

## **Charismatic, Competent, or Transformative? Ontario School Administrators' Perceptions of "Good Teachers"**

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### **Abstract**

Emphasis on issues of social justice and attention to socio-cultural perspectives on learning might be at odds with prevailing conceptions of "the good teacher." In this paper, we probe the perceptions of "good teaching" of Ontario school administrators. We begin with an investigation into dominant discourses of "good teachers" based on the framework posited by Moore (2004). Next, we examine the context that gave rise to Ontario's New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) and how this program shapes perceptions of good teachers and good teaching. Data from interviews with forty-one school administrators about their perspectives about good teachers was analyzed in light of the dominant discourses and the governing NTIP policy and practice. The discussion highlights the highly personal nature of perceptions of good teaching and the ways in which Ontario school administrators' perceptions tend to reinforce dominant discourses. The conclusion raises questions about how new teacher induction programs reinforce dominant discourses and raises possibilities to allow for alternate discourses to coexist.

### **Understandings and Discourses of "Good Teachers"**

In his book, *What Makes a Good Teacher*, William Hare (1995) poses a number of important questions: Who has the necessary wisdom and judgment? Who can

be trusted with this immensely important task? Who, in Socrates's words, is the expert in perfecting the human and social qualities?

Teaching is a difficult job "that seems easy" (Labaree, 2000), as it is often portrayed in popular literature and casual discussion. The frustrating reality is that there is no single factor, nor consensus in the literature, about what makes a good teacher. Many decades of philosophical theory and empirical research have explored factors such as pedagogies used by teachers, the effects of teachers' backgrounds (for example, degrees, experiences, socio-economic status, etc.), and teachers' personal characteristics and behaviours (for example, empathy, communication skills, etc.).

This paper does not attempt to define good teaching. Nor does it present conclusive empirical evidence to support or refute any particular conception of good teaching. Rather, our aim is to investigate how school administrators in Ontario define and perceive good teacher in light of dominant discourses on the matter. The perceptions of school administrators in Ontario's current educational environment is particularly critical, since it is the school administrator who evaluates all teachers in her school, making critical assessments which affect teachers' personal and professional development, as well as their career progression and professional certification. As a result, school administrators hold tremendous power, and their conceptions of good teaching privilege some, and marginalize others. Those marginalized, at worst, risk losing their professional certification as teachers. Moreover, this powerful position held by principals can reproduce and reinforce existing school cultures, or transform the way teachers teach and students learn through their leadership roles and influence over their staff.

To better understand perceptions of good teaching, we situate our data and perform critical analysis within three dominant discourses as proposed by Moore (2004). Those three dominant discourses are: the charismatic subject, the competent craftsperson, and the reflective practitioner. Bear in mind that these discourses are not mutually exclusive—usually, they operate in conjunction with one another (Moore). For instance, an individual might conceptualize good teaching as a combination of certain personal characteristics (the charismatic subject) and possessing specific skills (the competent craftsperson). We also contrast these with a fourth conception of good teaching: the transformative teacher. This fourth discursive frame, while not part of Moore's framework, is one which is prominent in the literature, particularly the body of work concerned with social justice and educational leadership.

The first, the discourse of the charismatic subject, constructs a good teacher as one who possesses certain intrinsic qualities or dispositions, rather than one who has grown as a result of professional training. The popular appeal of this discourse is evidenced in media representations of teaching and popular discussion of good teachers (Moore, 2004). This discourse describes good teachers in terms of dispositions and personal characteristics—enthusiastic, entertaining, caring, and so on. Going beyond the boundaries of popular portrayals, some empirical evidence has been presented which favours this discourse. The charismatic subject also appears in theoretical and philosophical literature as well (see, for example, Nel Noddings' body of work on caring in education). Some research suggests that characteristics of "good teaching" and

“good teachers” are those personal qualities that are nearly impossible to measure—caring for students, involvement and empathy. For instance, Goldhaber, Brewer, and Anderson (1999) report that “measurable” variables (for example, years of experience, SAT scores, performance on vocabulary tests and teacher educational attainment) studied empirically account for only 3% of influence on a teacher’s effectiveness. The remaining 97% are “intangible” characteristics such as enthusiasm and ability to communicate effectively. Similar findings were also reported by Beishuizen, Hof, Van Putten, Bouwmeester, and Asscher (2001).

The second discourse conceptualizes the good teacher as a competent craftsperson. This competent craftsperson discourse is currently favoured by central governments (especially in Britain and Ontario) and many school boards in the United States, often taking shape in the form of exhaustive lists of competencies which “good teachers” are supposed to demonstrate. This popular discourse is often referred to as the “cult of competency” (Bates, 1992). Thus, in addition to its dominance, this discourse also tends to be perceived as “official” because it is so often mandated by centralized governments responsible for education (Moore, 2004). They rely on external control by a regulatory body—typically a Department of Education (Jones & Moore, 1993) to define aspects of a profession.

The concept of competency models to describe occupations arose out of the private sector, and they can take on a variety of forms ranging from those in the behaviourist tradition to more complex models of situational performance (see, for example, Norris 1991; Bridges 1996). Competency models have been largely criticized for deprofessionalizing teachers by reducing constraining expertise into discrete, measurable units. (see, for example, Jones & Moore, 1993). As such, they cannot capture the complexities of a humanistic profession, or the intangible characteristics and dispositions central to professions like teaching. In this way, the competency craftsperson discourse is also at odds with the charismatic subject discourse.

Finally, by proposing limited and discrete constructs of professional knowledge, competency models actually restrict the development of a profession by constraining activity that does not conform to stated competencies (Bates, 1992). They beg the question: whose ideas about essential skills and knowledge are privileged? What happens to professional dispositions, skills and knowledge not included in official lists?

The third dominant discourse identified by Moore (2004) is that of the reflective practitioner. This discourse, according to Moore, receives widespread support among teacher trainers and educators but is less accepted outside of the education profession. Thus, it lacks the dominant status of the “charismatic subject” and “competent craftsperson” discourses. At the heart of this discourse is the notion that a good teacher reflects on her work in the classroom, and is constantly striving to improve her practice based on that self-reflection. Moore suggests that the popularity of this discourse is evidenced by the number of publications aimed at professionals, and despite its marginalization by government publications and policies favouring the competent craftsperson discourse.

All three of these discourses have the potential to help as well as to hinder educators' practice and their understandings of teaching. Each brings something important to individual and societal conceptions of good teaching—for instance, as Moore (2004) points out, being charismatic and caring are positive traits; similarly, being competent or knowledgeably in certain areas is desirable, and certainly being reflective about one's practice fosters professional development. In particular, Moore argues that each discourse has a tendency to over-emphasize the individual teachers' responsibility for student success, while understating contextual and systemic factors.

However, acknowledging and interrogating Moore's (2004) three discourses is essential to arriving at a more inclusive conception of good teachers:

The problem with all these discourses is that when they are adopted not in concert with one another or with other, equally instructive discourses, but in a way which affords them too great a dominance: we might say, when they evolve from being merely beliefs or views about teaching to discourses through which teaching is fundamentally perceived, experienced, spoken about and understood. (p. 7)

In other words, dominance of a particular discourse privileges a certain conception of a good teacher—and unfairly advantages the individuals who imbue that discourse. At the same time, alternate discourses, for instance, those which focus on social justice and systemic transformation, are marginalized.

Absent from Moore's (2004) model is the conception of the transformative teacher. In transformative models of education, teachers and students examine their own frames of reference, and those of others, by critically reflecting on underlying assumptions and taken-for-granted beliefs (Jones 2009; Brown 2006; Nagda, Gurin & Lopez 2003). At the heart of transformative teaching is Paulo Freire's (1998) belief that education ought to empower students to recognize connections between their individual problems and experiences, the social contexts in which they are embedded, and broader ruling relations in society. The transformative teacher "unveils" reality, thus allowing students to gain liberating insight into how the oppression they experience is socially generated with the aim of breaking the "culture of silence" and become agents in creating a just society (Schelling, 1988). Because of the concern with active student involvement towards transformation, a transformative teacher is aware of social justice and fosters critical inquiry in her classroom and within the school environment (McMahon & Portelli, 2004, 70) whereby "students and educators develop knowledge, skills, values, dispositions and actions that are called for by a reconstructive conception of democracy."

### **Theoretical Stance**

A theoretical perspective grounded in critical-democratic education praxis guides our research and analysis. This perspective values divergent and dialogical inquiry, open-mindedness, critical abilities and questioning, equity and taking alternatives seriously (Portelli & Solomon, 2001). Central to this framework is an understanding of education as an irreducibly political and philosophical pursuit, such that there are no neutral pedagogies (Freire, 1998), and hence one needs to

examine the “taken for granted” (Simon, 1992) in education in order to raise questions about the social and political implications of the often unexamined, daily practices (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998). Our critical democratic stance leads us to ask the following questions: Who defines “good teaching”? Who is privileged and marginalized by official discourses of “good teaching”? Who benefits from an induction program built on dominant discourses? Who may be marginalized by the government sanctioned version of new teacher induction? How do the criteria used in the program unwittingly reproduce current inequities?

### **Context**

In 1995, the Progressive-Conservative party, under the leadership of Mike Harris, took power after defeating the predecessor New Democratic Party government in the province of Ontario. Leading up to their victory, Premier Harris and his party campaigned on a controversial, but straightforward, platform called the Common Sense Revolution which promised to solve Ontario’s economic problems with lower taxes, smaller government and pro-business policies. As a political platform, it was presented in plain language and offered concrete (and arguably over-simplified) “solutions” to the provinces woes. To fulfill the Common Sense Revolution mandate, aggressive policy initiatives were quickly enacted, including significant changes to virtually all aspects of education policy, particularly teacher induction.

Resulting education policy included Bill 31 which established the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)—a self-regulatory professional body responsible for teacher certification—in 1996. This transferred the oversight of professional matters (discipline, certification and continuing education) to the OCT. By 2000, the controversial Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test (OTQT) for new graduates of initial teacher education programs was announced with the intent of improving teacher competency. The election of a Liberal government led by Premier Dalton McGuinty in 2003 resulted in the elimination of the teacher testing program. In the fall of 2005, in an effort to standardize the evaluation of recent graduates of teacher education programs and their transition to teaching, the Ontario Liberal government announced that the province would introduce the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) purportedly designed to “improve the skills and confidence” of and reduce the level of attrition among new teachers. A press release announcing NTIP stated:

A new era of professional support will better prepare and retain new teachers in the classroom and help boost student achievement, Education Minister Gerard Kennedy said today. (Ministry of Education, 2005)

The Ministry framed the NTIP program as a response to needs articulated by stakeholders. Through its introduction, this policy plays an important role in defining good teachers and teaching. NTIP includes the following elements: orientation for all new teachers; mentoring by experienced teachers; professional development and training in: Literacy and Numeracy strategies, Student Success, Safe Schools, classroom management, parent communication; and “teaching students with special needs and addressing the varied challenges of meeting the

needs of diverse learners that require a broad repertoire of instructional strategies" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006a, p. 24). NTIP completion requires two Satisfactory Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) ratings, thus tying induction to performance appraisal and to certification within a teacher's first twenty-four months of employment. The key components of the performance appraisal framework for new teachers include: competency statements to focus the appraisal on the immediate skills, knowledge, and attitudes that new teachers require to meet the OCT Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession; appraisal meetings between the principal and new teacher; a summative report to document the appraisal process on a two-point rating scale (Satisfactory, Development Needed) and rubric to provide feedback and assess new teachers' overall performance. Finally, the TPA includes a process for addressing Development Needed outcomes.

The criteria for new teacher evaluation, established by the Ontario Ministry of Education, are organized into "Domains," with corresponding "Competencies." The language used in the elaboration of criteria—particularly the term "competencies"—are telling of how the Ministry conceptualizes "good teaching" and their discursive preference for a conception consistent with the competent craftsperson. Within the first domain, Commitment to Pupils and Pupil Learning, the competencies defined are:

- Teachers demonstrate commitment to the well-being and development of all pupils
- Teachers are dedicated in their efforts to teach and support pupil learning and achievement.
- Teachers treat all pupils equitably and with respect.
- Teachers provide an environment for learning that encourages pupils to be problem solvers, decision makers, lifelong learners, and contributing members of a changing society

The second domain, Professional Knowledge, contains only one corresponding competency: "teachers know their subject matter, the Ontario curriculum, and education related legislation." The third and final domain, Professional Practice, contains the following competencies:

- Teachers use their professional knowledge and understanding of pupils, curriculum, legislation, teaching practices, and classroom management strategies to promote the learning and achievement of their pupils.
- Teachers communicate effectively with pupils, parents, and colleagues.
- Teachers conduct ongoing assessment of their pupils' progress, evaluate their achievement, and report results to pupils and parents regularly.

New teachers are evaluated on these eight competencies. The competencies within the "Commitment to Pupils and Pupil Learning" domain could arguably be dispositions, many of which reflect the charismatic subject discourse as defined by Moore (2004). The remaining competencies within the last two domains focus on more tacit or technical knowledge and skills, very closely aligned with Moore's description of the competent craftsperson discourse. Visibly absent are any competencies which imply or overtly address issues of

democracy or social justice. This absence reveals provincial priorities, and helps us characterize the type of “good teacher” most likely to be reproduced by implementing NTIP. NTIP reflects a knowledge transmission model of induction, whereby the focus is on conformity and the transference of so-called “expert” knowledge. The transmission model of induction employs dominant discourses within a particular school district or province to shepherd new educators through the difficult transition from student to teacher (see, for example, Feiman-Nemser, 2001). While there may be an emphasis on student success, it is through relational and individual action that this is to be achieved. The system in which the teacher and students work is left largely unexamined. This model is reproductive to the extent that it reinforces existing values, behaviours and structures. Societal inequities that enter the classroom with the students, such as racism, sexism and classism, are dealt with on an individual basis for the sake of individual achievement and smooth classroom processes. The new teacher is not encouraged to question the role of outside institutions or schooling itself in such societal ills but rather, at best, to simply monitor his or her own biases (Henry & Tator, 1994).

While the role of policy is no doubt salient in defining good teachers, what is particularly critical is the implementation role of the school administrator, who is solely responsible for applying these criteria in her evaluation of new teachers under her supervision. School administrators’ formalization of NTIP competencies through regular application of the Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) is “high-stakes” for new teachers since poor evaluations can lead to revocation of a new teacher’s Certificate of Qualification. Thus, school administrators’ conceptions of good teaching along competency dimensions defined by the Ministry are privileged.

Moreover, the defined competencies have the dangerous potential to limit new teachers’ perceptions of areas for personal and professional development to those privileged items identified in the evaluation policy. Opportunities to explore divergent perspectives, competencies and skills become limited at best. The power of the conception of good teaching in the TPA competencies, coupled with the power granted to principals in applying the TPA marginalizes teachers with divergent perspectives.

### **Methods of Inquiry**

The data presented in this paper are part of a broader research project which investigated the perceptions of new teacher induction in Ontario. The research team developed a semi-structured interview protocol used to guide discussions with participants (Creswell, 1998). The protocol was validated by expert review and piloting. One hundred and twenty-three in-depth interviews were conducted with 35 new teachers, 41 teacher educators and 36 school administrators from public and publicly-funded Catholic schools across the province. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and data was analyzed inductively, using the techniques described by Bogdan and Biklen (1998). Analysis of the data included process coding. The codes reflect the common and various themes that emerged from the data. It should be noted that the qualitative data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection. The data was analyzed using what Tesch (1990) characterizes as “de-contextualization” in order to identify themes and

coding categories and "re-contextualization" to present a unified and coherent picture. This paper is limited to the responses of school administrators to questions and prompts pertaining to how they recognize "good teachers."

A total of 41 Ontario school administrators (principals and vice principals) participated in interviews. Of these, 27 were elementary school administrators, four were middle school administrators, and ten were secondary school administrators. Seventeen of the participants were male and 24 were female; 32 worked in English-speaking schools and nine in French schools. The diversity of those interviewed provides a cross-section of various contexts in the province.

### **Findings: School Administrators' Perspectives**

School administrators participating in the research were all eager to discuss the importance of strong and effective induction programs, and discussion of their perceptions of good teachers was a salient part of their points-of-view on this topic. As a group, school administrators viewed induction as a process that ought to be tied to teacher performance appraisal. Discussions about school administrators' (SAs) personal conceptions of what defines an effective teacher shed light on their characteristics and skills they prioritize as "essential knowledge" for new teachers, as well what they believe to be the priority areas to develop in induction programs. In the subsections that follow, we illustrate how SAs prioritized the charismatic subject and the competent craftsman as their preferred discursive frames to describe what they look for in teachers under their leadership in schools.

#### *The Charismatic Subject*

Overwhelmingly, the school administrators interviewed for this research tended to engage in discourse that would constitute the charismatic subject conception of good teachers with the greatest frequency and emphasis. Words often used to describe good teachers included: passionate, enthusiastic, respectful and caring. As some pointed out, these qualities are difficult to measure by a standardized test or any other formal scheme. Some representative quotations include:

The hallmarks of a good teacher again, are those sorts of unwritten things that are hard to measure. There has to be some accountability measure, but I think they [OTQT creators] keep missing the mark with these things.... Good teachers care.

What makes a good teacher is empathy for kids; ability to get your message across verbally and in writing and the ability to care, to have presence in the classroom and to control, to have kids want to be there.

Well the number one quality of a good teacher is they care. In my years as an administrator the teachers that I've had trouble with are the ones that it was just a job, and to try to deal with them around issues that are important around kids they lack that intrinsic, what I call, and since this is my perception, caring.

The three quotations above emphasize the personal qualities of empathy and caring as hallmarks of good teaching. As well, these quotations illustrate some

level of thought (or at least awareness) of criteria that define these particular administrators' perceptions of good teachers.

Some administrators discussed specifically how charismatic subjects as good teachers are born, not made. Two representative quotations illustrating this are:

Teachers either have it in their heart, in their souls or they don't have it.... It's that simple. You are a good teacher because you love it, because you love children, and you are a good communicator. That will never show up on tests!! The competencies that we look for in teachers cannot come across in standardized tests.

A good teacher either has it or they don't. You can teach someone skills but if someone is going to be a great teacher, they either have it, it's innate or they don't. You can learn the steps—one, two, three, four, five, and it's funny because people say what is it? I couldn't tell you but a great teacher needs to be able to connect with the kids.... If you are going to be a great teacher you either have it or you don't.

A problematic aspect of the “teachers are born, not made” belief is its implication that some individuals, despite education, training and life experience, will never be able to achieve the status of good teachers. To an extent, this set of beliefs undermines the project of teacher education. Moreover, the reliance of school administrators on this discursive model can lead to subjective appraisals of teachers with little or no criteria for making an evaluative judgment. If a school administrator decides that a new teacher under her supervision “doesn't have it in her heart and soul,” and is thus a “bad teacher,” how can the new teacher overcome this label?

While the charismatic subject discourse is problematic when it comes to power relationships and evaluation, as described here, recall that it rarely operates in isolation of other discourses. Indeed, most school administrators tempered their dispositional descriptions of good teachers with other criteria, especially those reflecting a competent craftsperson discourse.

### *The Competent Craftsperson*

While the charismatic subject discourse was most prominent in our interviews with school administrators, the discourse of the competent craftsperson was also very evident. This may be, in part, a result of the dominance of the competent craftsperson discourse coming from the Ministry of Education, particularly with respect to the TPA process and competencies. Within this discursive frame, three particular areas of competency were emphasized: classroom management/organization, teaching/learning to address learner differences, and curriculum/policy knowledge.

Of these three competency areas, classroom management was discussed by all school administrators interviewed. More important than the frequency with which they brought this up is the strong emphasis they placed on classroom management as the most critical skill for new and experienced teachers. This is consistent with research that ranks classroom management as a high concern among educators and the public (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Interestingly, despite the fact that classroom management was considered important by school

administrators interviewed for this study, it is noticeably absent from the Ministry of Education's TPA competency list. School administrators' continued reliance on classroom management as an important teacher competency indicator despite the limited presence of this competency on centralized evaluation instruments indicates the durability of a managerial discourse in teacher evaluation.

An analysis of SA responses illustrates tremendous diversity in how school administrators conceptualize classroom management—a diversity which is also reflected in the education literature (see, for example, the collected works in Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). The diversity of conceptions of classroom management renders the term itself, without clarification, virtually meaningless. One way to clarify the variety of conceptions of classroom management is to utilize the metaphor of a broad spectrum. The spectrum is bounded by discipline-centred and student engagement-centred conceptions of classroom management. Points across this broad spectrum were represented in the responses of school administrators interviewed.

Some conceived of classroom management purely in disciplinary terms, synonymous with a culture of control in the classroom. For instance, one who said that classroom management was a principal's "highest priority" for a new teacher identified tone, noise, and the number of pupils sent to office as indicators of good classroom management. Four quotations reflecting this position include:

My first bit of advice to new teachers, student teachers in fact is recognize that you are the alpha male when you step in there, and attend to those details.... Everybody wants to please the alpha male.

Good classroom management gee, I've always said if someone that has good classroom control can have their kids on the top end of the volume, the communication and intermixing sort of level and then how ever you bring them bring them back down to sit at their desk and listen, and again, that's the students ok, so that's the teacher who is in control.... They say okay everyone now back to your desks and the kids ...the way they go.... And again, that comes when the line is very clear as to who the adult and the authority figure in the room is and it is rooted in respect for the teachers and respect for the students and an understanding that we are here to learn, and that we don't let those few people who want to control the class; they are learning off track, take control. That's up to teachers but again that's good discipline to me, that's how I assess it.

But you don't permit those kids to stop your instructional time, and those programs exist. Sometimes I've been to so many classroom management [workshops] over time where people come in sometimes with very philosophical good ideas but it's not the brass tacks you need. We need brass tacks, this was a brass tacks approach. You can't teach anything if your class is in chaos, so that is cornerstone. And I think any new teacher who does get in trouble beyond this, it's because they lack class discipline.

Oh [classroom management is] huge. Discipline comes before instruction. You have to have an orderly environment in order to teach.... And I mean it is so true, discipline comes before instruction. And I don't mean discipline in a bad way. I mean it in the true meaning of the word, order, and a chain of command and do something so there's predictability in the room.

The majority of school administrators, however, had more tempered conceptions of classroom management. These conceptions balance less authoritarian control (rules, consequences) with some student engagement aims (challenging and engaging content or pedagogies). Representative quotations of those who might fall in the middle of the classroom management spectrum include:

I think again different teachers have different styles which work for them and which work for the students so there's not one particular method. I think respect of your students and also students respecting you as the teacher is key. You need to establish respect in your environment. You need to set boundaries.

Classroom management: are they conscious of who constantly gets picked out for misbehaviour? There may be legitimate reasons but I think it is important that we are always asking why is it always so and so or this group of students or always these sets of boys. Are they truly disruptive or is there something that needs to be changed in order to get them more on side?

Some school administrators interviewed also conceived of classroom management as situated mainly or fully in student engagement, representing the more student-centred end of the spectrum. These conceptions emphasize relevant and engaging learning activities instead of a control-and-discipline focus. Two school administrators spoke about classroom management in ways that built on this conception:

I would say classroom organization, like from its most subtle thing to the most open thing. First of all, just in terms of the sort of constructive feeling you get when you get to a classroom when you see that things are happening, kids are learning, the kids are learning, the kids are engaged, that they find things relevant. But even the more subtle things like, how do they move between one subject area and another? How is the classroom arranged? What sorts of things are up on the walls? What is the relationship between the student and the teacher? How does the teacher address difficult moments in the classroom where students are reluctant to engage in a particular exercise or there's things happening in the classroom that really weren't intended through the curriculum that's being addressed. So, I think it's pretty open, it's pretty big, it's not just "sit down in your seat, shut up and do this." But something more about how constructive is the instructional time?

To see how an individual, how a class responds to that teacher. The volume of that class, what I mean by the volume of that class—I see a

nice loud active vibrant class and the teacher sitting down or gained their attention and say hey you know what the rate at which that teacher can change them or transition them from one activity to the other whether that would be coming in and quiet them down, whether that would be all working individually and back in to groups, I look for those kinds of things in terms of management. I look at kids how they look at the teacher.

This diversity in conceptions of classroom management shed light on how a teacher with a particular classroom management style, such as a student-engagement focus, might be considered a "good teacher" by a school administrator who shares that conception, but might be labeled as "needs development" on her TPA by an administrator with a different point-of-view. If dominant discourses with managerial conceptions of good teachers prevail, then those teachers with divergent perspectives (and specifically those who practice critical-democratic education) risk marginalization.

The second area of discussion frequently within the competent craftsperson discourse focuses on individualization of teaching/learning activities. Most school administrators recognized that learners have diverse needs, and most, as a result of this realization, emphasized the importance of adaptability to learner needs as a characteristic of good teachers. At the time of the research, the concepts of "differentiated instruction" and "universal design" were extremely popular in the province, appearing in various Ministry of Education documents and frequently endorsed at professional conferences. This emphasis on "individualization," learning styles, special needs and exceptionalities tended to mask school administrators' attention to systemic inequities along other dimensions of privilege. For example:

Well, it's hard to prepare a new teacher walking in for all eventuality, but I think they have to have an understanding of what modifying a program looks like and what differentiating strategies look like.

[A good teacher is] Someone who is engaged and knowledgeable about the curriculum, that is focused in their planning but also their instructional practice, that looks to create a balance for opportunities for students to engage, but also realizes the spectrum of the students they are dealing with in their class—the developmental levels and can be divergent in the way that they appeal to their students and differentiate the instruction.

The third area of discussion with respect to the competent craftsperson was the importance of curriculum expertise in their conceptions of good teachers—though this was less frequent and less strongly emphasized than classroom management and modification to meet learners' needs. This aspect of competence focused on knowledge of the subject, as well as understanding of provincial policy, especially pertaining to assessment/evaluation. Representative quotations include:

A good teacher is somebody very knowledgeable about the curriculum, has a variety of different ways that they approach the curriculum and

present it to students, that they have a clear notion of what they're teaching students and they have a very clear and concise way of assessing whether students have learned what they intended students to learn.

They have to be knowledgeable enough about the curriculum if they can plan effectively whether it be with a colleague, but in many cases on their own they have to be independent enough to be able to put the curriculum together to put a unit plan together and to constantly interact with students in the classroom

These quotations suggest that school administrators have extremely clear and concrete ideas about the competencies they perceive to be essential to good teachers. Some, but certainly not all of these competencies align with those formalized by the government through the TPA.

### *The Reflective Practitioner*

Moore (2004) suggests that the discourse of the reflective practitioner is popular among educators. While the prevalence of this discourse was high among the teacher educators interviewed for our study, it was notably absent from school administrator transcripts.

Most school administrators articulated the importance, in their view, of good teachers being open to change—personal change and learning, and environmental/systemic change—which is somewhat aligned with the reflective practitioner discourse. However, this discourse received far less attention and emphasis than the charismatic subject and the competent craftsman alternatives. Some representative quotations include:

The change in education, even though sometimes it's difficult, it's also important because the world around us is changing all the time too.... So it only make sense that what we do in school should change.

Perhaps most importantly, I think they're all important, is that it's somebody who's engaged in improving their own practice and does that through collaboration with his or her colleagues.

Our research did not reveal why this discourse failed to achieve dominance among school administrators interviewed. At this time, we can only speculate on some possible reasons for this finding. One possibility is that the recent intensification of school administrators' work—something articulated, without prompting, by all school administrators in our research—privileges managerial efficiency over reflective practice. A second possible factor contributing to the low incidence of a reflective practitioner discourse among SAs interviewed is the absence of this discourse from the Ministry of Education's "official" list of competency indicators. While classroom management was also absent from the Ministry's TPA, the historical prominence of this competency in educational administration folk knowledge increases the likelihood that it will continue to inform SAs' evaluations of new teachers in implicit ways.

### **Alternative Discourses: Critical Democratic Perspectives and Transformative Teaching**

Critical scholars view schooling as one piece of a larger struggle for democracy and social justice. Viewed from their perspectives, and that of the authors of this paper, attention to equity within the classroom, while laudable, is only part of the work that needs to be done. Discourses of "transformative teachers" should go beyond this to challenge the structure of schools and society itself. To that end, we sought out school administrators' perceptions on equity, diversity and social justice. We prompted all participants to discuss the role of equity and diversity and/or social justice as they relate to teacher testing, mentoring and induction.

Our interviews revealed superficial, and at times contradictory, understandings of equity and diversity. Among school administrators who participated in the research, equity definitions tended to focus on learning styles or special needs, instead of issues of race, class, gender, etc. In fact, when asked about equity and diversity, school administrators often ended up speaking about classroom management strategies. For example, when one participant was asked how to assess whether a teacher deals effectively with equity, diversity and inclusiveness in the classroom, the participant went immediately to questions of assessment:

I look for the type of assessment tools...Am I only paper-and-pen? Do you put a variety of oral in there by having the kids produce various forms of work, presentations? What are you using to evaluate learning? That's from the equity standpoint, that's what I take a look at...

Another, in response to this question, began talking about differentiation:

Does the teacher have a differentiated lesson? Is there something that the students with special needs can do or are provided with that's different from a student who is able to grasp materials right away? So, are the materials or the resources different, or are there supplementary resources? Does the teacher group students when they do groups or in what way does the teacher group students? Is the teacher pairing students that may have a learning disability with someone who is able to do the work.

Others had difficulty with or were unable to articulate criteria for equity and social justice. One framed it within the charismatic subject discourse:

You know what you want to get in to equity and competency and social justice, that is such a...how do I describe it? I mean you and I know who believes in those qualities or those basic premises of existence, and we also know those that don't. How do I look for it? I talk to them. How do I know if they are a competent teacher? I talk to them, I'm around I listen. I could never in a gazillion years come up with a checklist for a lot of these things that people have perfected because they say it's the way it was. I say, "no, it's not." You know what, a good person, there is no check list for it. A good person lives it out and none of us are perfect people, we all make mistakes, we all have good days, we have highs and we have lows.

Beyond these amorphous, individualized, and somewhat superficial conceptions of equity and diversity, few school administrators prioritized social justice, equity and diversity as part of their essential knowledge for new teachers, favouring instead classroom management themes. What an emerging democratic society needs is teachers who engage in liberatory pedagogies; those who provide a social environment that prepares the next generation of democratic citizenry.

Within the critical-democratic ideal, good teachers need to be able not only to counteract aspects of the overt and hidden curriculum but also to mobilize their students so that they feel empowered to act (Freire 1998). This conception of a “good teacher”—the “transformative teacher” discourse—stands in opposition to the current dominant discourses emerging from society, school administrators, and the Ministry of Education.

### **Conclusion: Charisma and Competence at Odds with Transformation?**

Evidence is clear that inequities in schools persist, contravening the possibility of a socially just education system (ref?). Transformative teaching is essential to addressing these injustices, yet it remains marginalized when we look at predominant discourses about teaching, ranging from School Administrators’ preferences, to government-mandated policy on new teacher induction. As we described, school administrators tended to favour charismatic subject and competent craftsperson discourses in their descriptions of good teachers. To a slightly lesser extent, they were also able to identify clear priorities reflecting the competent craftsperson discourse—classroom management, curriculum/policy knowledge, and individualization of teaching/learning. The predominance of these two discourses among school administrators interviewed for our research brings to light the problematic aspect of “privileged” conceptions of good teachers. If those practitioners who evaluate new teachers (that is, school administrators) adhere to dominant discourses in their assessments, what happens to the new teacher who doesn’t conform to that model, such as a teacher who practices social justice education?

Because the new teacher induction and TPA processes mandated by the Ministry of Education rely solely on the evaluation of new teachers as competent craftspeople, and secondarily, “charismatic subjects,” they are inadequate to address the needs of the critical-democratic ideal. In contrast to Ontario’s transmission model of induction described earlier in this article, transformative models are called for to address inequity and marginalization of divergent perspectives and promotion of social justice aims. A transformative model of teacher induction and teacher evaluation must go beyond helping new teachers avoid being part of the problem of social inequity, while helping them become liberatory educators themselves, questioning the system that employs them. As a result, designing a program or performance appraisal criteria to address the characteristics of good teaching becomes problematized—whose conceptions of characteristics should prevail? How can we critically assess dominant discourses of good teachers within the induction process? How can divergent perspectives of evaluators or teachers be addressed? How can competencies and habits of mind that fall outside of traditional administrative folk knowledge make their way into new teacher induction? Such questions have the potential to lead to

more complex conceptions of new teacher induction because they balance individual concerns with larger societal issues (Jones, 2006).

Our analysis raises two critical implications. First, given school administrators' relatively narrow conceptions of "good teachers" evidenced by their interpretations of charismatic subjects and competent craftspeople, we encourage greater professional debate and reflection about critical democracy among those in privileged positions of leadership.

Second, implications for policy-makers focus on the need for induction programs such as NTIP to be carefully considered. The apparent disconnect between school administrators' conceptions of good teachers and the criteria by which new teachers are evaluated suggests that the TPA process may be missing some important competencies valued by experienced educators. A second disconnect—that between policy makers' commitment educational improvement and the stagnation inherent in a transmission model of induction—will surely work against any significant change to the system. Without addressing the ideals of critical inquiry and social justice, the needs of marginalized students—the very targets of many student success initiatives—will surely not be met. Space for the "transformative teacher" discourse to flourish among the dominant discourses is critical for this type of change to occur.

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