal with a pressing program need and to make progress towards achieving more diverse representation in teaching.

We were surprised to find that the situation in school administration is no different than that in teaching. In the next 5 to 10 years, there will be an extremely strong need for more administrators – especially at the secondary level. Because a teacher shortage does not inevitably lead to an administrator shortage, we concluded that factors other than demographic changes must be at work. Thus, in the 12 districts we undertook follow-up interviews with additional teachers named by first-round respondents as potential candidates for administration to ascertain why appropriately experienced teachers no longer seek administrative positions. Such understanding, we reasoned, could form the basis for policy designed to equip the next generation of school administrators for leadership responsibilities in the 21st century. The second part of this article addresses how demographic changes are affecting administrative leadership.

PART II: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Findings

How will changing demographics affect the ranks of school administrators? Table 1 illustrates the distribution of British Columbia educators among three age cohorts, by job description. As of September 29, 2000, approximately 56% of British Columbia educators (school and district personnel) were between 40 and 54 years of age and 23% were between 50 and 54 years of age.

The two older cohorts account for almost two-thirds of principals: 39.0% of principals are aged 50–54, and 25.4% are aged 45–49. More than half of vice-principals (51.4%) and district staff (57.3%) are also aged 45 to 54.

The average retirement age of administrators is the same as the average retirement age of teachers, 58.7 years. Thus, of the predicted net loss to retirement of 13,300 educators by 2009, a substantial percentage will be administrators (many of whom may retire sooner). The data suggest that a shortage of school administrators is imminent.

In British Columbia, teachers have gone through a decade of curriculum change. Many have become not only older but more cynical. The adversarialism and managerialism present in British Columbia schools have taken their toll. We found many experienced teachers for whom continual renewal had led to disenchantment. They question why they should be involved in administration. The few teachers we found with positive outlooks – those who had “tended their own private garden” – saw no reason to become involved in the “land reform” of administration.

TABLE 1
*Selected Age Cohorts of B.C. Educators by Job Description
 (September 29, 2000)*

<i>Position</i>	<i>Aged 40-44</i>		<i>Aged 45-49</i>		<i>Aged 50-54</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>School staff</i>						
Teacher	4,830	14.0	6,446	18.7	7,357	21.3
Principal	172	11.1	392	25.4	603	39.0
Vice-principal	164	14.9	259	23.6	305	27.8
Department head	356	14.1	480	19.0	659	26.0
<i>Subtotals</i>	5,522	13.9	7,577	19.1	8,924	22.5
<i>District staff</i>						
Director of instruction	5	5.2	25	25.8	46	47.4
Instructional support	59	14.7	104	25.9	115	28.6
Testing and assessment	11	15.3	12	16.7	25	34.7
<i>Subtotals</i>	75	13.1	141	24.7	186	32.6
<i>Totals</i>	5,597	13.9	7,718	19.2	9,110	22.6

When we questioned them about this, they offered two broad reasons. One, they have figured out that by the time one has worked 60 hours a week and come in for every crisis at the school on the weekend, evenings, or during the summer, the hourly pay is not very good. But by far the biggest deterrents have to do with personal welfare issues and the fact that the job of administration is no longer perceived as attractive. In British Columbia, administrators are legislatively no longer teachers and this creates an impression for some teachers that they are "crossing over to the other side," leaving behind their colleagues to become one of "them."

Discussion

The demographic changes affecting the teaching force in British Columbia also affect the ranks of administrators in the province. We found evidence that the nature of school administration has changed dramatically in the last 10 years and this, together with increased work stress, contributes to a deeply embedded adversarialism between teachers and administrators that is largely responsible for districts having difficulty recruiting highly capable personnel into administrative positions. We believe that this

difficulty and the potential shortage of school administrators in the near future constitute a serious problem for the school system of Canada and British Columbia.

We suggest that to avoid this situation, it will be important to reconfigure the roles and responsibilities associated with leadership of schools. This would entail moving away from seeing schools as strict hierarchies, wherein principals are leaders and teachers are followers. It would involve re-thinking the work-schedule expectations to make the work more attractive to high-calibre candidates who are committed to fundamental educational values but also wish to have a satisfying personal life. It would be vital that district administrators find viable ways to support and challenge school administrators in a changing social, political, and cultural context, instead of treating them primarily as functionaries of the local collective agreement. We believe it will also be necessary to focus on nurturing leadership capacity in administrators and teachers, emphasizing vision, purpose, and relationships, not rules, rigid procedures, and mandates; emphasizing covenant, not contract. For us, the desired, covenantal focus is on building norms of collegiality, openness, and trust – at the district and school levels. In sum, we consider it crucial that districts actively mentor a cadre of future administrators.

* * *

CONCLUSION

In demographic, economic, and political matters, Canada often takes its lead from Ontario and British Columbia. Both of these provinces are on the cusp of experiencing a serious shortage of teachers and administrators. We believe our case study of British Columbia can, with the study from Ontario (McIntyre, 1998), serve as a prototype for the rest of Canada. It is clear that teacher and administrator shortages are imminent nation-wide. What is not as clear is evidence of the policy action required to deal with these impending shortages. Our fear is that, as in the case of nurses and medical practitioners, little will be done until the surging demand is overwhelming. We believe, however, that opportunity still exists for policy makers to deal proactively with the difficulties facing school systems across Canada. Thus, we call for careful policy making and strategic action to deal with the problems our study has uncovered.

But we also end with a plea. Faced with a potential shortage of teachers and school administrators because of changing demographics and less favourable work conditions, provinces need to act with clear-headed caution. Taking less-qualified candidates into teaching and administration – candidates who may have inappropriate preparation or who may be

more committed to the functions of managerialism than to fundamental educational values – merely to preserve the running of schools is, for us, a danger sign. We implore stakeholder groups to resolve not to fall into this trap. We also entreat policy makers to become proactive in addressing the organizational conditions and culture in which teachers and school administrators do their work and to work actively to recruit and mentor appropriately qualified teachers and administrators whose commitment to fundamental educational values and good practice is beyond question.

NOTES

1. This paper was originally presented at the Pan-Canadian Educational Research Association (PCERA) conference on the future of teacher education in Canada, May 23, 2001, Laval University, Quebec City.
2. Copies of the interview protocol are available from the authors. Our primary data and the secondary sources are limited to the public school system. We assume that the independent school system has a similar demographic profile. A comprehensive examination of teacher supply and demand should include the independent system.
3. We acknowledge the helpful work done during the site visits by Andrew Kitchenham of Malaspina University College, Nanaimo, British Columbia.
4. The districts are Abbotsford, Burnaby, Gold Trail, Kamloops, Kootenay Columbia, Kootenay Lakes, Nanaimo, Prince Rupert, Richmond, Saanich, Surrey and Terrace-Kitimat.
5. A detailed data table is available from the authors.
6. The sentiments expressed mirrored those of the U.S. Education Secretary: “New and veteran teachers alike say they do not feel very well prepared to teach effectively to the four fastest changing aspects of the nation’s schools – raising standards in the classroom, students with special needs, students from diverse cultural backgrounds, and use of technology. The fact that newer teachers report as much unease as their veteran colleagues indicates that teacher-education and professional-development programs are not addressing the realities found in today’s classroom” (Riley, 1999).

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