

**Marginalization and the Occasional Teacher Workforce in Ontario:
The Case of Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs)**

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This article considers the marginalization of internationally educated teachers (IETs) as occasional teachers. In particular, it explores the experiences of three IETs as they try to gain access to full-time teacher employment within the Ontario, English-speaking public school system. Data used in this article was generated from a qualitative study of occasional teachers who worked in the Ontario English-speaking public school system. Findings indicated that these teachers engaged in considerable amounts of unpaid work, participated in a great deal of informal and formal learning, and accepted all and any occasional work available – all practices associated with the cycle of marginalization.

Teaching is a unique profession. It is the only profession where absent teaching professionals must be replaced by another teaching professional. Such a practice does not generally occur in other professions. For example, if a physician in a general private practice awakes one morning to find that he/she is ill and cannot fulfill their professional duties for the number of patients with appointments for that day, the physician is not legally bound to see these patients nor to find another certified general practitioner to take his/her place. Teaching, however, is different. If a full-time elementary or secondary teacher is absent from the classroom, legislation generally requires that another teacher replace the absent teacher. This legal requirement essentially guarantees that there will always be a need for a pool of certified non-permanent teachers who are available for deployment within a short period of time, for indefinite periods and across a broad range of grade levels and subject areas. Currently, there is

now a sizeable contingent workforce of non-permanent teachers working in school systems in the Western world (Hanawar, 2007; Morrison, 1999a, 1999b; McIntyre, 2006). In Canada, one-fifth of the teaching workforce in the educational system work as non-permanent teachers (Work and Life-long Learning (WALL), 2005).

At the present time in Canada, many non-permanent teachers, henceforth referred to as “occasional teachers”, have been educated in countries other than Canada. Over the past few years internationally educated teachers (IETs) have taken advantage of Canadian immigration policy designed to attract “immigrants who have a high level of education and previous experience in the labour market” (Owen, 2005) to settle in Ontario. Teaching represents the fourth largest occupation of immigrants to Ontario (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003). Many IETs engage in the Ontario teaching profession through non-permanent teaching. Currently, IETs represent 48% of the Ontario occasional teacher workforce, compared to new Ontario graduates (18%), teachers educated in other provinces (23%), and teachers educated at border-colleges (24%) – American colleges along the Ontario-United States border that allow Ontario residents to take education degrees and do their practice teaching in Ontario classrooms (McIntyre, 2006). Most of these IETs immigrate to Canada from non-Western countries (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Like other internationally educated professionals, IETs are marginalized in the Canadian workforce (Galabuzi, 2006). The term *marginalized* was first coined by Robert Eze Park (1928) as a phenomena where migration resulted in individuals “striving to live in two diverse cultural groups” (p. 881) leading to an unstable character – a ‘marginal’ personality type. Marginalized individuals lived and functioned between two societies and were vulnerable to psychological problems because of the “conflict of the divided self” (Park, 1928, p. 356). Since the 1930s the

term marginalized has been applied to “different contexts with varying, often incompatible, results” leading to much contestation (Del Pilar & Udasco, 2004, p. 3). Presently, the term marginalized has been expanded to consider not only individuals but situations. This article considers marginalization as a structural phenomena that “presupposes some kind of barrier limiting or obstructing social interaction between members of groups that are in some form of relationship with each other” (Gist & Wright, 1973), not as an individual characteristic. As occasional teachers, IETs are marginalized by virtue of their unique work arrangements, and resulting attitudes and beliefs about them as a group act as barriers that limit or obstruct social interaction between themselves and other teachers (full-time, permanent) at the school(s) site. Duggleby (2007) points out that occasional teachers, regardless of their heritage, are marginalized because they lack power.

Publicly funded schools are hierarchical institutions, with many different levels or divisions of power. Each level of authority has a role to play, and each level is situated between those with more authority and those with less. Substitute teachers are treated poorly because they can be. They exist at the lowest level of a hierarchy and are governed by others with more power...It is important to understand that the inherently hierarchical nature of the school system prevents [occasional] teachers from ever becoming full members of the teaching profession. (p. 20)

Duggleby emphasizes that all occasional teachers are marginalized. But occasional teachers who are members of minoritized groups – this includes at least 80% of IETs – face additional marginalization. This paper highlights the cycle of marginalization of certified teachers who work as occasional teachers and received their tertiary education from non-Western institutions. Many of these occasional teachers also are members of minoritized groups and speak English as a second or third language. It should be apparent that non-permanent teaching is by default marginal work and those who work in these arrangements are set up for

marginalization. So many IETs begin their teaching career in Ontario in a doubly disadvantaged position. This marginalization occurs in the attitudes, behaviors and practices that IETs encounter as they work in their occasional teaching positions, and in their attempts to secure a full-time position. Specifically, this article explores the cycle of marginalization that IETs experience when they volunteer; engage in informal and formal learning, and pursue daily occasional teaching opportunities.

Methodology

The research in this article is from a qualitative study that explored occasional teachers' work engagement in Ontario. Eighteen participants were interviewed in total. Four were internationally educated teachers (IETs) seeking full-time teaching employment, four individuals had retired from permanent teaching posts and were presently doing occasional work, and seven were career occasional teachers, many of whom also held executive positions on various local Occasional Teachers' Bargaining Units (OTBU). Also interviewed were a union representative who bargained on behalf of occasional teachers, an employee from the Toronto District School Board, and a past staff member of a bridging program for internationally trained teachers seeking work in Ontario.

Employing both convenience and snowball sampling, participants were selected from Southern Ontario. Occasional teachers from Southern Ontario were chosen, in part because the researcher was familiar with the local context and because of geography and relationships forged through work at a university in the area. The researcher had better access to the workforce in Southern Ontario than to other workforces. Southern Ontario is quite densely populated, and includes Toronto, the largest city in Canada, and one of the largest school districts in North

America. Both its student and teacher populations are, in relative terms, more diverse than most of Canada (Harvey & Houle, 2006). The researcher wanted to capture the diversity that might exist within the occasional teaching workforce. Variety in this context includes employment arrangements (short-term occasional teaching, long-term occasional teaching) and work environments (school location, work assignment or role), but also demographics that include gender, race/ethnicity, location of training, previous teaching experience, subject expertise, grade level taught, and family, and immigration status.

Each participant engaged in a one-hour semi-structured interview. In this interview, participants were asked to describe how they came to be teaching occasionally, to describe a typical day of occasional teaching, how they interact with those they encounter in their work (such as other full-time teachers, secretaries, administrators, students and parents), what challenges they encountered and what strategies they employ to overcome some of these challenges. Interviews were audio taped, transcribed and the qualitative software package NVivo was used to organize and analyze the data. Data analysis consisted of searching for themes that were reported in the current literature but also for themes that were absent from the literature but present across interviews. Such themes included: professional identity, work-related learning and access to the profession and to daily work.

Conscious of space, experiences of three internationally educated teachers are highlighted as typical examples of internationally educated teachers' experiences as they try to gain access to the full-time teacher workforce in Ontario. At the time of the interviews none of these teachers had secured a full-time teaching position even though this was their intention. Some had the opportunity to work in long-term occasional (LTO) positions, but these opportunities did not lead to other LTO positions nor did it lead to a full-time teaching contract.

Participants

Zahra. At the time of the research, Zahra was an occasional teacher in the Elementary panel. Originally from Pakistan, Zahra taught mathematics, physics, biology and chemistry for 15 years before coming to Ontario. Her prior education included a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Physics, Bachelor of Education in Physics and Mathematics and a Masters of Education – all from Pakistan. After she arrived in Ontario, someone directed her to the Ontario College of Teachers where she was advised that she must provide original transcripts and documents from the degree granting institutions she attended and the schools where she was employed. Zahra received an interim teaching certificate while waiting for the documents to arrive. Also during this time, she had to help support her family, so twelve days after arriving in Ontario Zahra found a factory job packaging donuts. After a short period of time her supervisor approached her and suggested that she could find other work because of her educational background. Zahra eventually found work at a telemarketing call centre. She explained how she sold her home in Pakistan, paid her landing fees, air fare, and first and last month's rent to her landlord, depleting her financial resources. This was three years ago and since then Zahra has been employed to teach for one year as a full-time teacher at a private school while still working evenings and weekends as a telemarketer.

With hopes of one day securing a full-time teaching position in the Ontario English-speaking public school system, Zahra has participated in professional development courses, such as additional qualification courses and district run professional development. She even attended a grade 12 mathematics class at a night school because she wanted to observe how mathematics was taught in the Ontario context. Zahra was encouraged to work as a volunteer at a school where she could observe what teachers in Ontario do, how they prepare and deliver lessons, what

electronic resources they use and how they accommodate special needs and diversity within the classroom. Zahra participated in additional professional development and volunteered as a way to understand the Ontario English-speaking public education system but not necessarily to learn the pedagogical practices or content of the sessions. Much of this information was not new to her. She believed there was an implicit assumption that Canadian-trained teachers were superior to teachers who were trained elsewhere in the world. She pointed out that many educational institutes outside of Ontario and Canada actually model similar programs and use resources that are also found in the Ontario schools.

Sonia. Sonia immigrated to Canada with her family from South Africa. In South Africa she had been part of the education system for 16 years. She began her teaching career as a science teacher, was promoted to guidance councilor and eventually became principal. All of her teaching in South Africa was delivered in English, which is her first language; however she has a distinct South African accent. As part of the Ontario Certification process, Sonia did not need to participate in a language proficiency test. However, she still had to have her foreign qualifications accredited with the Ontario College of Teachers. While waiting for her teacher certification, Sonia taught English and math to other adults at a local Ontario community college. Many of the adults in the language program were professionals who recently immigrated to Canada. Because her work at the college was contractual, Sonia volunteered at a local school one afternoon a week as a way to make some connections. Once certified, Sonia attended all professional development sessions for occasional teachers in her local region. The occasional teacher orientation sponsored by the board focused on the application and interview process for actually getting onto the occasional teacher district list and the workings of the daily calling system. The local teachers' union also held an occasional teacher orientation where Sonia

learned about her rights under the local collective agreement between the district and local teacher association. This was something fairly new for Sonia as there was only an emerging union representation for teachers the last few years she taught in South Africa. Believing everything she was told, Sonia sent in the required forms and waited for the phone call for an interview. It had been suggested that since she spoke English as her first language and was a black woman who taught in the area of science and math, she should have little problem getting work as an occasional teacher and eventually securing an LTO position. But the phone call never came. Determined to work as a teacher, Sonia eventually decided to go against the advice of the school district personnel who repeatedly told new teachers to not contact the office – they [school and district] would contact them [the teacher] – and went to see a number of principals in person. After a few meetings, Sonia began receiving calls for daily occasional work. She wondered if administrators or the calling dispatch were reluctant to call because her name was difficult to pronounce or whether there was concern over whether or not she could speak English well.

Ogus. Ogus came to Canada three years ago from Iran where he was a language teacher at a local university. Ogus also worked in Hungary as a teacher before coming to Ontario. He indicated that during the immigration process he was misinformed about how to ‘get into teaching’. New friends and associates eventually painted a different picture. Ogus was told that he could teach language in private companies, teach at private schools, or become an ESL teacher through various adult education programs. Teaching language for private companies and for adult education is contract work that was viewed as rather unstable and Ogus wanted a career within the same profession over a long time period. He eventually figured out the first steps for obtaining teacher certification in Ontario, obtaining his Ontario Teachers’ license to teach ESL,

English, and Persian. Once certified, Ogus applied to numerous boards for work but heard nothing. He volunteered for two semesters in two different high schools as a way to both learn more about the Ontario English-speaking public school system and also as a way to make connections and network with others already in the workforce. After a period of time volunteering, Ogus approached the principal for a reference letter supporting him as a teacher. Ogus was successful in securing his name on a number of ‘eligible to hire’ lists at different local school boards, which meant that he could now be called to teach on a daily occasional basis. Eager to learn about the Ontario English-speaking public education system and to secure full-time employment, Ogus accepted all work assignments. He taught any and every subject, even French, although he could not speak one word of the language. He taught mainly within the intermediate grade level and would work at any school, urban or rural. While working as an occasional teacher, he also took additional qualification (AQ) courses such as English for high school at a local Ontario university. Ogus pointed out that he is not a native English speaker although he still speaks proficient English. However, he worried that those responsible for hiring him would think that he is a poor English speaker when they saw his name and his country of origin. Last year, Ogus secured a four month LTO at a school where he had previously volunteered. This school had a diverse student population that included many Iranian students whose first language was Persian. It is Ogus’ dream to one day be an Ontario school principal.

Data Analysis and Discussion

While each IET’s situation is unique, they nevertheless share similar experiences. The most obvious similarity is that Sonia, Zahra and Ogus are from non-western countries, do not speak English as a first language or with a standard Canadian accent,

obtained their teaching degrees at post-secondary institutions outside of Canada, had substantial teaching careers before they immigrated to Canada, and lastly, are *certified* to teach in Ontario. It is not surprising that these teachers come with substantial credentialing and career experience because one of the aims of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* of 2002 was to target individuals that are well educated and with work experience. However, Zahra and Ogus reported that they were misinformed about both the teacher shortage and access to the teaching profession in the immigration process. Zahra was led to believe that if a potential immigrant is certified as a teacher and has had a teaching career in their homeland, he/she would have an advantage in finding a teaching position. Katherine, an advocate for IETs, who was also interviewed, stated, “Many [IET occasional teachers] will say that they have been told by immigration that they’ll be teachers in Ontario. And that’s a big problem for us right now because becoming a teacher in Ontario is not as easy as they had been led to believe”. Not only were Sonia, Zahra and Ogus’ initial efforts to find employment teaching unsuccessful, they soon realized that to be successful they had to engage in a considerable amount of unpaid work (e.g., volunteering), attend a great deal of informal and formal learning, and eventually accept any and all daily occasional work— all practices that contribute to the cycle of marginalization.

Volunteering

All of the IETs volunteered. Volunteering is nothing new for non-permanent teachers. During times of teacher surplus, volunteering increases because IETs believed that it improves the chances of being hired for daily occasional work, an LTO, or even a full-time teaching

position. However, the reasons why IETs choose to volunteer in Ontario's public schools are different than those for new entrants educated in Ontario. For example, even though volunteering seems to increase with teacher surplus, none of the career occasional, or retirees, or remaining new entrants in the study mentioned that they were advised that they *had to* volunteer before they could secure any daily occasional work. Sonia, Zahra and Ogus, however, were told they *had to* volunteer before they could secure a place on the occasional teacher roster. Whether informally mandated or not, volunteering can be beneficial for all new entrant occasional teachers, particularly IETs. Ogus pointed out that

It is the common trend for people trying to work here - volunteering. They (administration, district representatives) say really, you must volunteer ... develop good relationships, good rapport with the principal, the vice principal and then they will recommend you for occasional teaching, and you will easily get occasional teaching work.

Volunteering is viewed as a way to make connections, meet teachers and administrators who might recommend the teachers or think of hiring them when there is a need for an occasional teacher at the local school site. Not surprising, Sonia, Zahra and Ogus also believed that volunteering gave them the opportunity to experience first hand teaching in the Ontario English-speaking public school system. As Ogus stated,

Volunteering, that's how you get information about the school. Volunteering, I would say, 90% of it was to my benefit. 10% to the benefit of the school... I learned what the school was about, the people who work [there], the principal, vice-principal, department heads, schools are not that big in my country. ... I am not accustomed to the department thing, because I taught in university, but not in a school like this.

The IETs viewed volunteering as more than a marketing strategy; they also saw it as a way to learn more about the workings of the Ontario English-speaking public education system. Other occasional teachers reported how the practice of occasional teaching helped them to learn

more about the different types of schools one could work in. As one career occasional teacher explained:

You get to see different areas of the region and teaching in an inner-city school might appeal to you where at first you thought you wanted one of the new modern ones in the subdivision, and then you get to realize that inmates are running the asylum here; the parents have too much to say, and the principal is a wimp, where the kids have more money in their pockets than you do, and you might be saying, “no, I don’t want that.” Not typical but it happens more often than enough, or you can’t handle the stresses and strains of an inner-city school, and you go to a newer area only to discover the kids are drinking at lunchtime, they’re smoking out behind the portable, and that the parents are playing musical beds.

It appears that all teachers new to the Ontario education system need some way to learn about the system before securing a full-time teaching position. They do so through either volunteering or non-permanent teaching. One of these practices is paid and the other is unpaid. The IETs in this study appeared to engage in more of the unpaid work through volunteering. This practice marginalizes IETs because they are expected to devote time to participate in unpaid work as a means of learning about the provincial education system. This volunteer work reduces availability of IETs for occasional teaching or other paid work opportunities elsewhere. This in turn can also mean less disposable income for IETs, which is significant when it comes to other strategies they reported such as formal professional development.

Informal Learning

Informal learning is an integral part of teaching. New entrants tend to engage in informal learning through either volunteering or while on the job as an occasional teacher. However, the purposes behind the informal learning were different for the IETs in this study. Those occasional teachers who were not IETs were more interested in finding schools, school cultures and climate

at the local level that they thought would be a good fit with who they were as individuals. These new entrants evidently believed that they had some degree of control or decision-making power over their work. As one new entrant commented, “Being an occasional teacher affords you the opportunity to see different things, and then you can make some wiser choices as to where you want your career path to go.” IETs, on the other hand, indicated that while they were learning about the Ontario English-speaking public education system, they were politely directed to volunteer and therefore it appeared that IETs felt they had less decision-making power. They indicated that they had no choice but to volunteer especially if they wanted to eventually secure full-time teaching. Learning through volunteering, however, also limited the availability these IETs had for paid daily occasional work. The limited availability perpetuates the cycle of marginality because each time teaching work is turned down, an opportunity to make connections and network is also lost. As well, new entrants who were not IETs were interested in understanding schooling from a local level; IETs were more interested in understanding how Ontario’s public education worked as a *system*, from a provincial level. For instance, Ogus mentioned “I am not accustomed to the department thing, because I taught in university, but not in a school like this.” He felt he needed to know more about the organization of the public education system. In addition to being encouraged to volunteer at public schools, Sonia, Zahra, and Ogus were also encouraged to attend other formal learning opportunities.

Formal Learning

New entrants, particularly IETs, appeared to participate in substantial amounts of formal learning, motivated by the desire to secure more occasional teaching days or a full-time, permanent teaching position. Ogus stated that he took “an ABQ (Additional Basic Qualification)

course in English to get [an] interview [to be put on the occasional teaching list].” Even though Zahra taught 15 years in her home country, has an undergraduate degree, a Master’s degree in math and physics, and a teaching degree, she was still having difficulty securing teaching work, so she attended a “Grade 12 Mathematics class in a night school.”

New entrants felt they could build their resume by participating in formal learning experiences and increase their chances of securing more teaching work. IETs indicated that not only was formal learning a way to build their resume and make connections, it was also a response to the notion that IETs are somehow deficient in their teaching skills and knowledge. However, none of the IETs reported that they learned anything new with regard to pedagogical skills and knowledge. As Zahra pointed out in frustration:

In this Canadian atmosphere, you have this conception that we don’t know about your curriculum. That we are not familiar with your assessment techniques. We are not familiar with your classroom management strategies and we can’t accommodate Special Education. That is why they (school district) say we must ... watch the teacher and observe what she does...how she prepares the lesson plan how she delivers the lesson, what technology she uses and how she accommodates the students learning styles... ALL of this we did back home!

The cycle of marginality continues for these IETs as they attempt to dispel others’ beliefs that they are somehow deficient. One way of doing this is to engage in formal learning opportunities. The IETs in these studies found themselves engaging in substantial amounts of formalized professional development that allow them to build resumes, network, and learn about cultural differences. But there is also a downside to participating in substantial amounts of formal professional development. First, some of these formal learning opportunities occur during the school day. This means that IETs who participate in this professional development might possibly forfeit a day of occasional teaching. More than this though, much of the professional

development occurs in the evenings and weekends and this would conflict with other forms of employment that many IETs engage in to survive. To give up paid work to participate in professional development that does not guarantee any further employment involves an element of risk. In addition to the risk, many occasional teachers must pay to participate in professional development activities. The Ontario Ministry of Education determined that in 2005/2006 approximately 52% of occasional teachers who held a long-term teaching contract paid for their own professional learning opportunities (Ontario Ministry of Education, Unpublished). So as the cycle of marginality continues, IETs engage in more formal learning, not because they necessarily need it to help their teaching, but as a response to how others perceive them. They engage in formal learning, often at the expense of missing occasional teaching opportunities and forgoing other paid work, and they do so while also paying for the formal learning opportunities themselves. Because of this delicate balance between paid and unpaid work, when the IETs in these studies actually had the time and opportunity to work as an occasional teacher they often did so in a manner that further marginalized them.

Daily Teaching Opportunities

The manner in which an occasional teacher engages with occasional teaching is also important. For instance, the majority of the career occasional and retirees completed their formal schooling and teacher education programs at an Ontario university. All were asked how they “got into teaching” and those who could recall how they secured their initial full-time teaching employment referred to having some type of network. For instance, two of the career occasional teachers spoke about how pre-service teachers in Ontario who decide to teach in the province have the opportunity to network within the school system as they complete the practicum

component of their degree. If they are successful in getting access to networks during this process, then access to work will be easier. On the other hand, if pre-service teachers had limited opportunity to establish networks, or their performance was perceived as marginal, then they too could be at the mercy of the calling system for occasional teachers (be it automatic or manual phone calling). Claire and Nicole, two Canadian-born occasional teachers, reflect on how the informal networking created during their teacher training helped them secure work:

I had a nice enough principal help me where I had done my student teaching, and so that's how I sort of started out supply teaching.

You automatically got in. So not only did we automatically get in, but then we all got jobs after, cause you know because you'd been over the years to so many different schools [...] and all the different principals, and we were all hard working, and great, and everybody was offered full-time jobs the next year.

The above two career occasional teachers, Claire and Nicole, indicated that their teacher training in Ontario helped them establish connections that they later used to secure full-time, permanent teaching once they graduated.

A school board employee, Daniel, confirms the need for networking when he recalled the selection process for interviews for the occasional list.

I will look at practicum teaching reports that individuals included in the package and the references when they come in and those kinds of things...kind of look at whether or not they have done their practicum locally, if so that gives me an opportunity to contact the principal and say "Do you know [...] who did a practicum with you? I have her on the supply list blah, blah, blah" and prioritize in that way... and I didn't want to mislead you in terms of the location where people are from, I wouldn't suggest to you that we consider people who have done their practicum here or whatever. It's just that is one criterion that we may look at as a means of shortening from the total number of people who apply.

In the above case, the school board employee relies on his colleagues to provide unofficial references for applicants. Teachers applying for occasional teaching will have a better

chance of getting on the school district hiring list if they completed their training and practicum within that district. Newly educated Ontario residents tend to have greater access to the teaching profession and actual daily work, while those educated outside the province initially have to establish themselves. All the IETs, on the other hand, wanted to secure full-time work teaching, but were at a disadvantage because the time they spent volunteering took away from the actual time they had to teach. Moreover, they needed to devote additional expenses to cover extra professional development and they had no networks to fall back on. As a consequence the IETs accepted just about any work that was offered. While accepting all work provided IETs with an income for that day and an opportunity to experience teaching in different contexts, this practice also generated disadvantages. Working indiscriminately across geography, grade level and content area may mean more daily work teaching, but it does nothing to foster any kind of rapport with individual teachers or particular schools, one of the successful strategies that other successful occasional teachers, such as career occasional teachers, reported. Accepting all work also means that occasional teachers must teach in some of the most challenging classrooms in public schooling and in grades and subject areas that they are not familiar with. Doing so places the occasional teacher in a vulnerable position because these assignments may create difficulties for IETs (as well as other occasional teachers) in the classroom. This may not bode well for IETs who are attempting to make a good impression on employers and create networks. IETs have additional job performance challenges because as Koroma (2004) points out, many students misbehave more when they are taught by occasional teachers who are not of a non-mainstream ethnicity or race. So not only are some IETs entering classrooms with challenging classroom management situations but discriminatory attitudes and beliefs of students and staff work against some IETs as they struggle to maintain classroom discipline and engage in meaningful teaching.

Because particular groups of IETs are believed to be deficient it can be argued that IETs are judged more harshly than non-IETs. As Schotte (1973) reported “Principals do not feel that all substitute teachers deserve the support they can give them” (p. 65). One of the principals in his study held this assumption:

I usually have problems with substitute teachers from India and the West Indies. They are not trained in our system and are not used to it. They have little control and discipline and just fail to command any respect from the children. I hate to say it, but there is not much I can do for them. (p. 65)

The cycle of marginality continues for IETs as they are directed to engage in volunteer (unpaid) work at local schools, participate in numerous formal professional development which they have to pay for, and are granted only limited access to daily occasional teaching because of preconceived notions of their abilities. IETs also feel that they need to accept whatever occasional work that they can get. Unfortunately these choices often lead to negative teaching experiences and prevent them from building networks necessary to ensure more teaching.

Conclusion

Why should we be concerned about the plight of internationally educated occasional teachers? Occasional teaching is (and has been) a part of the education system as far back as the one-room school (Baldwin, 1934). Today occasional teachers “fulfill a central role in maintaining the continuity of K-12 education” (Duggleby & Badali, 2007). They are “the educational bridges” when the classroom teacher is absent (National Education Association, 2003). Increased requirements for professional development for full-time, permanent teachers, changes in contractual arrangements, the variable demand for teachers now dictate that the services of occasional teachers are being drawn upon more frequently than in the past. Moreover,

high stakes testing and outcome-based education means that what occasional teachers do in the classroom has become more relevant. We need to ensure that students are well served by all occasional teachers. In order to do this, measures need to be taken to ensure that occasional teachers are able to do their jobs to the best of their ability. Teacher education programs at universities can play a more active role in expanding the notion that teaching can include numerous legitimate work arrangements (not just full-time, permanent contracts) and emphasize that the Ontario teacher workforce is quite diverse. Through contractual negotiations, school boards can improve provisions for better access to existing professional development and support on-going professional development that is specific to occasional teachers and IETs (Bontempo & Deay, 1986; Collins, 1982; St. Michel, 1995). Administrators can support a culture of inclusion within their schools by modeling positive behaviours and acceptance towards occasional teachers in general and towards IETs specifically (Berg, 1989). Administrators can also engage in tangible practices such as making sure that meaningful lesson plans are provided to occasional teachers when they arrive to work (St. Michel, 1995). Full-time teachers should be expected to treat occasional teachers as professionals (Sigel, 1997) and be held accountable for their actions towards occasional teachers. These measures are particularly important for internationally educated occasional teachers. Internationally educated occasional teachers face even more challenges than Canadian educated occasional teachers. If schools are to continue to educate students as they should, then those who are in a position to do so must work to ensure that IETs are no longer marginalized.

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