Preparing New Teachers for Non-School Employment
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Teachers Beyond the Classroom (TBC) wishes to acknowledge the support and encouragement received from CivicAction and the Emerging Leaders Network (ELN).

We would also like to thank David Montemurro, Jennifer Chan and Camesha Cox for their contributions as featured speakers at the TBC Community Forum.

Lastly, we thank Anthony Briggs, Chris Yang, Reena Tandon Robyn Connelly and Wayne Salmon for lending their time and talents to the initiative.

LOGICALOUTCOMES

C/O Centre For Social Innovation
720 Bathurst Street
Toronto, On Canada - M5S 2R4
info@logicaloutcomes.net
1-674-478-5634

GRAPHIC DESIGN BY ANITA SEKHARAN
Section A: Background

Since 2010, 1 out of 4 teachers’ college graduates in Ontario is unable to secure a teaching position. [1] This difficulty in finding school-based work has required graduates to re-imagine the transferability of their skills in a wide but often precarious labour market. Additionally, in response to a surplus of teachers, the Ontario government has introduced a second year to teachers’ college programs. This change has opened up a new opportunity for career planning beyond the classroom. Recognizing the need for teachers’ college graduates to focus on transferable skills in times of scarce school-based employment, Teachers Beyond the Classroom (“TBC”) was created as a Civic Action DiverseCity Fellows initiative to address the needs of young educators.

Civic Action’s DiverseCity Fellows program “is one of North America’s leading urban fellows programs for rising city-builders” and “brings together emerging leaders who reflect the diversity of our region, and kick-starts their collaboration with a wide network of city-builders and leaders in the public, private, and non-profit sectors.” [2] TBC’s purpose is to help teachers to apply their skill-set ‘beyond the classroom’ by embracing Civic Action’s philosophy of broad cross-sector collaboration. In recognition of this innovative approach to teacher training and career development, TBC was awarded the 2013-2014 Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) Prize at Civic Action’s 2014 Emerging Leaders Network pitch competition.
“This difficulty in finding school-based work has required graduates to re-imagine the transferability of their skills in a wide but often precarious labour market.”
Section B: Introduction

In the mid-1990s, the nursing profession in Ontario faced employment challenges similar to those being experienced throughout the public education sector today. Simply put, there were too many nurses and too few nursing positions. In response to this difficult situation, nursing educators began to think about ways to assist students to navigate a difficult and shifting employment market. Former University of Toronto School of Nursing Dean, Dr. Gail Donner, was instrumental in researching and designing career development opportunities for nursing students which emphasized career resilience, adaptability and the broadening of employment search strategies. These efforts culminated in U of T’s nursing program becoming a leader in career development for nurses by embedding such supports within the nursing curricula.[3] TBC acknowledges the work of Dr. Donner et al which has provided inspiration to its mission and vision.

Transferable skills are defined as “the talents a person gathers throughout their career and through other real life experiences which can be applied to a new job or new career.”[4] While transferable skills have often been discussed as being essential in today’s labour market, there has been no coordinated and sustained focus on transferable skills among teachers’ college students and graduates. TBC believes teachers have invaluable skills and training which allows them to be successful in a wide range of positions.
Section C: Methodology

On 22 November 2014, TBC held an open community forum at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). The purpose of the forum was to bring together a diverse group of education stakeholders to explore and respond to the following research questions:

1. What skills do teachers bring to the table for non-school employers?
2. What impact can teachers’ college graduates have on various industries and organizations in Ontario?
3. How can universities and employers better support teachers’ college students and alumni in finding work outside of schools?
4. How might recent changes to teacher education in Ontario impact teacher employment outside of schools?

The forum included guest speakers who provided important context. The data was collected from four focus groups comprised of teachers, educational entrepreneurs, government representatives and school board officials. The forum was attended by 40 people, with each focus group consisting of 8-9 people including note-takers.

Forum attendees were not pre-selected. Therefore there was no targeted sampling method employed to form the focus groups. However, the open-invite attracted a diverse group of persons interested in the subject matter, with teachers or teacher candidates representing the majority of attendees.
“While transferable skills have often been discussed as being essential in today’s labour market, there has been no coordinated and sustained focus on transferable skills among teachers’ college students and graduates.”
Section D: Findings

What skills do teachers bring to the table for non-school employers?

Currently, as a result of being a one-year post grad program, teachers’ college candidates are coming into the workplace with a diverse set of backgrounds and experiences. This diversity extends beyond undergraduate degrees. There are some who will have worked with children in various capacities both domestically and abroad; some who will have worked in group homes; still others from a range of campus clubs, and even those who are coming to teaching from a different career. This range of backgrounds is partly what makes them exceptional teachers, but it is also will make this group of professionals successful beyond the classroom. The teachers’ college curriculum builds upon the rich experiences of its candidates and provides them with a range of tangible skills, which are broadly applicable to non-school work settings.

The list that follows was compiled during the Teachers Beyond the Classroom community forum and represents the most common transferrable skills that trained teachers possess:

- Patience – Exemplified in dealing with students on a daily basis
- Time management – Classes can’t run late
- Public speaking – Performing to a critical audience on a daily basis
- Leadership skills – The undeniable ability to shape and direct a class
- People Management - Developed through managing an array of people/students
- Problem-solving, resourcefulness and adaptability – On any given day the students may not react well to the planned lesson which might necessitate a different approach
- Reading a crowd – Are the students understanding what they are being taught?
- EQ - Understanding interpersonal communication and group dynamics
- Positive role modeling– Setting a model with respect to values
- Communication - with a specific focus on oral and written forms
- Deconstructing complex concepts and making them easy to understand
- Planning - Exemplified through lesson planning
A few of these skills are particularly noteworthy. For example, the high degree of planning skills that teachers possess can provide enormous value to non-school work environments. With their enhanced ability to think strategically while planning toward outcomes, teachers can bolster an organization’s planning processes by contributing their design thinking and outcomes-based approaches. These skills could allow organizations to improve systems, workflows and strategic goal-setting. In addition, teachers are accustomed to working both collaboratively and autonomously. This agility makes them ideal contributors to special projects and other major work initiatives. By applying their know-how regarding building connections and relationships, teachers are uniquely positioned to fulfill the important roles of facilitator, team lead or project manager in various professional settings.

In addition, teachers bring a great amount of adaptability to any work environment. This is because they understand how to engage people from all walks of life, and they are trained to recognize, celebrate and encourage people with diverse talents, skills, aptitudes and goals. In short, teachers can help organizations to build new relationships through creative collaborations. With current employment trends demanding that employees work within increasingly diverse teams, teachers possess a clear skills advantage.

What impact can teachers’ college graduates have on various industries and organizations in Ontario?

As the knowledge economy grows, the need for organizations to expand their internal learning capacities also increases. However, most small to medium size enterprises (SMEs) do not have budgets which allow them to provide their employees with regular professional development and training. This presents an interesting opportunity for teachers who might act as “learning agents” within organizations, helping to offset training costs while taking the lead on developing and delivering organizational learning goals. Teachers are no doubt skilled at creating learning pathways which include formal instruction, assessment and evaluation. These skills could have significant impact within the non-school workplace.

Above all, teachers are other-oriented professionals who understand what people need to be at their best. As recent research suggests, the ability to empathize and relate to others is one of the most important qualities in today’s workplace.[5] Teachers know how to make people feel included and valued, and this in turn leads to more motivated and engaged employees and greater workplace productivity.
“With their enhanced ability to think strategically while planning toward outcomes, teachers can bolster an organization’s planning processes by contributing their design thinking and outcomes-based approaches.”
Employment opportunities suitable for teachers’ college graduates include:

- Corporate Trainer - Utilizing their curriculum development background and public speaking ability to develop and implement learning programs for employees of various sized organizations
- Youth Worker - Utilizing their pedagogy and EQ to facilitate personal, social, and educational growth amongst young people
- Workshop Facilitator - Utilizing people management and leadership skills to guide groups to find solutions to complex problems
- Educational Entrepreneur - Utilizing an intimate understanding of the industry and pedagogy along with leadership ability to provide services to underserved groups such as SMEs.
- Human Resources Manager - Utilizing people management, EQ, and positive role modelling skills to recruit, hire and develop employees at organizations of various sizes consultant in stakeholder relations, public engagement and/or public affairs

How can universities and employers better support teachers’ college students and alumni in finding work outside of schools?

UNIVERSITIES
Ontario teachers’ colleges should have deliberate focus on developing transferable skills that graduates can apply inside and outside of the classroom. In part, a deliberate focus requires having introductory courses that teach specific skills for broader application and might require bringing in adjunct faculty or partnering with other organizations to develop course content. A deliberate focus on transferable skills will also involve more practical training and less theoretical training (e.g. longer practicums), because it is the practical training that is more likely to build a transferable skillset.

Ontario teachers’ colleges can offer more career planning opportunities to students. In addition to the skills required to search for jobs outside of schools (e.g. creating a CV or resume for non-school employers and preparing for interviews with non-school employers), students would benefit from more career planning and networking events organized by career resource offices. Furthermore, career resource offices should have staff dedicated to building relationships with non-school employers. Career planning should also involve additional mentorship opportunities that connect current students to alumni, thereby allowing current students to learn from the experiences of people senior to them,
while also helping current students expand their networks. Current students should be encouraged to make time for these opportunities and avoid being narrowly focused on just classroom-based work.

Ontario teachers’ colleges are also encouraged to create more avenues for current students and recent alumni to provide feedback on their experiences, through qualitative surveys, dialogues or community forums.

EMPLOYERS

Employers from all sectors should make an effort to build relationships with career resource centres at Ontario teachers’ colleges in order to access a pool of trained professional students looking for opportunities. This includes participating in career planning programs and events, jobs fair and alumni associations. The private sector in particular feels foreign to many teachers’ college students. Engagement from employers can therefore help to demystify non-school employment for teachers’ college students.

How might recent changes to teacher education in Ontario impact teacher employment outside of schools?

IT IS DIFFICULT TO determine what the impact of adding another year to teachers’ college in Ontario will be. However, it is an opportunity to add more to the teachers’ college curriculum that will help prepare students for a broader set of opportunities than solely school-based employment. The second year may provide an opportunity to change the culture at teachers’ colleges so that teachers feel supported to think about applying their skills to a more diverse range of roles in all sectors. There are concerns that teachers’ colleges may become less diverse because it will be harder for students to attend if they cannot afford to take another year away from working. There is optimism, however, that this second year of teachers’ college will lower the overall number of teachers’ college graduates looking for jobs at any given time and better prepare students for the workforce.
“Above all, teachers are other-oriented professionals who understand what people need to be at their best.”
Section E: Recommendations

Based on the insights and experiences shared at the TBC Community Forum, as well as the TBC organizing team’s research and meetings with community members and teachers’ colleges, the following are recommended action items:

FOR NON-SCHOOL EMPLOYERS
Build relationships with teachers’ colleges, particularly their career development offices (or equivalent), to tap into a new source of potential employees. This includes participating in career fairs, sending employees to speak on panels or at other events and also providing information about employment opportunities that involve the transferable skills teachers’ college students have.

FOR TEACHERS’ COLLEGES
The additional year of teacher education is a great opportunity to prepare students for a broader application of the skills they’re developing in teachers’ college. Students should learn general career fundamentals, like resume writing, interviewing and presenting their skills to non-school employers. Specific attention should be paid to the jobs teachers’ college alumni are obtaining outside of schools and how students can be better prepared for those roles, including providing mentorship and networking opportunities.

FOR THE ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
A comprehensive analysis should be done of teachers’ college curricula to understand the transferable skills teachers’ college students are developing. This analysis should inform the additional year of teacher training provided by teachers’ colleges and encourage teachers’ colleges to engage with other industries and sectors beyond the classroom.

FOR TEACHERS’ COLLEGE STUDENTS
Teachers’ college students should participate in the broader career services offered by their universities and engage in networking opportunities with non-school employers. With the additional year of teacher training, students will have more time to explore career options in addition to traditional school-based teaching opportunities.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Neil Price is Executive Director of LogicalOutcomes, a non-profit consultancy in Toronto. An educator and community worker with a passion for supporting youth-focused initiatives, Neil teaches within George Brown College’s Community Worker Program.

Jamil Jivani practices business law as an articling student at Torys LLP and is the founder of the Policing Literacy Initiative, a grassroots advocacy group. Jamil is actively involved in creating economic and education opportunities for communities in the Toronto area.

Michael Bosompra is Innovation Manager at Procter & Gamble. Michael has an interest in technology and how it can be used to transform businesses and societies. He specializes in bringing unique perspectives to complex problems and galvanizing groups around common goals.
