

Chapter 15

Hiring Practices for Teachers From Underrepresented Backgrounds

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ABSTRACT

*When considering the many cases brought before the Supreme Court of the United States, one that had the greatest impact on the field of education when it came to diversity, equity, and inclusion was *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*. The outcome of *Brown (1954)* did bring changes in the operations of public schools with the concept of “separate but equal” no longer being the standard. The ruling, which was not always received with open arms, brought student diversity into schools across the country. This chapter will present the concept of hiring practices for teachers from underrepresented backgrounds by looking at several areas such as hiring for diversity, recruitment, interviews, and retention. Each of these areas must be considered if the current hiring practices for underrepresented populations are to be impacted. Scholars studying staffing in education consider human capital management to be strategic when it involves recruiting, developing, and retaining effective teachers who make a positive contribution to student learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) is one of the cases that has had the greatest impact on Education. In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, it was ruled unanimously that racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional. Prior to this landmark ruling, schools were segregated based on race. *Brown (1954)* was one of the cornerstones of the civil rights movement and helped establish the precedent that “separate-but-equal” education and other services were not, in fact, equal at all. The ruling, which was not always received with open arms, brought student diversity into schools across the country. Some arguments brought forward by advocates for integration were grounded in the principles of social justice, morality, and democracy. In addition, it was believed that the outcome would be positively associ-

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ated with increases in the black teacher workforce (Oakley et al., 2009). However, some black teachers felt that integration would discourage racial pride, that black students would not express themselves naturally, and that black students would not want to be where they were merely tolerated (Oakley et al., 2009; Rosenthal, 1957). Other teachers felt that integration would end the culture of leadership of black teachers, and there would be a loss of incentive for black students to want to become teachers (Rosenthal, 1957). Finally, an unintended consequence of the Brown decision was that it impacted the teachers who taught in the black schools because of the mandated desegregation it provided no protections for the 82,000 black teachers in the U.S. segregated schools (Rosenthal, 1957) who were deemed unqualified to teach white children. Despite the mixed reactions from across the racial spectrum, this case changed the face of the American education system.

Schools may overlook the fact that scores from subgroups are broken out and reviewed year over year. Having teachers on staff that represent the student subgroups (Teachers of Color and People with Disabilities) may help students identify with a teacher and therefore improve test scores. With government mandated consequences for schools that fail to educate disadvantaged students and the rapidly increasing levels of diversity and disenfranchisement among nonwhite students, it is imperative that schools identify strategies to meet the ever-increasing academic needs of their nonwhite students (Barney, 2007).

While society generally has become more diverse, the teaching profession has remained relatively homogenous, a feature made more noticeable over time and increasingly subject to criticism (Ryan et al., 2009). Diversity in society has changed since Brown (1954) but the faculties within public schools across the country have not kept pace. One of the many criticisms of a homogenous faculty stems from the belief that students of difference are disadvantaged in school when the teacher workforce is unrepresentative of their differences (Jack, 2016).

Another consideration with a homogenous teacher workforce is that students need to be exposed to a variety of instructional approaches and a variety of teachers from various backgrounds that may be different than their own (Boser, 2014). There is a growing body of research indicating that teacher diversity can make a difference in student performance and their interest in school (Clotfelter et al., 2006; Egalite et al., 2015). For example, Egalite et al. (2015) utilized a large data set from the Florida Department of Education to obtain achievement variations as students were assigned to teachers of different races. Results showed significant positive effects in reading when black and white students were assigned to teachers consistent with their race. These findings, coupled with federal mandates from the US Department of Education, have ramped up calls for increasing teacher diversity in American classrooms to improve student outcomes and erase the achievement deficit between students from minority backgrounds and their white counterparts (Bartanen & Grissom, 2021). On the other hand, there may be benefits for white students who are immersed in a classroom with a racially diverse teacher, including more prosocial attitudes and better preparation of white students for employment in diverse work settings (Wells et al., 2016). Students' exposure to diverse teachers and students, and the novel ideas and challenges that such exposure brings, leads to improved cognitive skills, including critical thinking and problem solving (Wells et al., 2016). Therefore, it is crucial to explore ways to diversify the teacher workforce. Unfortunately, there is limited research in this particular area. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the concept of hiring practices and retention for teachers from underrepresented backgrounds by looking at several areas such as hiring for diversity, recruitment, interviews, and retention. Each of these areas must be considered if the current hiring practices for underrepresented populations are to be impacted. Hiring teachers from the underrepresented is the first step towards diversifying the teacher workforce but retention of these new hires cannot be overlooked. Scholars studying staffing in education

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