



TORONTO TRAINING BOARD
COMMISSION DE FORMATION DE TORONTO

Toronto Training Board

Report of Think Tank Meeting on Internationally Educated Teachers

January 9th 2003

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Background

The Toronto Training Board identified the opportunity for a one-day Think Tank to address the findings of their Environmental Scan on teacher shortages and significant issues related to teacher credentialing for Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs). The possible areas that this Think Tank might address include: Credentialing, Academic upgrading, PLAR, Language, shortages in specific subject areas (Math, French, Science, Technological Studies), orientation, mentoring etc.

Statement of Purpose

The statement of purpose for the Think Tank was amended and validated by the group as follows:

- Collect, collate and share information that will be used by Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs) seeking employment in Toronto and Ontario;
- Identification of roles by various bodies, including: what's in place, who does what, limitations, degrees of flexibility, etc;
- Identify strategies and build a plan for establishing a coordinated system of user-friendly, relevant, and culturally sensitive information specific to the needs of IETs and provide proper access to such information;
- Identify and activate supports and structures that ensure effective access to the profession leading to successful employment;
- Review requirements for internationally educated teachers (IETs) and whether they are the best and are relevant;
- Set up a semi-permanent committee or structure for ongoing work and coordination of activities around the IET issue.

It was recognized that while the discussion was focusing on Toronto, the issue was Ontario-wide and the findings of the Think Tank could be generalized for later use on a more province-wide level.

Success Factors for the Think Tank

- Agree upon the outcomes for the session;
- Share what is currently being done in our organizations regarding this topic;
- Focus on what is currently working and what possibilities we can co-create;
- Test assumptions – demystify some of the myths that are limiting progress and collaboration;
- Begin to create a common way to collect and gather data with the ability for all to access this data from our own web sites;
- Begin to create a strategy that could enhance and accelerate the implementation of a new support structure for Internationally-Educated Teachers (IETs) who come to Toronto;
- Leave with a commitment to follow through on the specific recommendations.
- *Have fun and get to know each other!!*

Appreciative Enquiry

The methodology of Appreciative Enquiry was utilized during the meeting. This methodology focuses on successes and possibilities in order to find ways of addressing an issue.

Charting the I.E.T journey

Participants were asked to come up with high-level categories for areas, which an IET would have to address in order to become successfully employed as a teacher in Toronto.

- Information¹ (before and after arrival) and supports
- Assessment process
- Gap filling
- Employment

Participants were organised into three groups and asked to address either Assessment, Gap Filling or Employment and to address the information needs before and after arrival and the supports the person may need to become employed as a teacher.

¹ See Occupational Fact Sheets done by MTCU-APTU which can be a good starting point. See <http://mettowas21.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/nr/02.03/teacher.html>

Assessment

The Ontario College of Teachers is responsible for carrying out assessments of IETs. The requirements are complex. Before assessment, a file must be complete. Persons such as refugees without adequate documentation have serious difficulties. The OCT will not accept an evaluation from groups/organizations such as WES.²

To be assessed the following is needed:

- a) Documentation showing immigration status;
- b) Criminal check;
- c) A tuberculosis test;
- d) A valid Social Insurance Number;
- e) Academic requirement is an undergraduate degree (Canadian, US, Other) that meets requirements of the Ontario College of Teachers. The paper transcripts must be sent directly from the educational institution to the College. The requirements are different for a degree obtained from each territory - USA, Canada or other country. There is no challenge exam existing for applicants to write. The college indicates to all applicants if their qualifications are lacking for Ontario teaching certification. If the person has more than half the required courses, gap filling is possible. If he/she has less than half the required courses, he/she must complete a program at an Ontario Faculty of Education.
- f) Language – A language examination in English or French must be done involving a written and oral test. The TOEFL and IELTS English language tests are recognized by the College as is TESCAN for French;

² See www.wes.org/ca/ for World Education Services, a credential evaluation body set up in Ontario.

Professional requirements – Transcripts must show one year of professional training with five full courses. Recency of professional experience is not an issue, once the person has had professional experience;

N.B. If the person meets a-f, he/she can be licensed as a teacher. Once he/she is licensed he/she is eligible to apply for work.

- g) Ministry qualifying test – This is specific to Ontario. The IET has one year to complete the test. There is nothing in place currently for assisting teachers in understanding and passing this test. However, the Ontario Principals' Council, co-test provider, has a sample test on their website.

- h) Orientation to the profession

Gap Filling

- a) Language proficiency

For attaining proficiency in English or French the IET has recourse to government-funded LINC programs and private/public language courses. It should be noted that LINC language training is not occupation-specific;

- b) Academic qualifications - post-secondary studies. An acceptable undergraduate degree is required. Courses can be done online or through distance education;

- c) Professional preparation – Faculty of Education courses; volunteer work; work as an international languages instructor. Getting accepted into Additional Qualifications (AQs) and Additional Basic Qualifications (ABQs) courses is not easy. People must be qualified to take the courses. The ABQ allows the person to teach a certain age group. Finding practicum placements are difficult;

- d) Supports – financial support; information; mentoring.

Employment

Job Search

- a) Finding employment involves search for Labour Market Information on Local Area Boards, Private Schools, Information on who is hiring, etc;
- b) Familiarisation with the School Board and the self-hiring process which includes getting application forms, developing a CV and application letter, getting supporting documents in approved form, getting documents notarized and translated, doing a Tuberculosis check, doing a criminal check (done in the last 6 months);
- c) Building Canadian experience through volunteering, teaching their native language, registering as a supply teacher, and doing continuing education to keep skills relevant;
- d) Preparing for interviews involving orientation to local issues and people in the community (school principals, racism etc);

Job Maintenance

- e) Documentation of qualifications and experience – Make sure documentation goes through properly and the person is assigned to the correct salary grid from the start. Work with QECO/OSSTF; AEFO.

- f) Orientation to Ontario Teaching³ – the IET must
 - a. Understand the College's Standards of Teaching Practice and Ethical Standards;
 - b. Take part in Professional Development (PD) days, mentoring
 - c. Have proper Record-keeping
 - d. Understand disciplinary practices and cultural issues
 - e. Understand student evaluation

- g) Orientation to School – the IET must understand
 - a. Expectations of the job and the school;
 - b. The local community;
 - c. Working with parents;
 - d. Working with school council
 - e. Being more than just a teacher, for instance working more than nine (9) to five (5).

- h) Career Development
 - a. Fulfill Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) conditions
 - b. Additional Qualifications (AQs) and Additional Basic Qualifications (ABQs) needed for salary increase considerations
 - c. Masters in Education

- i) Build professional support network through
 - a. Colleagues/PD sessions
 - b. Federations/Subject associations
 - c. Familiarisation with School Board resources

³ Orientation to Ontario teaching as a course component is only available in bridging programs and not across the Board.

Locating the common themes in success stories and creating the image of a preferred future

Participants were asked to find out from each other what is currently working in assisting IETs. What were the themes present when things were working and helped and can continue to help in achieving success.

Themes

- a) Formalising the successful processes that were innovative and successful and could be used by others.
- b) Structured flexibility – a clear framework is necessary for future applicants to know the process for achieving success; non-linear flow charts; thinking and reacting outside the box, that is, flexibility to accommodate others, e.g., flexibility around certification;
- c) Adequate funding and coordination of information – multi-stakeholder effort
- d) Partnerships and shared understandings. Collaboration of all stakeholders – identifying the common goals.
- e) Transparency of the process so that the IET knows what he/she has to do without going from place to place.
- f) Mentoring – involvement with people who know the process.
- g) Systemic change, which involves attitudinal and institutional change. Systems need to change to suit immigrants and not vice versa and this includes the Ministry, the School Boards, the universities, NGOs, etc. The system must accept responsibility of multiculturalism and institutions have to change. Requirements must be assessed and barriers removed.
- h) Support structures – For instance a gap program involving orientation, support, mentorship, practicum, trouble shooting.
- i) Location - Consideration of other geographic areas other than Toronto for job search.

The group agreed if these themes were present consistently, there would be more successes.

Innovative Ways to create the future

Current Initiatives

Current initiatives that can be helpful to IETs (formal/informal Programs) identified by the group are as follows:

1. The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and a specific school board hosted an orientation program 3 to 4 days before school started for all out-of-province teachers. This program can possibly be adjusted for IETs;
2. Providing a handbook/binder of information for new teachers on subjects, class discipline, tricks of the trade, etc;
3. Survive and Thrive – an online discussion for new teachers. This could be a model for assisting IETs;
4. OISE/University of Toronto - Persons with less than 50% of course requirements who have to go back to school to do a full year are targeted for a Future Teachers Club. It is not easy to get into programs; one in seven are successful because you must be successfully assessed in grades and profile. The Future Teachers Club, which targets thirty potential teachers, identifies people and invites them to participate and qualify for entry in a program for the next year. Ninety percent of participants are successful. The Club does not target only IETs but any potential teacher. The program assists the person in getting volunteer experience, understanding class and economic issues, foreign-trained issues, ethnic issues, and the application process. The program cannot afford a bigger class size than thirty people. However, with adequate funding it could create a whole cohort of IETs.

5. Mentorship – At the beginning of the school year an experienced teacher takes a new teacher under his wing.

6. Bridging project for IETs– a partnership among Queen's University/Ottawa-Carleton Board of Education/World Skills. World Skills helps with the application process. The first cohort included twenty-seven (27) people. The program is targeting thirty people who have to pay for the course. Ontario Works funding is available for the program. Two different type of practicum is available to suit funding models. Eleven schools were willing to host trainees and five schools were chosen to host trainees. Additional multicultural training was provided to trainees and trainers teaching the course. There are two locations, one in Ottawa and one at Queen's university. The course content is one full year's work, which is tweaked and condensed. Funding is provided by Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities: Access to Professions and Trades Unit (APTU).⁴ The program is supposed to become self-sustaining at the end of three years. The second group will start in the summer of 2003.

7. OISE/University of Toronto – Technological studies program – two-year pilot -done in collaboration with Ontario College of Teachers and Vistion Corporation. Thirty people were involved. The target group was people being downsized from the Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) sector. People were funded by their unions. The format was flexible to provide alternate entries to teacher education. People were from non-standard backgrounds.

8. York University (past program) – A three-year part-time program for IETs. One day per week spent in schools and two evenings per week in class per academic year. One evening was spent doing formal ABQ (intermediate age group) and the second evening, participants were taught by an ESL teacher, developing language for classroom management. Peel Board of Education provided practicum placements for which students did not pay. The first group was mainly South-Asian background. The second

⁴ Fifteen million dollars have been made available by APTU for funding bridging projects.

year, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) funded a group from Somalia. The program was stopped thereafter as costs became prohibitive.

9. York University – 11-year old program, Access Initiative where visible minorities/refugees are the main applicants. It was noted it is difficult to create full-time teachers programs for one group only in publicly funded institutions.
10. Ontario College of Teachers – Outreach program where staff visit consulates and embassies. Teams from various countries such as Ukraine, India, Australia, and the UK visit the OCT. An email link has been set up with Romania to help applicants with the process.
11. Ontario Teachers' Federation – Assists in dissemination of information prior to arrival. People are aware and involved with the teachers' unions in their countries so they know the OTF. This process can be formalized with the right supports to help people learn about the process.

Recommendations for the ideal future

- A support structure must be developed where someone can guide the person to reaching his goal at each point in the process and assist in overcoming obstacles.
- Good things are being done in isolation. Connective tissue is needed between assessment, gaps filling, employment, supports, etc. A single massive organization is not necessary but a mechanism to coordinate and maintain connections.
- The Newcomer Information Centres⁵ (NICs) of which two have been set up, can be a starting point. The centers fund language and job search programs. Eighty percent of newcomers in Ontario use these Centres. The parties involved in the teaching profession can share their information with the NICs. NICs can also train newcomers on how to use computer equipment.
- Participants should go back to their organizations and get a buy-in from them to come together as a multi-stakeholder leadership council and put together a proposal for funding for a project addressing the IET issue. Possibilities include a website, a one-stop shop, etc.
- Information for distribution needs to be consolidated. The information must be clear and concise on the entire process. The message that goes out to IETs could be clarified by the Council.
- Someone who is now starting the process and someone who has gone through the process can assist the work of the Council. The Association of Foreign-Trained Teachers should be on the Council.

⁵ It was noted by CIC that immigrants are processed by paper only and CIC is not in a position to provide information to potential immigrants. Immigration consultants also sometimes provide wrong information to potential immigrants. One can try to provide information before arrival but interpretation of that information is a key issue. It was recommended that the Meeting work on the assumption that newcomer IETs know nothing about the process for becoming employed as a teacher in Ontario.

- Contact can be made with the province of BC to see what initiatives have been put in place there.
- Initiative must be implemented from the client's perspective involving the entire process.
- The Council would have an agenda and working group. The findings of this meeting would give the Group enough to get started.
- OTF is willing to volunteer time to put together a plan for first steps to address the issue of IETs. The Staff sees it as a priority but funding assistance is needed for this initiative to move forward.
- It is recognized that this is a provincial issue but it is manageable to start with Toronto. Focus would be on Toronto for the present to implement something workable and doable
- The Toronto Training Board is prepared to continue to assist on this issue.
- Teacher demographics have not changed to reflect changes in demographics in the wider population. This can be addressed by solving the dilemma of the IET. Visible minorities/IETs must be encouraged to teach and principals must be encouraged to hire them.

Next Steps

1. Send out Report of Meeting and other materials by Tuesday 14, January 2003;
2. Participants from the meeting will go back and talk to their respective organization after receiving the Report to lobby and champion getting a commitment and representative for the Leadership Council and ongoing work;
3. Participants will notify the Toronto Training Board of name and contact information of representative nominated to serve on the Leadership Council by February 01, 2003;
4. Possible resources – one person facilitating flow of information;
5. TTB will provide resources for meetings – venue/facilitator;
6. Research support will be provided by the TTB;
7. One person will be responsible for the coordination of the work;
8. CIC will provide a list of NICs, LINC programs and other information to assist the Group which will be sent out with the Report;
9. Material from OCT will be distributed. This material will be sent to the TTB for distribution;
10. Internationally Educated Professionals (IEP) conference co-funded by the TTB and being held on February 20, 2003 will be attended by OTF, OCT, Toronto District School Board, and MTCU-APTU to participate in the Teachers sector hub session.

These organizations will communicate to the TTB who specifically will be representing them at the Teachers' Hub of the IEP conference;

11. Target for first meeting (half-day) of the Leadership Council is second week in February 2003.

Appendix 1: List of participants

Name	Organization	Title	Address	Phone/Ext	Fax	Email
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