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**Principals' Reported Practices in their Hiring Process of Teachers:
An Exploratory Study in Lebanese Private Schools**

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Social & Behavioral Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Education – Emphasis Administration at Haigazian University

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Dedication

*To my parents,
Salma & Youssef Jabbour*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	viii
INTRODUCTION	
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Questions	6
Methodology.....	6
Participants.....	7
Material.....	7
Procedure.....	8
Significance of the Study.....	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
Delimitations.....	9
CHAPTER 2	10
Review of Literature	10
The Importance of Quality Teachers	10
Teacher's Character & Credentials	12
The Role of Religion.....	15
Compatibility with Principal's Leadership Style	16
The Role of Job Recommendations	17
Nepotism.....	18
Summary	19

CHAPTER 3.....	21
Results	21
Principals Related Biographical Information	21
Factors Influencing the Hiring Process	23
Background & Credentials of Teacher.....	23
Credentials & Personal Traits.....	25
Teacher’s Religious Background	26
Teacher’s Affiliation with the Principal’s Leadership Style	30
The Role of Job Recommendations	31
Nepotism	32
CHAPTER 4	35
Discussion & Conclusion	35
Teacher’s Background: Credentials and Personality Traits	36
Professional or Personal Attributes	36
Hiring Teachers with Graduate or Undergraduate Degrees?	37
Principal’s Background and Perceptions of Candidate’s Qualifications	37
Religious Beliefs	39
Affiliation with the Principal	41
Recommendations from Trusted Sources	42
Hiring the Relatives	42
Summary & Conclusion	44
Further Recommendations	45
REFERENCES	
APPENDIX A	
APPENDIX B	

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the hiring decision of principals in a sample of Lebanese private schools. The study aimed at exploring what school principals look for in a teacher candidate and what factors influence their hiring decision. The factors included the teacher's credentials and character, religion, affiliation with the principal's leadership style, job recommendations, and nepotism. A total of 27 principals from various private schools in Lebanon participated in this study. The study relied on 27 close-ended questions and 10 open-ended questions collected upon studying ample surveys from existing similar research studies. Data were collected and analyzed. The results showed that the teacher's character and personality mattered most; recommendations from trusted sources were relied upon; religious beliefs were also valued.

Principals' Reported Practices in their Hiring Process of Teachers

The act of hiring teachers in private schools is one of the most important administrative tasks school principals or other administrative staff engages in. The hiring decisions principals make have great impact on the student and the school itself. Among all other tasks, hiring qualified staff increases students' academic growth and causes change in the school culture and dynamics (Mason & Schroeder, 2010). However, a wrong hiring decision can lead to a disturbed school culture which itself creates chaos in the institution (Mason & Schroeder, 2010). This reveals the importance of hiring qualified educators to be the right fit in an era of school accountability and reform.

Much of school reform today focuses on providing better educational services, curricular and instructional changes, but inadequate attention is given to the persons making this reform happen. The major effort is put on making policies and providing competitive services, which is a crucial step to move the school from "good to great"; however, an equal effort, if not a greater, ought to be given to who will do this job. "Getting the right people on the bus" (Collins, 2001, p.13) is what matters in schools.

Therefore, hiring qualified teachers, whose job is to guide and facilitate the students' educational process, is a paramount responsibility laid upon principals and administrators such as heads of school divisions and other subject coordinators. It is the teacher's empathy, knowledge, and creativity that shape not only the students' academics but also their characters, eventually helping in maintaining the school's culture. For this reason, selecting the right person for the job is the starting point in the mission of hiring exceptional teachers who exhibit the desired skills, traits and values for the vacancy.

The major concern is what criteria determine that the right person is selected for the right place. To ensure that schools have a cadre of highly qualified teachers, the selection and

hiring process should be examined. It is essential to consider skills, traits, knowledge and experience when selecting from a pool of candidates, as well as the factors interfering in the hiring decision of the principal and/or the management team (Twombly, 2005).

This exploratory study examined what important qualities the Lebanese private school principals and/or administrators look for when selecting teachers and how they make the hiring decisions. The author also studied the factors that influence the hiring of teachers in private schools in Lebanon.

Statement of Problem

When hiring teachers in schools, the qualifications, skills, personality traits of the potential hire – the teacher including his/her personal and professional attributes – are identified by the principal (Mason & Schroeder, 2010). The candidate's background - potentials, qualifications and character - affect the hiring decision. The background alone does not secure the job, however. The selection and hiring process is impacted by other factors, some of which are significant to the current study. Of these variable factors, there are the religious beliefs and sectarian preferences of Lebanese principals, and/or their institutions, affiliation with the principal's leadership style and school values, job recommendations from trusted sources and nepotism, all of which are discussed in the following chapters.

What matters most to the school principal is making the right decision in hiring the right person for the job. In general, the credentials and academic qualifications of the candidate are what qualify the person for the job. But that is not always the norm; school principals look beyond that. Personal qualities, professional skills and morals are other criteria principals assess (Coleman, 1985; Galbo et al., 1986). In other words, whether the teacher is academically qualified remains the first major criterion; however, principals also

look at other aspects like exhibiting team spirit, communication skills, positive attitude and intrinsic motivation. According to Kersten (2008), the teacher's traits, attitude, credentials and skills - the professional and personal attributes - are criteria to be assessed to reach a hiring decision.

Nevertheless, the teacher's character and skills are not the only considerations in the hiring decision of some Lebanese principals. The influence of religious beliefs is not to be neglected in a society like the Lebanese. Taking a glance at the history of the country, one can associate the religious influence on the hiring decision with the presence of various denominations in the society and establishment of numerous private schools. Considering Lebanon's small population, having more than two hundred private schools raises many questions to those concerned. In a small country like Lebanon, the existence of this number of private schools is only justified when the religious structure of the society itself is looked upon. According to Bashshur (1992), having a fragmented and divided Lebanese society affected the educational system even before the conquering of Western Asia by the Ottomans in 1517. Years later, during the French Mandate, the religious communities in Lebanon were given the official right to establish and maintain their own schools as long as they conformed to the basic guidelines of public instruction (Article 10 of the Lebanese Constitution of 1926).

Religion, denominations in particular, plays an important role in nearly every affair in Lebanon including education. With the passage of article 10 of the Lebanese constitution, the stage was set for the various religious communities to establish their own private schools which mirror their own beliefs, values and policies. Then, after Lebanese Independence in 1943, a shift took place- from religious to cultural pluralism where unity and consolidation in education became somehow unattainable (Bashshur, 1992).

The presence of a number of private sectarian schools in Lebanon is explainable when the fragmented Lebanese society is thoroughly considered. It is due to the diversity of religion and the fragmentation of society into different groups that some private schools have been established, each adhering to their religious creeds. One could consider this situation as possibly alarming since favoring certain religious values over others could eventually affect the hiring decisions and other administrative affairs in the Lebanese schools. According to Bon (2009), not only is the hiring decision highly affected by the institution's creed, but the candidates applying for an educational job are also influenced by the school's religious beliefs when selecting their workplace. The respect for religious beliefs springs from the freedom of religion, and with the increase of religious diversity, tolerance for religious freedom is acquired, especially in the U.S.A. However, this study does not focus on religious freedom, which is considered a democratic practice in many societies, but aims instead to examine whether religious discrimination at the expense of choosing the most qualified candidate, is evident in the hiring practices of the Lebanese principals surveyed. This is one of the factors that could be affecting the hiring process of teachers that the author attempted to investigate.

Another factor that could also influence the hiring decision, hence, cause unfairness and obvious bias is the hiring of a teacher that complies with the school's values and ethos, and that affiliates with the principal's leadership style. Little and Miller note that (2007) "educators select those applicants whom they perceive as being most likely to match preexisting value system of the district rather than those with the strongest objective qualifications" (p. 119). Such a practice, i.e., hiring candidates according to personal preferences and compatibility with the institution, is considered dysfunctional (Anderson & Shackleton, 1990).

Recommendations and referrals might also be a key factor considered in recruiting teachers. It is needless to say that the job market demands and values recommendations from professionals. Little (2004) states that school principals do consider the employer's feedback on the former candidate's job performance; however, most of the time the feedback is limited to basic information like the job title, job description or salary range. This study explored whether the surveyed principals consider the recommendations they obtain from trusted sources and/ or subscribe to referrals coming from superiors.

Besides the above factors, another factor which is likely to influence the hiring selection and decision is nepotism. It is not unusual to find a school employer's relative, sister, brother, son or daughter in the same workplace in Lebanon. Furthermore, it is not uncommon to have a teacher hired directly by the principal just because he or she is an old acquaintance or is closely favored for his or her loyalty to the principal. It might not be absolute nepotism; however, a modest consideration and preference can go a long way. The question raised here is whether the institutions discussed in this study, provide equal opportunities and hire objectively.

Some of the above factors could be dysfunctional and detrimental if they are applied by the hiring school bodies. In this case, fair and objective hiring process in certain Lebanese educational institutions is needed to ensure that any qualified teacher with the fit traits is likely to get hired.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine what influences the hiring decisions of school principals in some of Lebanon's private schools and what in particular principals look for in a potential hire. There is little research done on the factors that influence the hiring decision in Lebanese private schools. Research on how Lebanese principals recruit, select and hire

teachers is still very minimal. What influences their decisions might not always be disclosed. In addition, knowing the diversity of religion and culture in the country, it is interesting to know whether the administrative decisions are affected by the nature of the society's composition. It is also important for teachers to know what the educational market demands to get themselves hired in an era of economic challenge.

Research Questions

This study examined four major research questions regarding the principals' reported practices in their hiring process of teachers in private schools in Lebanon.

1. What are the factors that influence the hiring of teachers in private schools in Lebanon?
2. What do principals look for in the potential hire?
3. How fair or biased can the hiring decision be?
4. What policy do principals follow when they hire teachers?

Methodology

This exploratory study examines the different factors that influence the principal's hiring decision in private schools in Lebanon. The researcher chose to carry on an exploratory study since the interest lies in the principals' perceptions of the best hire which are based on values and personal attributes in addition to credentials, qualifications and recommendations. The study also examined the factors that might have interfered in their decision. The exploratory research methodology is based on researchable questions. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Participants

This study surveyed the principals of the private schools and not any other administrative personnel because typically, in most Lebanese schools, it is the principal who leads the teacher hiring process. Also, it is beyond the scope of this study to interview and survey other administrative leaders such as board of trustees or other committees, if they exist. A total of 27 principals from 27 different private schools in Lebanon answered the questionnaire. All the participants except two were males. No age question was addressed but the years of experience as principals were required. The majority of the participants had at least 10 years of experience. The majority held degrees in the field of education and/ or teaching. More than half of the participants held a degree in school administration. Very few of them (7 principals) were owners of their institutions.

Materials

To find answers for the researchable questions, the researcher designed a questionnaire of 37 closed- ended questions (see Appendix A) and 10 open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The researcher studied different surveys used in similar studies (Kersten, 2008; Hynes, et.al, 2012) then consolidated the various questions in the researched surveys and studies made, and finally designed this current study's survey. The questionnaire was constructed to identify the factors that influence the hiring decision, principals' perceptions of a good hire, the school's hiring process. The 37 closed –ended questions were categorized as follows:

The first set of questions gave general background information of the school and the principal's educational background and years of experience which might be significant to the analysis. The second set of questions targeted the perception of the best hire with

respect to candidates' qualifications and skills. The third set of questions addressed the different criteria that could influence the hiring decision, including: the religious beliefs and sectarian preferences, affiliation with the principal's leadership style and school values, and nepotism.

The 10 open-ended questions were more descriptive of the participants' views since the participants explained in their own language the procedure they followed as they selected and hired; they also specified the exact traits they looked for in their hires. They were also asked directly about the procedure they followed to hire teachers. Whether they hired relatives or not was also asked in the open-ended section of the survey.

Procedure

The researcher visited schools and handed in the questionnaire by hand to the secretaries during school days. The researcher also delivered the questionnaire through connections and friends. The participants were given a two -week time to fill out the questionnaire. Some participants (2) were emailed the questionnaire.

Significance of the Study

This study is conducted to examine how school principals select and hire teachers and what influences their hiring decisions, whether the decision is biased or not. It also examines what principals look for in the potential hires. A fair, unbiased decision secures equal opportunities for qualified teachers and may provide vacancies for candidates who may be left out for reasons unrelated to their qualifications. In fact, the highly qualified candidates are not always the ones given the job (Jensen, 1986). Moreover, the demand for highly qualified teachers is crucial for the development of education. For this reason,

it is significant to have a closer look at the reality behind the hiring process and the factors that contribute to the decision.

In addition, the results and the analysis of this study will give the participants an insightful look at their hiring practices. It will also help teacher candidates to be more aware of what to expect in the hiring process.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

Nepotism: Favoritism shown to nephews and other relatives, by giving them positions because of their relationship rather than their competencies (Meriam-Webster, 2000).

Affiliation with the principal's leadership style: The paper refers to the affiliation with the principal's leadership as strong agreement or coalition with the principal's decisions and leadership style.

Delimitations

The study focused on a single data source, that of the schools' principals. It was difficult to have all principals take the survey. Most of the principals who did not participate in the study were principals of schools which are religiously orthodox. Had those principals participated, the analysis of the religious factor would have been clearer.

Fifty surveys were distributed, three of them were emailed; however, one emailed survey was not answered and 27 surveys were filled and returned. Therefore, readers may not generalize the findings to all private schools in Lebanon.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

In an era of educational reform, school effectiveness and student achievement are constantly empowered and evaluated. A key element to both standards is the teacher. Having qualified teachers in the faculty moves the school forward and makes school effectiveness possible. For this reason, the hiring decision in a school is one of the most important decisions a principal, with or without an administrative or academic team, needs to take on yearly basis or so. Hiring the qualified teacher, per se, is what makes the process a critical one (Peterson, 2002; Rottman, 2004). To that end, the principal's perceptions of a potential hire, the school's hiring policy, and any other influential factors affecting the hiring decision need to be examined. Whether the hiring decision is fair or biased remains a significant insight for both the decision maker and the candidate teacher.

The literature review will address two major areas of research related to hiring teachers in private schools. The first section will address research related to the importance of hiring qualified teachers. The second section will focus on research related to five factors that might influence the hiring decision in schools.

Hiring Qualified Teachers

A fair amount of research work has been conducted in the past two decades on the correlation between teacher effectiveness and competence and the achievement of the students. Regardless of the reasons behind hiring ineffective teachers, studies show that students who excel year after year are those who continuously had competent teachers. A 1998 study by the Education Trust revealed a similar conclusion as explained by the following quote:

“Students who have several effective teachers in a row make dramatic gains in achievement, while those who have even two ineffective teachers in a row lose significant ground, which they may never recover. Indeed, students who achieve at similar levels in the third grade may be separated by as many as 50 percentile points three years later, depending on the quality of the teachers to whom they were assigned!”

Several reasons may contribute to the hiring of ineffective teachers. Examples of such reasons could be attributed to shortage of qualified and effective teachers (Darling-Hammond 1997), financial constraints (Smith & Holdaway 1995) weak screening process (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Even effective teachers may become ineffective or incompetent over time due to complacency. However, the end result remains the failure or underachievement of the student. Therefore, the principal has the ultimate and great mission of hiring quality teachers, and ensuring that his/her teachers are trained and performing at a level that guarantees the success of most (or a good number) of the students (Guyton & Farokhi, 1987; Sanders & Rivers, 1998).

Determining whether a teacher is “good” could be a challenging task. One obstacle to such a challenge is the ability to clearly and fairly define what “an effective teacher” means. For example, effective teachers could be described those having strong academic credentials, established credibility especially among students, many years of experience, creative, and well-liked by the students, parents, and their colleagues (Byrne, 1983). While all these attributes are great qualities to have, some principals may limit such a definition to teachers who get their students to learn what they are expected to learn during an academic year. Therefore, it may be essential for principals trying to hire new teachers to seek after methods or tools that help them identify teachers who are most likely to succeed.

A study conducted in the United States in 2000 by Stanford University, used data from a 50-state survey of policies, state case study analyses, the 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS), and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The study's objective was to examine ways that may shed light on the correlation between teacher qualifications and student achievement across the various states. The findings of both the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the study revealed that policy investments in the quality of teachers may be greatly related to improvements in student performance. One of the findings showed that the level of teacher preparation and continuous certification are by far the strongest indication of student achievements especially in reading and mathematics.

Considering the pressure the principal has to improve student achievement and the growing evidence that correlates effective teaching with student learning, it is important to look deeper into how principals hire teachers, and what influences their choices. The second section of this chapter will now consider selected factors that might influence the principal's decision and provide related literature.

Teacher's Credentials & Traits

According to Simplicio (2007), the hiring decision might not always settle on the meritocracy of the applicant. The best teacher is not always the person who gets the position. However, the process is sometimes influenced by a balance of many factors which lead to hiring one and excluding the other. To begin with, the teacher's credentials and traits might indicate a preference to a hire. Yet, first, it is important to define what the researcher means by credentials and traits. Based on the literature reviewed for this study, the term 'credentials' is used in this study to refer to the candidate's degree, work experience, knowledge, skills (could include pedagogical skills) and achievements. 'Personal traits' or

‘character traits’ would include teacher’s positivity, team spirit, love for children, enthusiasm, morals.

According to Mason and Schroeder (2010), principals articulate the following criteria in evaluating teacher’s meritocracy: personal traits, academic background, adequate professional knowledge, skills and ethical character. In fact, the literature identifies favoring professional attributes, like credentials and subject knowledge, over personal attributes, like tolerance, enthusiasm and work ethics. This preference can be relevant to the fact that professional attributes are likely to be measured and evaluated more objectively than the personal attributes. Moreover, the candidate’s experience and accomplishments are emphasized in the interview. This is because administrators and assisting committees focus on these aspects more than the candidate’s personal attitude (Peterson, 2002).

However, Kersten (2008) found that the hiring process embraced both the professional and personal attributes of the candidate. In an exploratory mixed methods analysis using interviews, Harris et.al, (2010) studied what teacher characteristics principals preferred in midsized schools in Florida district. Respondents in their study considered the teacher’s subject knowledge third among twelve teacher characteristics. In comparison, teacher’s intelligence seemed less important since principals considered that applicants should at least meet minimum level of intelligence since they were certified. In the same study, the surveyed principals preferred less experienced candidates because of tenure rules. Remarkably, this study showed that principals preferred teachers who had a mix of personal and professional qualities, which also agrees with Kersten’s findings (2008).

Another mixed-methods study led by Hynes et al. (2011) was conducted throughout Texas. A total of 117 principals and superintendents of elementary schools, middle schools and secondary schools responded to what characteristics and qualities they use to determine who to hire as teachers in their schools. The schools were located in the urban, suburban, and

rural areas. Findings for the candidate's qualifications highlighted the importance of knowledge of content and a four-year university degree. As for the findings for the personality traits, it appeared that willing to work in a team and keeping a positive attitude, having passion for teaching are most important.

In a similar study conducted in southeastern Wisconsin, the principals' hiring practices were surveyed (Mason and Schroeder, 2010). It was intended to determine how much weight principals place on professional and personal attributes of the candidate. When asked about positive and negative characteristics that they look upon during the interview, the majority of responses referred to personal attributes rather than professional. For example, excitement, confidence, and positivity were valued. However, results of this study revealed that professional attributes were important to principals in the first level of the hiring when the screening and selecting process was being reduced. But, at the second level- the interview level- personal attributes weighed more. To achieve the professional feedback, principals only have the paper evidence, but when they are face-to- face with the candidate, it is more likely to get the feedback on positive personal characteristics (Mason and Schroeder, 2010)

In a research conducted by Roden and Cardina (1992), principals from a nationally representative sample were asked to identify the qualities they considered most important when making a hiring decision, what qualities teachers exhibit that seemed satisfactory and finally to determine the skills they saw important for teachers to acquire in the following five years. The data were provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) 1992. Results showed that the qualities principals perceived as "most important" were 'ability to present one's self professionally in an interview', 'content knowledge', 'understanding of learning theory and pedagogy'. However, graduation from an 'in-state institution' was perceived as less important. Interestingly, principals in this study showed less satisfaction with teacher's conflict management skills and ability to work with exceptional students.

Finally, participants in the study stated that, for the following years, teachers need to work on stimulation of critical thinking and instructing students in ‘positive social and interpersonal behavior’ and teaching conflict-resolution skills. Remarkably, this study also showed that personal traits are highly recommended for a candidate to get hired and so is the content knowledge and teaching skills. In addition, this study highlighted an important teaching skill, probably not recognized in other studies, the stimulation of critical thinking.

To conclude, much of the literature researched on this factor revealed the importance of both, teacher’s credentials and personal traits. It is difficult to say one outweighs the other since it is a highly subjective matter. A principal’s personal preferences and evaluations cannot be generalized; it can only serve a hiring decision in a specific school.

Religion

The current study explored factors that might influence the hiring decisions in private schools. The teacher’s credentials, personality and character traits are considered a major factor in guiding the principal and/or other administrators involved in the hiring process towards a decision. Considering the professional and personal attributes of a candidate is validated when the attributes play an important role in the candidate’s job. But, how can religion affect the hiring decision in an era of technological invasion and globalization?

The diversity of culture, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities and religion has overwhelmed society. While these make remarkable changes in society, they also impact the composition and culture of schools (Bon 2009). Among the mentioned diversities, religion might be a key element in the hiring decision. Considering the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, freedom of religion is a protected right. Yet, it is identified that some Christian public schools in the U.S.A. have “institutionalized” the beliefs of Christian privilege (Blumenfeld, 2007). Blumenfeld also recommended modifications in curricula, recognition of religious diversity, promoting freedom, and recruiting teachers of a various

religious background to achieve equality. By the same token, looking at faith-based schools, which are considered private schools in the States, one cannot disregard their eminent vision. When hiring teachers, their main concern is how to keep a balance by hiring teachers that support or subscribe to their religious mission (Russo, 2009). However, Sheridan (2007) argues that the extent to which religious affiliation negatively or positively affects the chances of getting hired has not been completely investigated in empirical studies.

In short, there is not much of literature related to religion as a key factor in influencing the hiring decisions in schools. Yet, this paper explored in the introductory chapter the importance of religion in this study. As was highlighted previously, this study deals with a Lebanese sample, which makes it geographically significant to consider religion as a factor since it is an integral part of the fabric of life in Lebanon.

Compatibility/affiliation with the principal's leadership style or the school's

The hiring process, at one level, is somehow subjective. The above literature showed that certain character traits are sought after by principals while interviewing candidates for the job. The teacher's interpersonal traits are examined and evaluated, thus making the process highly subjective. What is seen appropriate and agreeable to one principal might not be the same to another principal. Besides, determining whether the principal hires a candidate that seems more affiliated with his/her leadership style is somehow difficult. Anderson and Shackleton (1990) found three factors that contribute to the interview level in the hiring process. The aspects are: the principal's preference to hire the candidate with whom he/she shares a biographical resemblance, a personal liking, and a general instead of a specific description of a good candidate for the position. Therefore, based on Anderson and Shackleton's findings, if principals are sometimes influenced by these three factors, they are

more likely to hire the candidate that is compatible with the school regardless of the professional attributes.

On the other hand, since the school culture is often reflected to the outside, then hiring the person that fits with the school culture is understood (Stewart, 2000). True, hiring a person that fits with the school's values, mission and ethos perpetuates the school's culture. Moreover, comparing between principals from a strong rural background and larger districts, Little and Miller (2007), state that those who have rural values focus on the candidate's fit with the school. They also note that principals choose candidates that match with the existing value system rather than candidates with strong credentials (2007).

With reference to related literature, most of the time, it is the candidate's compatibility with the institution, not with the leadership style, that plays a role in the hiring decision. According to Harris, Routledge, Ingle, & Thompson (2010), principals emphasize the importance of hiring the candidate that fits in the organization. But, it is insightful to know whether the hiring decision is influenced by the candidate's willingness to affiliate with the leadership style and not the institution's values and mission. It is also interesting to know whether the principal's leadership style complies with the school's values.

The Role of Job Recommendations

Nearly most of the literature reviewed for this study referred to letters of recommendation and recommendations from trusted friends and professionals as contributors to the hiring process. After screening credentials and narrowing down the candidate pool to a reasonable number, analysis of the documents takes place. Then, the process continues to consult with the candidate's references, a task that gathers quality information about the potential hire (Peterson 2002). Letters of recommendation are considered a major factor that helps reduce uncertainty in the hiring process (Peterson 2001; Mason & Schroeder 2010).

Furthermore, Bolz (2009) also considered letters of references the most valued among other components of the candidate's portfolio in addition to the college transcripts. Recommendations and referrals somehow act as the candidate's social network. Thus, recommendations might be either verbal or written. It is through the person's connections that sometimes a job offer is given. A principal might hear about a good candidate from a trusted friend, and likewise, an applicant might get an opportunity through a network of friends. Social network can be vital to teachers in identifying job opportunities and gathering information about schools, yet it can restrict the freedom of the ones inside the network and keeps the ones outside the network off (Cannata, 2010).

The questions that might lead to insightful research are - Could social network be a positive or a negative factor in getting the right job or getting the right person to the job? Does it provide equal opportunities?

Nepotism

The last factor that might influence the hiring decision is nepotism. The term nepotism refers to *favoritism shown to nephews and other relatives, by giving them positions because of their relationship rather than their competencies* (Meriam-Webster, 2000). For lack of sufficient related literature and empirical studies on nepotism as a factor influencing the hiring decision in schools, this section will be limited to one fact, the negative effect of nepotism on job opportunities. In cultures that value interpersonal connections and relations with relatives or close friends (cronies), it is rather hard to suppress nepotism (Ashour, 2004). Nepotism has negative effects on recruitment, for candidates are not selected because of their qualifications but for their blood relationships. These candidates might perform poorly on a job, thus denying a professional replacement the job opportunity (Arasli & Tumer 2008). Finally, the concern lies in whether teacher hiring suffers from the negative effects of

nepotism. Assuming that the hiring decision might be influenced by favoritism to a relative or friend, what can be done to identify it and/ or reduce?

Summary

In conclusion, the literature provided identifies the correlation between teacher's effectiveness and student achievement. For that reason, school reform focuses on improving teacher's quality to enhance and empower student achievement. Since the quality counts, it is important to ensure the presence of effective teachers in a school. Hence, the hiring decision, involving the principal and/or assistant team, is examined. Of the factors that might influence the hiring decision, this chapter examined five only, teacher's credentials and traits, religion, compatibility with the leadership style or the school itself, job recommendations, and nepotism. All these factors might play a role in the hiring process. However, the teacher's credentials and traits, in specific, the teacher's professional and personal attributes, indicated a remarkable influence on the hiring decision. Both attributes are considered important in the hiring decisions. The religious background of the candidate is not used as a criterion for evaluation except in faith-based schools. Moreover, the candidate's compatibility with the organization is recognized since some principals search for the 'fit teacher'. Recommendations as in letter forms and referrals are important to reduce the level of uncertainty while selecting the candidate. Finally, the last factor, nepotism, is not supported with empirical research, yet nepotism is considered a factor by the researcher since it leads to negative effects in the workplace and is examined in the exploratory study that follows in chapter 3.

This study investigated four major research questions regarding the principals' reported practices in their teacher hiring process in a Lebanese sample:

1. What are the factors that influence the hiring decision in private schools in Lebanon?
2. What do principals look for in the potential hires?

3. How fair or biased is the hiring decision?
4. What policy do principals follow when they hire teachers?

CHAPTER 3

Results

The survey that was conducted in support of the thesis consisted of 47 questions (total of 37 closed-ended and 10 open-ended). Those questions made up a questionnaire that aimed at understanding the approach used by school principals when hiring school teachers. A total of fifty surveys were distributed randomly to principals of private schools in the urban, suburban, and rural regions of Lebanon. Out of the 50 surveys, 27 principals responded (54%). The demographics of the respondents were as follows: 24 males and 3 females. While 54% of those surveyed responded, not all of them answered all the questions in the questionnaire. Therefore, while analyzing the data, the sample size varied when each question of the survey is considered separately.

An analysis of the data yielded from the respondent principals revealed findings within the areas of the research questions. The principals' responses to the questionnaires were grouped to correspond to the research questions and then categorized for five major themes. For the unity of the study, the author will refer to these themes as factors which might influence the hiring decision. The background information about the principals and their schools is stated in the results below.

Principal Related Biographical & Managerial Information:

The participant sample (n=27) in this exploratory study comprised randomly selected school principals. Data collected included highest degree held, field of background education, years of administrative experience, existence of a management action plan, decision maker, number of enrolled students, and students' socioeconomic status (SES).

Fifteen principals (56%) held a degree in school administration. Ninety-two per cent of the respondents' original background was in the field of education and/or teaching (n=26). Respondents had been in their current positions as school principals for an average of 11.6 years (SD=9.1); the range was 2 to 40 years. 85% of the respondents' schools have a formal management action plan that the school closely follows (n=26). Of the four schools that did not have a plan, three of them had less than 300 students. As for having a specific policy for hiring, 96% of the respondents' schools had one. The only school that did not have a policy for hiring had 285 students and lacked a formal management action plan. In 19% of the schools, the respondent was the sole decision maker in the hiring process. The background information of the principal respondents is presented in Table 1.

The average number of students enrolled in the school was 827.6 students (n=25, SD=569.2); the range was 106 to 1960 students. The majority of the respondents (59%) stated that the socioeconomic class of the majority of the students enrolled was "Low to Mid", while 41% stated that it was "Mid to High." None of the respondents stated that the SES of the majority of the students was "High."

Table1. Principals' Biographical & Managerial Data

	Mean	Number of Respondents
Holds a degree in School Administration	56%	27
Years of experience as principal	11.6	27
Has original background in education	92%	26
Follows a formal management plan	85%	26
Follows an explicit hiring policy	96%	27
Is the sole decision maker in hiring	19%	27

Factors Influencing the Hiring Decision

Background & Credentials of Teacher

The background and credentials of the teacher as the potential hire had the following results. Fourteen principals (61%) stated that the institutional background of the candidate had a bearing on their hiring decision (n=23), but 9 principals (36%) stated the opposite.

Twelve principals (48%) stated that they were more interested in a candidate's experience than their degree; 9 principals (36 %) stated the opposite; 4 principals (16%) stated they were interested in both, experience and degree.

Figure 1 represents the responses collected on the question: "When hiring new teachers, are you more interested in the degree they hold or the experience they have?"

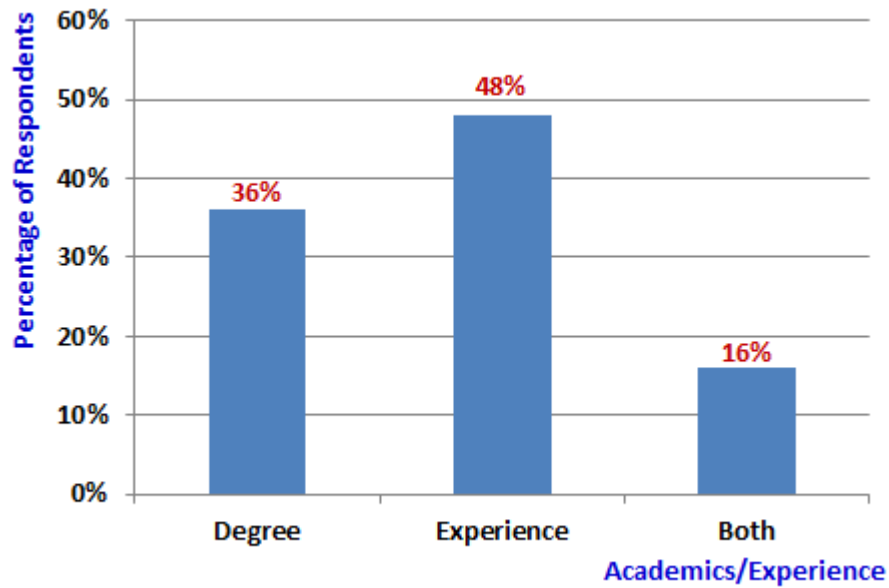


FIGURE 1. Candidate's Experience or Degree [n=25]

When asked about the preference between the candidate's specific credentials for a vacant position and the candidate's general college education background, 22 principals (88%) stated that they were more interested in a candidate's credentials; 2 principals (8%) stated the opposite and only 1 principal (4%) stated that both, credentials and education background, were taken into consideration (see Figure 2).

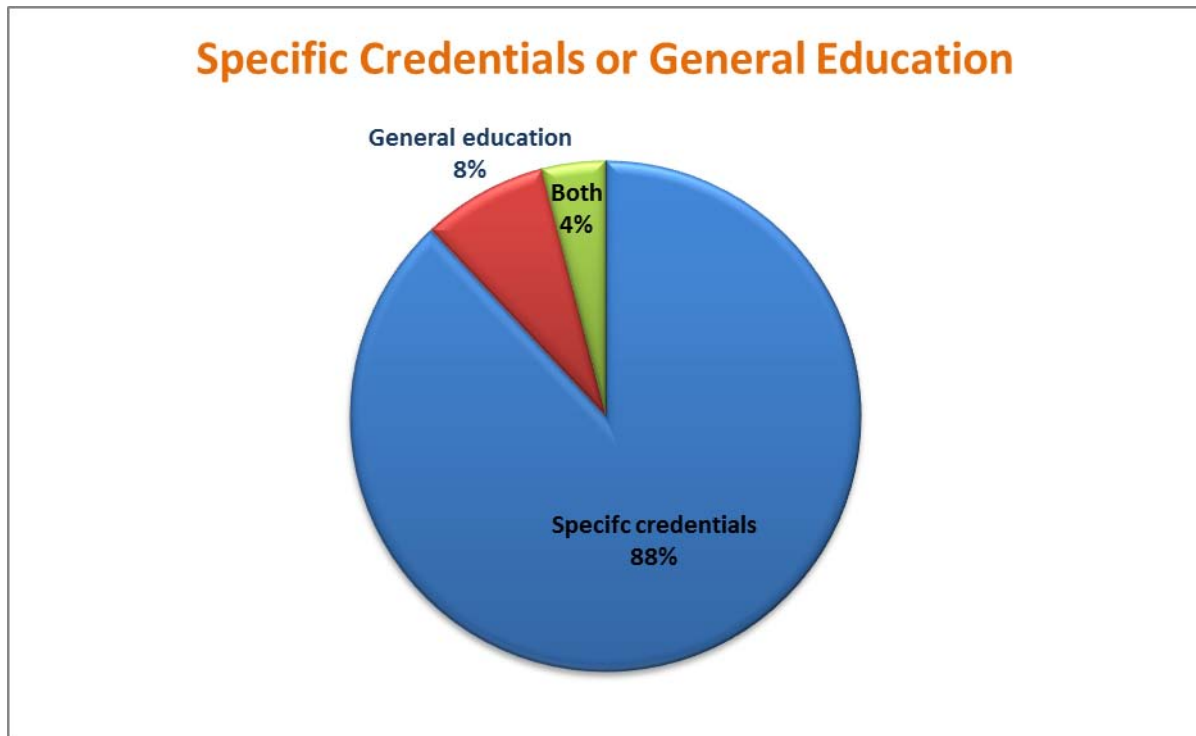


FIGURE 2. Specific credentials or General Education

Teacher's Credentials & Personality Traits

In addition to the work experience and degree, the candidate's qualifications, good personality, work ethics, continuous professional development were highly valued by school principals. Principals were even willing to promote a qualified employee whose personality traits might not necessarily conform to theirs. Where $n=26$, 96% of the respondents stated that having the right qualifications for the job is essential for hiring. In addition, 25 principals (96%) indicated that the candidate's good personality traits, work approach and willingness to learn are more valued than the candidate's years of experience. All principals encouraged and valued professional development. Qualified teachers were valued to the extent of getting a promotion. Twenty-two (85%) principals stated that they were willing to promote a qualified teacher whose personality traits do not conform to the respondent's leadership style ($n=26$).

When asked about the general personality or character traits principals look for when hiring a new teacher, the majority said that “good and respectable character”, was preferred. One respondent said, “Being a respectable person with the ability to control his/her classroom without the need of aggression, in addition to being cooperative and strong-willed.” Another principal said, “We look for people who show: commitment; a good work ethic; willingness to learn; flexibility and creativity; ability to be a team player; a willingness to make a positive contribution to the school and invest in the lives of the students.”

Teacher’s Religious Beliefs

In the open-ended section of this study’s survey, principals were asked to what extent was subscribing to their organizational and religious beliefs and values a must for hiring (Question #5- Appendix B). Twenty-four principals (89%) responded to this question while 3 principals (11%) left this question unanswered (n=24).

Nine respondents (37.5%) said that teachers should subscribe to the religious beliefs and values of the organization. One respondent said “they must subscribe”, another said “it is an absolute must”, a third said, “The religious beliefs and values a must for hiring for it impacts the responsibility toward the students.” In fact, two of the respondents to this question specified the school’s religious sect when the questionnaire had not inquired the data. They stated the following:

Respondent 1: “Since we are a Catholic school we require that teachers believe and are religious, and that they lead a decent life that represent human and spiritual values.”

Respondent 2: “It is important we are a catholic school, and the Christian values are fundamental.”

Another remarkable response was the following: “As a Christian school, we would expect that our teachers are actively involved in a local church. We would also expect our teachers to be supportive of the mission and vision of our organization.” It is also remarkable to note that this same respondent said that they “advertise in local churches” when the need to hire teachers arose (Question # 6 –Appendix B).

To the same question, 9 principals (37.5%) responded that the teacher candidate does not need to subscribe to their organizational and religious beliefs. All 9 principals who ignored the religious factor in their hiring decision agreed that it was the teaching skills along with teacher’s education that mattered and not the teacher’s religious subscription. Two of the 9 principals asserted that their schools provided employment opportunities to teachers from various sects, for they valued and accepted all religions. “We are trying our best to recruit teachers from different religious sects. It is our objective to have an open-minded, tolerant school,” one respondent said.

Moreover, there were 6 principals (25%) who had a rather different opinion when the religious factor played a role. Four of the 6 principals believed that subscribing to their religious beliefs was not important, but subscribing to the organizational beliefs was important. One principal said the candidate should subscribe but to a moderate extent. One remarkable response mentioned that lack of religious beliefs turned the person “meaningless.” (see Table 2)

Table 2 Principals' quotes on the importance of the religious beliefs of their teachers

Views of Certain Principals Regarding Religious Beliefs of Teachers	
Principal 1:	"I don't mind hiring qualified teachers regardless of their religion, but they should have the same values and ethics of the school."
Principal 2:	"The school doesn't force the teacher to be so, but anyone who has no religious beliefs and values is meaningless."
Principal 3:	"Moderate extent."
Principal 4:	"Subscribing to our organizational beliefs is necessary, but to our religious belief is not."
Principal 5:	"The organizational beliefs and values are important. (Religious beliefs are not considered)."
Principal 6:	"We are an institution that accepts all religions, but we consider the candidates values and behavior that is necessarily matches the basic norms and values of our culture."

Therefore, the principals' views of whether teachers need to subscribe to their religious beliefs or the beliefs of their schools are represented in figure 3 below.

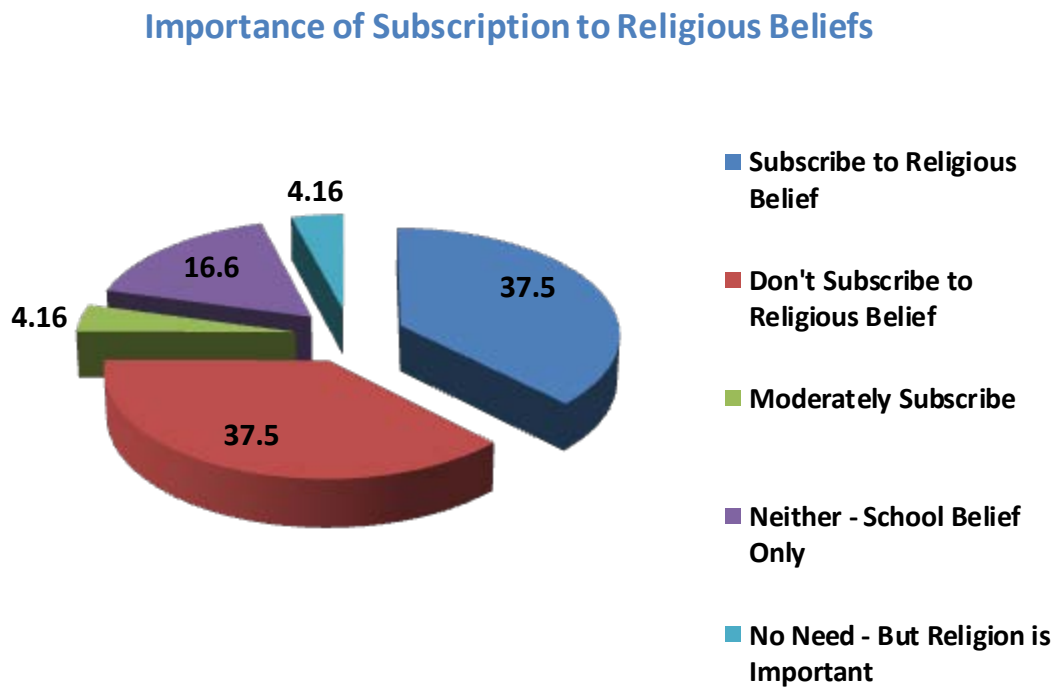


FIGURE 3. Subscription to religious beliefs

Teacher's Affiliation with the Principal's leadership style

This factor dealt with the principal's leadership style and whether it was important to hire teachers who harmonize with that style. Accepting teachers with different philosophies, diversity of thought, style and character was also studied. In addition, principals were asked whether they preferred to hire a trusted candidate who they had known for years over someone who was relatively unknown to them.

Only 8 principals (33%) stated that it was a must for the teacher candidate to ascribe to their leadership style in order to get hired (n=24). Sixteen principals (80%) stated that they tolerate teachers who have different approaches or philosophies than theirs. However, when asked about valuing diversity of thought, style and character in their schools, 24 principals (92%) stated that they did (n=26). However, of the 8 principals who said ascribing to their leadership style was a must, 6 principals valued diversity of style and character, though.

Moreover, principals were asked whether they preferred to hire a strong-willed teacher with significant experience over an easily convincible teacher with minimal experience. Twenty-one principals (81%) preferred to hire the strong-willed and 5 principals (19%) preferred the easily convincible (n=26).

Another question revealed whether the alignment with the principal's leadership style is a factor that affects the hiring decision. Only 4 principals (17%) stated that when hiring new teachers, they look for those whom they can easily mold and who have minimal or no resistance to, or questioning of their management style. However, 20 principals (83%) stated that they do not look for these traits "at all" when hiring a teacher (n=24).

When asked if they preferred a trusted candidate whom they have known for many years over someone who was relatively unknown to them, 2 principals (8%) stated "absolutely" for

hiring a trusted candidate, 15 principals (58%) stated “yes”, for hiring a trusted candidate, and 9 principals (35%) stated “not at all” for preferring hiring a trusted candidate over an unknown one (n=26, see Figure 4).

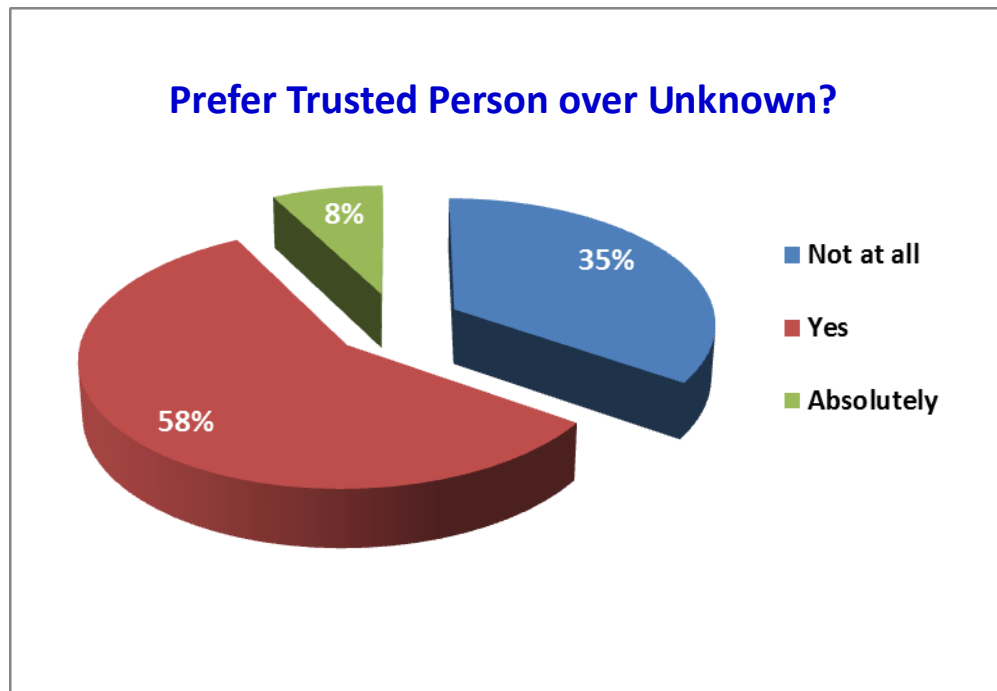


FIGURE 5. Hire a trusted person or an unknown; [n=26]

Recommendations and Referrals

The hiring decision is sometimes influenced by a recommendation from a professional, a trusted friend or by a referral from a superior in the school. This study asked principals about relying on recommendations, whether they faced such a situation when they considered or had to consider hiring a teacher who was recommended by a professional, and finally whether their decision yielded excellent result. All participants in the survey answered this section's questions (n=27).

Seventeen principals (63%) stated that they rely on recommendations or referrals from teachers or trusted friends when hiring teachers. However, only 8 principals (32%) stated that the recommendation of a candidate from trusted source is more valuable than hiring an

unknown who has excellent educational credentials and many years of experience.

Furthermore, 18 principals (72%) stated that their past experience of hiring based on recommendations from trusted sources yielded excellent results.

However, when asked whether they faced the need to hire teachers based on imposition from their superiors, 20 principals (74%) said they have never faced such a need, 5 principals (19%) said that sometimes they faced such a need, and 2 principals (7%) said that they often faced such a need.

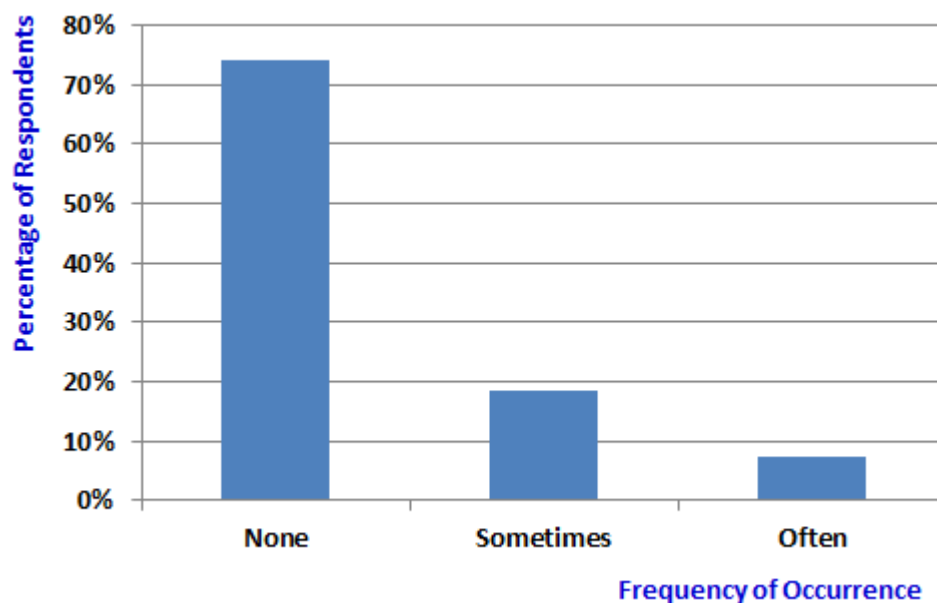


FIGURE 6. Frequency of hiring upon imposition from superiors; [n=27]

Nepotism

The final factor examined in this study was nepotism- favoring a relative and granting him/her a job. Principals in this study were asked whether they owned the institution they run, had relatives or family members working with them, and whether they wished to see their relatives continuing their work.

Only 7 (26%) of the surveyed principals owned the school they lead. Remarkably, the 7 (100%) principals stated that they would like to see their relatives continue the work they started, but this proportion drops to 36% (n=14) for the principals who did not own the institution.

Eleven principals (41%) stated that 1 to 3 teachers at their institution were relatives; only 1 principal (4%) said that more than 3 teachers were relatives. But, 15 principals (56%) had no teachers directly or indirectly related to them.

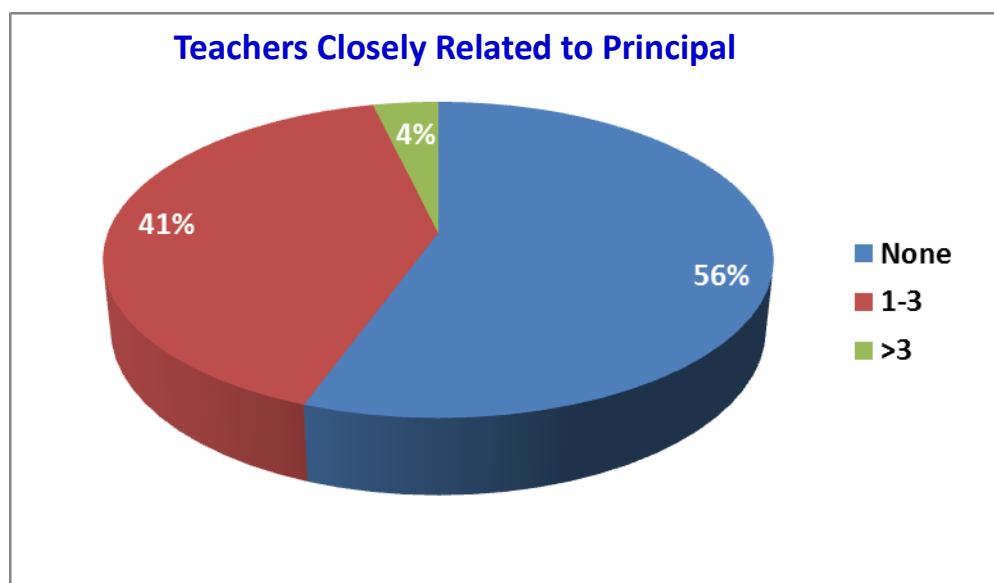


FIGURE 7. Percentages of employed relatives [n=27]

Sixteen (70%) principals stated that it gave them satisfaction to see their relatives continue the work they started. In addition, when asked whether the school had a policy against nepotism, the common concern among the majority of respondents was the teacher's qualifications. They said that relatives have to be evaluated like others, and only if they were qualified for the position, they would get hired. One of the respondents said, "Basically, I'm not against Nepotism but I follow a concept that revolves around the need of experience. In other words, if my relatives are experienced and qualified I'm ready to hire them, and if not then I don't have to". Another respondent said, "No we do not have an overt policy against

nepotism. I have seen nepotism work both ways- when an unqualified person was hired simply because she was related to someone powerful and when an unqualified person was rejected despite the fact that she was the spouse of one of our teachers.

Finally, the five factors that might influence the hiring decisions will be discussed and analyzed in the coming chapter. The chart below summarizes the results of all the probably influencing factors in the hiring of teachers in some Lebanese private schools.

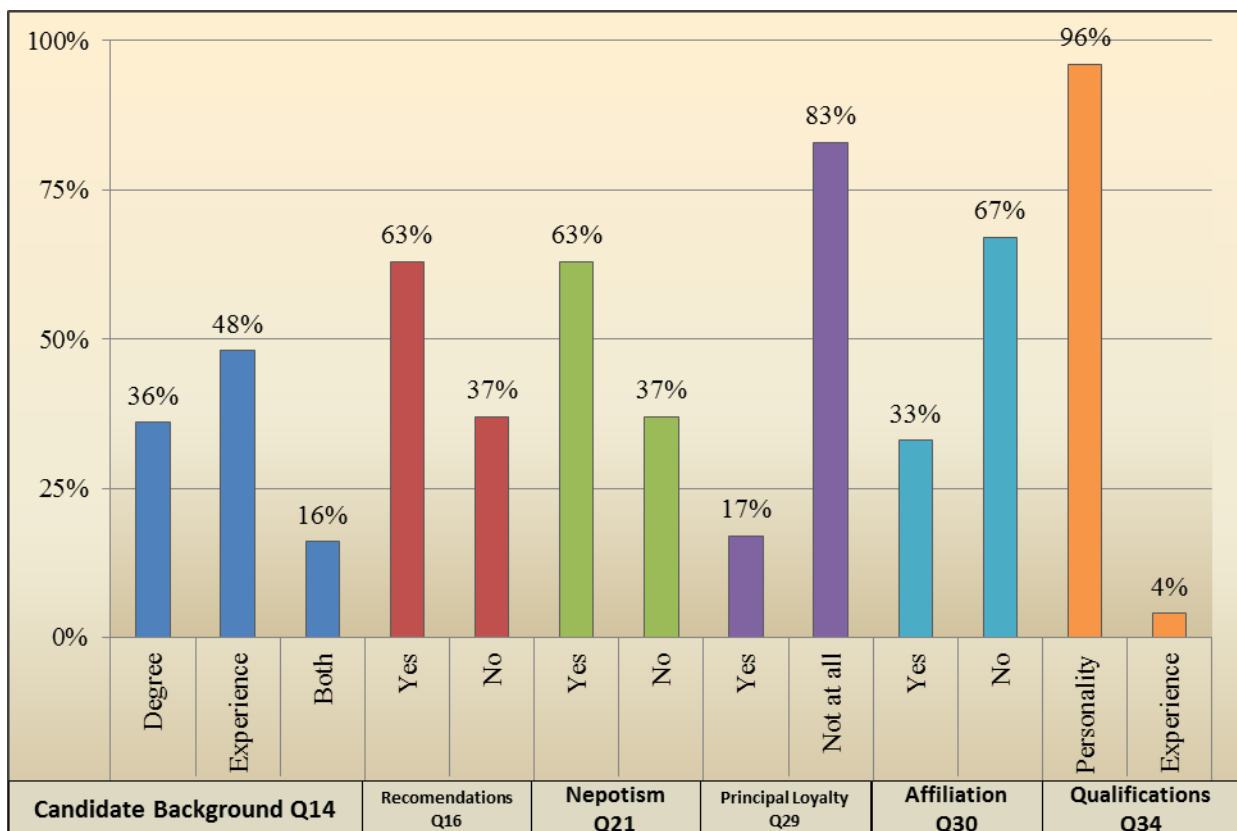


FIGURE 8. Summary of the factors that might influence the hiring decision.
(Information taken from the close-ended survey)

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

With the growing demand of qualified teachers in the school, the process of hiring those teachers has become an important step towards school effectiveness. Studies show that teacher quality is closely related to student achievement (Darling-Hammond 1997). Schools are in constant reform to ensure the school effectiveness and student achievement. Knowing that not always the qualified teacher gets the job (Simplicio, 2007), it is significant to examine what influences a principal to prefer one candidate over another and what limits his or her ability to select and hire the best candidate for their workplace. Related research has shown that the principal considers and evaluates the teacher's professional and personal attributes to reach a hiring decision (Kersten, 2008). In addition, research has also shown that choosing a candidate that makes a good fit with the school's ethos and values is a priority. Since freedom of religion is considered a sacred right, the literature reviewed for this study, showed that the candidate's religious belief was not considered a criterion for a hiring decision, except in faith-based schools.

The purpose of this study was to examine how fair or biased the hiring practices in private schools can be, what qualities school principals look for in a potential hire, what influences the principal's decision in choosing one candidate and excluding the other. Using a survey of 47 close and open-ended questions, a Lebanese sample of 27 principals of private schools participated in this study. Data were collected and the results presented in the previous chapter were categorized into five themes (referred to as factors in this study). The results will be analyzed and discussed under five factors that the study assumed might influence the principal's decision, teacher's background, teacher's religious belief, affiliation

with the principal's leadership style, recommendations from trusted sources, and nepotism.

Teacher's Background: Credentials and Personality Traits

The hiring process of a teacher is likely to be influenced by the candidate's profile.

The educational profile of the teacher includes the professional attributes of the teacher, such as the teacher's university degree, teaching experience, institutional background, knowledge of subject, and pedagogical skills. Besides the professional attribute, the personal attribute of the teacher might include the teacher's character traits, work ethics, enthusiasm and positivity. What do principals look for in a potential hire? What is more important to them, the professional or the personal attribute?

Teacher's Professional and Personal Attributes

In their studies, Kersten (2008) and Harris et.al (2010) found that both the professional and the personal attributes are equally important for a hiring decision. It is a mixture of both, one complementing the other. However, Mason & Schroeder (2010) found that principals preferred the professional attribute over the personal attribute. Conversely, in this study, principals showed more interest in the personal attribute. In addition, principals (96%) believed that a candidate's good personality and work approach and proactive attitude are more valued than the teacher's years of experience. The principals were also more interested in the teacher's experience than his/her degree. In short, this Lebanese sample valued the teacher's personality above all, then teacher's experience, and then university degree. This favor of personality might be due to the cultural background of the Lebanese sample which values social interaction. Further studies on whether the

principal's cultural background is related to valuing the personal attribute of the teacher candidate more might be insightful.

Hiring Teachers with Graduate or Undergraduate Degrees?

It is noteworthy to consider the university degree of teachers working in the schools whose principals were surveyed in this study. Considering the socioeconomic class of the students enrolled in the surveyed schools, 16 of the 27 principals (59%) assured that their students' SES is low to medium, which is almost the majority of the schools that participated in this study. Corresponding to the degrees the teachers hold, 8 or more of the 16 (low-to-medium SES) schools have over 70% of their teachers having only an undergraduate degree. Additionally, only 4 of the 16 (low to medium SES) schools have over 70% of their teachers having a graduate degree. Therefore, it is safe to reason that the majority of the schools that participated in the study are probably located in relatively poor areas of Lebanon. And, those schools, with the majority of their students having a relatively low SES, employed a low number of teachers with graduate degrees. This may be related to the fact that such schools are unable to afford high paid teachers. Furthermore, this finding agrees with the findings of Darling-Hammond (1995), Oakes, Franke, Quartz, & Rogers (2002), and Pflaum & Abramson (1990) who noted that students with low SES are challenged for not having access to qualified teachers.

Principal's Background and Perceptions of Candidate's Qualifications

As for having the right qualifications for the job (Q.33), 26 principals (96%) stated that it was essential for the hiring decision. However, the only one principal respondent who stated the opposite has very little experience (3 years) and does not hold a degree in school administration. The author cannot make any conclusions from one response, but it might be a direction for future research.

One respondent has many years of experience (30 years), but does not hold a degree in school administration stated that a candidate's degree was more important than experience (when most of the respondents said experience was more important), but the candidate's experience was more important than good personality and work approach. So, it seems that this particular principal values a degree above all, then experience, then personality, which is against the norm in this study's results. Preferring the teacher's degree over his/her experience might probably be related to the fact that this principal lacks a degree in administration, yet has many years of experience. However, further research is needed to validate this assumption. It might be safe to say that to this principal, a teacher's degree is the best representative of quality teachers, in addition to experience. Also, it is likely that this respondent has found that having a degree empowers one's position in the school and has seen the difference between highly-qualified teachers and mediocre teachers.

However, the principal's work experience doesn't matter that much when looking for candidates. Basically, regardless of their work experience, virtually all principals look for specific, appropriate qualifications (Q15, Q33) and place a high value on personality and work ethic (Q34). So, assuming that principals valued the candidate's years of experience because they themselves have years of experience does not stand valid in the results of this study.

Although the above analysis is based on one respondent only, it draws the attention to an interesting relation between the principal's experience - degree and the preference of degree and/or experience while evaluating the candidate's profile. This relation might illuminate further research.

Teacher's Religious Beliefs

Principals were asked whether the candidate teacher needs to subscribe to the organizational religious beliefs and values to get hired. Nine principal (37% n=24) believed that subscription to the school's religious belief is not a must for a hiring. To them the candidate's religious background is not related to the professional attribute of the teacher. These principals believed that the teacher's qualifications and experience are what matters, not their religion. One principal confirmed, "It is not a must at all. We are trying our best to recruit teachers from different religious sects. It is our objective to have an open-minded, tolerant school." This open-mindedness mentality reflects the acceptance and appreciation of religious diversity. In a country like Lebanon and in such critical era of political division, accepting religious diversity in schools is highly recommended since it would reflect that cultural profile of the country (Al Ariss, 2010). Moreover, diversity in the workforce enhances the performance of the organization (Richard et al., 2007).

On the other hand, 9 (37%) principals stated that the teacher's religious belief is highly valued; "it is a must," one principal asserted. Another principal confirmed, "The religious beliefs and values a must for hiring for it impacts the responsibility toward the students." For this principal the teacher's religious beliefs are important not only for the institution but also for the students. What could this possibly mean? Does the teacher's religious belief influence the student's morals and faith? What could be safely said is that this school definitely has a religious mission.

It is noteworthy to reflect on the other 6 principals who had different responses. When the other 18 principals were equally divided, these 6 principals shed the light on an interesting discussion. Four of the 6 principals agreed on one idea – the teacher candidate needs to subscribe to the organizational beliefs but not to the religious beliefs. Here, the principals make a distinction between the organizational and the religious beliefs. However, there is no clear evidence that their schools are not religiously affiliated. If the teacher's

religion does not have a bearing on their decision, why didn't they more firmly state that religious beliefs have no say in their decision? However, the wording of the question might have misinterpreted the content. Hence, there could have been four responses in favor of the religious belief (or not).

The last 2 principals of the 6 who did not state a definite 'yes' or 'no', gave noteworthy responses. One principal said that a teacher should "moderately subscribe to organizational religious beliefs" and the other stated that the religious belief is not a must, but "a person without religion is meaningless". If the candidate should moderately subscribe to the organizational religious beliefs, then, to an extent, religion is considered in the hiring decision. Would this principal hire a qualified candidate who would be the right person for the job but does not subscribe to the school's religious belief? The second principal made a remarkable judgment saying that his/her school doesn't force the subscription to religious beliefs but "a person without religious beliefs is meaningless." Interpreting the respondent's words, one may conclude that, in a way this principal cares about the person's religious beliefs. Furthermore, it is not clear if the respondent's school has religious preferences or not. Saying that the school "doesn't force it" cannot claim that the school does not prefer it. Even though their responses are not definite, they unravel a religious preference.

Finally, comparing the results (37.5 % "yes" for religion; 37.5 % "no" for religion), it is not completely surprising to see the religious diversity even in a school environment, for it mirrors the Lebanese pluralistic society. The only concern echoed here is providing equal opportunities for qualified teachers and securing a teaching environment free of religious indoctrination. However, the religious factor exerts strong pressure on some school principals in Lebanon. Akkary and Greenfield (1998) put it clearly:

"Religious favoritism determined to a great degree, the teachers who get hired, the students who are admitted,...Community religious leaders and other politicians also interfere in many decisions that are related to the daily functioning of the school... (p.11)"

It is strongly recommended that this religious preference be controlled to minimal effect especially in schools. To secure job opportunities to qualified teachers, and enhance student academic performance (Darling-Hammond, 1992), religion should not be an obstacle in the hiring process. Al Ariss emphasized that the lack of merit based evaluation obstructed the person's career choices and opportunities in Lebanon (2010).

Affiliation with the Principal's Leadership Style

Research has shown that hiring a teacher that fits the school's culture is taken into consideration (Liu, 2003). Additionally, most of the time the most compatible candidate gets the position although he/she might not be the best qualified (Broadley & Broadley, 2004). The present study examined whether the principals in this Lebanese sample favored hiring a teacher candidate that might be loyal to them and/or might ascribe to their leadership style. Most of the principals denied that affiliation with their leadership is must for hiring. Only 8 stated the opposite, however, these 8 also stated that they valued diversity of thought, style and character. This could be interpreted that those who want the teacher to ascribe to their leadership style, do not mind having a teacher with different character than theirs, but within the limits of that affiliation. Having the majority of principals (81%) preferring to hire the strong-willed character with significant experience over an easily convincible candidate with minimal experience agrees with the results that principals in this study do not favor the teacher that affiliates with their leadership style. In the administration field, it is

recommended that principals work with those with different characters than theirs (Swain, 2006).

Letters of Recommendation & Impositions

Letters of recommendation, as mentioned in the literature review, are required for the candidate portfolio (Mason & Schroeder, 2010) and they are used in the selection process to reduce any uncertainty. In this study, principals valued recommendations from trusted sources and relied on them. They also stated their past experience of hiring based on recommendations from trusted sources yielded excellent results. Yet, the recommendation factor takes a further dimension in this study. Because of the social and political nature of Lebanon, recommendations might bear contextual influences. For this reason, principals were asked whether they have faced the need to hire candidates based on imposition from superiors. Although this is closely related to whether the leadership is centralized or decentralized in the school, the result showed the imposition happened very rarely knowing that only 5 (19%) principals are the sole decision makers in their schools. Only 5 principals stated they ‘sometimes’ faced such a situation and 2 principals said they ‘often’ faced such a situation. Finally, these results disagree with the existing norm (Akkary & Greenfield, 1998) that the private schools are influenced by political and religious powers that affect who gets hired.

Hiring Relatives

Seven (26%) principals owned their institution and stated they would like to see their relatives continue their work, which is a normal trend that also reflects the structure of our Lebanese society. Some children inherit their parents' companies and likewise pass the legacy to their own children. It is seen happening in schools, companies, and also in politics. This, however, questions the fairness of the hiring process. Are qualified teachers who have no

social networks (Cannata, 2011) or a relative employer to help them find a job denied equal opportunities?

Another interesting fact is related to the principal respondents who did not own the school they lead. Of the 27 principals, 20 do not own the school they run. The interesting fact; however, is that 9 non-owner principals do not encourage their relatives and family members to choose the same career as theirs. And 11 (n=20) principals encourage their family members to choose the same career. It is interesting to know why the 9 principals do not encourage their relatives. Could it be lack of job satisfaction? Could principalship be challenging to those 9 principals? Further research in this area might reveal interesting new findings.

Moreover, it is noteworthy to consider the following comparative analysis with respect to hiring relatives in a school, qualifications of the relatives, preference of hiring a trusted candidate, and being the sole decision maker in school (corresponding to Questions 23,24,26,37-Appendix A). A sizable majority (over 58%) of the principals who participated in the survey stated that they do prefer or favor hiring those who are loyal to them (such as relative, family members, or close confidants). Also, an overwhelming majority (81%) of the principals who participated in the survey stated that they are “not the only decision makers” in their schools (Q.37-Appendix A).

This means that the hiring process in their schools is decentralized. Probably, they have a board of trustees, personnel or human resources manager with whom they share the decisions. Besides, of the 11 principals who employed teachers related to them, 4 (36%) principals said that those related teachers were not qualified to continue the work they started (be in a leadership position). It might be safe to argue that the relatives hired are not qualified to be in a leadership position. But, doesn't the teacher position require leadership skills?

Another observation can be made based on the above conclusion. Assumingly, if a committee participates in the decision making process, then it is safe to ask a question regarding hiring relatives, trusted people, or family members. How could it be that in over 58% of the cases that the board or personnel agree that the relatives of the principal are the best fit for the position and that the principal may prefer to hire those who are loyal to him/her?

Summary and Conclusion

The results in this study highlighted the importance of the task of hiring teachers in the Lebanese private schools. Briefly, the study showed interesting facts that might be insightful to both, the principal and the teacher applying for a job. The results might guide the teacher applicant to consider what principals look for in a teacher and what might influence their decision. Principals, in turn, can benefit from examining and reconsidering their hiring practices while not being in the middle of it. In short, this study showed that the principals show more interest in the teacher's personal attributes than the professional. They also favor the teacher's work approach, ethics more than his/her experience. Principals' perception of a good hire relates the teacher's personal attributes as a priority, then the work experience and finally the university degree. A relation between the principal's credentials and favoring the credentials of the teacher most is not confirmed in this study.

Considering what might influence the hiring decision, religion worked two ways. To some, the teacher's religious beliefs were valuable and to others they were not. Furthermore, affiliating with the workplace and fitting in with the school's ethos are much appreciated, yet the diversity of thought, style and character are highly valued. Also, relying on trusted sources to hire teachers is common practice, and has yielded effective results to certain extent. However, imposition from superiors to hire certain teachers occurs at a minimal

frequency. Finally, hiring relatives is not unusual in a Lebanese context. It is important to understand the effect of the above factors to secure a fair and unbiased hiring decision.

Further Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the author concluded with the following recommendations for further future research and recommendations for principals and teachers.

1. It would be insightful to study if the principal's cultural background with respect to the Lebanese context has a say on his/her preference for the teacher's personal attributes rather than the professional attribute.
2. The religious preference restricts the principal's choices to a certain pool of teachers. This might have a negative effect on another qualified pool of teachers. It is recommended that the hiring decision be free of religious preferences but limit the preferences to acknowledged values and code of ethics.
3. Teachers need to study the school's beliefs and values before applying for a job to see if they fit in the institution.
4. Principals need to consider academic credentials, experience and good work ethics of the prospective teacher above all other criteria.

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Appendix A	
Survey on Hiring Teachers in the Lebanese Private Schools An Exploratory Study Spring 2011 [Targeted Questions]	
No.	Question
1	What is the number of students enrolled in your institution? Number: <input type="text"/>
2	What is the socioeconomic class of the majority of your students? <input type="checkbox"/> Low to Mid <input type="checkbox"/> Mid to High <input type="checkbox"/> High
3	Do you hold a degree in school administration? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4	How many years have you been in your current position? Number: <input type="text"/>
5	Is your initial/original background in the general field of education and/or teaching? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6	Does your office have a formal Management Action Plan that your organization closely follows? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
7	Do you have a policy for hiring? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8	How many educational staff do you employ per year? Number: <input type="text"/>
9	Roughly, how many teachers have not yet completed their undergraduate degree? Number: <input type="text"/>

10	Roughly, how many teachers only have undergraduate degree? Number: <input type="text"/>
11	Roughly, how many teachers have a graduate degree? Number: <input type="text"/>
12	How many teachers actually hold a teaching diploma? Number: <input type="text"/>
13	Does the institutional background of the candidate has a bearing on your hiring decision? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
14	When hiring new teachers are you more interested in the degree they hold or the experience they have? <input type="checkbox"/> Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Experience

15	When hiring for a specific position do you look for credentials directly related to the vacant position or would you be satisfied with general college education background? <input type="checkbox"/> Specific Credentials <input type="checkbox"/> General Education
16	When hiring new teachers do you rely on recommendations / referrals from current teachers and trusted friends? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
17	Is the recommendation of a candidate from trusted sources more valuable to you than hiring an unknown who has excellent educational credentials and many years of experience? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
18	Has your past experience of hiring based on recommendations from trusted sources yielded excellent results? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
19	How often do you face the need to hire candidates based on imposition from your superiors? <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often

20	Do you own the educational institution that you lead? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
21	Do you encourage your family members or relatives to choose the same career as yours? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
22	Does it give you satisfaction to see your relatives continue the work that you started? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
23	How many of your teachers are directly or indirectly related to you? <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - 3 <input type="checkbox"/> > 3
24	How many of the teachers who are related to you are qualified to continue the work that you started? <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Few <input type="checkbox"/> All
25	Do you wish to see your relatives continue the work that you started? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely

26	Regardless of the educational background, do you prefer a trusted candidate whom you have known for many years over someone who is relatively unknown to you? <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely
27	Do you allow the hiring or promotion of a non-qualified but trusted candidate over that of a qualified but untested candidate? <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely
28	Which do you prefer to hire: a strong-willed person with significant experience or a person who is easily convincible but with minimal experience? <input type="checkbox"/> Strong-willed <input type="checkbox"/> Convincible
29	When hiring new teachers do you look for those whom you can easily mold and who have minimal or no resistance to, or questioning of your vision or management style? <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
30	Is subscribing to your leadership style a must for hiring? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
31	Do you tolerate teachers who have different approaches or philosophies than yours? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

32	Is diversity of thought, style, personality, and character valued and encouraged at your institution?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
33	Is having the right qualifications for the job essential for hiring?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
34	Is good personality and work approach with willingness to learn more valuable to you than years of experience?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
35	Do you encourage and value continued education for your teachers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
36	If the need arises, are you willing to promote a qualified employee whose personality traits do not conform to your leadership style?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
37	Are you the only decision maker in the hiring process?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Appendix B

Survey on Hiring Teachers in the Lebanese Private Schools

An Exploratory Study

Spring 2011

[Open-ended Questions]

Please provide your response to the questions below. Your opinion is truly appreciated and will greatly enhance the quality of my research effort. Thank you.

1. What general personality traits or characteristics you look for when recruiting teachers for your academic institution?

2. Do you have a policy against Nepotism (favoritism to relatives)?

3. Describe the process you or your institution follows when recruiting teachers.

4. What do you think the turnover rate is at your institution and what reasons for leaving do teachers cite when turning in their resignation notice?

5. To what extent is subscribing to your organizational and religious beliefs and values a must for hiring?

6. Is the alignment of your employees' work style and ethics to your specific style essential to the success of your organization? Please explain.

7. Have you ever hired a teacher that you thought will be a good fit but turned out to be the wrong person for the job? Please explain.

8. When there is a need to hire a teacher, how do you go about getting that vacancy filled? Please describe the process.

9. In your opinion, does the process itself by which you hire teachers impact the success of the school and the achievement of the students? Please elaborate.

10. What would you do to retain qualified teachers? How would you go about terminating one?
