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Teacher Hiring: The Disconnect Between Practice & Research

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Problem

- Relationship between teacher quality and student outcomes requires that only the teachers with the greatest possibility of success are hired
- Principals untrained in HR processes create and implement teacher hiring processes
- Gap in the literature regarding effective teacher selection systems



Purpose of Study

This study was designed to examine the actual hiring processes utilized in schools in order to determine the extent to which research based practices are utilized and whether principals' perceptions of effective hiring practices correspond with what is known from current research.



Research Questions

- RQ1. What elements do principals include in their teacher hiring processes and do those elements reflect best practice as defined by management and teacher quality literature?
- RQ2. How do principals determine which elements to include in their teacher hiring processes?
- RQ3. What teacher characteristics or traits influence the final selection of candidates?
- RQ4: How are principals trained to create and implement teacher selection processes?



Literature Review

- Teacher hiring as an element of school improvement and consequences of a “bad hire”
- Three essential elements for an effective hiring process: (1) identification of key qualifications and prior experience necessary for success, (2) a structured interview process aligned to identified skills and abilities essential for success on the job and creation of interview questions and acceptable answers in order to assess whether the candidates possess the identified attributes, and (3) addition of other predictive elements so that decisions are not based solely on paper screening and interviews (Moore, 2017).



Method

- Electronic Survey – Qualtrics
- Principals in ten states – 5 in southern region, 5 in western region
- 19,433 surveys delivered, 1008 surveys were completed, response rate of 5.2%

Table 1 – Participating principals by state

State	Frequency	Percentage
California	251	24.90%
Oregon	58	5.80%
New Mexico	54	5.40%
Utah	58	5.80%
Washington	58	5.80%
Alabama	86	8.50%
Arkansas	84	8.30%
Georgia	154	15.30%
North Carolina	148	14.60%
South Carolina	57	5.60%
Total	1008	100.00%




Method

- Instrumentation
 - Question construction guided by research questions & Creswell (2018)
 - Piloted by ten principals
 - 42 multiple choice questions
 - 9 questions directly related to this study
- Analysis
 - Descriptive statistics




Results



1. What elements are included in the interview process?

- Traditional interviews conducted by an administrator - 28%
- Panel interviews with a single candidate - 25%
- Reference checks - 25%
- Selection process elements that mention 'research' were among the least selected items:
 - 'Research based screening assessment' - 3%
 - 'research based predictive interview that results in measurable data' - 1%



2. What influences the elements of the interview process

- Most influential:
 - ‘my opinion as a leader based on what is important at the time of hiring’ – mean 2.49, SD 1.56
 - ‘Requirements from the district office’ - mean 3.40, SD 1.92
- Least influential
 - ‘ ‘training I have received regarding effective practices’ – mean 4.38, SD 1.97
 - ‘evidence based practices from science and research’ – mean 4.17, SD 2.12



3. Elements of Structure

- Interview questions were developed prior to the interview – 82%
- Same set of questions asked to all candidates – 87%
- Questions aligned to teacher quality research – 70% (21% not sure)
- Interviews that result in measurable data – 43% (37% no, 19% unsure)



4. Influences on final candidate selection

- Important
 - Ability of a teacher to build a relationship with students – mean 1.32
 - Certification – mean 1.49
 - Ability to collaborate with colleagues – mean 1.57
- Unimportant
 - Measurable data from predictive interviews – mean 3.25
 - Research based qualities known to be predictive of high teacher performance – mean 2.65
 - Ability to cause student growth – 1.95



5. Principal Training

- District provides training - 12.28% of participants,
 - Trained to administer predictive interviews that generate measurable data - 27.47%
 - Teacher selection was covered in a graduate or leadership certificate program – 27.47%
 - Attended workshops or conferences about personnel selection - 29.66%
 - None - 16.86%
-
- 92% of principals indicated that they could benefit from more training



Conclusions

- Principals tend to rely on their own opinions rather than research when making decisions about the structure of the hiring process and the qualities of the teacher whom they will hire.
- Principals rely upon traditional interviews either with an individual administrator or panel of interviewers as the most likely method to gain information in order to hire teachers.
- Principals believe they are aligning their processes to teacher quality research but the factors that influence their decision to hire teachers are inconsistent with such research.
- Principals have very little training in selection processes and much of it is not likely grounded in research.



Implications

- Research
 - Use of teacher quality research in specifically designed teacher hiring processes
 - Impact of structured interviews aligned to teacher quality research on student outcomes
 - Elements of structure with most impact on teacher success
 - Teacher perception of structured interviews and research based processes
 - Principal reluctance to utilize research based hiring practices
 - Predictive teacher hiring elements
- Practice
 - Principal training
 - Support from district personnel
 - Consistency