

# Chapter 11

## The Future of Teacher Selection



**Abstract** Throughout this book we have argued that implementing research-based teacher selection methods is a ‘quick win’ to improve education systems, but that selection methods for teacher education and employment have not kept pace with those used in other disciplines. In this final chapter, we share a few concluding thoughts about our prediction of the future direction of teacher selection research and practice. We suggest six themes that will characterize teacher selection work: (a) developing attribute-based approaches to teacher selection, (b) addressing the diversity-validity dilemma, (c) building modular approaches to selection, (d) testing longitudinal validity of selection methods, (e) designing new methods based on technological advances, and (f) improving the recruitment and selection of school leaders.

Throughout this book we have argued that implementing research-based teacher selection methods is a ‘quick win’ to improve education systems, but that selection methods for teacher education and employment have not kept pace with those used in other disciplines. We began with a look at calls for the reform of teacher selection methods from the 1920s, with education ‘influencers’ such as John Dewey wondering whether ‘the sciences’ could help solve the problem of differential teacher quality. Now, a century after multiple calls for building the teacher workforce through better selection, we have shown in this book that (a) effective teacher selection is a crucial building block for strong education systems, and (b) teacher selection can be improved through implementing proven methods that have a sound theoretical foundation, a robust research base, and that have a track record of successful application. In this final chapter, we share a few concluding thoughts about our prediction of the future direction of teacher selection research and practice.

**Changing the status quo.** Although it seems clear that developing and implementing better selection methods is an effective and efficient way to improve educational outcomes, we occasionally see a certain resistance to changing selection programs, with a reluctance to engage with research on the effectiveness of current and potential selection approaches. While it is easier to maintain the status quo with selection practices, making changes to recruitment and selection structures can pay off with better candidates in teacher education programs, a higher quality teacher

workforce, and the enhanced reputation of the profession as a whole. Structural changes to selection programs occur in three phases—initiation, implementation, and institutionalization—and it is entirely predictable that resistance to proposed changes will occur during the initiation and implementation phases. Murphy (2016) proposed that during the initiation phase, managing resistance to change involves presenting a clear message about the urgent reasons and rationale for proposed changes so that a ‘sense of purpose’ is fostered among those implementing the changes. During the implementation phase, a detailed support plan can help address the needs of those charged with implementing new systems, with two-way communication essential to help manage the inevitable challenges. Implementing changes in large organizations is always challenging, but the reasons for improvements to teacher selection are persuasive. Improvements to teacher selection not only have the potential to strengthen the teacher workforce but can also build economic and social health at the country level with relatively modest investment (Hanushek, 2014).

**The future of teacher selection.** In this book we have discussed a number of research-based approaches to improving teacher selection practices, but we expect that further research will bring increased opportunities to develop the ways we identify the best possible teachers. We suggest that these six themes will characterize selection work in the next decade.

1. *Developing attribute-based approaches to teacher selection.* We have seen a significant shift towards attribute-based (or *values-based*) approaches to selection in professional fields outside of education (e.g., in the NHS and College of Policing in the UK). We suggest that educational organizations will follow. The key attributes, once identified and endorsed, can form the bedrock of recruitment, selection, and development strategies. Building a selection framework (Chap. 9) encourages thoughtful consideration of key attributes and the methods used to assess them. Of particular interest will be cross-cultural work that explores the universality and the cultural specificity of the key attributes deemed essential for successful teaching practice. For education organizations and systems, an integrated recruitment → selection → development framework benefits greatly from an attribute-based approach (see Chap. 10).
2. *Addressing the diversity-validity dilemma.* Some countries experience a lack of diversity (in gender, ethnic, social class, sexuality) in the teaching workforce (Hodge & Marsh, 2015) and some selection methods show ‘adverse impact’ or bias towards certain groups (see Chap. 4). Little attention has been paid to reducing group differences in teacher selection, but most selection methods (interviews, cognitive measures, SJTs, MMIs) show some form of group differences. Acknowledging (and measuring) these differences can help make selection fairer with more representative pools of successful applicants. For example, video SJTs may reduce gender differences compared to text SJTs, but may not have an effect on ethnic group differences (Bardach et al., 2021). Developing the best possible selection methods includes a focus not just on ‘raw’ predictive validity, but on the nuances of group differences in performance using particular selection tools.

3. *Building modular approaches to selection.* A program of selection will benefit from breaking down the selection process into the basic underlying components, as suggested by Lievens and Sackett (2017), and as discussed in Chap. 9. Attention to the building blocks of selection (e.g., stimulus format, contextualization, response formats, variety of information sources) allows for better decision-making when considering changes to a selection program. Of key importance is developing a *selection framework* that incorporates multiple predictor variables and multiple outcome variables for validation.
4. *Testing longitudinal validity of selection methods.* In some fields, especially medical education, testing the validity of selection methods is routine. In teacher education, testing the validity of selection methods is rare, and data collected at the point of selection is rarely examined in terms of important future outcomes (Klassen & Kim, 2019). In order to maximize the effectiveness of selection methods, further research is needed to measure important teacher outcomes (e.g., attrition rates, teaching observation ratings, student value-added achievement) from the point of selection through training and well into professional practice.
5. *Designing new methods based on technological advances.* The restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in ITE programs implementing remote selection processes in many settings. Technological advances in selection will likely go far beyond online delivery. One likely area of advance is *gamified assessments* (serious games) that incorporate gaming elements in non-game contexts (e.g., Woods et al., 2020). For example, SJTs can be ‘gamified’ by placing candidates in a virtual school classroom using virtual reality technologies, and ‘branched’ SJTs can provide a more interactive and tailored selection process (e.g., Reddock et al., 2020). One such immersive virtual teaching environment is SimLab, developed in the US (<https://kognito.com>) and recently piloted for teacher education at Murdoch University in Australia (Ledger & Fischetti, 2020), with results showing increased self-efficacy of preservice teachers. Recent advances in virtual reality and simulated teaching environments will spur on new ways to select prospective teachers (e.g., Ke & Xu, 2020).
6. *Improving the recruitment and selection of educational leaders.* There is a shortage of high-quality school leaders world-wide and current selection processes can be arbitrary and opaque (Yang et al., 2021). Lessons learned from teacher recruitment and selection (e.g., building from a foundation of key attributes, using evidence-informed methods, measuring the validity of methods) can improve the approaches used to attract and select prospective school leaders. Further research focused on building and testing new methods to identify the best possible educational leaders has the potential to improve educational systems worldwide.

**Final words.** Selecting the next generation of teachers presents a genuine opportunity to improve education systems and positively influence social and educational outcomes for children and young people. The overarching goal of a well-functioning teacher selection program is to use the best possible methods to recruit and select

outstanding prospective teachers. In this book we have argued that selecting future teachers is an important challenge that has been too-long neglected, and that modest efforts focused on improving selection methods will pay off with a stronger teacher workforce, a higher quality education system, and a more productive and prosperous society.

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