UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

# Millennial Teachers in Canada:

# Why the Youngest Generation of Canadian Professionals Leave Teaching

By

Lena Shulyakovskaya

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

MARCH, 2017

© Lena Shulyakovskaya 2017

## Abstract

Nearly half of Alberta's early-career teachers left the profession within only five years in the classroom. The youngest generation of teachers entering the workplace are the millennials. While sectors outside of education had begun to address generational differences and needs of their millennial employees, the education sector had not. The two main research questions addressed in this study were: (1) Why do Canadian millennial teachers leave K-12 schools? (2) What helps Canadian millennial teachers want to stay in K-12 schools? This qualitative case study explored the perceptions of 13 teacher participants about their choice to either stay or leave teaching. Nine participants, belonged to the millennial generation, while the other four were from pre-millennial generations. While the exploration of generational differences among teachers called for further research, the six findings from this study were as follows: (1) All of the participant former teachers had a different field of interest initially going into post-secondary education and all of the participant current teachers entered post-secondary studies with the goal of becoming K-12 teachers, (2) Overwhelming majority of the participant millennial former teachers expressed unpleasant practicum experiences during their Bachelor of Education programs while all of the participant millennial current teachers expressed positive practicum experiences, (3) No connection was found between participants' negative work relationships and teacher attrition, and work overload was not an issue, (4) All of the millennial participants disapproved of a standardized approach to classroom teaching, (5) All of the participant millennial teachers indicated that teacher personalities influenced how teachers felt about the profession, (6) While participants of pre-millennial generations believed younger teachers were more enthusiastic, all of the millennial participants believed age made no difference in teachers' levels of enthusiasm.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents and my sister for supporting me through this graduate school journey, and for putting up with all the electrical bills that accumulated because of my late night writing. Their love and encouragement were the light at the end of the thesis-writing tunnel. I thank my two cats for keeping me company during those late nights of writing. Without my participants there would be no study to write about and I am sincerely thankful to all of my participants for sharing their stories with me. I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Sharon Friesen who has guided me along the way, challenged me to think critically and deeply, and was the only teacher/professor who actually took the time to help me develop better writing skills. I would also like to thank the examination committee for sharing their knowledge and providing me with feedback. Last and definitely not least, I thank my friends and classmates for their resources, encouragement, support, ideas, and sense of humour during my time in graduate school.

*Dedicated to my grandma, Baba Kapa, who walked me to and from school when I was little and who would have been very proud of this thesis*

# Table of Contents

**Abstract** ii
**Acknowledgements** iii
**Dedication** iv
**Table of Contents** v

**Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study**
- **Introduction** 1
- **Background and Context** 2
- **Problem Statement** 4
- **Statement of Purpose and Research Questions** 4
- **Research Approach** 5
- **Assumptions** 6
- **Rationale and Significance** 7
- **Definitions of Key Terminology Used in This Study** 8

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**
- **Introduction** 10
- **Teacher Attrition and Mobility** 13
- **Job Satisfaction** 16
  - Work flexibility and job satisfaction 17
  - Gender of teachers 20
- **Collegial, Administrative, and Systemic Support** 21
  - Administrative and systemic support 22
  - Collegial and departmental support 24
  - Mentorship of new teachers 26
  - Workplace bullying 27
- **Salaries** 29
- **Class Composition** 31
  - Studies from the United States 32
  - Studies from Canada 33
- **Personal and Academic Backgrounds of Teachers** 35
  - Teachers' racial and ethnic background 36
  - Teachers' academic background 39
- **Millennials (Generation Y)** 41
  - Millennial employees 42
  - Millennial teachers 43
- **Connections Between Millennial Employees and Teacher Attrition** 43
- **Conclusion** 45

**Chapter 3: Methodology**
- **Introduction** 48
- **Case Study Approach** 49
  - Rationale for qualitative research design 49

Rational for exploratory case study 50
**Research Participants** 50
Purposeful sampling 50
Recruitment 53
**Information Needed to Conduct the Study** 54
**Research Design** 55
Data collection methods 55
Data analysis and synthesis 58
Ethical considerations 59
**Issues of Trustworthiness** 61
Subjective stance 61
Credibility 61
Dependability 62
Confirmability 62
Transferability 63
**Limitations and Delimitations** 63
Delimitations 63
Limitations 65
**Significance of Study** 66
**Summary** 67

**Chapter 4: Findings**
**Introduction** 68
**Finding 1: Initial Post-Secondary Field of Interest** 70
**Finding 2: Millennials' B.Ed. Experiences** 85
**Finding 3: Administrative and Collegial Support** 104
**Finding 4: Education System in Canada** 122
**Finding 5: Teacher Personalities** 143
**Finding 6: Teacher Age and Levels of Enthusiasm** 144
**Conclusion** 157

**Chapter 5: Discussion**
**Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis of Findings** 160
Analytic category 1: Initial post-secondary field of interest and attrition 162
Analytic category 2: Millennials' B.Ed. experiences and attrition 163
Analytic category 3: Administrative and collegial support, and attrition 168
Analytic category 4: Class composition and attrition 173
Analytic category 5: Standardized education and attrition 174
Analytic category 6: Teacher personalities and attrition 177
**Revisiting Assumptions from Chapter 1** 178
**Summary of Discussion** 179

**Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations**
**Introduction** 182
**Conclusions** 182

Initial post-secondary field of interest **182**
Millennials' B.Ed. experiences **183**
Administrative and collegial support **184**
Millennials' disapproval of standardized education **184**
Individual personalities of teachers **185**
Teachers' age and levels of enthusiasm **186**
**Recommendations** **187**
B.Ed. programs **187**
Current and prospective student teachers **189**
Human resources departments **190**
Ministries of education **190**
Further research **191**
**Researcher Reflections** **192**

**References** **194**
**Appendix A: Recruitment Letter** **199**
**Appendix B: Informed Consent** **201**

## List of Figures

**Figure 1:** Participants who wanted to be teachers before initially enrolling in post-secondary education **70**
**Figure 2:** B.Ed. experiences of millennial former and current teachers **85**
**Figure 3:** Comparison between millennial current and former teachers with experiences in workplace relationships **105**
**Figure 4:** Themes that participants brought up in regards to what they disliked about the system **123**
**Figure 5:** Personalities of people who become teachers, according to participants **144**
**Figure 6:** What kind of teachers are more enthusiastic **151**

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

## Introduction

This chapter consists of the background and context for this study, problem statement, statement of purpose and research questions, research approach, researcher's assumptions, rationale and significance of this study, and definitions of key terminology.

## Background and Context

Teacher attrition and mobility is a growing problem across North America. Over the past few decades, a number of studies have been conducted to address the issue. A certain amount of teacher attrition and mobility is natural and expected, as people retire, move, and family situations change. However, too much turnover in a school's teaching staff is problematic because it may hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of school reform initiatives and new program implementations (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009), result in poorer quality of education for the students (Clark & Antonelli, 2009), and cost countries millions of dollars in new recruitments, training, and mentorship (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Being the youngest generation of professionals, not many studies have been conducted as of yet about millennial teachers specifically. Other sectors have already begun to address generational differences and needs of their younger employees, while the education sector remained fairly constant since the 1960's, in terms of its employment and retention practices (Ball, 2013; Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). However, a substantial number of studies have been conducted on teacher attrition of multiple generations and a number of studies addressed employment needs of millennials in sectors outside of education.

Previous literature (Allensworth et al., 2009; Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Schaefer et al., 2012) showed that approximately 10% - 20% of teachers leave their schools annually and that

approximately 40% - 50% of early career teachers leave the profession within the first five years on the job.

Job dissatisfaction was reported as the primary reason for teacher mobility and attrition, that was not related to old age retirement or change in family situations (Allensworth et al., 2009; Clark & Antonelli, 2009). The main factors that influenced teachers' levels of job satisfaction were work-life balance and administrative, collegial, and systemic supports, as well as personal characteristics of teachers. Specific reasons for job dissatisfaction, as well as the number of teachers reporting job dissatisfaction differed between provinces and territories. That was due to the fact that some provinces had conducted more comprehensive studies than others and due to "regional, social, and cultural differences within each province and territory" (Kutsyuruba, Godden, & Tregunna, 2014, p. 49).

Work flexibility was one of the major contributing factors to having a work-life balance and lack of it affected teachers' ability to manage work and personal obligations, often resulting in job dissatisfaction (Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013).

Previous literature (Allensworth et al., 2009; Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014; Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014) demonstrated that attrition was also connected to support teachers received from their school leaders and their colleagues.

Teacher characteristics such as gender, race, and academic background played only a small role in teachers' tendencies to leave (Allensworth et al., 2009; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2011). Age and experience seemed to have the biggest influence on teacher attrition, with the younger less experienced teachers leaving in higher numbers than the older more experienced

teachers (Allensworth et al., 2009; Ball, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Jordan & Cooper, 2003).

In 2015, the youngest and least experienced teachers in Alberta schools were those of the millennial generation. They also made up approximately 45% of the teachers in the province (Alberta Education, Alberta Teaching Certification Statistics, 2015). Although some studies (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2013) showed that differences existed between millennial employees and those from pre-millenial generations, very little data was available on how those generational differences came into play in regards to the teaching profession and teacher attrition.

## Problem Statement

Previous research studies focused on all teachers, without an emphasis on any particular generation, and had shown that almost half of early career teachers left the profession within their first five years on the job. Despite the significant investment in time and money in order to become qualified teachers, these people left the profession after only a few years. Prior literature has also shown that teacher attrition resulted in the hindrance of school reform, poorer quality of education for the students, and impractical spending on new recruitments and training. The youngest generation of professionals entering the workplace at this time is the millennial generation. It has been estimated that in approximately 10 years, millennials will comprise 75% of North America's available workforce (Boissonnault & Csorba, 2014). While other sectors have begun to address generational differences and needs of their younger employees, there was little information about why millennial teachers left the profession after only a few years on the job.

## Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of a sample of 13 former and current teachers living in Canada of why they chose to

either stay or leave the K-12 teaching profession. Specifically, the main phenomenon to be investigated was the attrition of Canadian millennial teachers. The two main research questions that led this study were: (1) Why do Canadian millennial teachers leave K-12 schools? (2) What helps Canadian millennial teachers want to stay in K-12 schools? It was anticipated that by gaining an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and motivations of millennial teachers to either leave or stay in the profession, more informed employment and retention practices may be developed to assist current and future Canadian teachers of the millennial generation. To help explore the phenomenon, the following interview questions were addressed:

1. Why did participants leave the K-12 teaching profession? Or alternatively, for those who stayed - why are they teaching and what are their career plans for the future?
2. How would participants describe their experiences during their Bachelor of Education programs?
3. What were their relationships like with their colleagues and administrators?
4. What were their relationships like with their students and the students' parents?
5. How did they experience work and life balance?
6. What was the best part about working as a teacher?
7. What was the worst part about working as a teacher?

## Research Approach

With the approval of the University of Calgary's ethics board, I engaged in semi-structured in-depth interviews with 13 participants. Using an exploratory case study approach for my research, I aimed to bring together the various experiences and perspectives of former and current Canadian millennial teachers, as well as former teachers of pre-millennial generations who came to Canada as immigrants. These multiple experiences and perspectives helped form conclusions

about the overall meaning of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), which is millennial teacher attrition in Canada.

The main method of data collection for this study consisted of in-depth interviews. Purposeful sampling was used in order to recruit participants. Within this study, there were three distinct groups of participants, making a total of 13 participants: Canadian millennial teachers who had left teaching (n=5), Canadian millennial teachers who were currently teaching (n=4), and pre-millenial teachers who moved to Canada as immigrants (n=4). The latter group of participants were included to determine whether the reasons for either attrition or retention were unique to Canadian millennial teachers or could perhaps be attributed to other factors such as, intercultural and intergenerational. I also thought that this third group of participants could potentially be the most contrasting to Canadian millennial teachers, in terms of experience, practices, and expectations. One of the delimiting conditions I placed on participant recruitment was all participants had to be Canadian citizens or permanent residents because the topic being explored focused on Canadians. The other delimitation on participant recruitment was that the millennial teachers had to have completed their Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs in Canada.

Findings derived from these in-depth interviews formed the study. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and participants were identified by a pseudonym. All the transcripts were coded multiple times to establish themes and surface findings.

## Assumptions

Based on my past experience and background as an elementary school teacher who belonged to the millennial generation, there were three primary assumptions and biases that I held going into the study.

The first assumption was that the main contributing factor that influenced millennial teachers to leave the K-12 teaching profession was their inability to achieve a work-life balance. This assumption was based on informal conversations with teacher colleagues, my own experience working as a teacher, and articles about teacher workloads read prior to the start of my graduate studies.

Second, I assumed that there would be notable generational differences between younger and older generations in terms of how they approached work, and more specifically a work-life balance, which I assumed would be the main contributing factor to teacher attrition. The assumption that there would be a notable generational difference stemmed from my own personal experience and bias.

Third, based on informal conversations with teacher colleagues and on my own experiences, I assumed that some teachers were driven out of the profession by negative and oppressive administrators.

Throughout the course of this research study, I went from being a graduate student to also serving as a research assistant, and a sessional instructor for the Bachelor of Education program at the University of Calgary. Furthermore, I fell into the category of teachers being investigated in this study - millennials who completed their Bachelor of Education programs in Canada and who were Canadian citizens, as well as someone who moved to Canada as an immigrant. Therefore, as a researcher I brought in practical experience to the inquiry process as a Canadian millennial teacher, as an immigrant, as well as a B.Ed. instructor to millennial future teachers. I acknowledge that such background and experience may provide valuable insight. I also recognized my own biases and had to ensure I let the data inform the findings, and established research literature inform the interpretations of findings. I committed to ongoing self-reflection as the study progressed, as

well as held an ongoing dialogue with my graduate supervisor in order to strengthen the credibility of my findings.

## Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study came from my desire to understand why almost half of early career teachers left K-12 teaching within the first five years of entering the profession. I wanted to know if my own experience, assumptions, and biases were correct. I also wanted to know what led to millennial teachers' decisions to leave the profession or remain in teaching. I also wanted to explore what the millennial former teachers believed would have kept them satisfied and happy at their teaching jobs.

Ensuring teachers were satisfied and happy at their jobs may have benefitted not only those teachers but benefitted the education sector as a whole by having employees who enjoyed their jobs. I decided it was important to investigate why such a large number of teachers left teaching. While some attrition in every profession is natural and expected, having too many teachers leave has been shown to be detrimental to the quality of education provided at K-12 schools as well as to the funding that is allocated for recruitment and mentorship of new employees. Moreover, attrition hindered the effectiveness and sustainability of school reform initiatives and new program implementations.

Furthermore, other sectors have begun to address generational differences and needs of their millennial employees, while the education sector has not. Connections could be made between research conducted about millennial employees in other sectors to teacher attrition in general, however, those connections remained largely speculative as I was unable to find any comprehensive studies on teacher attrition and retention of Canadian millennial teachers.

Therefore, my study was significant as it addressed the current gap in research literature on millennial teachers in Canada and their reasons for leaving the profession. My study aimed to bridge the gaps in research literature through the exploration of the real-life experiences of my millennial teacher participants.

## Definitions of Key Terminology Used in This Study

- Millennials (also known as Generation Y) - are a generational cohort born roughly between 1977 and 1995 (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009)
- Attrition - includes teachers who leave the K-12 profession altogether
- Canadian - in this study, this is an individual who is a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada, and who finished a teacher education program in Canada
- Mentor teacher - practicum teacher who agrees to host a student teacher in their classroom for the duration of the student teacher's practicum; also known as partner teacher

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore real-life experiences of former and current Canadian teachers. Specifically, I sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the contributing factors related to Canadian teacher attrition in the millennial generational cohort. To carry out this study, it was necessary to complete a critical review of the contemporary literature in this area.

Being the newest generation of professionals, not many studies specifically about millennial teachers have been conducted. However, a substantial number of studies have been conducted on teacher attrition in general, without any emphasis on a specific generation; and, a number of studies addressed employment needs of millennials in sectors outside of education. Therefore, this critical review combines those two areas in order to explore how they may relate to the experiences of millennial teachers. There is an urgency to find appropriate ways to retain that generation because in just over 10 years, millennial employees will comprise 75% of the North American workforce (Boissonnault & Csorba, 2014). In light of this, two major areas of literature were critically reviewed: (1) teacher attrition and mobility; and (2) millennial employees. A review of the literature on teacher attrition and mobility provides an understanding of the reasons behind attrition and explores the topics of workload, collegial and systemic support, salaries, class composition, and personal and academic backgrounds of teachers. All of these were key topics that emerged out of the reviewed literature. Although teachers tended to quit for personal and work-related reasons, personal reasons may be more difficult to predict and control. The primary work-related reason for attrition was job dissatisfaction. Job dissatisfaction was tied to several themes: work-life balance, collegial and administrative support, salaries, class composition, and

background of teachers. Almost every Canadian study discussed work-life balance and collegial and administrative support as contributing factors to teacher attrition. On the other hand, salaries, class compositions, and teacher backgrounds were not mentioned in many Canadian studies reviewed. However, these latter topics came up more in the more comprehensive reports, such as the one published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2013.

To conduct this selected literature review, I used multiple information sources including journal articles, books, periodicals, and conference papers. The sources were accessed through the University of Calgary library database, Google, Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) online archives, and Alberta Education's website.

I used studies conducted on Canadian teachers, as well as American teachers. Even though the two countries had different education systems, the same key topics related to teacher attrition were mentioned by Canadian and American researchers. Both countries had approximately the same percentage of teachers leaving annually (10% - 20%) and the same percentage of early career teachers leaving within the first five years (40% - 50%) (Allensworth et al., 2009; Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Schaefer et al., 2012). From the key topics, data on teacher job satisfaction and workload (OECD, 2013) showed noticeable commonalities between Canadian and American teachers. Data on collegial support among Canadian teachers (ATA, 2014) and American teachers (Allensworth et al., 2009) also revealed similarities between the two countries. Data on the topics of salaries, class composition, and background of teachers surfaced differences between the two countries, in terms of teacher attrition. Therefore, while reviewing literature on the topics of job satisfaction, workload, and collegial and administrative support, Canadian and American studies

were used to complement one another. For the other topics, where the research literature indicated differences between Canadian and American teachers, I discussed the differences.

Literature about millennial employees came from studies and articles written in the United States as there was a lack of Canadian literature on the topic. However, a multinational generational study (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2013) revealed similarities between millennial employees living in Western countries; and, because of cultural and lifestyle similarities between Canada and the U.S., it may be appropriate to relate data on American millennials to Canadians of that generation.

Throughout the review, I attempted to point out important gaps and omissions in the particular segments of the literature as they became apparent. In addition, relevant contested areas or issues were identified and discussed. Each section of the literature review closes with a synthesis of the major insights that can be drawn from the literature.

There are four sections in my literature review: teacher attrition and mobility; job satisfaction; collegial, administrative, and systemic support; and, millennials. The section on “Teacher Attrition and Mobility” surfaces the primary work-related reason that teachers give for leaving teaching or moving to another school is lack of job satisfaction. The next section, “Job Satisfaction” discusses how it is often influenced by a work-life balance and teachers' inabilities to achieve that balance. The section on "Collegial, Administrative, and Systemic Support" discusses the importance of teachers' perceptions of their co-workers, in their decisions to leave their schools. The section also talks about salaries, class composition, the background of teachers - and how neither of those themes made as big a difference in teachers' tendencies to quit as the collegial, administrative, and systemic supports. The final section on “Millennials” discusses the

known literature on millennial employees in general and a limited number of articles written about millennial teachers.

## Teacher Attrition and Mobility

Teacher attrition and mobility is a growing problem across North America. Over the past few decades, a number of studies have been conducted to address the issue. In many parts of Canada and the United States, there are more teachers than there are jobs (Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010). A certain amount of teacher attrition and mobility is natural and expected, as people retire, move, and family situations change. However, too much turnover in a school's teaching staff is problematic because it may hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of school reform initiatives and new program implementations (Allensworth et al., 2009), result in poorer quality of education for the students (Clark & Antonelli, 2009), and cost countries millions of dollars in new recruitments, training, and mentorship (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Job dissatisfaction was reported as the primary reason for teacher mobility and attrition, that was not related to age related retirement or change in family situations (Allensworth et al., 2009; Clark & Antonelli, 2009). Although occurrences such as retirement and change in family situations may not always be controlled, levels of job satisfaction may potentially be improved or worsened. Job dissatisfaction generally referred to work-related conditions that negatively affected a teacher's wellbeing. Reasons behind teacher job dissatisfaction were many and the most common ones will be discussed in this chapter.

In Canada and the United States almost half of early career teachers voluntarily left their schools within their first five years (Allensworth et al., 2009; Clandinin et al., 2012). Teachers who transferred from a school to pursue employment at a different school or district – are known as movers; teachers who leave the profession altogether – are known as leavers. Therefore, 50%

of the early career teachers who voluntarily left their schools within the first five years included movers and leavers as it was difficult to track the employment status of teachers once they left the district or the city. In either case, studies (Allensworth et al., 2009; Clark & Antonelli, 2009) showed that reasons for attrition of movers and leavers were very similar.

Allensworth et al. (2009) analyzed 72,940 teacher employment records and conducted 27,643 high school teacher observations. The study concluded that the rate of teacher attrition in Chicago public schools was similar to the state and national rates of teacher attrition – 50% within five years and approximately 20% left annually. In the province of Alberta, 40% left the profession altogether within the first five years and 25% of teacher graduates never began teaching in the province (Clandinin et al., 2012). In Ontario, the annual attrition rate was between 24% and 32% (Clark & Antonelli, 2009). Surprisingly, Clark and Antonelli (2009) claimed that the attrition rate in Ontario was very low.

Study after study, researchers' findings seemed to be similar, as were their recommendations for improvement. This phenomenon could potentially mean two things: (1) although studies were conducted and suggestions for improvement were provided, there was no interest from the stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, governments, school leaders, etc.) to implement changes in that regard and hence, everything remained unchanged; or (2) reasons for attrition and job dissatisfaction discovered during the majority of the previous studies were only surface reasons that did not address deeper concerns. Therefore, it could have been possible that even if some stakeholders did in fact address those surface reasons, it did not improve the situation for teachers because deeper underlying concerns were overlooked.

A recent study, *Reflections on Teaching: Teacher Efficacy and the Professional Capital of Alberta Teachers* (ATA, 2014) used a mixed-methods approach with a surveying tool initially

developed by Day and Gu (2010) who studied teachers' work-life balance in the United Kingdom. The survey was administered in Alberta during the summer and the tool was described as a reflective survey which allowed teachers to graph and give written responses about their high and low points during the previous school year. A total of 138 teachers participated in the study, 94 of which came from the same high school in Alberta while the other 44 were surveyed during a conference at a later time and came from different schools all over the province. The goal of the study was to explore which factors affected teacher efficacy and their ability to achieve a work-life balance, as well as to see how the findings might be similar to those of Day and Gu (2010). A total of 1600 handwritten answers and 2200 individual comments were received from the participants. However, it was unclear whether the answers and comments came from all the participants or if perhaps a certain number of participants submitted several answers and comments while others chose not to answer or comment at all, hence not being exactly representative of the whole. Although a number of topics were covered and many responses collected, participants were only given 90 minutes to graph and write about their experiences.

Naturally, one could not mix 94 participants who all had their experience from one school with 44 others who came from many different schools because it would skew the data, making it more representative of one school rather than the province as a whole. For the most part, the two groups were analyzed separately. According to the authors, the results of this study were aligned with Day and Gu's (2010) results. It could potentially mean that U.K. and Canadian teachers had similar experiences in the workplace due to the similarity in teachers' personal life expectations, experiences with student interactions, influences of practice settings, and the effect educational policies had on the teachers (ATA, 2014). This study's authors admitted that the way questions were worded could have influenced the participants' responses and suggested it should be repeated

with more demographically diverse participants. I understood this to mean that almost 2/3 of the participants should not come from the same school.

A point that should not be overlooked is the fact that this study was conducted by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), which is a teachers' union. It would normally be expected that research conducted by a group such as the ATA would typically be biased towards their union agenda – for example, studies that promoted more funding for teachers or promoted work-life balance for teachers. However, that did not necessarily make the data unreliable as other researchers outside the Alberta context had previously validated the survey instrument. Despite the noted limitations, particularly the skewed participant sample, this study had very many commonalities with other Canadian studies on teacher attrition (Dibbon, 2004; Dyck-Hacault, & Alarie, 2010; Leithwood, 2006).

Reasons for teacher mobility and attrition were many, including personal reasons, such as retirement and change in family situations; and, work-related reasons, such as job dissatisfaction. While personal reasons are generally more difficult to predict and manage, work-related reasons may be easier to control. Data on attrition may have been slightly different from province to province, with some provinces having had conducted more comprehensive studies than others; and due to "regional, social, and cultural differences within each province and territory" (Kutsyuruba, et al., 2014, p. 49). Those studies will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Overall, however, the primary work-related reason for attrition was job dissatisfaction (Clark & Antonelli, 2009). The main factors that influenced teachers' levels of job satisfaction were work-life balance and administrative, collegial, and systemic support.

## Job Satisfaction

Job dissatisfaction was the primary work-related reason for teacher attrition (Clark & Antonelli, 2009). A fairly consistent theme in the majority of studies on job dissatisfaction was the idea of work and life balance, and teachers' inability to achieve that balance. Work-life imbalance was described as an inability or perceived inability to manage all the work responsibilities and all the personal responsibilities in a way that did not make one feel overwhelmed or out of control (Duxbury & Higgins, 2013). This section talks about work flexibility, workload, and gender of teachers - and how those aspects relate to work-life balance.

**Work Flexibility and Job Satisfaction**

Duxbury and Higgins (2013) surveyed 25,000 employed Canadians, as well as used data provided by the ATA on 2,462 teachers to see how Alberta teachers (ATA sample) compared to other employees across the country (National sample). Using the answers from the surveys, researchers discovered that the participants in the ATA sample reported less work flexibility (e.g., ability to take sick days, have time off, sometimes come in late, finishing tasks) than any other group of professionals in the general sample, even less than nurses and police officers. Work flexibility was one of the major contributing factors to having a work-life balance and lack of it affected participants' ability to manage work and personal obligations, often resulting in job dissatisfaction (Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013). Fewer than 40% of the ATA sample reported high job satisfaction. It was not stated how many reported "regular" job satisfaction and how many were actually dissatisfied.

A national survey conducted around the same time, in 2011, by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) found that out of their 434 teacher respondents (9.9% response rate), 81% reported being satisfied with their job. Assuming that the job satisfaction rate (high and "regular") in Alberta was close to 40% (Duxbury & Higgins 2013), the difference between Alberta and the

national average was fairly dramatic. This could possibly mean that either the unsatisfied teachers did not want to answer the national survey or that there was a difference in job satisfaction between provinces.

Another CTF survey conducted in Ontario in 2007/2008, found that 18.5% of teachers moved to another board and 17.6% left the teaching profession, making a total turnover rate for one year 36.1%. However, the study stated that only 10% left because of job dissatisfaction. It would have been useful to survey teachers leaving Alberta schools to determine how many were actually dissatisfied with the job.

On the other hand, Duxbury and Higgins' (2013) findings on job satisfaction were drastically different from what was reported by the OECD study (2013), in which 92% of Alberta teachers reported being satisfied with their jobs. The two studies were conducted in the same year. It is important to note that unlike the OECD study (2013), Duxbury and Higgins' (2013) research was a self-reported study. The weakness with self-reported studies is that participants may exaggerate the severity of their situations and their answers may be biased based on their feelings at the time. Therefore, it is important that findings from self-reported studies are considered in light of more comprehensive self-reported studies with established measures of reliability, such as the OECD studies. While the OECD study (2013) stated that 92% of Alberta teachers reported being satisfied with their jobs, it said that 23% wanted to move to another school and 35% doubted they chose the right profession. The OECD study (2013) did not divide teachers' levels of job satisfaction into "high job satisfaction" and "regular job satisfaction." Survey findings, such as the OECD (2013) study, along with the other survey research studies, need to be followed with qualitative studies to determine the type of working conditions that contributed to the significant and varied reported levels of job satisfaction.

The ATA study (2014) built upon Duxbury and Higgins' study (2013) and also discussed the idea of work-life imbalance and work overload. Participants mentioned feeling effective and caught-up in teaching work only when their families and home lives were neglected; and being able to feel rejuvenated and happy at home only when teaching work duties were neglected and quality of their work decreased. At the same time, the report stated that work and home wellbeing went hand in hand, and majority of the participants reported feeling happy at home when everything went well at work; and, vice versa. While the ATA report (2014) stated that 78 teachers out of a total of 138 commented on not having sufficient preparation time for marking and lesson planning, it was unclear whether those 78 teachers came from the same school, as 94 of their participants came from the same high school. Hence, no conclusion can be made about whether it is a systemic issue or an issue just for that one school.

However, it may be safe to assume that teachers' reported concern regarding lack of time for marking and lesson preparation may be systemic based on the data from the OECD (2013). According to OECD (2013), on top of regular work-related duties (32 hours), Alberta teachers reported to have seven teaching hours more per week than an average teacher who participated in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) - 26 teaching hours compared to 19 teaching hours, making a total of 58 hours that Alberta teachers worked per week. These results were similar to Duxbury and Higgins' (2013) results when they concluded that Alberta teachers worked approximately 10 hours more per week (60.8 hours) than other professionals (50.8 hours). A commonplace and generally misinformed societal belief may be that teachers have a lot of free time because they have the summer off, as well as get all the other school breaks. Putting that belief into perspective, we can use Duxbury and Higgins' (2013) findings to calculate the following: even if other professionals in Canada worked with no weeks off at all, in one year, they

would have worked a total of 2,641.6 hours (52 weeks x 50.8 hours/week). If we subtracted 2 weeks off in the winter, 1 week off in the spring, and 4 weeks off in the summer, in one year, Canadian teachers would have worked a total of 2,736 hours (45 weeks x 60.8 hours/week). Therefore, Canadian teachers, specifically in Alberta, may not have necessarily had more free time than other professionals; and in fact, may have actually worked more.

**Gender of Teachers**

In terms of gender, approximately 60% of Alberta teachers were female, with an average age of 40 years old (TALIS, 2013). Compared to other TALIS countries whose teaching force consisted of approximately 68% females and was on average 43 years old, Alberta's teaching force was fairly typical of other countries (TALIS, 2013).

Duxbury and Higgins (2013) stated that 50% of women in the ATA sample and in the national sample reported doing a “second shift” at home as caregivers for the young. Even though the number of female teachers and the number of other female professionals who provided care for the young was the same, Duxbury and Higgins (2013) stated that the amount of caregiving provided for the elderly was higher in the ATA sample. They suggested that the role of women in the workplace, in general, needed to be re-evaluated since women not only continued to serve as main caregivers for the home but also worked full-time – being more susceptible to work and life imbalance and overload. Duxbury and Higgins’ study (2013) did not include data on how many males reported doing a “second shift” at home.

On the other hand, Allensworth et al., (2009) analyzed employment records for one academic year in Chicago public schools and found that 80% of male teachers and 79% of female teachers remained at their schools for the following school year. The difference of 1% between

male and female teachers in the Chicago public schools challenged the idea that women left teaching more than men because of family obligations (Allensworth et al., 2009).

Clark and Antonelli (2009) also found no significant differences between female and male respondents when they surveyed 399 resigning Ontario teachers and inquired about their reasons for quitting.

Job dissatisfaction was the primary work-related reason for teacher attrition (Clark & Antonelli, 2009). One of the factors contributing to job dissatisfaction was the teachers' inability to achieve a wok-life balance, without feeling overwhelmed by either work or family obligations, or both. While Duxbury and Higgins (2013) suggested that the inability to find a work-life balance may have been related to gender as 50% of female teachers reported doing a "second shift" at home, Allensworth et al. (2009) and Clark and Antonelli (2009) found no significant differences between female and male teachers in regards to their tendencies to quit from their schools. Duxbury and Higgins (2013) and the OECD (2013) concluded that Canadian teachers, specifically in Alberta, worked more hours per week than other surveyed professionals in Canada (60.8 hours compared to 50.8 hours) and more than other surveyed teachers from the TALIS countries (58 hours compared to 47 hours). However, Duxbury and Higgins (2013) reported that the quality of school administration had more influence on teachers' work-life balance than did bigger educational policies.

## Collegial, Administrative, and Systemic Support

One of the most prevailing reasons for job dissatisfaction as expressed by teacher participants had to do with having unsupportive colleagues, administrators, or board, union, and ministry members (Allensworth et al., 2009; ATA, 2014; Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014). Feeling unsupported by

colleagues, administrators or the board, union, or ministry created a negative work environment for teachers. Teachers expressed how important it was for them to have a positive and trusting work climate, to have strong leaders who provided positive feedback, and have a work environment where voice and efforts were acknowledged and respected (ATA, 2014). This section talks about the role of administrators in creating positive school climates, the importance of positive collegial interactions, the influence of new teacher induction and mentorship programs, workplace bullying in schools - and how those relate to teachers' job satisfaction. Further, this section discusses how other contributing factors, such as salaries, class composition, and personal and academic backgrounds of teachers have little influence compared to the quality of school leadership.

**Administrative and Systemic Support**

The Ministry of Education in Alberta – Alberta Education, conducts annual stakeholder satisfaction surveys to see how Alberta's education system is "meeting the needs of students, society, and the economy" (Alberta Education, 2015). In 2015, 84% of teachers stated that their input was considered by their individual schools and only 30% felt that their input was considered by the Ministry (Alberta Education, 2015). Interestingly, the public and the teachers were equally dissatisfied by the fact that the Ministry did not consider their input into education. It might have been helpful for Alberta Education to expand on what was meant by "input."

The ATA study (2014) stated that teacher wellbeing, stress levels, and a sense of efficacy were directly related to the level and quality of support they received from their colleagues and administrators. Levels of effectiveness, stress, and wellbeing influenced teachers' tendencies to quit as those were connected to the levels of job satisfaction (ATA, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Literature showed that teacher effectiveness sharply increased after a few years on the job

(Darling-Hammond, 2010) and that "schools that cannot retain their best teachers are likely to see their future academic performance suffer" (Allensworth et al., 2009, p. 3). It has been argued that "this kind of churning in the beginning teaching force wastes money and reduces productivity in education overall since the system never realizes the eventual payoff from its investment in novices" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 19). Alberta Education (2015) reported that 29% of the province's teachers and 28% of parents agreed that the quality of education at schools had worsened over the past three years.

Additionally, Duxbury and Higgins (2013) claimed that it was organizational culture of the school that affected the work-life balance more than any policy. Schools that were reported to have good teacher retention rates were also the ones that reported a strong sense of collaboration between colleagues and the principal (Allensworth et al., 2009). In Alberta, 84% of teachers agreed that leadership at the school level supported teaching and learning (Alberta Education, 2015). While that number appears high, it is important to remember that the study was delimited to one school year. That said, the reported average finding from the Alberta Education (2015) study was fairly consistent with 80% annual retention rate of Chicago teachers (Allensworth et al., 2009). Even though retention rates and levels of support are two different topics, what Allensworth et al.'s study (2009) demonstrated was the importance of a longitudinal analysis. In Allensworth et al.'s (2009) study, 50% of Chicago teachers ended up leaving their original schools after five years, despite there being a reported 80% annual retention rate. Of course, this is assuming that attrition and administrative support are connected – which previous studies demonstrated they were (Allensworth et al., 2009; ATA, 2014; Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014).

**Collegial and Departmental Support**

Schools may also have different groups of teachers within them – for example, separated by department, with some departments being more supportive and tolerant of their colleagues than others. Horn and Little's study (2010) served as a good example that demonstrated how differently teachers within departments communicated with one another and how that communication resulted in either creating a sense of membership, affiliation, and professional growth; or, feeling unacknowledged, ridiculed, and alienated. Horn and Little (2010) conducted a qualitative case study where they observed, audio and video recorded teacher interactions with one another, and conducted individual interviews for the duration of two school years. While this study included two schools, the published article (2010) described interactions within one school but in two different departments, for the duration of one school year. There was a Math Department group (Algebra group) and an English Department group (English group), both of which self-identified as collaborative entities. The Algebra group had a department average of 8.7 years of teaching experience and the English group had a department average of 3.5 years of teaching experience. Horn and Little (2010) provided two examples of group interactions that they said were representative of how teachers within those groups generally communicated with one another.

In the first example – the Algebra group, Horn and Little (2010) described a situation where a novice teacher came to the departmental meeting feeling discontented about the way her lesson went earlier that day. After listening to the teacher explain her situation, the other math teachers "normalized" the situation by drawing examples from their own classes, emphasizing the fact that the problem was not related to the number of years spent in the profession, and connecting it to teaching as a practice in general. They then asked further questions which prompted the novice teacher to analyze and reflect on her own teaching techniques, expectations, and even personality. All the while, the novice teacher "was positioned with substantial agency in defining and

elaborating on the problem and in working out possible responses" (Horn & Little, 2010, p. 129). The other math teachers helped each other connect these real life experiences within the classroom to more abstract concepts of teaching. Horn and Little (2010) referred to this approach as "checking in" or "turning toward" the conversation of teaching – an approach that "positioned the teachers in alliance with one another, creating a sense of membership and affiliation (p. 197) (…) They explicitly relieved one another from blame for problems of practice, while still signaling that they were collectively responsible for student learning" (p. 201).

Contrary to the practices of the Algebra group, the English group engaged in a "walk through" approach and "turned away" from conversations of teaching. The English group divided the labour by having each teacher create lesson plans for different units and later sharing those lessons with the others. The "walk through" approach used during their meetings involved the lesson planner walking the other teachers through the plan as a way of giving a condensed version of the lesson. In Horn and Little's (2010) second example, an English teacher tried to interject when one of her colleagues – the lesson planner for that week, was walking the rest of the teachers through the lesson she had designed. As the teacher voiced a potential complication that her students may experience, together with her own lack of full understanding of the assignment being presented, her input was marked as irrelevant by the lesson planner who responded with "whatever," (Horn & Little, 2010, p. 203) and continued talking. When that teacher tried to once again express her opinion, her concern was pushed aside and met with a joke by another colleague who called her "legally brain dead" (Horn & Little, 2010, p. 204). It was not until a yet another colleague expressed her agreement with the concern that the English group stopped to address the comments. The teacher who had the concern was given different options of things she could do while executing the lesson plan, should problems arise in the classroom. While the group

eventually expressed sympathy for the teacher, it defined the concern as that of the problem poser alone. “This positioned the problem poser as relatively helpless in the face of circumstances beyond his or her control or as a passive recipient of others’ advice (Horn & Little, 2010, p. 192) – turning collective attention away from the problem of practice” (p. 207).

Horn and Little (2010) argued that professional learning and a sense of being respected happened more successfully in the Algebra group because they dealt with issues in ways that created membership and treated questions and problems as deserving attention. “Principles of teaching were cast not as tips or tricks but as ways of interpreting students’ responses” (Horn & Little, 2010, p. 201). The group even brought in colleagues from other schools to participate in their meetings. On the other hand, the English group did not seem to be concerned with reflection and “individual preference and perspectives prevailed when disagreements surfaced” (Horn & Little, 2010, p. 209). However, the English group may have felt pressured by time to “get things done” instead of “figure things out.” They were pressed to create lessons for the immediate future and did not try to analyze how similar lessons have been taught previously (Horn & Little, 2010).

Allensworth et al. (2009) pointed out that attrition was very much influenced by the teachers’ perceptions of their colleagues and administrators in feeling respected and supported to do their job well. Horn and Little (2010) identified that different social dynamics could occur not only within different schools, but also within departments in the same school.

**Mentorship of New Teachers**

Horn and Little's study (2010) demonstrated the importance of proper mentorship for new teachers, either by more veteran teachers or by superiors. Other studies (ATA, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014) also discussed the importance of appropriate mentorship and how mentors could support or undermine quality of education that beginning teachers

provided, as well as how long beginning teachers remained in the profession. Kutsyuruba et al. (2014) pointed to Canada's overall lack of consistency in terms of providing mentorship for beginning teachers, saying that induction and mentorship programs varied greatly by province and territory. Only Ontario and Northwest Territories addressed new teacher mentorship at the provincial level, while other provinces and territories relied on education ministries, unions, or individual boards and schools to execute teacher mentoring (Kutsyuruba et al., 2014). Induction and mentorship programs ranged from conferences, workshops, and being paired up with a veteran teacher for one year (Ontario) to simply receiving a brochure about being a teacher (Saskatchewan). Yet, some provinces did not have any induction or mentorship programs at all (Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island). The province of Alberta had a formal teacher induction and mentorship program in order improve teaching and learning (Kutsyuruba et al., 2014). The program provided guidelines for administrators and teachers about "proper" mentoring, such as doing observations and giving feedback. However, only half of Alberta teachers (52%) felt that the feedback they received led to positive changes in their teaching (OECD, 2013). Kutsyuruba et al. (2014) urged that when designing mentorship programs, stakeholders had to consider the role of administrators in serving as "proper mentors" in order to help new teachers develop and grow rather than simply assess them on performance.

**Workplace Bullying**

A considerable number of studies and numerous school initiatives have addressed issues of bullying at schools. However, most of them discussed bullying among students with very little emphasis placed on bullying among teachers or bullying of teachers. Although very little information exists on workplace bullying at schools specifically, a plethora of research exists on workplace bullying in other sectors (e.g., Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen, Hoel, & Zapf, 2010; Jacobson,

Hood, & Van Buren, 2013; Leymann, 1996; MacIntosh, Wuest, Gray, & Cronkhite, 2010; Rhodes et al., 2010; Salin & Hoel, 2013), indicating that it was a serious problem that often related to levels of job dissatisfaction and attrition.

For some professions and fields, workplace bullying seemed commonplace and even expected. However, Salin and Hoel (2013) argued that in the case of nurses and teachers, workplace bullying may have been more damaging since those employees generally chose their professions because they felt a calling to help people and change people's lives as opposed to "attaining status or high monetary gains" (p. 245). Therefore, when the everyday realities of their work environments did not coincide with their expectations, nurses and teachers became more vulnerable to harmful effects of job dissatisfaction (Salin & Hoel, 2013).

In 2005, CTF conducted a survey in Ontario about teacher bullying in the workplace. Out of 1,217 respondents, 38% claimed to have been bullied by a student, 36% of elementary teachers and 22% of high school teachers reported being bullied by parents, one in three reported an increase in the number of incidents with angry or abusive parents compared to four years prior, one in four were bullied by their superiors, one in five knew a teacher who had been cyber bullied the previous year, and one in seven were bullied by coworkers. Even though individual employees may be to blame for workplace bullying, Fuller et al. (2013) argued that teacher behaviour may have been a reflection of not simply individual personalities but of organization-wide norms and expectations, as well as a cultural understanding of how work got done at those schools or boards. More research is needed to explore the effects of bullying on teachers' levels of job satisfaction and tendencies to leave from their jobs.

Supportive work relationships did not only differ from school to school, but from one group of teachers to another within the same school (Horn & Little, 2010). Workplace bullying in schools

remained largely unexplored even though teachers reported being bullied (CTF, 2005). Fuller et al. (2013) argued that teacher behaviour may have been dependent on the school or school board culture, rather than individual personalities. At the same time, more teachers reported being bullied by superiors, parents, and students than by co-workers (CTF, 2005). School leadership had a strong influence on the type of relationships teachers had with one another – positive or negative (Allensworth et al., 2009). Site-level leadership and "principals can be 'catalytic agents' for school improvement" (Fuller et al., 2013, p. 5). Having expert mentors proved to have young teachers remain in the profession at higher rates and become more competent as opposed to learning by trial and error (Darling-Hammond, 2010). However, not all new teachers received proper mentorship, and the levels and quality of mentorship varied greatly by province and territory (Kutsyuruba et al., 2014).

## Salaries

Salaries may be a determining factor in how long employees remain at their jobs. Literature on teacher salaries showed differences between Canada and the United States in regards to attrition. The differences are discussed below.

Almost every U.S. study on teacher attrition that I reviewed talked about low salaries of teachers as potential contributing factors. Many of them discussed the differences in salaries between urban and suburban teachers. Teachers who worked in disadvantaged urban schools in the United States received a salary that was 1/3 of what teachers in other schools were paid (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This could also be related to the fact that United States urban schools, in general, had a higher number of less qualified and less experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010); which could be reflected in the salaries of these teachers.

Salaries, as one of the reasons for attrition, were not mentioned in studies on Alberta teachers. On the contrary, Duxbury and Higgins (2013) claimed that families in their ATA sample were middle or upper-middle class and, in fact, were more financially secure than their national sample. It is important to remember that even though Alberta teachers may have been some of the highest paid in Canada, the cost of living in the province was also substantially higher than in other provinces (Statistics Canada, Consumer Price Index, 2014). Therefore, when comparing salaries between provinces, the difference in the cost of living should be taken into consideration since all provinces and territories have varying salaries, minimum wages, and living costs.

The CTF (2011) stated that, based on their 2007/2008 survey, salaries where not a significant factor in influencing teachers to leave. Clark and Antonelli (2009) stated that only a few newer or part-time teachers in Ontario left their schools due to insufficient compensation. Salaries were not mentioned in many other Canadian studies on teacher attrition and it may be safe to assume that teacher salaries were not a significant contributing factor to teacher attrition in Canada.

Despite the fact that teachers at disadvantaged U.S. schools had lower pay, their salaries also did not appear to be a determining factor for attrition. After having analyzed several school board initiatives to provide bonus pays - in some instances up to $18,000 per year for teachers in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, Darling-Hammond (2010) reported that the extra pay did very little to attract or retain teachers. Urban school teachers claimed that it was not the salary that attracted them to certain schools but rather principals who were good instructional leaders and like-minded colleagues who were committed to the same goals (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Salaries were mentioned by some studies as contributing factors to attrition. However, there was a difference between teacher salaries in Canada and the United States. Generally, salaries

were not a contributing factor to teacher attrition in Canada. In the United States, low salaries were more of an issue for urban school teachers than suburban teachers. However, in her literature review, Darling-Hammond (2010) stated that salary increases did very little to retain teachers in urban schools, where contributing factors to attrition closely tied to supportive school leadership.

## Class Composition

Previous studies pointed out connections between teacher attrition and class composition, such as students' socio-economic status, ethnic background, dominant language skills, and special needs. A considerably larger amount of research on the topic of socio-economic status of students has been conducted in the United States compared to Canada. As well, easily accessible comprehensive studies on racial and ethnic background of students, as well as their varying racial and ethnic needs, prevailed more in the U.S. than in Canada. On the other hand, in terms of class composition, Canadian studies focused on special needs students overall and English language learners overall. However, some studies also discussed socio-economic status of students. This section discusses how class compositions may have led some teachers to leave their schools. It also talks about some differences between research conducted in Canada and research conducted in the U.S. in regards to class composition.

Racial and ethnic backgrounds were generally connected to socio-economic status, with students of colour generally coming from socio-economically disadvantaged families (Jordan & Cooper, 2003). Socio-economically disadvantaged schools were generally situated in an urban setting and tended to have many underperforming students with challenging behaviours (CTF, 2011; Jordan & Cooper, 2003; PISA, 2012). Student classroom behaviour had a strong link to teachers' tendencies to either leave teaching or move to a new school (Allensworth et al., 2009;

CTF, 2011) and the ability to build positive relationships with students contributed to teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction (ATA, 2014).

**Studies from the United States**

In the U.S., teacher attrition was 50% higher in urban schools than in suburban ones (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Often, economically disadvantaged students were visible minorities (Jordan & Cooper, 2003).

In their study of Chicago teachers, Allensworth et al. (2009) discovered that 2/3 of the schools with high attrition rates were schools where nearly all students were from socio-economically disadvantaged families. Schools that struggled the most in retaining their teachers were in low-income neighbourhoods with predominantly African American or a mix of African American and Latino students (Allensworth et al., 2009). In their literature review of studies done about African American students, Jordan and Cooper (2003) stated that African American male students had "higher dropout rates, lower standardized achievement scores, higher suspension and expulsion rates…" (p. 200). Student achievement was directly related to teaching quality; and, teaching quality was generally related to experience (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Many urban teachers were poorly prepared, poorly qualified, and less experienced; and, were twice as likely to leave their schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods than suburban teachers (Ball, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). That phenomenon created a vicious cycle of constant teacher turnover because teachers did not feel effective in the classroom, felt overwhelmed, simply did not know what to do, and at the same time did not want to shortage the students (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The situation was further intensified by the fact that poorly-qualified and ineffective teachers only contributed to the achievement gap between low-income and more affluent students. Previous

literature suggested "the achievement gap would be much reduced if low-income minority students were routinely assigned (…) highly-qualified teachers, rather than the poorly-qualified teachers they most often encounter" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 17).

Urban schools losing their poorly-qualified teachers may have been beneficial since they lost ineffective underprepared teachers. Furthermore, there were a lot more teachers being produced for the job annually than were being hired (Darling-Hammond, 2010). However, this would have been beneficial only if the poorly-qualified teachers were actually being replaced by higher-qualified ones – which was not often the case (Allensworth et al., 2009). Allensworth et al. (2009) learned that poorly-qualified teachers were generally being replaced by other poorly-qualified teachers; and, that teachers who ended up quitting from their urban schools did not necessarily move to more advantaged better-performing schools. The study did not report how many urban teachers in Chicago actually left the profession since they did not have the possibility of knowing whether teachers simply transferred out of the district or left the profession altogether. However, out of those urban teachers who transferred to other schools within the district, approximately "half moved to a school with similar or lower achievement than the one they left" (Allensworth et al., 2009, p. 12). For those teachers who moved to more affluent schools - "the difference in the number of low-income students between new and former schools was less than 1%" (Allensworth et al., 2009, p. 22). Therefore, the belief that teachers moved because of the students' ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds could be challenged.

**Studies from Canada**

A smaller number of Canadian studies discussed socio-economic status of students, and a much smaller number discussed racial and ethnic background of students, in relation to teacher attrition. Ethnic and racial data on students and student achievement was generally difficult to find.

With the exception of Aboriginal student statistics, culturally neutral data (e.g., grade levels, ages, class sizes) was easily accessible. Studies that mentioned race and ethnicity generally tended to group students together under "visible minority" without a further breakdown (e.g., Black, East Asian, Middle Eastern, Latino etc.) or just under "immigrants."

Unlike in the U.S., Canadian studies generally did not discuss connections between socio-economic status of students and their behaviour, or whether socio-economically disadvantaged students also tended to be visible minority. However, the CTF (2011) and the ATA (2014) studies mentioned challenging student behaviour as one of the reasons for attrition. In fact, student behaviour was the third leading cause for teacher attrition in Ontario (CTF, 2011). In Ontario, 74% of teachers said socio-economic changes in the community and the presence of gangs in the school had a significant negative effect on the students; and, 30% believed racist and sexist conduct by students had a significant negative impact on students' ability to succeed (CTF, 2011). As well, Ontario teachers asked for more support for immigrant and Aboriginal students, as well as English language learners (CTF, 2011).

On the other hand, 95% of Alberta teachers expressed satisfaction that their schools were helping students demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours (Alberta Education, 2015). At the same time, OECD (2013) stated that Alberta teachers were more likely than other teachers in the TALIS study to work at schools with high proportions (more than 10%) of students who had special needs or students of linguistic minorities. Almost 1/3 of Alberta teachers reported losing a lot of class time due to student interruptions (OECD, 2013). Because Alberta classrooms did not appear any more disruptive overall than in other TALIS countries, OECD (2013) suggested the possibility that teachers in different countries may have different levels of tolerance for disruptions.

Usually, when Canadian studies discussed class composition, it was in regards to large classes and teachers feeling overwhelmed by the number of students in their classrooms (ATA, 2014). Teachers asked for smaller class sizes in order to provide more inclusive education (CTF, 2011). In terms of student learning across the globe, class size seemed to have little influence on student achievement (PISA, 2013). Indeed, the PISA report for 2012 (2013) stated that connections between class size and student achievement depended more on the culture of the country rather than the sheer number of students.

Studies from the U.S. and Canada tied teachers' tendencies to quit to class composition. While many U.S. studies discussed visible minority status of students, in terms of class composition, Canadian studies discussed linguistic, immigrant, Aboriginal, and special needs statuses overall. Both countries talked about a low socio-economic status of communities having a negative effect on student behaviour. Student behaviour was one of the main causes of teacher attrition (ATA, 2014; CTF, 2011). Allensworth et al. (2009) challenged the idea of teachers quitting mainly because of student demographics by concluding that teachers who quit from certain schools, often left for schools with similar student demographics. Loeb et al. (2005) found that working conditions influenced attrition more than student demographics. Duxbury and Higgins (2013) claimed that working conditions were dependent on school leadership. Allensworth et al. (2009) stated that, typically, it was the quality of school leadership that made a difference to teacher turnover, both attrition and mobility, rather than various student characteristics.

## Personal and Academic Backgrounds of Teachers

Studies showed that academic and personal backgrounds of teachers could have an effect on their abilities to connect with students and their tendency to quit teaching (Allensworth et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2007). Personal background referred

to teachers' racial and ethnic background, country of origin, gender, age, years of teaching experience, as well as individual personalities. Academic background referred to the type of teacher education received and the level of higher education attained. Even though studies discussed students' socio-economic status in relation to teacher attrition (as discussed in the previous section), not many discussed teachers' socio-economic background in relation to their tendencies to quit. In this section, I discuss studies on racial/ethnic backgrounds, countries of origin, and academic backgrounds of teachers. Gender was discussed previously in this literature review with no major differences found between female and male teachers, in terms of attrition. Age, years of experience, and individual personalities - all personal attributes of teachers, are discussed in the later section about "Millennials."

**Teachers' Racial and Ethnic Background**

While the student population in Canada was becoming increasingly diverse, the teachers and school administrators remained predominantly white (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2007). Studies showed that the rapport teachers and students established through their common cultural heritage could be very strong (Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Philip, 2012; Ryan et al., 2007). In Jordan and Cooper's case (2003), they argued "race congruence and cultural synchronization may have made a difference in motivating Black students to learn" (p. 205). Teachers of all backgrounds and similar academic backgrounds were more likely to leave predominantly black schools, although black teachers were a bit more likely than others to remain at their schools and white teachers were slightly more likely to leave (Allensworth et al., 2009). A considerably larger amount of research from the United States discussed race and ethnicity of teachers, compared to Canada.

Data on racial and ethnic background of teachers in the U.S. - former and current, was easier to access. Unlike in the United States, those statistics were not easily available to the public

in Canada. The ATA told me that they did not track such data, although the ATA study (2014) suggested, “It would also be useful, in a future study, to collect and analyze demographic information about the respondents” (p. 7). In an email communication, Alberta Education refrained from acknowledging my question about race and ethnicity of teachers and students, but did answer my second question about the teachers’ ages. Ryan et al. (2007) were unsuccessful in locating racial and ethnic information about Canadian teachers. Eventually, with the help of Statistics Canada, they drew upon the census data for 2007 reporting that visible minority teachers made up 5.4% of Canadian teachers, compared to the total number of visible minorities which made up 13.4% of the Canadian population (Ryan et al., 2007). This number did not include the Aboriginal population. The data was grouped together under "Visible Minority Teachers," without a further disaggregation - for example, East Asian, Black, Middle Eastern, Latino, etc.

Despite having less information on Canadian teachers’ race, the available data was similar to the visible minority teacher situation in the U.S. (Ryan et al., 2007). However, the lack of minority teachers in the two countries may have had different causes. According to Ryan et al. (2007), U.S. schools had a higher minority student dropout rate in the years leading to high school, in high school, and even college, diminishing the pool of potential minority candidates with university education. In the case of Canada, Ryan et al. (2007) stated that immigrant students and many of the Canada-born visible minority students, generally, achieved as well as Canada-born white students.

On the other hand, almost half (48%) of Canada's Aboriginal school-aged students did not finish high school; and, only 25-30% finished high school within the typical three years (MacIver, 2012). This phenomenon may considerably diminish the pool of Aboriginal candidates with university education. However, MacIver (2012) stated that in 2006, Aboriginal teachers made up

6% of Saskatchewan teachers. According to Statistics Canada (2006) for that same year, Aboriginal Peoples made up 15% of Saskatchewan's population. Those numbers were similar to Ryan et al.'s (2007) data about other visible minorities in Canada, whether Canada-born or immigrants. This may indicate that Canada's visible minority groups, in general - whether they achieved as well as Canada-born white students or performed more poorly, were still disproportionately represented in the teaching force compared to the general population. MacIver (2012) drew data from the province's Ministry - Saskatchewan Education and Ryan et al. (2007) drew data from Statistics Canada. Both were considered to be sources of reliability.

Ryan et al.'s study (2007) consisted of them analyzing census data, surveying Canadian principals, and analyzing a University of Toronto's study about Canadian immigrant teachers. Ryan et al. (2007) mentioned that the majority of Canadian minorities arrived as immigrants. Due to a different immigration program, Canadian immigrants tended to be more educated than American immigrants and were more likely to have a university degree compared to their Canada-born peers (Ryan et al., 2007). "In contrast to the United States, Canada appears to have a comparatively more substantial pool of educators of colour from which to draw" (Ryan et al., 2007, p. 14) and "one of the reasons that there are so few educators of colour in Canada is that teachers of colour have difficulty finding jobs in their profession. This problem is particularly acute for internationally educated teachers…" (p. 15). Teaching was the fourth most common profession of arriving immigrants and Ryan et al. (2007) attributed low proportions of visible minority teachers to Canada's general reluctance to hire immigrant professionals, especially if they came from the "third world."

On the other hand, despite being born in Canada and having completed education in Canada, CTF (2010) report stated that Aboriginal teachers described a pervasive atmosphere where

"their professional capabilities were questioned" (p. 41) and their qualifications disregarded. Aboriginal teachers further "described various ways in which they experienced racism," (CTF, 2010, p. 8) with racism in education being typically "denied, ignored and trivialized" (p. 8).

When reporting attrition and mobility rates for Canadian teachers, a further break down of statistics on race and ethnicity would be useful.

Although a number of studies pointed to benefits of having a diverse workforce, simply having a non-white teacher “does not mean he or she will automatically provide a better educational environment for white or non-white students” (Ryan et al., 2007, p. 6). Racial congruence between teachers and students may have been very important in some schools, but an effective teacher of any race or ethnicity was more preferable for student success than an ineffective teacher of colour (Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Nevertheless, previous studies linked the presence of visible minority teachers to student success, especially in the case of minority students (Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Ryan et al., 2007). That topic, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis. In the case of attrition though, the link between visible minority status of teachers and attrition has been very weak (Allensworth et al., 2009).

**Teachers' Academic Background**

New teachers who felt ineffective and who lacked preparation for the job had a higher likelihood of leaving as opposed to those who felt well prepared for teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2010). “Most inexperienced teachers start the year in a deficit position and struggle to gain a sense of efficacy and wellbeing” (ATA, 2014, p. 51). Fuller et al. (2013) argued that a sense of teacher efficacy was not necessarily an individual personality trait but depended on the social cohesiveness of the school. Kutsyuruba et al. (2014) concluded that most provinces and territories had some form of mentorship for new teachers, whether on the provincial level, through unions, or through

school boards. At the same time, the ATA (2014) stated, “Most teachers in Canada receive no support or mentoring upon entering the profession” (p. 13). New teachers who were not assigned a mentor or some kind of support person reported feeling very stressed out and overwhelmed (ATA, 2014). On the other hand, some of the more veteran teachers in the ATA study (2014) mentioned that their stressful points in the year had to do with the fact that the department had to mentor too many student teachers, which created extra stress and a lot of additional work. “...well-designed mentoring programs improve retention rates for new teachers along with their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 24). In the future, it may be worth studying how mentor teachers get selected.

While some studies demonstrated that ineffective, poorly prepared, and at times, under-qualified teachers were more likely to quit from their schools (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2010; Jordan & Copper, 2003), other findings suggested that teachers with strong academic backgrounds, such as having high GPA’s and having attended highly selective universities (Allensworth et al., 2009), and teachers with master's degrees or higher (Fuller et al., 2013) were also more likely to quit. Even though more complete preparation of teachers with strong academic backgrounds, generally, enhanced student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2010) and student achievement has been linked to teacher job satisfaction (ATA, 2014), Allensworth et al. (2009) found only weak links between teacher education programs and turnover rates.

In this section, I discussed themes that were believed to be among contributing factors job dissatisfaction and therefore, to teacher attrition: collegial, administrative, and systemic supports; salaries; class composition; personal and academic backgrounds of teachers.

In terms of collegial, administrative, and systemic supports, mentorship programs for new teachers were tied to how long those teachers remained in the profession. Kutsyuruba et al. (2014)

urged for a greater emphasis to be placed on selecting administrators who could serve as "proper" mentors since they were generally the ones responsible for executing mentorship programs. School administrators were also responsible for creating the school culture that influenced teachers' tendencies to either stay or leave (Fuller et al., 2013). However, Fuller et al. (2013) also suggested that school administrators' conduct was very much dependent on the system-wide norms and interpretations of how work was done there.

Although salaries (Darling-Hammond, 2010) and class composition were brought up, they generally had little influence on teachers' tendencies to quit compared to the quality of school leadership (Allensworth et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013; Loeb et al., 2005).

Teacher backgrounds discussed in this section were racial/ethnic backgrounds and countries of origin of teachers, as well as teacher preparation for the job. Even though underprepared teachers were more likely to leave their schools, teachers with master's degrees or higher were also more likely to leave (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fuller et al., 2013). Canadian teachers were disproportionately white (Ryan et al., 2007). However, no direct links were made between teachers' visible minority status and tendencies to quit. Allensworth et al. (2009) concluded that racial and ethnic qualities only had a small link to turnover.

## Millennials (Generation Y)

Personal teacher characteristics with the strongest predictor to turnover were age and experience (Allensworth et al., 2009). In 2015, the youngest and least experienced teachers in Alberta schools were those of the millennial generation – born roughly between 1977 and 1995 (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). They also made up approximately 45% of the teachers in the province (Alberta Education, Alberta Teaching Certification Statistics, 2015). Every generation

carries with it its own set of values and ideals, rooted in the collective experiences of its time. Being the youngest generation of professionals, few studies have been conducted as of yet about millennial teachers specifically. Other sectors have already begun to address generational differences and needs of its employees, while the education sector remained fairly constant since the 60's, in terms of its employment and retention practices (Ball, 2013; Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). In this section, I discuss the literature on millennial employees in general, as well as talk about a small number of articles written about millennial teachers in the United States. This section is not an exhaustive collection of research on millennial teachers, but is rather a review of selected literature of potential generational differences that may play a role in teacher attrition.

**Millennial Employees**

In 2013, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) conducted a large-scale generational study of its employees all over the world. The reason they conducted the study was that they began to notice that many of their young employees left after only a few years on the job. PwC (2013) indicated that millennials tended to be highly educated and educationally minded, creative, innovative, confident, and globally oriented. Millennials and Baby Boomers (those born roughly between 1945 and 1965) were thought to have similar strong moral values to "contribute to a larger movement for positive change… pursue a more open and tolerant society" (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009, p. 2; Wong & Wong, 2007b). Millennials were considered to be the most diverse generation of professionals and were dubbed "global citizens" (Wong & Wong, 2007b). In their literature review, Wong and Wong (2007b) stated that millennials "may be the most socially conscious generation since the baby boomers" (p. 2). It was unclear how either of those studies evaluated millennials' levels of social conscientiousness, creativity, or contribution to positive change.

**Millennial Teachers**

Kutsyuruba et al. (2014) referred to teaching as an occupation that "eats its young" with an intergenerational gap between employees serving as one of the challenges for new teachers. In their literature review on millennial workers and teachers, Behrstock and Clifford (2009) stated that because of their collaborative and tech-savvy skills, together with their desire for a more peaceful world, millennial teachers could very well be the needed “Teachers of Tomorrow.” At the moment, such statements rely largely on speculation and research is needed to see whether millennial teachers are in fact more tech-savvy and peaceful than the other generations. The biggest threat of millennial employee turnover was the idea that workplaces would lack the appropriate “21st Century” key skills needed in order to operate in today’s world (PwC, 2013). Again, more research is needed to see whether "21st Century" skills possessed by millennials are different from those of other generations.

Coley (2009) emphasized that while the whole faculty of multiple generations would have liked and benefited from certain conditions, for millennial teachers those conditions were necessary if schools were to retain them. Whether talking about teachers or other millennial workers, the primary reason for turnover seemed to relate to them not being interested in having a traditional boss. Instead, they wanted a transparent leader who could be respected for his or her expertise rather than just the title of the position (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coley, 2009; PwC, 2013). Work flexibility, work and life balance, and paperwork procedures that were not very cumbersome have also been noted as contributing factors to millennial teachers’ tendencies to leave the profession (Coley, 2009).

**Possible Connections Between Data on Millennial Employees and Teacher Attrition**

We may attempt to see how the small amount of data specifically on millennials might relate to the widely-available and extensive attrition data on all teachers. Young teachers made up

a large number of teachers in Alberta (45%). Being young, many of them could be novice teachers. Previous studies showed that "schools with higher proportions of new teachers are hiring at high rates and typically have higher turnover rates" (Loeb et al., 2005, p. 62). Millennials were reported to desire collaborative work environments where they could develop strong relationships with colleagues and a sense of membership (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coley, 2009; PwC, 2013; Wong & Wong, 2007b). Yet, one of the biggest reasons for attrition had to do with teachers' inability to develop a sense of belonging, having no time to collaborate with colleagues, and lacking proper mentorship (Allensworth et al., 2009; ATA, 2014; Ball, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013; Fuller et al., 2013; Kutsyuruba et al., 2009). In the case of proper mentorship, many teachers not only lacked mentors in their first year of teaching, but also reported a lack of administrative support (Allensworth et al., ATA, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010). It is also worth considering that literature on millennials indicated that they were highly educated, very diverse, and yearned work flexibility and innovation. On the other hand, data on the current teaching situation showed that teachers who had high GPA's and who held master's degrees or higher were more likely to quit (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fuller et al., 2013), the teaching profession was disproportionately white (Philip, 2013; Ryan et al., 2007), teachers reported less flexibility than nurses or police officers (ATA, 2014), and the education field as a whole was very much steeped in tradition (Ball, 2013; Coley, 2009).

Research exists on the needs of millennial employees. However, research on millennial employees in the education sector is still very limited. In this section, I attempted to make connections between data available on millennial employees in general and teacher attrition data from all generations. Although some connections could be possible, most conclusions were very speculative as no comprehensive studies on Canadian or U.S. millennial teachers have been

conducted that confirmed that "stereotypically" millennial characteristics played a role in teachers' decisions to quit.

Therefore, my study is significant as it addresses the current gap in research literature on millennial teachers in Canada and their reasons for leaving the profession. Even though connections between studies on millennial employees and teacher attrition are mostly speculative at the moment, my study aims to bridge those gaps through the exploration of the real-life experiences of my millennial participants.

## Conclusion

Attrition of Canadian millennial teachers remains an area to be investigated. Despite the plethora of studies conducted on teacher attrition in Canada and the United States, and despite the many suggestions, exodus rates remained fairly high – 40% - 50% within five years (Allensworth et al., 2009; Clandinin et al., 2012). Some attrition was natural and expected but too much of it negatively affected school reform programs, new program implementations, quality of education, and education budgets that had to be spent on recruitment and mentorship (Allensworth et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Many teachers quit for personal reasons, such as retirement or change in family situations. Personal reasons may be difficult to predict and control. However, the primary non-personal reason for teacher attrition was job dissatisfaction. Job dissatisfaction was tied to work-life balance and collegial, administrative, and systemic support.

Study after study and theme after theme, discussions seemed to go back to school leadership as an epicentre of the teacher attrition movement (Allensworth et al., 2009; ATA, 2013; CTF, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013; Kutsyuruba, 2014). School leaders were reported to have significant control over teacher workloads and school climate. Studies also indicated that student qualities and salaries may have been blamed for teacher attrition,

but when explored further, the data indicated those had very little effect on teacher attrition (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Teacher qualities also came under investigation with such characteristics as gender, race, and academic background playing too small a role in teachers' tendencies to leave (Allensworth et al., 2009; CTF, 2011). However, out of teacher characteristics, it was age and experience that seemed to have the biggest influence on teacher attrition, with the younger less experienced teachers leaving in higher numbers than the older generations (Allensworth et al., 2009; Ball, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Loeb et al., 2005). The youngest generation of professionals at the moment is the millennial generation. Although some studies (PwC, 2013) showed that differences existed between millennial and older employees, very little data was available about how those differences came into play in regards to the teaching profession and teacher attrition.

As more millennials join the workforce, research is needed about millennial teachers' needs and whether those needs are any different from other generations'. While encouraging the education sector to evolve according to the needs of younger and different generations, we need to be aware of the fact that the field of education is very much buried in tradition. "Systemically, educators are still much the same as they were in the '60s. Given the socio-political, demographic, and economic realities of today, they must ask themselves if they are asking the right questions, and are they willing to grow from the insights they receive?" (Ball, 2013, p. 39).

Addressing the issues of teacher turnover – movers and leavers, is one of the most urgent topics in education right now because school reform initiatives, new program implementations, and professional development efforts have very little chance of being effective and sustainable if there is constantly changing teaching staff.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

A qualitative exploratory case study approach was used to investigate the phenomenon of millennial teacher attrition in Canada. Multiple participants were interviewed in order to illustrate the main issue (Creswell, 2013). Case study was the preferred approach to use for this research topic since: (1) it helped answer the "why" questions that required an extensive in-depth description; (2) I had little to no control over the behavioural events; and (3) the focus of the study was a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The two research questions that I investigated were: (1) Why do Canadian millennial teachers leave K-12 schools? (2) What helps Canadian millennial teachers want to stay in K-12 schools?

Using an exploratory case study approach by interviewing several participants provided for a more thorough understanding since it consisted of analyzing different people's experiences in order to gain insight into one phenomenon. Case study was a research approach that had a long and distinguished history (Creswell, 2013). It was commonly used in educational research to allow investigators to focus on a case, while retaining a holistic and real-world perspective (Yin, 2014). Using an exploratory case study approach for my research brought together the various experiences and perspectives of former and current Canadian millennial teachers, as well as former teachers of older generations who came to Canada as immigrants. These multiple experiences and perspectives helped form conclusions about the overall meaning of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), which is millennial teacher attrition in Canada. This approach helped uncover some complex layers and provided useful information needed to help retain millennial teachers in Canadian K-12 schools.

I had three groups of participants. Depending on the saturation of the data, approximately four to five participants per group were selected, as this number was believed to provide ample

data to identify and analyze the themes that emerged from the stories of the participants (Creswell, 2013). I will enter into a full description of how the three groups of participants were selected later in this chapter.

This chapter will discuss in detail the steps I took in designing my study, recruiting participants, collecting and analyzing data. It will also discuss ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness, and limitations and delimitations of my study.

## Case Study Approach

### Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Interpretive qualitative research was the preferred methodology for my research questions as it allowed for an in-depth multilayered exploration and analysis of the phenomenon at hand. Because I was interested in understanding the phenomenon of millennial teacher attrition in Canada, I was not simply interested in the statistics of how many teachers quit. I was interested in understanding the perspectives of the millennial teachers themselves and how the factors that influenced some teachers to leave the profession differed from those who chose to stay.

Merriam (1998) stated that one of the key components of qualitative research was that the phenomenon had to be understood from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's. Another component of qualitative research, according to Merriam (1998) was that a human instrument had to be used as a data collection tool, as opposed to inventories, surveys, or questionnaires. The idea behind the importance of a human instrument was that humans were able to process data straight away, ask for clarifications or elaborations, and pick up on non-verbal cues. Other components that separated qualitative research from quantitative were the ideas that qualitative research built concepts, abstractions, and hypotheses, presenting findings in the form

of themes; and, that words, such as direct citations, together with descriptions and analysis were used to convey what has been learned about the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

### Rationale for Exploratory Case Study

Merriam (1998) described case study as "an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (p.19) and stated that the interest of the researcher had to be "in discovering rather than confirmation" (p.19) of the researcher's biases. In education, case studies were described as detailed "descriptions and analysis of a single unit or a bounded system" (Merriam, 1998, p.19). In the case of my research, the unit of analysis was teacher attrition and retention. Even though the three groups of participants were quite different, the in-depth information that these groups provided was there to support the understanding of the main phenomenon - millennial teacher attrition in Canada.

## Research Participants

### Purposeful Sampling

Purposeful sampling was used in order to recruit participants for this study. Due to the nature of the topic – former Canadian millennial teachers, specific criteria needed to be met. Having that criteria in place allowed for purposeful sampling of individuals (Creswell, 2013). "The logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases, with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 69).

Within this study, there were three distinct groups of participants, making a total of 13 participants. One of the delimiting conditions I placed on participant recruitment was all participants had to be Canadian citizens or permanent residents because the topic being explored focused on Canadians.

Millennials were considered to be those who were born roughly between 1977 and 1995 (Coggshall, Ott, Behrstock & Lasagna, 2010). Millennials were also known as Generation Y and in the beginning of my study, the main term that I was using for my target group was "Gen Y" rather than "millennial." However, I found that many people were familiar with the term "millennial" and not as familiar with the term "Gen Y," assuming it was a different generation. Therefore, I changed my terminology and began to refer to my target group as "millennials."

All of the millennial participants had to have gone through their teacher education in Canada but they did not have to have worked as teachers in Canada. For those millennials who left teaching, they had to have left K-12 teaching in order to engage in a different career. They could not have left K-12 teaching temporarily (e.g., maternity leave). Even though there could be instances when teachers left to become permanent stay-at-home caregivers, the purpose of my study was to explore the realities of teachers who left the K-12 teaching profession and chose not to go back to it by engaging in a different career outside of their home.

Former teachers, who were born outside of Canada and immigrated to Canada as permanent residents (immigrants) after having worked as teachers outside of Canada, could be of any age. Because different countries had different regulations about how to become a teacher, the immigrant participants did not have to have any formal teacher education. They just needed to have worked as teachers. Having said that, all of the immigrant participants who participated in my study went through formal teacher education programs outside of Canada, had teaching experience upon their move to the country, and were from pre-millennial generations.

In recruiting the participants, I relied largely on coworkers or classmates of my friends who worked in the education sector but who did not fit the participant criteria themselves. As well, I found a few of the participants quite unexpectedly by engaging in simple conversation with

strangers and later finding out details about them or someone that they knew who could potentially fit the criteria, should they choose to participate. A snowball sampling strategy was also implemented where participants referred other individuals for the study.

*Group I:*

The first group consisted of five participants (former teachers) who were residents of Canada and who went through teacher education in Canada. All five participants voluntarily left the K-12 teaching environment and were the main group in helping answer the research question of "Why do Canadian millennial teachers leave K-12 schools?"

*Group II:*

The second group consisted of four participants (current teachers) who were residents of Canada and who had not left the K-12 teaching environment. This particular group was the most difficult to recruit as current teacher participants tended to drop out of the study after having initially agreed to participate. Five participants who were unfamiliar with one another ended up not following through with the study by discontinuing their contact with me. It is important to note that none of the four current teachers who participated in this study were engaged in full-time teaching jobs at the time of data collection. This group of participants were the main group in helping answer the research question of "What helps Canadian millennial teachers want to stay in K-12 schools?"

*Group III:*

Some experiences and employment expectations could be intergenerational and intercultural. To determine to what was in fact characteristic of Canadian millennial teachers, I brought in a third group of participants that could potentially be the most contrasting to them, in terms of experience, practices, and expectations. The third group consisted of four participants

who were Canadian residents, but moved to Canada as immigrants after having taught outside of Canada before immigrating. The four participants were either of Baby Boomer generation (born approximately between 1945 and 1965) or Generation X (born approximately between 1966 and 1976). This group of participants was the main group in helping understand whether the reasons behind searching for employment in other sectors, outside of the K-12 teaching environment, were indeed more characteristic of Canadian millennial teachers, or if some of those reasons were perhaps generational and intercultural.

**Recruitment**

My participants lived in different places in Canada and had their teaching experience primarily within Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, or other countries.

I contacted my potential participants electronically and, if they expressed interest, I sent them an official email with the recruitment letter and consent form that were approved by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board. Participants were given an opportunity to read through the recruitment letter and the consent form in order to ask any additional questions. If they were still interested in participating, an appointment was made for an interview. Interviews will be discussed in the Data Collection Methods section.

Some factors that may have influenced the recruitment of my participants had to do with my own background. Being a former millennial teacher myself and also having immigrant background, I may have been considered more of an "insider" by my former millennial and former immigrant teacher participants. Recruiting current teachers was more difficult possibly because they felt uneasy with the topic and might have felt as though I was trying to "dig up some dirt" as opposed to simply exploring the phenomenon of attrition.

## Information Needed to Conduct the Study

This exploratory case study focused on 13 participants from different parts of Canada. Nine participants were of the millennial generation, with five of them being former teachers and four being current teachers. The other four participants were former teachers of older generations and had moved to Canada from other countries. In seeking to understand why Canadian millennial teachers left the K-12 teaching profession, two research questions were explored to gather the needed information. The information I was seeking included:

- Former millennial teachers' perceptions about why they left K-12 teaching in Canada and what they would have needed in order to remain in the profession
- Current millennial teachers' perceptions about why they wanted to stay in the profession and what future occurrences could possibly make them want to leave
- Former immigrant teachers' perceptions about why they did not teach in Canada and whether there were overarching themes between former immigrant and former Canadian teachers
- An ongoing literature review that provided grounding for my analysis and conclusions

## Research Design

The main goal of my study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the contributing factors related to Canadian teacher attrition in the millennial generational cohort. Although some teachers quit from their schools to go work at other schools, my focus was on the ones who left the profession altogether

I investigated how the former teachers' past and present professional and personal experiences may have played a role in their decisions to leave the teaching profession. I analyzed how those experiences, as well as future aspirations, compared to the participants who had continued teaching in K-12. By bringing in a third group of participants, former immigrant teachers

of all ages, I aimed to compare and contrast the reasons for not working as teachers between those of Canadian millennials and those of multi-generational immigrants. The purpose for doing that was to determine whether some of the explanations provided by the previous two groups (Canadian millennials) may have been intergenerational and intercultural as opposed to belonging just to Canadian millennials.

**Data Collection Methods**

Qualitative research relied heavily on interviews since interviews allowed the interviewer to explore the depth and richness of the participants' stories. Therefore, the main method of data collection for my study was interviewing. Publically available data from Alberta Education about Alberta teachers and students was also analyzed.

**Phase I: Interviews.** Interviews with the participants were the main focus of data collection. I conducted semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Having specific questions and propositions allowed each interview to stay within feasible limits (Yin, 2014). Doing that allowed me to keep the interviews within the expected parameters of the phenomenon of Millennial teacher attrition, as well as allowed me to zoom in on various topics brought up by the participants.

*Interview process.* Once the participants agreed to be interviewed, we set up a time that was most convenient for them. Some interviews took place at the university at Taylor Family Digital Library because of it being a central and neutral location on campus and because of their convenient room booking system. A couple of other locations around Calgary were used that were more convenient for the participants, as well as Skype and FaceTime interviews were conducted for those who could not come in person or who lived outside of Calgary. The interviews were conducted between September and November, 2015.

Before the interviews commenced, the participants were given an opportunity to ask any additional questions. Those who were interviewed in person signed their informed consent form before the interview and those who were interviewed electronically, had to have their consent form signed and emailed back to me prior to the interview.

The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to almost two hours and were audio-recorded. All of the interviews began by participants giving me a short introduction about their teaching careers, which allowed me to situate myself as a researcher and interviewer in a given participant's story. To ensure that all participants were given the opportunity to address some core topics, a set of specific questions was used to guide the interview. However, many of the interviewees covered what would have been the answers to certain questions even without me asking.

Some interviewees had less teaching experience, while some had more, some were willing to share more than others, and some were simply fast or slow talkers. That contributed to the various time lengths of the interviews. At times, the interviews got interrupted because the room booking had expired and we had to find another room; or, by technical difficulties if it was done over Skype or FaceTime.

Upon interview completion, the participants were told that they would receive a transcription of their interview, at which point they could edit, delete, or add anything.

*Transcription:*

I transcribed all the interviews and forwarded them to the appropriate participants. They were given a deadline by which they had to reply with the edited transcript if they wanted me to implement any changes, otherwise the transcript would be used as is. Participants were generally given between three to four weeks to respond. Some participants replied with edited versions, some

replied by confirming that everything was okay with the transcript as is, and some did not reply at all.

**Phase II: Follow-up questions.** Because certain themes came up in the later interviews, I had to send out follow-up questions to a few earlier participants seeking further clarification on a number of topics.

Initially, I was going to have a focus group where all the former teacher participants would come together to design an improvement plan for teaching conditions and create a "perfect" teacher schedule. This focus group did not happen for two reasons. Firstly, everyone had very different schedules and had different location preferences. Therefore, the focus group would have been very difficult to plan. Secondly, and perhaps most decisively, was that I realized that talking about schedules and teaching conditions fed into my own biases as I realized that I had assumed those would be the main contributing factors leading to teacher attrition. However, even if teaching conditions and schedules were mentioned, they did not come up for everyone and not everyone felt the same way. Therefore, to hold a focus group for what I had initially planned would not have been very useful and individual interviews were sufficient to cover the individual participants' stories, which was the focus of the study.

**Phase III: Additional sources**. I contacted Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) in order to obtain some information about how many teachers resigned during the previous couple of years and how many remained. I also inquired about whether they collected demographic information on teachers, such as their ages and race/ethnicity, in order for me to see if any of those things related to teacher attrition, since the issue of race and ethnic background came up in a few interviews. The ATA replied that they did not track that kind of information and suggested I contact Alberta Education. Alberta Education's website had the ages and the number of teachers

currently employed, but did not have the data on those who resigned. In an email communication with Alberta Education, they helped locate the information about the teacher ages, but refrained from answering about race/ethnicity and suggested I call them. When I phoned them, I was transferred from person to person until completing a full circle and being transferred back to the first person. No one was able to answer whether racial/ethnic data was collected on the teachers of Alberta. Therefore, not much data could be collected, outside of the interviews with the participants.

**Data Analysis and Synthesis**

In case studies, analysis generally involved the identification of recurring patterns, also known as themes (Merriam, 1998). Data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection in order to generate an emergent understanding of the research topic at hand (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). A table for each of the participant groups was created. The table was divided into sections which generally related to the main interview questions (e.g., Background of participants, pre-service experience, in-service experience, etc.). Participants' answers in each section were colour coded by themes (e.g., teacher education programs, mentor teachers, school timetables, union support, etc.). Overall, my goal was to find themes that were linked together, "either similarly or divergently" and that collectively described the research phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Each transcript was read several times. Reflections were made on larger thoughts presented until a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences was gained (Creswell, 2013).

First, I compared the themes within each category of participants. Second, I compared the themes across the categories in order to find bigger overarching patterns that transcended the unique and individual experiences (Yin, 2014).

The two millennial groups of participants shared many similar experiences. On the other hand, the immigrant participants' experiences were quite unique. Despite the overall differences between the millennial participants and immigrant participants, some themes were intergenerational and intercultural. Third, the themes explored during my study were situated within prior literature, research, and public documents. Certain themes pointed to the current gaps in literature.

The themes that emerged out of my study ended up being quite different from what I had initially assumed about the phenomenon of teacher attrition in Canada. Based on the analysis, I managed to see how this study filled some gaps in current literature about Canadian teachers. As well, I formulated ideas for future research and developed practical recommendations.

**Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent remained a priority and participants were given time to read through the Letter of Consent prior to officially agreeing to participate in my study. Participants were allowed to refrain from answering certain questions and were able to keep certain parts of their background undisclosed.

Real names of the participants were not used in the write-up of this thesis and only I have access to the real names. Participants were also given the opportunity to withdraw from the study anytime they wanted prior to the writing of the thesis.

After I transcribed the interviews, I forwarded the transcriptions to the participants so they could edit or delete anything within the transcript. They were also able to add any other information during that time. Some participants were sent follow-up questions and were given the option of not answering them. Some participants sent back answers to the follow-up questions, while others did not.

If participants wanted to implement any changes to their transcripts, they were given a deadline by which to respond. The deadline was usually three to four weeks after my initial email informing them about the option.

To ensure further anonymity, no names of school boards or cities where the participants worked or resided were named. For the immigrant participants, the countries of origin were not named and instead I used the bigger regions in which their old countries were situated (e.g., South America, South Asia, Eastern Europe).

Even though my study strives to protect the participants' privacy and anonymity, the participants were made aware (in the informed consent) that someone close to them or familiar with them could still end up recognizing them from some of the quotes that I would end up using or from stories shared during the interview.

## Issues of Trustworthiness

### Subjective Stance

I am a millennial teacher and currently do not hold a teaching position, while working on my Master's degree. Prior to this study, I worked as an elementary school teacher for four years in Ontario, Sweden, and Alberta. Having grown up among Eastern European, Central Asian, Far Eastern, and Western cultures, I went through the Soviet school system, Post-Soviet school system, and a Canadian public school system. My primary assumptions about the research at hand included the idea that Canadian teachers worked too many hours per week without proper break times or support, conditions which negatively affected the work-life balance of teachers — a very important aspect in supporting high quality of life in a developed country such as Canada. I believed that the main culprit that caused teacher attrition in Canada had to do with work overload.

In order to manage my biases, specific means of trustworthiness were employed, such as credibility, dependability, confirm-ability, and transferability.

**Credibility**

For my conclusions to be credible, they needed to be accurate from the standpoint of my participants, my readers, and from my own standpoint (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). I triangulated my data sources by hearing the stories of different participants, in relation to the phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). By having participants from different provinces and even different countries of origin yielded a fuller and richer picture of millennial teacher attrition in Canada.

I clarified my biases about teacher work overload before the study began. I was surprised at how themes emerged from my analysis of the interviews that had to do with issues other than work overload. This analysis showed that teachers identified many issues and conveyed instances that challenged my initial expectations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

**Dependability**

Dependability is a method qualitative researchers used to show consistency of findings. They describe exact methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation so another researcher can follow the study. I have described my methods of data collection and analysis in detail. In Chapter 5, I explained the ways in which I went about the interpretation of the findings from this study. My goal was to see how my collected data was consistent with the previous literature; and, if there were inconsistencies, the goal was to understand why they occurred (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Coding became important in my data analysis and I presented some of my work-in-progress at an international conference on education, where I received feedback and questions that further aided the critical analysis of my data.

**Confirmability**

In order to make sure that the findings were in fact the result of the research rather than a statement of my own biases, I constantly reflected on the data and, as mentioned before, identified themes that I had not previously considered. During the interviews, I asked confirming questions to make sure I had understood the participants' stories correctly. The interview questions were open-ended and the participants had the freedom to discuss what they believed played a significant role in their experiences. Direct quotes from the participants were used to support the findings.

### Transferability

Transferability refers to the way my readers would determine how and to what extent the findings and conclusions that I presented on the phenomenon of millennial teacher attrition in the context of Canadian K-12 schools could transfer to other instances of millennial teacher attrition in the same context. The depth and detail presented in my interviews, together with the fact that the key themes were brought up by multiple participants, and the fact that these themes were situated within literature – provided the basis for my conclusions to be relevant in a broader context, outside of my immediate study.

## Limitations and Delimitations

### Delimitations

One of the major delimitations of my study was the relatively small number of participants. Even though several participants brought up certain themes, the restricted sample size still made the findings difficult to generalize to other instances of millennial teacher attrition. However, the idea of transferability was employed where the rich and detailed data collected could provide building blocks for the knowledge on the phenomenon; and, that knowledge could perhaps be applicable to other instances of millennial teacher attrition.

Another notable delimitation had to do with the way I worded questions which could have influenced some of the participants' responses. Lack of experience as an interviewer and a researcher played a role for me in that regard. Merriam (1998) stated that interviewing was a skill that could be developed with practice. For the purposes of the analysis, the responses collected from participants for questions where I felt I might have influenced or led what the participants answered were not given nearly as much weight as the responses to open-ended questions. During interviews, when I caught myself asking influencing or leading questions, I would try to reword the question later in the interview in order to get a more authentic answer.

All of the participants for the study had to be Canadian citizens or permanent residents because the topic focused on Canadians. The millennial participants had to have gone through teacher education in Canada but did not necessarily had to have worked as teachers in Canada. The reason for that was that I was interested in understanding why some millennial teachers would choose not to teach in Canada. All the former millennial teachers had to be engaged in activities other than teaching in K-12 schools. The immigrant participants were not required to have gone through formal teacher education training because different countries had different requirements for being teachers. However, the immigrant participants had to have had experience working as teachers outside of Canada. The immigrant participants could not be holding teaching positions at the time of the study because I was interested in understanding why they were not working as K-12 teachers. Having that criteria in place allowed for purposeful sampling of participants who could best provide the needed data in order to explore the phenomenon of millennial teacher attrition in Canada.

Finally, a further delimitation was that my Canadian millennial participants only had their teaching experience within Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec - only three provinces out of 13 provinces

and territories. Realistically, it would have been very difficult and extremely time consuming to gain access to former millennial teachers in every single province and territory. However, my study could potentially be a "stepping stone" for future studies about millennial teachers in other provinces and territories.

**Limitations**

A number of limitations were also inherent in this study. Unfamiliarity with many of the participants may have played a role in the type of information the participants disclosed and the kinds of stories they shared, perhaps offering me the responses they felt I was looking for. On the other hand, the participants who were familiar with me may have been more guarded with their replies or incomplete with their stories, assuming that I already knew the rest. For the former, I tried to use open-ended questions as much as possible and asking for both sides of the story – for example, if they were constantly talking about the negatives, I would later ask about the positives. For the latter, I asked the participants to tell me the whole story again, even if I already knew it. As well, I refrained from using any personal knowledge of those participants when analyzing the transcripts and only stuck to the stories shared during the interviews.

There could have been a further difference in the responses of former and current teachers in a sense that former teachers may have felt more at ease talking about the negatives of the teaching profession, whereas the current teachers felt more guarded about expressing their negative opinions. Even though, this may have been more difficult to control, I kept assuring the participants that their names, city names, province names, school board names would not be mentioned in any of the write-ups.

Another major limitation in my research was one that almost every qualitative study faced – that the primary instrument for data collection was a human. According to Merriam (1998),

"…the investigator as human instrument is limited by being human – that is, mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, personal biases interfere" (p.20), hence, "all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values, and perspective" (p.22). Best efforts were taken in order to address issues of subjectivity. Those efforts were discussed in the section on Issues of Trustworthiness. For missed opportunities, I reached out to participants with follow-up questions. However, in some instances, the opportunities to gain additional understanding were truly missed, as not all participants responded to the follow-up questions.

## Significance of Study

This study was one of the first generational studies on teacher attrition in Canada. It provided an understanding behind the reasons of millennial teacher attrition. My study also brought up issues that remained largely unexplored in the context of Canadian schools – such as, race and ethnicity of educators, blacklisting of school employees, immigrant teachers' barriers to securing employment, bullying among school personnel, and the role practicum mentors played in setting student teachers up for success.

Previous studies have focused largely on the experiences and opinions of working teachers. Those studies reported that some teachers thought about leaving the profession several times a week (Duxbury & Higgins, 2013). However, talking about leaving the profession and actually doing it were two different things. My study focused primarily on the lived experiences of teachers who left the Canadian K-12 teaching environment.

I did not simply report on the problems related to teacher turnover, I provided potential solutions to help stabilize the mobility rate of young Canadian teachers. The solutions were voiced by the former and current millennial teachers, as well as former immigrant teachers. "Research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied

offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (Merriam, 1998, p.1).

This study is important in the field of education because it is obvious that the attrition rate is very high (40% within five years) for Canadian teachers. School reform initiatives and new programs implemented by schools may not be effective or sustainable if teachers implementing those programs leave teaching after only a few years.

## Summary

In this chapter, I discussed in detail the steps I took to design and conduct my study. A qualitative research methodology was the most effective way to answer my research questions: (1) why do Canadian millennial teachers leave K-12 schools? (2) What helps Canadian millennial teachers want to stay in K-12 schools? An exploratory case study approach was used as it best helped answer the research questions and provided an insight into the phenomenon. There were three groups of participants, making a total of 13 participants. Nine of the participants were of the millennial generation and had gone through teacher education in Canada. Five were former teachers and four were current teachers. The other four participants were former teachers of older generations, who immigrated to Canada. All three of the participant groups provided multilayered data that was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the main phenomenon – that of Canadian millennial teacher attrition.

# CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

## Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions of Canadian millennial teachers in their decisions to either leave or stay in the teaching profession. Five interviews with millennial former teachers and four interviews with millennial current teachers were conducted. In order to discern whether reasons for not working as a K-12 teacher in Canada were unique to young Canada trained teachers or if perhaps certain themes were intergenerational and intercultural, four more interviews were conducted with older immigrant participants who received teacher training outside of Canada and who had eventually left the teaching profession.

This chapter presents the key findings obtained from 13 in-depth interviews. Six major themes emerged from this study. The six themes with each of their related findings are:

1. Interest in a field other than education prior to entering post-secondary education: All of the former teacher participants (eight out of eight) - Canadian millennials (five) and older immigrants (three), who voluntarily left the K-12 teaching profession had a different field of interest initially going into post-secondary education. All of the teacher participants (four out of four) still in the profession entered post-secondary studies with the goal of becoming K-12 teachers.

2. Unsatisfactory experiences during Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs: The overwhelming majority (four out of five) of the millennial former teachers expressed unpleasant practicum experiences during their B.Ed. programs. On the other hand, all of the millennial current teachers (four out of four) expressed positive practicum experiences. Out of the millennial teachers who discussed their B.Ed. coursework, majority (five out of seven) stated the courses were useless or not engaging.

3. Relationships with administrators and colleagues: Administrative and collegial support affected the work atmosphere and how millennial teachers felt being in their schools; however, no consistent relation was found between the types of professional relationships (positive or negative) that teachers had and their tendencies to leave the profession. Furthermore, only one millennial participant reported having been unable to achieve a work-life balance as an in-service teacher in Canada.

4. Concerns with the education system in Canada: All of the participants (13 out of 13) had concerns with the education system in Canada; however, all had slightly different concerns. All of the millennial participants who became in-service teachers (eight out of eight) expressed a dislike for various bureaucratic processes in education. All of the millennial former teachers (five out of five) did not approve of standardized tests or a standardized approach to classroom teaching.

5. Teacher personalities: All of the millennial teachers (eight out of eight) indicated that teacher personalities influenced how teachers felt about their profession. Three out of three millennial former teachers, who did not naturally progress to academia, indicated that their personalities did not fit with their teaching situations. All of the millennial current teachers (four out of four) indicated that one really had to love the job a 100% in order to withstand all the stressors and negativity.

6. Age in connection to teacher enthusiasm: Three out of three older immigrant participants who discussed age felt that being young was important in order to be an enthusiastic teacher. On the other hand, seven out of seven millennial participants who discussed age, believed that age made no difference in teachers' enthusiasm.

These findings are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs, with quotations to support and explain each finding. I have documented a broad range of experiences in order for the reader to better understand the everyday realities of millennial teachers in Canada. Illustrative quotations taken from the participants' transcripts were used to capture and present the multiple perspectives of the participants, as well as demonstrate the complexity of the attrition situation for millennial teachers in Canada.

**Finding 1 - Interest in a field other than education: All of the former teacher participants (eight out of eight) - Canadian millennials (five) and older immigrants (three), who voluntarily left the K-12 teaching profession had a different field of interest initially going into post-secondary education. All of the teacher participants (four out of four) still in the profession entered post-secondary studies with the goal of becoming K-12 teachers.**

The primary and overriding finding of this study was that all of the millennial teachers who chose to leave the K-12 teaching profession initially had different fields of interest when first enrolling in college or university. Although eventually, reasons for leaving the K-12 teaching profession were different among these participants, it is still worth acknowledging that what all of them had in common was the fact that none of them thought of becoming a teacher when initially starting post-secondary studies. Furthermore, all of the millennial former teacher participants are currently teaching or mentoring adults rather than children.

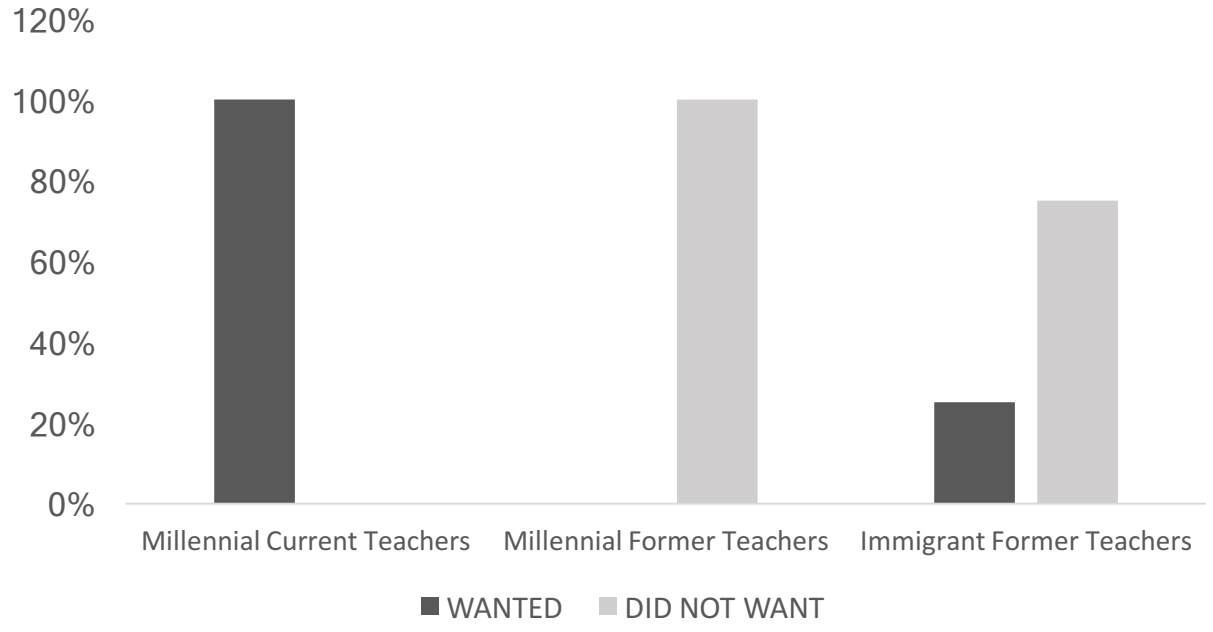


*Figure 1*. Participants who wanted and did not want to be teachers before initially enrolling in post-secondary education.

In some cases, lack of job prospects in the initial field of study was cited as one of the reasons for switching to teaching. In other cases, the initial field of interest would have taken much longer to study and the field of education was eventually seen as an alternative that would be fairly close to the initial interest. Some participants also mentioned that having many teachers in the family helped them decide to go into teaching, when they were unsure about what to study. Among the millennial former teacher participants were Olga, Jenny, Zoey, Lily, and Kiara.

Olga did her Bachelor of Arts in history. She wanted a foreign experience after graduation so she left Canada to teach English as a second language (ESL) in Asia for five years. When Olga came back to Canada, she believed there was not much opportunity for someone with a history degree, so she enrolled in a Bachelor of Education program.

*And then after that [Asia], I came back to Canada but having a history degree wasn't good enough to get any kind of work so I enrolled in Teachers' College. I finished within a year. I went straight to the Middle East after I was done. I didn't want to work in Canada because my experience in Teachers' College was kind of disheartening.* (Olga)

After having taught overseas for many years, Olga came back to Canada and currently teaches ESL to adults. She does not want to teach in Canadian K-12 schools because of her B.Ed. experience.

Jenny had a similar experience in that she began her undergraduate degree in science but quickly realized there would not be a lot of job prospects in the future.

*... you always have that once a year sit-down with the counsellors at [university]. Like if you are in general sciences, they make you go in to see their counsellors once a year to make sure that you're still on track to graduate. And then they'll ask you: "Well, what do you want to do?" And then I lived in residence at that time and saw a lot of people graduating with like art degrees that did nothing. And then I saw some people who were like general sciences and they also did nothing. So then seeing them having no like end game kind of thing. Like you graduated, you did all of this, you did great but now there's a disconnect in terms of what they could do at the end. And watching them do that, I knew that earlier on, in my second year, I had to start picking something that like moved me towards a career, moved me towards a job. So that is why I chose education.* (Jenny)

Jenny worked as a high school teacher for two years before enrolling in a master's degree. After the master's degree, she came back to teach for two more years before pursuing a Ph.D. She is now teaching adults and does not see herself going back to K-12 teaching: "*I do like academia.*

*But I also really believe in doing research in a school because like many things can go wrong in a school*" (Jenny).

Zoey also did not think of teaching when she initially enrolled in college. In fact, she first pursued business because that was what her friend did at the time. However, upon graduating from that program, Zoey realized it was not for her. She was very interested in psychology but was discouraged by how long the process of becoming a psychologist would have taken, so she decided to enroll in education.

> *So when I looked at psychology, the career counsellor lady said: "You know, it'll take you 10 years to become a psychologist..." nine to 10 years as a process and how I had to take a master's degree and blah blah blah. So I was really discouraged and I was walking around campus... somehow, I dropped my stuff, I dropped my purse or something and I picked it up and I looked up and I saw this word "education." I saw this building and this word "education." And it was like a light bulb moment, like: "Why don't I try to get into education to become a teacher? Then I can teach kids, I can make a difference. It has some psychology in it," right? So I was really excited*. (Zoey)

After teaching for seven years, Zoey decided to go back to university to pursue psychology. Just like Jenny, her master's degree further inspired her to pursue a Ph.D. She is currently teaching adults, while pursuing a Ph.D. She misses teaching children but would not go back to work as a K-12 teacher:

> *See, I love teaching. And I realize now I love teaching adults. Just because, you know, there is a level of... you can joke around with them and you can talk about things. Whereas, teaching younger kids - you have to be careful... I cannot see myself teaching for the [local public board] or any board full-time anymore... I think I've switched. I'm interested in*

*research right now and hopefully my research will inform practice... my first love, I would have to say is counselling. I love, love, love counselling. And my second love is teaching. And I would love to teach counselling topics or education topics - my two loves.* (Zoey)

Similar to the three previous participants, Lily did her initial undergraduate degree in a different field and upon graduating, played around with different ideas about further studies. She decided to go into teaching because she had many teachers in her family.

*...once I graduated [from my initial degree], I sort of played around with a few different ideas for a variety of reasons. But one option was to go into teaching. My grandma is a teacher, or was a teacher. Like, there are a lot of teachers in my family, either in the school setting or else in university setting. So I did my after-degree in education – a two-year after-degree program, with two practicums.* (Lily)

Lily admitted that going into B.Ed., she was not sure if it was the right decision: "*I wasn't sure when I entered that I wanted to do it. To be honest, I wasn't a 100% convinced*" (Lily). Lily never began teaching in K-12 schools after finishing her B.Ed. and upon graduating, she went on to further pursue her initial field of interest. Lily has had experience teaching adults and liked it a lot more than teaching children. She hopes she can teach adults again in the future.

*It was a very different experience [teaching adults]. I felt much less responsibility to ensure they were… I still felt responsibility for facilitating learning and teaching things in a way that made sense so they could kind of learn and understand and apply it. But I felt much less responsibility to make sure they knew the answers. That was then on them to learn and to study and to do their assignments. It wasn't like me having to breathe down their throats, like "don't forget this is due," and "this is how you do it," – feeling that sense of responsibility that I think I felt when I was teaching the younger grades. Like "what if they*

*don't learn and then their parents are upset?" you know, and "these are the basic skills they need to have." So it was just a very different kind of like: "Alright, here's your stuff. You guys take it, do what you want with it and if you get it – you get it, if you don't…" And you could joke with them. I felt like I could be very real with them. I loved it. I still love it.* (Lily)

Kiara did not elaborate too much on her academic background. However, she did do her initial undergraduate degree in a field other than education at a university that offered a concurrent B.Ed. program and an after degree B.Ed. program. She later enrolled in the after-degree B.Ed. program. Kiara began to consider other careers even while she was still enrolled in her teacher preparation program. After graduation, she chose to work as a substitute teacher rather than a full-time classroom teacher because she wanted more flexibility. After substituting for two years, she left the teaching profession to work in a different field where she currently works with adults in a mentoring capacity.

Although all of the millennial former teachers (five out of five) now work with adults, all five of them said that the best part about K-12 teaching was interacting with students. Even though some of the millennial former teachers reported enjoying teaching adults now, it seemed that the age of the students had very little influence over these millennial teachers' initial decisions to leave the K-12 teaching environment. When asked about some of the positive aspects about their K-12 teaching experiences, here is what the millennial former teachers had to say:

*I had a really great relationship with kids. Like there have been moments [after I left] teaching when I've seen them and they remember me. And you know, I've been lucky as a sub. to get presents from kids and notes on the boards. Like, I never felt as though I was missing out, I never felt like I didn't get along with kids. I felt like I was really fortunate. I*

*loved the kids. I love kids and that's why I went into teaching. Touch wood, I never had an experience, even as a sub., where I couldn't manage a classroom. And so for me, I felt like I got dealt a really great hand of cards with kids.* (Kiara)

*On some levels, it was really wonderful. I love working with kids... I find them so energizing and so interesting, and I'm always so curious about their perspectives... The positives were absolutely the students. And at the end of your practicum, having kids write you cards saying: "You are the best teacher I ever had." So the kids were absolutely the highlight for me. And seeing kids learn things was also really cool - like, a student finally gets something when you're trying to teach them.* (Lily)

*...because I loved teaching, I would go to bed at night, thinking about the next day's lesson: "This is going to be kind of boring or it's not going to catch their interest. I need to ask what they like or what would interest them..." I wanted to give, give more to the school. And I would always be the first one to volunteer for this club, that club. I opened up my classroom every lunch hour so the kids could come eat with me. And the teachers ate in the staff room. I'm like: "Welcome, kids." My class[room] was so full. Every lunch hour - full, full, full. So every class, not just my class. They'd play chess, they would eat. Like, they'd rush into my class so they could get a seat. And sometimes: "Ah, man, it's full again" - they'd sit on the floor.* (Zoey)

Jenny and Olga also talked about their students as being some of the highlights during their K-12 teaching careers. "*Student interactions are always great*" (Jenny). "*Highlights for me were watching my students grow educationally and being around their fun and positive energy*" (Olga).

All of the millennial former teachers enjoyed working with the students they were assigned and therefore, age of the students was not a contributing factor in their decisions to leave the

profession. However, what all of the millennial former teachers had in common was that all of them initially began to pursue their post-secondary education in a field other than education. That phenomenon was also true for the older generations of immigrant former teachers.

Three out of the four immigrant participants left the K-12 teaching profession voluntarily. Among those three were Veronika from Eastern Europe, Dina from South Asia, and Patricia from South America. Veronika and Dina did not initially think of becoming teachers when they enrolled in post-secondary education in their countries of origin; and, Patricia became a teacher because when she was starting high school, all the girls in her country were more or less expected to receive teacher training. Although each of the immigrant former teachers had quite unique experiences, what they had in common was the fact that at one point, just like millennial former teachers, they had an interest in a field other than education.

The interview with Veronika was originally conducted in Russian. The quotes used in this thesis are translations that were approved by her. Veronika's university degree provided her with two disciplines - one which allowed her to work as a chemical engineer and the other, which allowed her to work as a chemistry teacher. When she started working in the chemistry field, she had never thought of becoming a teacher. However, when her son started school, she decided it would be a good idea to become a teacher so she could keep an eye on him:

> *As a teacher… when I was studying at the university and when I started to work later on, I never thought that I wanted to be a teacher. When my son started school, I decided it would be a good idea to work as a teacher and keep an eye on him because he was a fast boy, and that way he could always be with me. And especially during that time, when he started school, it was not very peaceful in our country. That's why I thought it would be better if*

*we came to school and left school together, and I would keep him under my control. So that's how I got into teaching*. (Veronika)

Veronika enjoyed teaching very much and loved the school in her old country, where she had worked for 10 years. However, she did not even consider working as a teacher upon her move to Canada. Lack of English was one of the driving forces in her not wanting to teach in the country. As well, she simply did not even consider it as one of the options for employment:

*Well, at first maybe I did want to [teach] but I didn't have enough English to feel confident. What I mean is that my desire to teach was not strong enough to overcome my lack of confidence in the English language. I was very unsure about my English; I pretty much did not speak... And now, I just don't want to [teach] at all. I didn't even think about it.* (Veronika)

Dina did her Bachelor of Arts in her old country in South Asia and was in fact waiting for admission decisions to get into a master's program in journalism. During the months leading up to the admission decisions, Dina went to live with her father in the Middle East. While there, she got employed as an English teacher at an international school. It was during that time that she got married and followed her husband to England. In England, Dina enrolled in a Bachelor of Education program. After a few years of living in England, Dina and her young family immigrated to Canada. She was able to secure a teaching job at her children's school after the school staff learned she had a teaching degree and encouraged her to apply. After a few years teaching, Dina left the teaching profession so she could focus on her daughter's school work and do some volunteering in other organizations.

Unlike the seven former teachers mentioned above, Patricia had a different experience. She did not begin post-secondary education in a different field because of a slightly different system

in her old country. At the time that she entered high school, all the girls in her country were more or less expected to go through teacher training. Therefore, she did what society expected and upon high school graduation received two diplomas - one certifying her as a high school student and the other, certifying her as a teacher. She taught for a few years and enjoyed it very much. However, after she had her first child, she enrolled in an insurance degree at the university so she could change careers and earn a better salary. She came to Canada with her background in teaching and a degree in insurance but could not find a job in Canadian insurance companies. When she inquired about becoming a teacher in Canada, she was told she would have to do teacher education in Canada. She did not want to go to university again and ended up getting employment in the hospitality sector. She says she still loves teaching and teaches Spanish privately for a few hours per week.

All of the former teachers - millennials and those from previous generations, Canada trained and foreign trained - who had left the teaching profession voluntarily, have had quite different and unique experiences in terms of getting into the teaching profession and leaving it. However, the one commonality that they shared was the fact that all of them initially pursued a different field when they first enrolled in post-secondary education. In the case of Patricia, she enrolled in a different field of study when she decided to go to university and had already switched careers before immigrating to Canada.

Interestingly, all of the millennial teacher participants currently in the profession (four out of four) claimed to have always wanted to be school teachers. All of them enrolled in post-secondary education with the goal of becoming certified teachers. The teacher participants in this group were Amelia, Everleigh, Sophia, and Courtney.

Amelia has always wanted to be a teacher ever since she was little. Even though she did her initial degree in a different field, it was simply because her university only offered an after-degree option for the Bachelor of Education. Therefore, she followed the university counselor's advice and enrolled in a four-year psychology degree, which was used to get admitted into the after-degree B.Ed. program. She finished her B.Ed. program five years ago.

> *I always wanted to be a teacher. When I was younger, my sister and I would always play school and pretend we were teachers, so it was something that I always wanted to do. I don't really know what other job I would do if I wasn't teaching*. (Amelia)

Amelia is not a permanent teacher yet and currently serves as a long-term occasional (LTO) teacher at her local public school board. In the future, after having worked as a permanent full-time teacher for a few years, Amelia thinks she may want to work as an ESL teacher or be support staff where she could work with ESL students in a small group setting.

> *I think I will always want to teach... I definitely want to try having my own classroom for a few years. But I might also want to either work as an ESL teacher or some other kind of support staff, where I would be doing more one-on-one work or going into classrooms to support and not necessarily have my own class. So I would hopefully, if I have the chance, do a bit of both and then see which position I like better and kind of suits me better, then stick with one of them*. (Amelia)

Similar to Amelia, Everleigh also enrolled in an after-degree B.Ed. program simply because that was the only teacher preparation option the university in her city offered. She has always wanted to be a teacher and cannot see herself doing anything else.

*I guess [teaching] is the only thing I ever really thought about doing. I never really had a plan B. I always just pictured myself as being a teacher. Even though I've been supplying most of the time, I enjoyed my experience so far*. (Everleigh)

Everleigh does not currently hold a permanent contract and has faced a few roadblocks in the last few years in terms of becoming a substitute teacher and later on, a long-term occasional teacher in her city. This was due to the substantial number of unemployed teachers in her province and the limited number of available jobs. She is still optimistic about her future prospects but has pointed out the possibility of her exploring other options if she is still unable to secure employment in a few years.

*I wasn't really considering switching careers. Maybe getting like a second job to help balance it out. But I always wanted to stay in teaching just because I did all the schooling for it and I put a lot of effort into it so I didn't want to give up. And I feel like I'll get something eventually. So right now, I'm not at the point yet where I'm super desperate and I want to have like a permanent position. But hopefully within the next couple of years, I'll have a permanent job or I might have to see what else is out there.* (Everleigh)

Like Amelia, if Everleigh is able to secure a permanent full-time teaching job, she may eventually work as a resource teacher:

*I think I would generally want to stay as a teacher, maybe I would move from being a homeroom teacher to a resource teacher or an LRT [learning resource teacher] and work with smaller groups to improve their reading, like ESL groups.* (Everleigh)

Similar to Amelia and Everleigh, Sophia has always known she would be a teacher: *"I always knew I would be a teacher... it's something I've wanted to do my whole life"* (Sophia). However, Sophia did enroll in the sciences at first to become a doctor but quickly changed to do a

four-year Bachelor of Education program. She also received a master's degree in social justice. Sophia's teaching experience spans 14 years and makes her the longest serving teacher of all of the participants in this study. Sophia admitted that she tried to leave teaching three times in order to work in the field of social justice or for non-profit organizations. Although that would have been a field of work she felt passionate about, realistically, she could not afford to have low salaries that non-profit organizations offered:

> *I'm going to be honest. There are probably [three] times in my career where I tried to get out. Like, it just… Not because of teaching. The teaching part is what I love. But just to get experience somewhere else. One year, I applied to UNICEF [The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund] actually and I went through the interview and I didn't get the job. And another organization, they're called CAWST – the Centre for Water Sanitation Technology, something like that, I applied to that. The kind of jobs that I wanted, they don't pay as much as teaching. It would be the biggest pay cut. And [my province's teachers], we have good paycheques. To go into non-profit, it just wouldn't work out for the lifestyle my husband and I have right now. So that kind of swayed me back into teaching (...) I wanted to see what it was like to go into non-profit. And it's so competitive, it's so hard... And once actually I applied to [the local university] ... it was in education and developing a curriculum for the stuff that I like - getting kids to go out and do citizenship. So there was something about developing a teachers' program, a curriculum in that, and I applied. And I think on LinkedIn, it said there was over something crazy, like 300 applications. This sector is so competitive, it's crazy. You know, I could go into a university and do this kind of job - like that's the only place where I could get the kind of compensation I need. But other non-profits, it's… It's just – I can't.* (Sophia)

Just like Sophia, Everleigh and Olga also pointed out that teachers in Canada earned good salaries. On the other hand, Kiara did not seem to think teacher salaries were good enough: *"... nobody goes into teaching for the money (laughs) that's really obvious"* (Kiara). Seeing how opinions on salaries differed among the participants; it is reasonable to assume salaries had very little effect on teachers' decisions to stay or leave.

Despite trying to leave the profession a few times, Sophia pointed out that if she were to leave teaching for a bit to work in a non-profit organization, she would always come back to teaching: *"You know, [I] just dabbled with the idea of going to get experience in a non-profit. But I don't think I could fully do it. I think I'd always come back to teaching"* (Sophia).

The fourth teacher participant still in the profession, Courtney, also knew she wanted to be a teacher early on in her life. Unlike, Amelia, Everleigh, and Sophia, it was not something she thought about her whole life. However, she spent a lot of her teenage years working with younger children and when she was in grade 12, knew she wanted to be a school teacher.

> *I think in high school, I was a bit lost in general and didn't know a 100%. I knew I liked working with kids and I knew teaching might be an option for me. But I wasn't a 100% sure until around grade 12. And then I took a year off from school, worked a little bit more. And that's when I really knew that teaching is what I want to do.* (Courtney)

Courtney finished a five-year concurrent bachelor degree in education. After teaching full-time for four years, she enrolled in a master's degree in education. She wants to go back to teaching after finishing her master's degree; however, eventually, she would like to work for a school board or a ministry of education in curriculum development for the early years.

As was the case with the millennial former teachers, when the millennial current teachers were asked about the positives about their job, every single one of them (four out of four) talked about student interactions:

*What I like best would be just working with the kids and seeing their progress when you're really working with them on something and seeing they finally understand the concept that you're teaching them, and then you know that your teaching is working and seeing that they're really getting what you're teaching, so you know you're kind of meant to do that.* (Amelia)

*Well, I like that usually everyday that I work, there's a student that comes up to me and either gives me a hug or says I'm their favourite teacher. So it always makes me feel good that I seem to be making a positive influence in one of the students' lives. And usually they seem to respond well to me so I like that. At the end of the day, I always leave feeling like I did something good and got something accomplished. And usually they seem to leave with learning something they didn't know before, too. So that's what I usually like to take away from my days*. (Everleigh)

*Definitely, the kids – going to teach them and affecting them in some way. When I see other students going off to university and they do social justice work, even if they're in [a different field], even if they're going into med. school, they keep up with social justice – that's what keeps me going. Going to class and just when you look at the students and you know they get it - that's awesome. I like that.* (Sophia)

*Being able to make a difference. Kids are also hilarious. Kindergarten in general was very rewarding and probably my most favourite year teaching – the year before last year. I think the way you can just see them grow, and make a difference. Hopefully make a positive*

*impact on them as well – is I think important... And I worked in two schools that both had a high number of economically disadvantaged kids. And so I also really enjoy working with children that, sometimes, come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and being able to just be that consistency for them and support for them.* (Courtney)

All of the former teacher participants who voluntarily left the K-12 teaching profession (eight out of eight) cited student interactions as the biggest positives about their experiences. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that students and student age had very little influence over the millennial former teachers' decisions to leave the profession, even though they all worked with adults now. On the other hand, what separated former teachers from the current teachers was the fact that all former teachers did not go into post-secondary education with the goal of becoming certified teachers. All of the current teacher participants claimed to have known they wanted to be teachers before they enrolled in post-secondary studies.

It also becomes important to point out that graduate degrees inspired millennial teachers to consider other professions. Former teachers Jenny and Zoey were inspired to go into academia because of enrolling in master's degrees, which were at first supposed to only further their professional development as K-12 teachers. Current teachers, Sophia and Courtney consider working in different professions related to their master's degrees - social justice for Sophia and curriculum development in the early years for Courtney.

**Finding 2 - B.Ed. Experiences: The overwhelming majority (four out of five) of the millennial former teachers expressed unpleasant practicum experiences during their B.Ed. programs. On the other hand, all of the millennial current teachers (four out of four) expressed positive practicum experiences. Out of the millennial teachers who discussed their B.Ed. coursework, majority (five out of seven) stated the courses were useless or not engaging.**

Bachelor of Education programs had an effect on the student teachers' sense of efficacy and enthusiasm. The aspect of the B.Ed. program that had the most influence was the field experience - those periods in a year when student teachers were paired up with in-service mentor teachers for practicum teaching. Mentor teachers played an important role in the student teachers' B.Ed. experiences. Perhaps unknowingly, mentor teachers had a substantial impact on their student teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession.

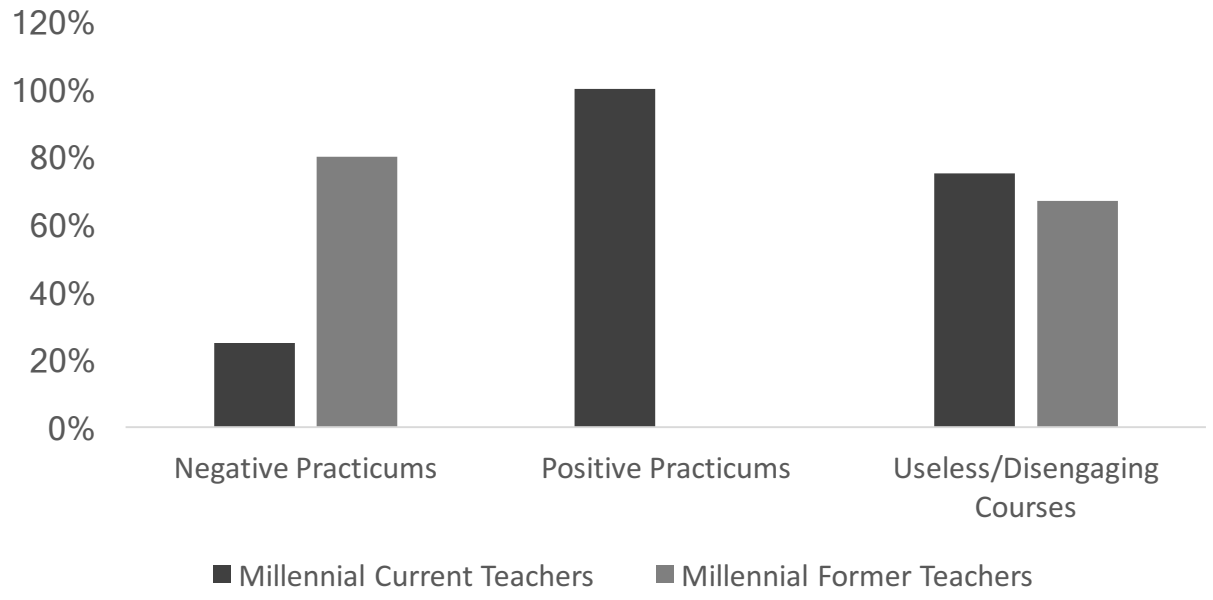


*Figure 2.* Bachelor of education experiences of millennial current and former teachers.

Olga claimed that it was her B.Ed. experiences that turned her off from teaching in Canada. She said her experiences were disheartening because of her rude and unapproachable mentor teachers.

*I didn't want to work in Canada because my experience in Teachers' College was kind of disheartening. My teaching practices weren't really that fun. I mean it was a great*

*experience, I enjoyed working with the students but both my mentor teachers were nightmares... The first one I had, she didn't tell me how I should improve until I was nearly done my teaching practice with her. She just gave me all this feedback, good and bad, when I was finished. She was like: "Oh, I hope this isn't overwhelming for you." I'm like: "Um… Yeah, it would've been nice to know this beforehand so I could improve and maybe get a better grade on my evaluation." And she was very cold, I didn't like her personality, I didn't feel like I could come easily to her with questions. She was kind of rude a couple of times. But the second one made the first one seem like an angel... She was nice the first day I was there and I was thinking: "Alright, finally, this is great, I get a good teaching mentor." After a few days, she just became very cold… I don't know, I found it very hard to talk to her, to ask her questions as well. She wasn't exactly very polite... When I taught, my teachers were very mean. So I was just turned off from my whole teaching experience.* (Olga)

Olga also pointed out that her second mentor teacher did not seem like a good teacher or like she cared about her lessons: *"... she didn't really seem to put much effort into her lessons. Whenever I watched her teach, I didn't learn much. Most of her lessons were giving instructions on how to complete a hand-out or supervising them as they completed a written assignment"* (Olga).

Like Olga, Zoey did not have very positive practicum experiences either. In fact, practicums made her question whether she was in the right place:

*... so that experience shut me down a little bit. But it wasn't too bad. I still got a really good evaluation. I passed it and I graduated, right? But it's not until, again, that I got my own class, that's when I realized: "I love this! This is so cool!"* (Zoey)

Just like Olga, Zoey also reported feeling no connection with her mentor teachers; and, she overall lacked confidence as a student teacher.

*It's funny because when I did my teaching practicum, I was not sure at all. I was like: "What am I doing?" I had a grade three class first semester and a grade five-six class next semester, and I was not sure a 100% that I wanted to stay in teaching. I remember journaling about it like: "I don't know if I can handle it." The grade five-six had 60 students with two teachers. With two, so they did team teaching. And when I was teaching, I had to teach 60 students, right? And I just felt like: "I don't know… this is a lot of students. I don't know if I'll be effective." I just questioned myself a lot. And at times, I didn't feel like I connected with the partner teachers – the practicum teachers. I don't know what you would call them? Co-teachers? I forget what you call them. I didn't feel a really deep connection with them so I was questioning it.* (Zoey)

Again, like Olga, Zoey found her mentor teachers short and snappy; and, she did not feel as though she could get help if she needed it. She remembered wondering if, once she becomes a teacher, she would also be that rude a few years into her career. Zoey also felt stressed out because she did her second practicum in a class with 60 students and two teachers. The two teachers co-taught together. Being the lone student teacher, when it was Zoey's turn to student teach, she had to teach all of the 60 students by herself:

*So my first experience in grade three – she was not well, her health wasn't good... I remember when I was there near the end, she was actually taken away on a stretcher in an ambulance because she fell or something. That was near the end of my experience there. So because she wasn't healthy, she was a little short with the kids. She was a good teacher, really, she tried her best to be patient. She had really good classroom management. She*

*tried to connect with all the students. But because of her health, sometimes, she was short, you know what I mean? So when I saw that, I was like: "I just hope I will never be that way." I hoped I won't be that way – like snap on them sometimes. But really, overall, she was a good teacher. And that was fine, me and that teacher, we actually worked okay together... But the second semester, with the 60 kids… the grade fives, I just felt like I wasn't effective teaching 60 kids. And my partner [mentor] teacher, I don't want to say it but she was pregnant and she was moody. Not all pregnant people are moody but she was very moody. She would snap at me or snap at the kids, she was very blunt with things she would say (...) Maybe it's not because she was pregnant. Maybe it was also… I was like: "Oh? Am I going to be like that after teaching for five-10 years? And I'm going to snap if I had a student teacher?" So that's what I mean by the connection, I didn't feel like I could confide in her if, let's say, I wasn't sure about a lesson. I felt: "I better do it perfect because she's going to judge me. She's not going to help me." So the second round, I was really nervous. And somehow the teachers went on strike.* (Zoey)

Kiara did not elaborate on her B.Ed. experiences too much. However, she indicated that it was her practicum experiences that made her weary of the teaching profession and she began to consider other professions even while still enrolled in the B.Ed. program. It was unclear to what extent mentor teachers affected her practicum experiences because they were not specifically mentioned:

*For me, when I started my field experience, when I started as a student teacher, that was sort of where I kind of had an inkling to the way the system worked and how I felt being in the system. And so I think it sort of that experience that made me feel a little weary of getting into teaching (...) But initially when I went into it and when I started having field*

*experience as a student teacher, that's when I was like: "I don't think that I can see myself doing this for a long time," and I did start looking at alternatives while I was still in my B.Ed.(...) I know when I was doing my program, [my university] was really struggling to be able to find schools that were taking on student teachers because it's more of an ethical responsibility than it actually is a professional obligation. So you have a choice not to take on a student teacher and a lot of people opt-out of having a student teacher. And so what ends up happening is that there isn't enough room and so you're kind of stuck with whatever situation you're in. And I know that from my experience - I had two very unusual teaching experiences that weren't enough, I think, to equip me personally for being put into the situations I was in.* (Kiara)

For Lily, once again, it was the practicum experiences that completely turned her off from teaching. She had quite challenging experiences. There was no gradual release of responsibility during her first practicum and in fact, her mentor teacher did not even warn her she would be teaching a lesson. He told her half an hour before the lesson that she would be teaching for the first time, in his defense as a way to demonstrate that *"... part of teaching, you're not always going to have time to prepare. Here you go"* (Lily). Lily remembered being taken aback by that but still believed her lesson went fine after all. Toward the end of her first practicum, Lily remembered an incident where her grade six class was writing an exam and she saw one student in distress. Leaving the class with her mentor teacher, Lily took the student out into the hallway to help him. However, her action was later reprimanded by the mentor teacher who told her she had to be attentive to the whole class rather than address an individual issue with one student. In that moment, Lily knew she could not be a teacher because of that:

*And I was proud of the way I had handled that situation. I saw someone who was in distress - a child, I approached them - an opportunity to learn more about what was going on for them. I felt like that was an important part of me honouring what I naturally wanted to do, as kind of a caregiver. And my mentor teacher later took me aside after that and asked me what had gone on. And I'd given the mentor teacher a summary of what had happened. And he said to me: "In the future, you couldn't do that. You can't leave a classroom full of children and take someone in the hall and unpack what's going on for them. You have to be attentive to the whole instead of the individual." And of course, I understand that. I understand from a theory level, from a classroom management perspective. But I knew in that moment that I couldn't be a teacher because I could never maintain a focus on a classroom when I saw something like that going on. That to me was so counter-intuitive to what I wanted to do and I knew in that very moment. And as I speak now, I have shivers, because I'm reminded of that moment. I knew I will not do this.* (Lily)

Lily said her second mentor teacher was very negative and recalled the relationship with her as challenging. The second mentor teacher often made remarks about how difficult and stressful teaching was, talked about wanting to leave the profession, and one time even wanted to develop a plan for a career change for Lily. To make matters more complicated, there was an educational assistant in the classroom who was friends with her mentor teacher and who was very negative and would also make negative comments to Lily, making Lily feel like "the odd man out" in the classroom.

*I would say that my relationship with my mentor teacher, my second practicum, was quite strained, it was difficult. There were a lot of misunderstandings and interpretations, I felt on her end, that weren't quite accurate. So that relationship felt quite… that relationship*

*was challenging... So for example, at the time I volunteered on Thursday evenings... So I had to leave at a certain time. And it wasn't unreasonable, it wasn't like I had to leave at noon. I had to leave at three o'clock, but it was early leaving. We got out I think at one or two. And so I would leave and that was understood from the get-go. But over time, I'm not sure how she would experience it, but seemed like some resentment started to form... So at one point, after class I commented on how I needed to get going and asked if there is anything I could do. And my mentor teacher had made a comment about questioning my commitment because I had to leave: "Seems like you have a lot of other things that are more important than making the bulletin board." And the nature of my volunteer work was quite… it was important to me and it was crisis, it was working with people in crisis. So to me that felt important, that was a big part of my life and I really got a lot out of that. And I also felt like I was helping the community. So for her to say that other things seem more important than making this bulletin board and "this is part of your job, too. I'd like to see you take more of an active role and doing things like this bulletin board." And I just thought: "Fuck the bulletin board. Who cares about it?" Like, I get it, I understand why that's important. I don't care about the bulletin board at all. I don't care about it. And I'll do it and I will stay here late, stapling things to the wall. But please don't make me do this on a Thursday when I've got something else that you knew was important to me and you knew I had to be at. So that kind of situation set me up for sort of: "Ok, this is a job. I appreciate a good bulletin board. Looks great. But I'm not very creative in that respect and I also kind of felt like I've got something else I've committed to. So if this is what teaching is – if teaching is sacrificing your own needs, your own desires, your own commitments in order to do something that's as banal and, in my opinion at the time, kind*

*of superficial as making this bulletin board then, again, maybe this isn't for me (...) It was like you need to give up your life for this, you need to give up your life to be a teacher. And this was an instructor who was quite burnt out, she communicated that. I was like: "Well, if you're this burnt out and you're thinking you might want to leave the profession, and you're shaming me for having balance and having other commitments, that doesn't really make a lot of sense to me."* (Lily)

Lily expressed her sympathy for the student teachers who have always dreamt of being teachers and are faced with a negative mentor who shatters their dreams:

*My heart goes out to people who've always wanted to be teachers and they enter the profession and then they're really disenfranchised by the entire thing. And those are the people my heart really goes out for because that was their dream, they really wanted it, and there's such a rude awakening when it doesn't fit with what you want. I could handle the mentor teachers that were burnt out because whatever, I'm doing something different. But if someone's like young and naïve and has dreams of being the best teacher, if they encounter that, then I'm sad for that. I would hope that that doesn't happen to them.* (Lily)

Lily's hopes were realized, at least for the millennial participants currently in the profession of teaching in this study, because all of them described their practicum experiences as positive. Indeed, even when they described their mentor teachers as not very warm, they still claimed to have learned a lot from them.

Sophia referred to her practicums as the best parts about her B.Ed. program. She got along well with her mentor teachers and learned a lot from them:

*So my mentor teachers, especially my last practicum, it was awesome. I had two and they were great. They let me have all control of the classroom. And you know, only if I was comfortable with it. I was. And they were great. I learned so much from them.* (Sophia)

Amelia claimed to have enjoyed her field experience very much. Unlike what happened to Lily, she really appreciated that her mentor teacher did a gradual release of responsibilities and by the time she had to teach her own lesson for the first time, she already knew the children and felt prepared. Out in the field, Amelia found her mentor teachers to be very helpful and nice. Both of her mentor teachers had very different teaching styles and she acknowledged learning a lot from both of them:

*I enjoyed working with the mentor teachers I had during my time in the [B.Ed.] program. I began in a grade two class, and my first mentor teacher was a male teacher. I was a little nervous at first, as I was hoping for a female teacher who I could potentially form a closer bond with. However, my mentor teacher turned out to be very nice and helpful. I was his first student teacher, so it was a learning curve for the both of us. However, he had very good classroom management techniques and lesson ideas, and I learned a lot from him. He helped me become more firm in my teaching and with my classroom management. My second mentor teacher was a grade four teacher. She had been teaching for quite a while and also was very good with classroom management, and I would say was a little strict, which was the opposite of my teaching style. However, she helped me to become more authoritative. I also had the chance to work on report cards and come up with learning stations, which I did not have a chance to do with my other mentor teacher. Both of my teachers had very different styles and personalities, so I learned different skills from each of them, and I really enjoyed teaching grade two and four.* (Amelia)

Everleigh also learned a lot from her mentor teachers. She got along very well with her first mentor teacher and admitted to having had learned a lot of relevant, practical, and hands-on material from her, such as how to set up curriculum-relevant centres and how to write report cards:

> *During my placement, I was in a grade five-six class as well as a kindergarten class. I got along really well with my kindergarten mentor teacher and she really seemed to appreciate my help and ideas in the classroom. I would go in early to set up the learning centers and usually stay late to plan with her for the following day. I also had the opportunity to meet several parents and build some relationships with them. She was able to help me out by showing me the difference in planning for a kindergarten class and assessing these students who are just beginning their schooling career, in comparison to older grade levels. She also showed me how I could create learning centres based on certain themes or topics that could be used all week long, where students can rotate to their centers and learn everything from science, to math, to language arts, depending on the activities set out.* (Everleigh)

Although Everleigh's second mentor teacher was not necessarily as warm as the first one and she claimed to have felt intimidated by her, as well as being intimidated by teaching in an older grade, she learned to enjoy her time there and admitted to learning a lot from her second mentor teacher:

> *I also liked my mentor teacher for the grade five-six class, but I was a bit intimidated by her. I also found that her teaching style was very different from my first mentor teacher. As she had already worked with a classmate of mine in the first half of the semester, I also felt that she had already established a strong bond with her and was sometimes comparing me to what she accomplished during her time in the classroom. It also took a bit longer for the students to warm up to me, as I was not really comfortable in an older grade level and*

*they could probably tell. I did learn to enjoy my time there and came away with a lot of knowledge. This mentor teacher helped me with classroom management techniques and showed me how to differentiate in the classroom. I would create a lesson plan and meet with her to discuss it, and she would usually have me rethink a lot of my plans, in order to make them more creative, hands-on and interactive, and to make sure that I am thinking about all of my learners and how to meet their needs. This is very helpful to me now because these are themes in education that always come up, and I am better able to discuss them during interviews.* (Everleigh)

Courtney also described her field experiences as positive. She said that one practicum was not as positive because the mentor teacher's approach to everything was: *"Well, what do you think you should do?"* and, at times, she was asking him because she actually had no idea and needed some guidance. However, that practicum was also in an older grade and just like Everleigh, Courtney's preference was with the younger grades. She believed that aspect also could have influenced her feelings at the time.

*I had really positive relationships [with the mentor teachers]. I had one where I didn't feel as comfortable, I didn't always feel as guided and set up for success. I think his philosophy was: "What do you think you should do?" and sometimes, I'm the type of person that that question is good, but actually I'm asking because I don't know in this situation what I should do. So that was my longer placement and it was still fine, and I still did okay, but I didn't feel myself as a teacher a 100%. It was also a grade five-six and that's just I don't think my strength. I'm primary, that's just really what I love.* (Courtney)

Courtney quickly became friends with her last practicum mentor and claimed they were a great teaching team. Both of them are still very good friends:

*And then yeah, in my last placement, I'm really good friends with her. I don't know if that's like… I'm sure there are no rules [against] becoming friends with your mentor teachers. But she was a bit younger and was just such a good example, I learned so much from that last placement. And we're still very good friends. I invited her to my wedding. We still see each other, like very-very close. We just hit it off and we're very similar and it worked, and it worked really well in us team teaching – that was my last placement... So that was wonderful and a seamless transition. But that takes a lot as well to be able to have that.* (Courtney)

One of the interesting parts about Courtney was that after she mentioned becoming friends with her mentor, Courtney felt the need to say that she was sure there were no rules against becoming friends with mentor teachers. The idea of rules, new rules, and constantly changing rules for teachers will be discussed later in this chapter when my teacher participants talk about the education system as a whole. Courtney also talked about the importance of having a good relationship between a mentor and a student teacher; and, about the importance of making student teachers feel comfortable in a given classroom environment. She said that those who became mentor teachers really needed to want to be mentors because it contributed to a more welcoming and encouraging environment for all. When discussing the importance of having a positive relationship between a mentor and a student teacher, here is what Courtney had to say:

*It's really important because I feel that if you feel comfortable in an environment, you're more likely to do your best and to introduce things that are going to benefit the kids, yourself as a teacher, everything. So having that relationship is important and also having people that want to have you in their classroom. I get that's difficult because you might be inundated with student teachers all the time, sometimes it is nice to maybe teach on your*

*own. But to actually want to teach them – student teachers, I think is important because then you're obviously going to be more engaged and motivated to make it a nice environment and atmosphere for everyone.* (Courtney)

Jenny was the only millennial former teacher who described her practicum experiences as positive:

*I really loved both my practicums. The first practicum was in a learning disabled school in which the content of the courses was not difficult, but that was where I learned all sorts of skills like building relationships with students. I also learned, from the students - how to bake cinnamon buns and give head massages at that school because they had all sorts of vocational programs. The second school was an academic school in which my mentor teacher taught Advanced Placement math. I had the pleasure of teaching a few of those classes. I remember all the great things I learned during my practicums. I know school placements are assigned based on availability; but, I feel like my Ying-Yang placement - high vocation to high academic, really prepared me well for the real-world. It was like a higher power was aligning all my experiences to ensure I got the full spectrum before I got a job.* (Jenny)

Looking at the millennial participants' stories, it is important to consider how practicum experiences may have related to teachers' tendencies to either leave or stay in the profession. Out of the four current teachers, two did after-degree B.Ed. programs and two did four or five-year B.Ed. programs. However, out of the millennial former teachers who described their practicum experiences as negative (four participants), all four were enrolled in after-degree B.Ed. programs. It could be possible that the format of the program may have played a role in how student teachers felt during their field experiences. It is also interesting that out of the five millennial teachers who

mentioned the grades in which they student taught, four indicated tense situations within grade five and six classrooms.

Other aspects about Bachelor of Education programs that millennial participants talked about had to do with the actual university program and the coursework. Seven out of eight millennials talked about the coursework and the majority of them (five out of seven) found it irrelevant, disengaging, or very easy. As well, some found the requirements to get into the program to be very easy. Because it was very easy to get into the B.Ed. program, some participants believed it encouraged a lot of people to apply who did not care about becoming teachers. They indicated that courses were easy or disconnected from the realities experienced during practicums. Some participants believed that if courses were more rigorous, it could help filter out more apathetic B.Ed. students before they graduated. They expressed that doing so could potentially help with the teacher attrition rates because the "slacker" apathetic teachers would never even have an opportunity to start teaching in the first place - as that type of teacher was believed to be the type to quit.

> *I really enjoyed my program, but I was not a high flyer. I was one of those students who just kept my head down and did all the courses. I do remember the education courses being easier compared to the science courses I took during the concurrent program. However, I am not sure whether anything that was taught to me was learned properly or applied to my own classrooms (...) And then I did my master's and when you go through some of those courses, as soon as you get in, they're like: "Well, this is the nature of science," which is like you focus mainly on… even though there are many things to focus on in terms of like science, it's not just getting the content across which was kind of what I did in the first year, "Content, content, you have to understand this content." But it's more about, "How did*

*you come up with this knowledge?" and "How do you get to this process?" Like in a lab, I would always think: "Ok, if students can get the right answer, that is good." But really, it's about the process of the lab, it's not just the final product. So I learned all of that during my master's. And throughout those courses I would think like "Oh my God, I'm such a horrible teacher!" And I was like: "I feel so bad for the students who used to be… who were my students before, the previous two years." It's just… I was just: "I didn't know this! I'm just learning it now!" or you've learned it but you went over it so fast in your undergrad. degree that you didn't really know this is something to really focus on. So I would… I just glossed over it and then when I got to my master's, I'm like: "Wow! There's so much more!" And then I felt like I was a better teacher the next two years as well.* (Jenny)

Sophia also pointed out the difference between her B.Ed. experience and her master's later on. Although she did not remember much of her B.Ed. courses because it was a long time ago, she said: *"I wish... unlike my Master's where I was really involved in my studies, I wish I was more involved in my studies [during B.Ed.]"* (Sophia).

The way Jenny felt about teaching after doing her B.Ed. - in terms of "content, content, you have to understand the content" was similar to the impression Lily got from her coursework:

*I remember the first lecture of one of my courses, the [professor] put up on the board: "Those who can't do, teach," which is a common phrase that most undergrads encounter. And [the professor] proceeded to explain why that isn't necessarily accurate, but I felt did not do a good job at that. In fact, I felt at the end, "You almost solidified or deepened that belief that those who can't do, teach." It just left such a bad taste in my mouth. I remember thinking like: "They didn't sell it like teaching is a gift and teaching is an art. They kind of*

*left it sort of hanging there." So even from the very beginning I was like: "I'm not convinced this is necessarily what I am meant to do." I know I'd be good at it and I think I was. The feedback I received was that I was exceptional but it just didn't fulfill me the way I thought it could. I don't know, to be honest. I guess in a way I felt like it would challenge me intellectually a little bit more, be a little more intellectually stimulating. And I just sort of found myself kind of like: "Ok, so I will memorize all this stuff and I'll regurgitate it and I'll keep it in mind, drop key terms…" And I guess I just thought that it would fulfill something in me that I would feel: "Ok, I've arrived. This is what I'm meant to do. This is going to challenge me and keep me stimulated." And I sort of realized, no it didn't. Early on, it didn't, even before I even got into the practicum. Learning about teaching did not really stimulate me, didn't really excite me or light a fire in me the way I guess… I hadn't really assumed it would necessarily light a fire, if you will. But that it would at least do something, like a spark. And I just kind of felt like: "Ah, this is quite dry…"* (Lily)

However, one of the biggest disappointments for Lily were her B.Ed. classmates who did not seem to care about their studies or being teachers. She attributed her classmates' poor attitudes to the fact that it was very easy to get into the program:

*I think one thing that turned me off was… ok, this is going to sound judgmental and I'm in no way… this is… I would like to preface my statement by saying the students were not the… it wasn't everyone that was this way, but there were quite a number of students who… the average to get into the program at the time I was there, was 2.0 on a 4-point scale. Which as you know is like not good, it's not good. And I guess I just found that there were a lot of students that came into the program that didn't really seem to want to be teachers,*

*they didn't seem to care much about what they were learning, they kind of… and I base this on conversations I had with them, on evidence of their commitment to their studies, and skipping class, just students who were often like: "C's get degrees," and "Who cares how we do?" And I just remember thinking: "I don't want to be a part of this club. I want us to work hard and I want us to be proud of the work we're doing. And to aim for good grades because purpose being we want to make a difference in the lives of those we encounter," and it just seemed like there was a complacency, there was like: "Well, I guess I won't do what I originally got my degree in, so I will come back and I'll teach." Those who can't do, teach. Right? There was, unfortunately, that underlying mentality. And that really turned me off... There were certainly students who did not embody that and we became fast friends. But the vast majority were kind of like: "Who cares?" And it's shocking. And a lot of the course assignments were group project based and so I often found myself just flabbergasted that students were missing group meetings… And others were just flat out like: "I'm cool with a C, doesn't matter to me if you guys want an A, go for it. But I'm good with a C." And I just… again, not to say that everyone needs to be that A student, but it just surprised me that those are the people who are going to be going into the education system and are going to try and instill a belief in others to do well and to care about their academics, to care about their education. And yet these individuals didn't really seem to take theirs too seriously, from what I could tell.* (Lily)

*It was not as difficult to get into the program as I had thought it would be, based on what I heard from other people. I remember having to send in a resume and answering a variety of questions relating to the teaching profession, as well as completing an essay. Though this was time consuming and stressful, the questions themselves were not too difficult to*

*answer (...) I recently heard that if you stated in your application that you have access to a car and would not be using public transit to get to your placement schools, then you are pretty much guaranteed to get in! (...) I found that my classes at the university were somewhat dull and based on a lot of theory and not enough on practical applications to be used in the classroom... Though some of the classes, such as social studies were interesting and showcased what types of projects you could do with your class, many classes consisted of the professors discussing their own life stories which sometimes had nothing to do with what we were supposed to be learning.* (Everleigh)

*I had always heard from others that the B.Ed. program was very difficult to get into, but luckily, I did not have any trouble getting in. I found that the classwork was time consuming. I also found a lot of the assignments to be pointless - theories, endless journal entries, and reflections on our experiences. And therefore, the classes themselves were very easy. Looking back, I wish they would have taught us more about classroom management and allowed us to share more of our experiences with our fellow classmates.* (Amelia)

Despite all, Amelia believed that she was as prepared as she could be coming out of her B.Ed. program and said that the real test came when one started teaching out in the real world.

Zoey on the other hand, did not feel prepared coming out of her B.Ed. program: *"The courses, in general, were informative but I did not feel ready to teach even after my two practicum experiences. I was afraid of the class size and being burnt out. The practicum did confirm that teachers do become exhausted"* (Zoey).

Kiara expressed an opinion similar to Amelia's in terms of the actual B.Ed. program. Although she claimed that, just like Zoey, she did not feel adequately prepared for the job coming out of her program, she felt tremendously supported by the university and believed it did the best

it could to support student teachers. In Kiara's opinion, the inadequacy in her preparation laid not in the B.Ed. program, but rather in the way the K-12 system worked as a whole:

> *Post-secondary education can only give so much... And I knew it was not the fault of the university. I felt hugely supported by the university. I just felt there was nothing else, like there is no other option. So I feel like in the system, where inherently there isn't the desire to support one another, even on the most basic level, how can you then professionally end up feeling as though you're equipped to deal with what it is you need to deal with? So if there is no one on the systemic level giving support to student teachers, when you find yourself eventually in a situation when you're teaching, you know, you can draw on your experiences or you can reflect on the experiences you had; and, if they were poor and unsupportive, then you're again perpetuating that whole idea… or that whole idea is perpetuated by the school board itself. So I found that very-very difficult.* (Kiara)

Some of the millennial former teachers changed their minds about wanting to become teachers even while they were still enrolled in their teacher preparation programs, while others left the profession later on for different reasons. Some of those reasons were discussed in the section about Finding 1 - where some teachers enrolled in master's degrees and later became involved in academia. However, despite the differences what should not be overlooked is the fact that an overwhelming majority (four out of five) of millennial former teachers expressed having negative practicum experiences, often involving a strained relationship with their mentor teachers. On the other hand, all the teachers (four out of four) currently teaching described their practicum experiences as positive.

**Finding 3 - Relationships with administrators and colleagues: Administrative and collegial support affected the work atmosphere and how millennial teachers felt being in those**

**schools. However, no connection was found between negative work relationships and teacher attrition. Furthermore, only one millennial participant reported having been unable to achieve a work-life balance as an in-service teacher in Canada.**

When discussing work relationships, my participants described fairly mixed experiences, with immigrant former teachers, millennial former teachers, and millennial current teachers having had experienced positive and negative work environments. Workload also came into discussion when talking about administrators and colleagues as the amount of workload seemed, in some cases, to influence the relationships between teachers and administrators. Workload was an issue for some during their B.Ed. programs. Eight out of nine millennial participants became in-service teachers. Out of those eight only one - Kiara, reported having been unable to achieve a work-life balance.

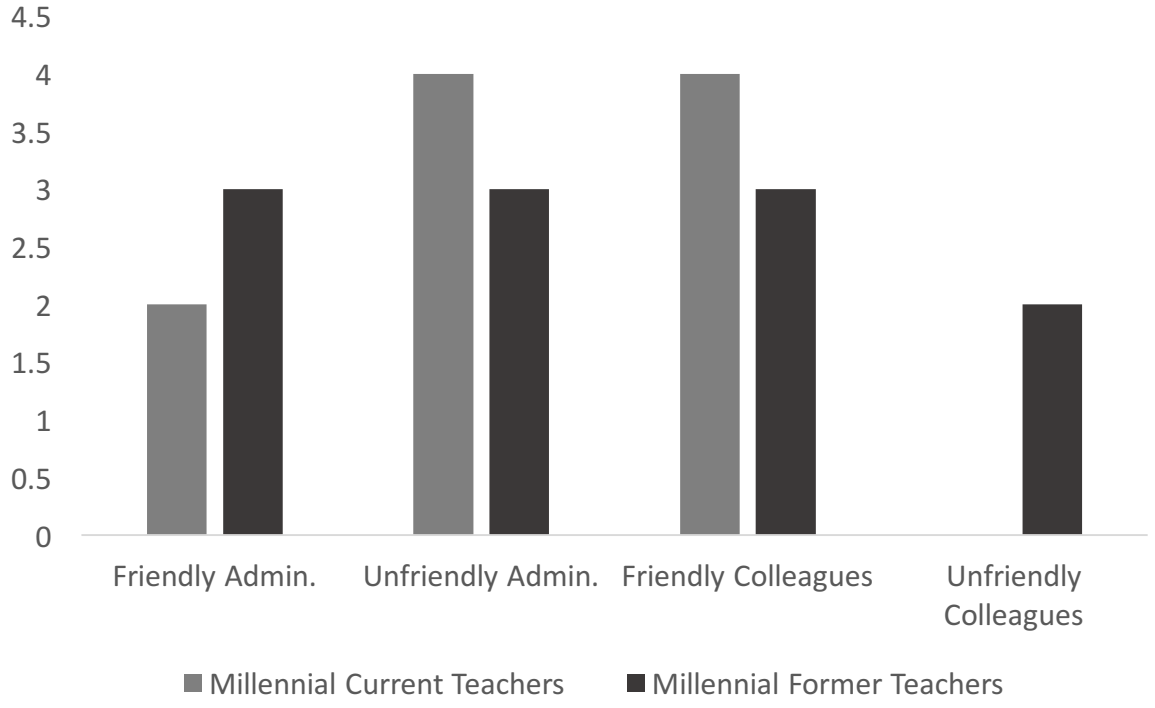

*Figure 3.* Comparison between millennial current and former teachers with experiences in workplace relationships

All of the millennial former teachers experienced a positive work climate at least at some point in their teaching careers. Jenny and Zoey have generally had friendly and supportive colleagues and administrators; and, expressed feeling satisfied with their work schedules. When talking about her work schedule, Jenny said: "Life of a teacher is actually really good" (Jenny). Zoey recalled her administrators making sure she had a work-life balance:

> *And because I was working so hard, the principal called me into his office and said: "Zoey, you are half-time but we're going to give you another spare, another prep. period." I said: "I don't need it. I don't need it." "No, you do because you're doing all this extra... You're coming in when you don't have to." But he was worried about my wellbeing, he really was, he said: "You need to slow down..."* (Zoey)

Zoey described very positive relationships with all of the administrators at her schools: *"Every administrator, they all liked me"* (Zoey). One of her principals also helped her look for teaching jobs at other schools when she could not be offered a contract because of employment rules in terms of seniority, when the job had to be given to a more senior teacher:

> *So somehow, my principal at the time was calling up all these principals, saying: "You need to interview Zoey, she works very hard. She's excited about teaching." So other principals called me. But another school, somehow, found me as well and I actually did an interview for this school... And they hired me on the spot.* (Zoey)

Zoey also talked about her colleagues. Although she had positive relationships with most of her colleagues, she stated that every school that she worked at had a few "bad apples:"

*I taught in three schools. Every school - always few that are very negative. So for example, when I shaved my head for the Terry Fox Foundation, a lot of the male teachers signed up to shave it. But they had no hair already, it was kind of a joke: "I'll shave my head." This Home Ec. Teacher at the time signed up (...) Guess what? The day before, we already raised $5000 – we were all celebrating, and she tore her name down... "What happened to her?" I don't know, it was not my place to say anything of course. But yes, there are teachers like that who are so negative. And I cannot believe she did that. That's just wrong. She had no faith.* (Zoey)

Despite some negative colleagues, Zoey had a very positive experience overall and claimed to have loved her time teaching. She went on a maternity leave and during that time decided to pursue her graduate studies, which later sparked her interest in academia. If she did not leave the year she went on her maternity leave, Zoey claimed she would still be working as a teacher.

In Jenny's case, she described very positive experiences with colleagues and more negative experiences when it came to administrators. *"...the teachers worked cohesively, yeah, it was a positive experience... And we're still really good friends. I still go out with them even though I'm not a teacher now and it's been a couple years. So we still chat, so you made lifelong friends"* (Jenny). When talking about administrators, she experienced positive and negative situations. However, at the time that she left the school to pursue her Ph.D., the workplace atmosphere at her school was negative:

*So I went through a couple waves of admin. changes. So the first wave, the principal… I didn't really notice the principal. I was new so I needed a lot of help but at a very smaller level... the other physics teacher helped a lot and then my department head because he was also in science, he was able to help me. And like as soon as something in my classroom*

*wasn't going properly, I would like yell across the hall like: "Help! What do I do? I have a child crying." So they were able to help me a lot, more than the admin was. So I didn't really get to know my admin. that year. But then my second year, we had a really strong admin team. Some people that were at our school got moved up to admin. and then we got a new principal as well... He was like very helpful, he was like: "I trust you to do your thing so if you have a problem, just tell me." And it was really strong leadership. And when we needed something, he would advocate for it and get it done. It wasn't like a problem on our end. We didn't have to keep chasing him down and tell him.* (Jenny)

Jenny indicated that the later principal held her position for her while she was pursuing her master's degree, so she could come back to work. However, when she came back after finishing her master's, the administration had changed and the new administrators changed the staff dynamics for the worse. She remembered many teachers quitting and telling her to quit as well because the atmosphere was very bad.

*New admin... and then people got moved up and some people were like: "Well, that person shouldn't have moved up," so some people were trying to work against those admin. So I just kind of like did my thing. But then there was a shift in like the dynamics of how the teachers worked. In fact, some of the teachers would say like: "Jump ship now." Like get out of the school, get out of this, get out of this now. So the admin. definitely changed some of the dynamics. But the thing is I knew I was already on the way out because I've already got my Ph.D. [application] accepted, I knew I was leaving. I was like: "Oh it's all good, they wouldn't put any pressure on me to sign up for things for next year." But I did see… So people didn't volunteer enough the third year of my teaching. So in the fourth year, they have a big chart, like a big poster with each teacher and who signed up for what. And each*

*thing - you had points. And everybody had to come up with eight points in order for you to like meet your quota for your extra-curriculars... So people didn't really like that system because it's like: "Well I would volunteer to coach volleyball because I like volleyball. But now it's like I have to take volleyball and I have to take soccer because I need two sports to get my eight points." So little things like that really didn't help our admin. And then the dynamics started to change and then the year I left that school, quite a few people left as well (...) We had a few people who jumped districts to get out of that school...Yeah, it was quite dramatic. I didn't notice it was so bad because I was ready to leave anyway. But they were like: "It's really bad so we're going to look for any way out possible."* (Jenny)

Jenny believed that one of the reasons she did not notice the severity of the situation with the new administrators was because she had a good department head who may have potentially blocked a lot of the negativity from reaching the teachers in his department.

*I've always had very strong department heads, they blocked a lot of the admin. things coming down on us. Like I had really-really good department heads all the time. I didn't notice it so bad but that could be because that person blocked everything for me.* (Jenny)

Olga did not want to teach in Canada because of her B.Ed. experiences and she believed most schools in Canada would have similar rude, overworked, and unapproachable co-workers. However, while teaching abroad, she experienced positive and negative work environments as well.

*Canada didn't really appeal to me. I knew that if I were to get a job as an elementary school teacher, which the chances of that were very small, I probably wouldn't really like my job although it would be… you know, the money would be good. I wouldn't really have much of a life. I'd find myself marking a lot of stuff at home, preparing lessons that would*

*take up my whole evenings. I was just turned off from Teachers' College and… You know, I love Canada but I wanted an exotic experience…* (Olga)

While teaching in the Middle East, Olga experienced a negative and gossipy work environment: *"... gossip was so rife there. And there's like one or two bad apple teachers that were kind of manipulative and controlling of the other teachers"* (Olga). However, despite that, she claimed to have had a good work-life balance while living there, which allowed her to get involved in leisurely activities of her choice outside of work. She also experienced a very positive work environment and a great work-life balance while teaching in Scandinavia. After Scandinavia, Olga taught in Asia again and found herself in a negative work environment:

*Again, like the teachers there were pretty miserable, very-very gossipy. The work environment was just so toxic. And similar to my time in [the Middle East], it was one or two teachers that were bad apples that would poison everyone else. And not really a happy place to work. Very strange. So the school sucked, the city sucked.* (Olga)

When talking about her negative teaching experience, Olga stated that the negatives were having those "bad apples" among the staff. Now that she is back in Canada, she has taught ESL online to adults and she has really enjoyed that experience: *"And I could teach in my pajamas or not have to work with shitty colleagues. It was cool"* (Olga). While Olga did not see herself teaching in the K-12 environment in Canada because of the unpleasant work environments she experienced during her practicums, she believed that she could perhaps work at a school like her friend's, where the principal seemed to be supportive:

*... my friend who I went to Teachers' College with, she's a French teacher at a school in [another city in Canada] and she's happy at that school. So maybe it depends what school you work for, you know? She said that the principal there is very understanding and she*

*doesn't really feel a lot of pressure to do a lot of work, although she is a passionate teacher so she already does a lot of work. She doesn't feel unnecessary pressure to do things... So she's happy where she is. I can see myself working at a school like hers. But here in [this town], not really… like it doesn't really seem like a happy work environment.* (Olga)

Kiara was the only millennial participant who could not achieve a work-life balance in her capacity as a K-12 teacher. Just like Zoey and Jenny, Kiara described very positive relationships with her colleagues and administrators.

*I found that teachers were really warm and responsive to me, I ended up getting a lot of temporary contracts for schools. I also ended up being on the preferred sub. list for a number of different schools, which worked out great... I was fortunate in the French immersion community that allowed me to build a network. So you're very consistent at the school that you're at - I knew all of the teachers, I was embraced in the staff rooms, I felt like I was a part of the team. I never felt like I was a sub... I was really fortunate. I felt like the administration in all of the schools that I worked at were lovely, very supportive. I felt as though they were really good with checking-in to make sure everything was okay. For instance, I never really felt unsupported necessarily by the administration. I never had negative relationships. I feel like I had very positive relationships with the administration that I worked with. And they were quite open and willing to give the best that they could.* (Kiara)

Although Kiara admitted to having a couple of negative experiences with some administrators, she did not take those incidents personally and believed the way the administrators acted was representative of the bigger educational system that existed:

*I mean, there were maybe one or two schools where I felt that the administration was generally not the best. But that was felt expressly by all of the staff. And so that was the culture that was created... it was more about the kind of administrators that were really rigid with the way they sort of functioned. And I think that's telling of their relationship between the administration and the board, right? So, you know, there are some schools that were student-focused, and there are some schools that are teacher-focused, and there are some schools where it's very much the business of education (...) I think when I say the business of education, I think it's more about the relationship between the board and the administration. So it's about… it's not about the teacher or the student, it's about meeting the needs of what looks good for the board, as though school is a business. "Oh okay, we're doing this just because this is what we ought to be doing based on what outwardly is perceived as the correct way of doing things" versus, "Do teachers need this? Do students need this?" (...) There was maybe one or two situations where I did feel a little uncomfortable and that was basically because of, I think generally, the attitude of the administration. Just kind of difficult to get along with across the board, not just with me and I never took it personally. I just felt like some people are unapproachable.* (Kiara)

The lack of a work-life balance was the main reason behind Kiara's decision to leave the profession: *"... I mean I miss the kids. But I also feel like I don't miss feeling as though there is no work-life balance. I don't miss feeling as though I'm a machine or need to be a machine"* (Kiara).

Millennial teachers currently in the profession also had mixed experiences in terms of positive and negative work environments. Even though they acknowledged that teaching was a busy profession, all four were able to achieve a work-life balance.

Just like Kiara, Amelia and Everleigh also worked as substitute teachers and on temporary contracts. However, Amelia and Everleigh did not have any issues with feeling overworked. While Kiara chose to be a substitute teacher because of the flexibility it offered compared to a regular full-time teaching job and denied four full-time job offers, Amelia and Everleigh could not wait to have their own classrooms as regular full-time teachers. Indeed, when talking about the negative aspects of their teaching experiences, both of them mentioned not knowing when they will get called in and to where because they wished to have their own school and their own children to go to everyday.

When describing her schedule as a substitute teacher, Kiara talked about not being able or allowed to take preparation times that were in the schedule of the regular teacher she covered. Instead, if there was a preparation slot in her schedule, she was asked to cover other teachers' classes because of the belief that substitute teachers did not need preparation times. Kiara also recalled eating lunch on-the-go as she had to do lunch supervision as a substitute teacher and was not allocated the same break times as the regular teachers. On the other hand, both Amelia and Everleigh claimed to have had the same preparation and supervision times as the regular teachers whose classes they covered.

As a substitute, Amelia has had positive experiences with the other teachers at her schools and described them as nice and helpful. At the same time, she found it intimidating to go into staff rooms at lunch because she did not know who to sit with and what to talk about:

> *Usually the other teachers are pretty friendly. And if they know you're a supply, most of them initially try to help you out with where you're going and what you're doing. And if you need to ask them a question, usually they're pretty good at helping you out and things like that. But I always find it a bit nerve-wracking to go into the staff room at lunch and*

*recess with all the other staff members because you don't know who to sit with and what to talk about and things like that. So it's good if you're at the school a lot and you get to know the other staff and then you can build a relationship with them. But I find it's always a bit nerve-wracking at lunchtime.* (Amelia)

Another nerve-wracking aspect about lunch times that Amelia described - was simply not knowing where the staff rooms were and how to get to them. Although the other teachers were friendly, Amelia found that some administrators and office staff were rude to substitute teachers:

*So for the most part it's good but sometimes you don't see the principals that often so it's hard to build a relationship with them at all. And the secretaries and staff are always so busy that I find at some schools, they're kind of rude when supply teachers come in because if we don't know where we're going or we need to ask for keys or ask for all these different things then they kind of get annoyed easily just because I guess if a lot of people come in and ask them that then I guess it's stressful for them. But at the same time it's stressful for us if we don't know.* (Amelia)

Everleigh also described positive experiences when interacting with the other teachers at the schools in which she substituted: *"Usually they're pretty nice and pretty helpful and come to check on you, if they know that you're a [substitute] and if you have plans for the day and things like that. So usually I don't really have trouble with the other staff"* (Everleigh). However, Everleigh did not find some of the administrators to be very friendly or helpful:

*Well, for the most part it's been pretty good. I just been having a little bit of trouble getting the references that I need for the LTO interviews because they're supposed to be principals that have watched you teach but being a supply teacher it's hard to get them come watch you because you only know last minute you're going to be at their school or they're busy*

*and they can't take the time to come and see you. So it's hard to use them as references. And then sometimes they say they'll be a reference and then they decide they're not going to be one – which happened to me. So sometimes, I don't find that they treat the OT's [occasional teachers] as well as the general staff do. Mostly because I guess they're busy and they kind of just let you do your own thing. But I find that they can be more welcoming to OTs and half of the time they don't even come to pop in to see how you're doing. So you could have a horrible class and things could be going crazy and they would never know because they never stop by to check on you or say hello. So sometimes they're not very friendly.* (Everleigh)

Everleigh expressed feeling stressed because of always needing to interact with different administrators. She also found it frustrating at times to deal with Human Resources because there were a few times when her last name got mixed up with another teacher in the system; or, in other cases the board just kept forgetting to pay her:

*... sometimes dealing with a different administrator every single day can be a bit exhausting. And getting paid properly. Sometimes my paystubs and another teacher's are mixed up because we have the same last name - which shouldn't really happen but it does (...) Yeah, that happened a few times and sometimes I just look and I notice that I didn't get paid from a school so then I have to contact the vice principal and then they pay me because they entered the wrong coding at the time. And then it's like two weeks later than it should be... The switch up with the other teacher might have happened more when I worked at a different board actually. I don't know why. But for some reason they always mixed us up. But with the [current board] it's always just that they forget to pay me - which*

*is not much better. But I always have to watch because they do that a few times a year.* (Everleigh)

Sophia has had very good schedules; and, although some periods in a year were busier than others, she felt as though she always had a work-life balance. For the most part, she had very good relationships with administrators and colleagues. Some of her colleagues ended up being her best friends: *"... a lot of my best friends were people that I worked with and although they've continued on to other schools, we're still really good friends"* (Sophia). Her colleagues and administrators also supported her projects and initiatives for years:

*Ok, so I'll give you one [example]. There's this project that I started probably maybe five or six years ago and it's a social studies project where students go out and volunteer. So the [Grade 10 Social Studies] final unit is all about citizenship. And honestly, it's like with everything else in the curriculum, it's probably the hardest to do justice because the other parts are history and economics. And so a lot of teachers, they just gloss over it. So rather than glossing over it or sitting there for the final two weeks of school, let's make this unit a whole semester project. And so students go out and volunteer and they do their own program, they blog about it. And because it was so intensive, I wanted them to do that instead of the final exams. "This is so important that you won't get a final exam," and "This is so big, that you won't get a final exam." It has to be that big that you're not going to do a final exam. And of course, there had to be admin. [support]. And totally - admin. supported it from the beginning. English department actually liked so much what we were doing in social studies that they wanted to do it cross-curricular-wise (...) English [teacher], he kind of came in and said we should do it cross-curricular. So he did the English portion and when he left, he actually went on a sabbatical, another teacher took it*

*over, and then he kind of followed these kids through to grade 11 where another English teacher had to take it over. So there's been about three English teachers involved in it and then me and probably four other social studies teachers have done this... It got so big that we had to schedule certain students to take social and English the same semester, with the same teachers so that this program could work. So there is another facet right there where admin. needed to support us.* (Sophia)

When asked about the positives of her teaching experience, Sophia said that collaborating with the other teachers and doing projects together were definitely some of the highlights for her: *"I like collaborating with other teachers and doing some new projects. Thinking of something new to do in the classroom, I like that stuff, too"* (Sophia). Sophia also mentioned that it was good to disagree with colleagues sometimes because it created for a healthy professional debate:

*I mean, there've been a few experiences here and there where an admin. and I have butted heads over just teaching practices – what I saw as good teaching practice and the admin. might not have seen it as good teaching practice. But you know, that's with everything, that's with other teachers as well. I mean, it's a healthy professional debate, right?* (Sophia)

However, when asked about the negatives of her teaching experience, Sophia admitted that having unsupportive administrators who did not want to negotiate was definitely one of the biggest negatives. When Jenny talked about her negative experiences in terms of administrators, she mentioned that if the person right above the teacher - "the middle man" was supportive, that person could block a lot of negativity coming down from the administrators to the teachers. Sophia, on the other hand, served as that "middle man" for the social studies department in her capacity as a coordinating teacher. Sophia mentioned that as a coordinating teacher, she knew what went on

behind closed doors, that the other teachers did not know. She had mixed experiences with that because it depended on the kind of administrators at the time:

> *... sometimes, being a coordinating teacher and knowing what goes on behind closed doors, sometimes it's not good and sometimes it's good. Sometimes, it contributes for me having a perspective of something more positive and sometimes it's more negative. It depends on the year. Probably, last year was my hardest year teaching there just because as a social studies coordinating teacher and having an admin. that didn't see eye to eye as me, that was tough. And other years – having an admin. that lets you do whatever you want - it's good. It depends on the admin., depends on the department, as well. I've always worked with a good department so that's always been good... You know, I hate to say it… Yeah, last year was really tough and that's just because admin. and I didn't see eye to eye. That project I was telling you about was supported by all admin. until this new admin. last year. They didn't support it. And you know, I just couldn't understand the rationale because we've been doing this project for five or six years and it's met with success. And we've had turnovers for admin. and they've always supported it. And all of a sudden, we're getting no support. They were not flexible, they weren't willing to meet halfway where: "Ok, can we at least try it this semester and if you really don't like it, we'll get rid of it next semester?" So that aspect.* (Sophia)

Like Olga and Zoey, Sophia briefly mentioned some "bad apples" among colleagues and she believed that if colleagues were able to negatively influence other staff it was only because the administrators provided them with the opportunity to do so: *"I also think there are a select few teachers that contribute to the school atmosphere, for sure. And the reason why they're able to contribute so much is because admin. lets them or admin. supports them"* (Sophia).

Courtney claimed to have always had supportive colleagues and school leaders. She also asserted that she has never been in a position where she felt overworked. She remembered her first teaching job where she had a nice transition of gradually taking over the responsibilities of a teacher who was going on a maternity leave. It was actually that teacher who had taught Courtney about the importance of a work-life balance and knowing when to stop:

> *I remember my first actual teacher that I transitioned with, for the long-term occasional position and she said: "If people, as individuals, are very task oriented and have to check things off their list and have to have everything done," I remember she said, "[then] teaching probably isn't for you only because there are always things to do." But it's not a bad thing and eventually you just have to stop and you're not doing anything for the rest of that day or night or week, or whatever that might be. But there really is always something you could be doing.* (Courtney)

Courtney had also been paired-up with a veteran teacher mentor during her first year teaching and she was allowed to get time off in order to meet with that mentor teacher to get hands-on training or guidance, go to seminars, or check in on how everything was going. Amelia and Courtney both said it was important to get to know the other staff in order to network and simply feel excited about coming to work everyday:

> *I feel I always tried to have good relationships with the staff and get to know people. Sometimes it's hard, as a new teacher especially, because you're trying to just get your program up and the curriculum, assessment, everything in between. And so there is a tendency to want to stay in your room and work over break... And going into the staff room, I think it's important - that's maybe not what everyone wants to do but to actually go in and get to know and talk to teachers, I think it's important. It just creates a healthy*

*workplace if you're excited to come to school and to see people. I think I always had good relationships with teaching partners and that kind of builds the friendship. And you could also learn so much from other staff members, from all the amazing things they're doing. So actually getting to know them, helps with that as well.* (Courtney)

Just like Sophia, Courtney has enjoyed collaborating with the other teachers at her schools. Courtney also claimed to have been lucky because she always had good and supportive school leaders. Similar to Sophia, she expressed that administrators were responsible for creating and fostering a positive work climate:

*So I've had amazing experiences. I've always really felt supported even as a new teacher, felt supported. And even just acknowledged for what you're doing in the classroom, feedback was always given. And so that was a great learning experience to come from. And then my permanent position where I worked for two years, I had the same principal and vice principal team. That vice principal and principal worked really-really well together. And you can always notice when they do because it makes a difference in the whole climate and culture of the school. I worked at a school where the principal was great, and the vice principal and principal didn't always work together or maybe share the same... didn't come across as the same views. I probably didn't connect with that vice principal at the time, as much as the principal, partially because I was slightly afraid of them, they didn't always give the most welcoming vibe... But to see that [other] team of principal and vice principal work so well together, it just makes a difference... So I always felt really supported as a teacher and that's important, I think, to be able to have that relationship and to be able to go to your principal with concerns or needs. And even if I didn't need to go to them often, it's nice to know that they are there and that… they always had the belief*

*that they stand behind their teachers, and they stood behind us a 100%. And I think that's important when dealing with parents and community members. They just really supported us.* (Courtney)

Similar to Amelia and Everleigh, Courtney felt it was important for principals to be interpreted as approachable and for them to be present within their schools in order to demonstrate to the teachers, students, and parents that they cared. When talking about the importance of principals sending out welcoming vibes, here is what Courtney had to say:

*I think it's important because it transfers that trickle-down effect with everyone. So it transfers to, "Do I feel welcomed walking in my school as a teacher?" like walking to work everyday, do other teachers feel welcomed? And then do students, as well? So I worked with people - and students didn't know who the principals or vice principals were. Not because me, as an educator didn't share with them, they just never saw them. So I've worked in schools where that wasn't as present. They were maybe still great leaders; but, at the end of the day, we're working with kids – all of us. So we're all doing the same thing and we all hopefully have the same goal in mind - success for our students. So that transfers to the students' happiness, as well. At my last school, students were thrilled to see my principal and vice principal coming into our classroom. And they practically begged them to come back all the time and show them what we're doing in the room. So that's important to have that. Also, that open door policy that they always would come into our rooms and see what we're doing and they actually knew our kids, knew their names. And it's important. And I get that it's hard at a big school, but still just being present says a lot to students, to staff, to parents. I think it's important.* (Courtney)

Lily was the only millennial participant who chose not to become an in-service teacher, which she attributed to her B.Ed. experiences. Although she did not enter the system, she learned about teacher work overload from her mentor teachers during practicums:

> *I think it was just the more candid conversations we would have, where I would ask them about their experiences. And perhaps it's partly because I asked and most don't, I don't know. But I did, I was quite curious about: "What brings you to teaching? How is it going?" and "Do you still like it?" and "What are the challenges?" I kind of wanted to get a good understanding of the good, the bad, and the ugly. And I got that. And so I think the challenges were that it's harder than people expect to be a teacher. There's a lot of instances where teachers take home their work with them. And when you're also experiencing a family and you've got other priorities, it can be really difficult to bring work home and you constantly feel like you have to do more, more, and more.* (Lily)

Millennial participants in this study have had mixed experiences in terms of positive and negative work environments and relationships. Kiara was the only millennial teacher who could not achieve a work-life balance while working as a K-12 teacher in Canada. Olga never taught in a K-12 environment in Canada because of her B.Ed. experiences and Lily never became an in-service teacher because of her B.Ed. experiences. However, all three of these millennial former teacher participants - Kiara, Olga, and Lily - believed that they could not achieve a work-life balance while working as K-12 teachers in Canada. Because Olga and Lily never taught in a Canadian K-12 school, no definitive conclusion may be made about work overload as a contributing factor to teacher attrition. Jenny and Zoey had good schedules and naturally transitioned out of K-12 teaching into academia.

Experiences in regards to positive and negative work relationships were also mixed. Although school administrators were believed to be primarily responsible for the work climate and the kind of relationships that teachers had with one another, no conclusion can be made about whether certain types of work relationships contributed to attrition.

**Finding 4 - Concerns with the education system in Canada: All of the participants (13 out of 13) had concerns with the education system in Canada; however, all had slightly different concerns. All of the millennial participants who became in-service teachers (eight out of eight) expressed a dislike for various bureaucratic processes in education. All of the millennial former teachers (five out of five) did not approve of standardized tests or a standardized approach to classroom teaching.**

Bureaucratic processes included the steps involved in obtaining and keeping a teaching job, the support system that was in place for teachers, constant changes to the ways teachers had to be working, and blacklisting of certain employees. Three millennial former teachers, three millennial current teachers, and one immigrant former teacher talked about the difficult process that was involved in actually becoming employed by a school board. Often, the process was described as cumbersome and ever-changing. Having personal connections was believed to be important in order to secure employment.

Four out of the five millennial former teacher participants became in-service teachers. Out of those four, only Jenny did not talk about the difficulty involved in securing employment with school boards. I also did not ask her about that process so that could be the reason why she did not talk about it. Jenny stated that she was able to get a full-time teaching job with one of the school boards right after she finished her B.Ed. program.

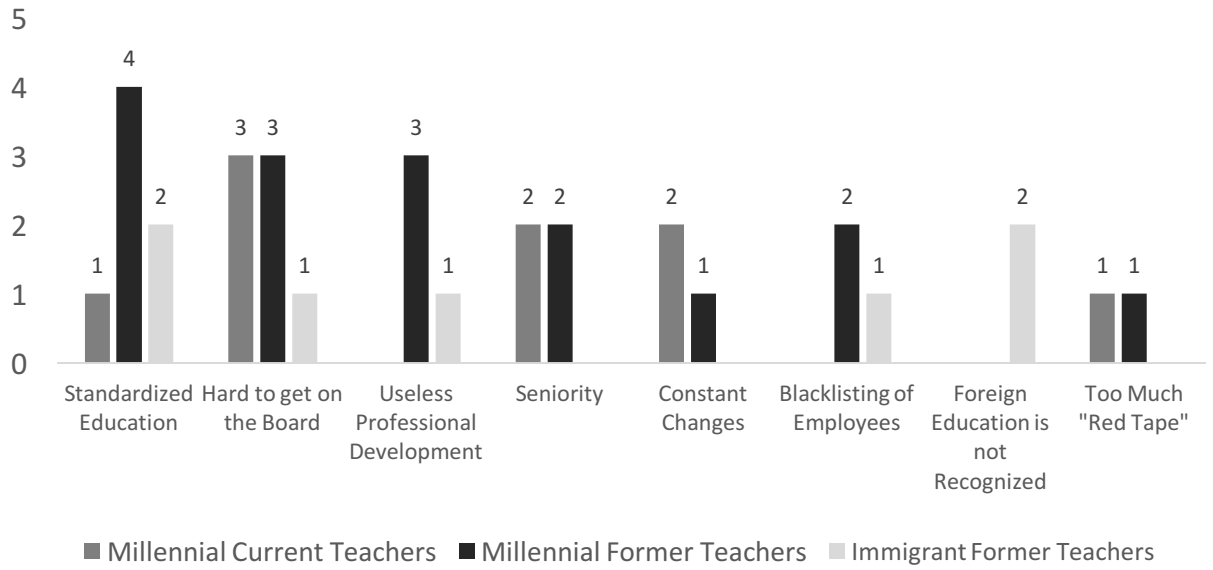


*Figure 4.* Themes that participants brought up in regards to what they disliked about the system.

Olga did not apply with a school board, but was basing her opinions on the experiences of those she knew who had a difficult time securing teaching employment in her area. She mentioned how the chances of her being employed with the board, even as a substitute teacher would have been very slim.

While Kiara did not have a difficult time of securing employment with her local board, she talked about how difficult it usually was for new teachers to find jobs. She felt fortunate that she was among the only two graduates from her program that year who managed to secure teaching jobs with the board.

Like Kiara, Zoey did not have much difficulty securing a teaching job. However, she talked about how difficult and how much work it was for new teachers to get employed with the board. She said that if she did not have to go on maternity leaves, she would still be a teacher now because she would not have wanted to give up what she had in terms of her position within the board: *"Like, it's so hard to get on with the school [board], right? It's a lot of work to get... [local public board]*

*is so hard... So of course I'm like... if I didn't have kids, I would never... Why would I give that up?"* (Zoey). After teaching in an Aboriginal community, Zoey considered teaching abroad but then she got a job with her local school board and stayed:

> *So ok, I thought I would come back to [my city] after my [Aboriginal community] experience, and I will see. I did actually. I will see if I can get a job… at that time in my head, I thought there is no way I'd get a job. You hear all these stories how people can't get on with the [local public board], can't get on with the Catholic board. And I can't for sure, I'm not Catholic. Can't even get anything. So I thought, I might just start to see if I can go away again.* (Zoey)

Amelia described the long and cumbersome process of applying and getting teaching jobs. Before she could apply for permanent teaching jobs, she had to have worked as a long-term occasional teacher. In order to work as a long-term occasional teacher, she had to be on the long-term occasional list. In order to be on the long-term occasional list, she had to be on the regular occasional teacher list first. However, she could not get on the regular occasional teacher list at first because it was closed:

> *The year that I graduated, the list was, from what I remember, it was closed so I couldn't get on. And then the second year, I applied and I never got an interview but just got an email that the interview process was over and they already had their candidates. So I never really knew how it worked or why I didn't get chosen. But then luckily, the year after that, I got an interview and I passed it the year I tried (...) If you're not on the supply list at all, then you can't [apply for permanent jobs]. But if you're on the supply list, then you could apply but you're not really likely to get a full-time job unless you're on the long-term list (...) It's quite a process.* (Amelia)

Amelia found it stressful to know that some people spent five or seven years substituting before they were able to obtain permanent full-time jobs:

*Well, the process itself was challenging - to get on the list, since it took about two years to actually get on it. And some days are challenging depending on the class but overall, it's a fun experience. But I've heard a lot of stories where people would do supply teaching for five or seven years before they can move up and get a more permanent position. So it is stressful knowing that you could be supplying for a long time...* (Amelia)

Everleigh expected to have an easier time securing employment because she was bilingual, however, she described a cumbersome process required in order to get on with her local school board and the work involved with staying on different lists:

*I was told by many people it would be much easier to find a job and it hasn't been as bad I guess as some people that are just going to pure English. So I think compared to other supply teachers who are only teaching in English, I do get more calls on average than them. And I had the two positions in French which I probably wouldn't have had if it was only in English so it has helped me. But to get a permanent job, until I get on the long-term occasional list, it won't really help all that much. But I think once I'm on that list, I can get a permanent job a bit faster just because not as many people apply to French positions (...) every year, they seem to change the rules, like the different lists you have to be on, so you have to get on the OT list and then the LTO list to apply to contracts. And you have to get evaluated and pass different things like that. So there's all these different steps and each of those steps usually takes quite a while just because there are so many people who are trying to do it. And it sometimes goes by seniority also so if you're way down on the list*

*then you have to wait even longer. So just getting through all the hurdles seems to take a long time.* (Everleigh)

To further progress on the lists, Everleigh required references from principals. However, it was difficult to get principals to come in for observations so they could comment on her teaching abilities because of her inconsistent schedule as a substitute teacher.

Similar to Kiara and Zoey, Courtney did not have difficulty securing teaching employment. Even though she did not have difficulty getting on the board and felt very fortunate about that, she talked about the long process generally involved in applying for jobs. Courtney also talked about her friends who struggled to get permanent teaching jobs at their boards, even though it has already been six years since they finished their B.Ed. programs: *"I have a lot of friends who are teachers and they're doing wonderful things but they don't yet have permanent positions"* (Courtney). In fact, because of how long it took to get on the board, Courtney felt trapped in her old town because she felt moving would mean starting from the bottom again:

*I loved getting a job right away. I'm one of the only people that I went to university with who has like a full-time 100% permanent out of all my friends. So I'm very lucky and I don't take it for granted but I kind of felt trapped because I can't move easily, and that's just the nature of teaching. And trying to get into a new board because you start at the bottom and you try to get on their supply list and you spend whatever – their rules... So I struggled with that, I think, because sometimes there is opportunity for movement within your life, to move places, and then you feel like you can't (...) I actually liked where I was. I just thought if I have an opportunity or something ever comes in my life to move, I just felt like you can't because you're a permanent teacher in a board, which is a great thing but sometimes, people's lives move them or partners or careers, whatever that might be*

*(...) So I'm on a leave of absence currently. So I was granted a personal leave of absence, last year, to do my Master's of Education... So the leave of absence is nice because you can still have your position and go back. Unfortunately, I think I'll have to give it up this year because I don't believe my husband and I will be able to move back to [our province] for September. So in that case, I'm probably losing this wonderful thing that I had.* (Courtney)

Two immigrant former teachers were able to work as teachers in Canada - Mariana and Dina. Mariana had a very difficult time obtaining and keeping teaching employment. Mariana and Patricia came from the same country in South America and went through the same schooling system where they became certified teachers upon high school completion. Both of them moved to Canada around the same time. They do not know each other. Although Patricia was told she would have to do teacher training again in Canada, the same province allowed Mariana to get recertified without any upgrading. However, the process of recertification took approximately two years to complete. Mariana said it was very difficult for immigrants to find work in Canada and that foreign education was not respected:

*When I came here, I thought I could work as a teacher. But here - is so difficult, it's too many conditions and too many problems. For immigrant people, it's just difficult. I don't know how to say the big word to say "difficult..." You have professional, but your title is just garbage for them. It's not useful. You need to prove with blood that you did, you studied hard... I started that long-long process. Then we had to translate all the papers, have the papers from my country, as a teacher to do blah blah blah because many papers they don't come from our hands to the [ministry]. They had to send the papers from our country to [ministry] directly, no passing through our hands because it's like we were lying or*

*fortification, whatever. I don't really know. But yeah, after two years, I got that. And when I had the paper... they sent information that I had to do an interview. And then when I called the lady that I didn't understand very well what she said, "Ok, you have children?" I said I have children. "Ok, they are studying?" I said, "Of course." "Where?" "In [name of school]" "Then go to that school, talk to the principal and you ask the principal to read this paper that I sent to you. Then the principal knows what to do with you because he or she has to conduct an interview to you in French or English..." And I had to buy a cassette. Then I had to bring to him the cassette without opening. He had to take the envelope away in my eyes, in front of my eyes, that it was virgin, it was clean, it was not falsification. And also, I didn't know about the questions. Then, he sat down with me, we set up everything, and it was 40 minutes in French and 40 minutes in English. And I got everything well. I got the permission, I didn't need to take any other course... they asked for many papers. Many papers. And everything is money. Everything is translation. My sister had to ask somebody there [old country] to translate the papers and then send to [ministry]. It was just crazy. You can't believe it. And a lot of money. I don't even want to count the money we spent for that because it's just terrible.* (Mariana)

Dina did not have difficulty securing employment after finishing her B.Ed. in England. She was not required to get recertified either. However, Dina mentioned that making personal connections first and volunteering at a school helped her with obtaining employment there. In fact, all of the immigrant former teachers mentioned the importance of having personal connections in order to secure employment. Veronika and Patricia mentioned that having personal connections helped them obtain teaching jobs in their old countries. Zoey, Courtney, and Mariana also shared the belief about the importance of personal connections in order to obtain teaching jobs in Canada.

Zoey recalled meeting a teacher at her gym: *"So we ended up talking, he said: 'Oh, why don't you give me your contact information and your email, and I will find you a job with the [local public board]."* He did and Zoey got a job even without an interview. *"So I got in because of who I knew, really... that's the way of life, I guess - who you know. So yeah, it's a long process to become a permanent teacher"* (Zoey). Zoey also talked about how, later on, her principal called other principals in the city asking to hire her because he could not offer her a new contract due to a new teacher with more seniority who wanted her position. It was because of those personal connections, that Zoey was inspired to do her master's degree which later directed her interests toward research and academia. Zoey believed that making personal connections with peers and colleagues was very important to her and she could not work in isolation anymore, *"So I need that. I need the face-to-face interaction. And I think I thrive on that"* (Zoey).

Courtney made some connections during her practicums and the board hired her as a substitute right after she finished her B.Ed. program. She substituted for a school for 6 days and they offered her a long-term occasional contract.

And while Zoey and Courtney were able to secure employment thanks to connections they had made, Mariana felt that it was the lack of personal connections that prevented her from securing a teaching job. When talking about not being able to get a job at the school of her dreams, here is what Mariana had to say:

> *Because you know what, I have applied in that school four times and then I gave up. Because this is very high people and I have no friends to get me there. Even because they say: "No, in Canada, we don't need that." No? Liars! Here, everyone everywhere, you need that help to get there... All those connections. Doesn't matter what they say. Look at me, one year and three months looking for a job because I don't have any friends to get me*

*there. I don't have that connections. Then applying online? That is bullshit. Sorry.* (Mariana)

Because it was so difficult to get on the board, some - just like Courtney, did not think it possible to move anywhere else because they would lose their "seniority spot" with the board and have to start from the bottom again. Out of the five millennial participants who left the K-12 teaching profession, Lily and Kiara never considered teaching abroad. Olga and Zoey wanted a "foreign experience," so they applied to teach abroad. Both of them were inspired to teach abroad by their not very pleasant B.Ed. experiences. "*... I thought*, *'Okay, maybe I should teach overseas to see if I do like it in another country,' because I wasn't sure about teaching in the city"* (Zoey). Although Zoey applied to teach in Asia, she decided to teach in an Aboriginal community instead. Olga left to teach in the Middle East. Jenny was about to apply at a Canadian school abroad where her cousins worked, however, she ended up getting hired by one of her local school boards and decided to stay in Canada. Jenny wanted to teach at a Canadian school abroad because she believed, being Canadian, it allowed for more mentoring of the students rather than strictly doing academics - which was the traditional way of teaching in that country abroad:

*... in [another country] the culture is you do a lot of drills and students have a lot of homework and it's like work, work, work all the time. Versus here - it's more relaxed, we focus on the student as a whole, you have to have extra-curriculars, you volunteer, you have time for that. But in [another country] it's very like academic-based.* (Jenny)

On the other hand, one of the reasons Veronika did not want to teach in Canada was that she believed Canadian schools were too focused on academics and she would miss the mentoring aspect that she had in her old country:

> *A teacher's job is more of a mentor than an educator... I think at the university level, the teacher is just an educator. But at school, the teacher is also a mentor. And I think here [Canada], now that I'm talking, I realized it, here, there is probably no opportunity to be a mentor. Maybe teachers don't have that opportunity - you're just an educator. And maybe for mentors, there are some other organizations, other people do it. Thinking about it, I think I would miss that aspect. I don't want to just be a teacher and write on the board. It is boring for me.* (Veronika)

Interestingly, after her practicum experience, Lily also believed that Canadian classrooms lacked the mentoring aspect because she was told to attend to the whole rather than the individual.

Out of the millennial current teachers, only Courtney had not considered teaching abroad. Although Everleigh considered it, she was not sure if she would actually do it in the end. Sophia considered teaching abroad but the school calendar in places where she wanted to do it was different from Canada's school calendar and there was no pay. She still wants to do a short teaching abroad project in the future. Amelia considered teaching abroad but since she got on with the board as a substitute teacher, she felt it was better to stay because of how difficult it was to get to that point. Although Courtney did not consider teaching outside of Canada, she felt trapped teaching in her old town because she felt if she left to live somewhere else in Canada, she would lose all the seniority she had earned over those few years. However, she did end up moving to a different city in Canada and now has to give up her seniority and potentially start from the bottom at a new school board.

Participants from all three groups reacted quite strongly when talking about the education system as a whole. The following paragraphs will discuss support systems, constant changes, and blacklisting.

Veronika believed that unlike in her old country, strictness in Canadian schools was not appreciated. *"Here, as far as I know, strictness is not appreciated. Not cruelty, strictness"* (Veronika). She believed it would be difficult for her to teach in a system where children had more rights than the teachers. Furthermore, she believed it to be a bit strange that there was no hierarchy in Canadian schools where teachers were seen as masters, as people that could be trusted with their knowledge:

> *There was discipline there [at the school in the old country]. But again, there was no cruelty. But there was discipline. This hierarchy, you are a teacher and you are a student, it existed. But it existed more on the positive side, with respect. Like, a teacher – he knows more, he understands more, one can come to him not just with academic questions but with life questions as well... And I don't want to say that one was God for the kids, but you were a master... I don't know, to me it seems like here [Canada], children have more rights and that's not exactly right. That's another reason why I don't want to work as a teacher now (...) I myself don't like when someone dictates me their… I'm for negotiation. But in order to negotiate, it has to be a person equal to your mental abilities, experience... But to actually understand why things are the way they are, it's only by believing the teacher as a master and later understanding why things are the way they are...* (Veronika)

On the other hand, Zoey expressed an opinion that was quite different. She believed that some teachers abused their rights as authority figures and because many teachers were unionized they believed they could do whatever they wanted without getting fired:

> *So that's the problem with this profession because we're unionized, we're protected. So sometimes teachers may think they can do a lot of things and they won't get fired, and still have their job. Unless, it's so bad that is like sexual or really physical maybe. I think that*

*has to change. It shouldn't be about protecting teachers… well, it needs to be more about protecting students... Yeah, we get protection.* (Zoey)

She recalled a documentary entitled "Waiting for Superman" about tenured teachers abusing students and no one believing the students about the abuse. Furthermore, contrary to Veronika, Zoey believed that teachers were not experts in their fields and had to continually learn together with their students:

*Teacher. To teach. Teacher is like – I'm going to teach you something, I'm up here, you're down there. But really, it's collaborative. I learn from my students all the time. So why are we the teachers? How do we even replace that word? Educators? Facilitators? It's going to be hard for young kids, right? "She's my facilitator." But that word has that connotation, right - I'm above and you're learning from me. But really, we're all learning together. So I tell my [adult] class now, "We're learning together. I'm going to make mistakes. I'm not perfect. I'm not the expert. If you don't agree with me, if you think I'm making a mistake, please, hope you feel comfortable just letting me know," because I am no expert*. (Zoey)

The two examples above may potentially indicate generational differences between how younger teachers approach teaching compared to the older teachers. However, these examples could also be indicative of cultural difference rather than age.

Kiara and Mariana found the system as a whole to be quite unsupportive. *"I found the difficulty lied more so within the system, the bureaucracy of the education system and also the hands-off attitude towards the teachers"* (Kiara). They both felt that although the services seemed to be in place to help teachers, no one could actually help them with their concerns.

*I feel like the system… it's seems as though, as a whole, the needs that need to be met aren't being met. So as a teacher, when you do, you know, if there is an issue, you could always go to your representative, you know your union representative. But ultimately it doesn't seem like things are in place to support you without having been met with another wall... So okay, you want to talk to somebody about it, but nobody, it seems… it's so hand-off that nobody can actually do anything for you and you're stuck in these difficult situations where nobody's really there to be consistent with what the expectations are...* (Kiara)

Mariana had a similar experience where she contacted the union to seek some help. She felt the person on the phone was very nice but in the end did not actually provide her with the help and the information she was seeking.

In the end, Kiara felt as though the system as a whole placed very high demands on teachers without any help in place. Teachers were put into 'sink-or-swim' situations. She found it very stressful to be in that type of an environment while simultaneously being liable for children and their education:

*I found for me, in the secondary system, the expectations were just too high and not enough support to actually meet them. And I thought that I don't think I could really be a contribution to the school system, given that I don't feel like I have enough resources to do it on my own. And so at that point, I decided, you know what, it would be best if I gave them my resignation letter and look for other opportunities where I can still affectively teach just not in the traditional setting, not in a bureaucratic setting, not in a setting where I feel like there are gaps to be bridged and are just not being bridged.* (Kiara)

Kiara recalled two of her long-term contracts. During one of the contracts, she was hired as a French immersion teacher, however, ended up being assigned to English classrooms. One of

the classes had 33 students with three very high-needs students, one with Autism Spectrum Disorder, one with Tourette's Syndrome, and one with Down's Syndrome. Kiara received no aide to help her with the class. During the other contract, Kiara recalled taking over a teacher who had had an accident. That was during the report card period and Kiara was expected to do report card entries without actually knowing any of the students. Recalling that last experience, Kiara said:

> *For some reason, it fell on my shoulders, a sub., versus maybe someone else like a resource teacher or someone else who could be more helpful. And so I felt, in that way, there really wasn't any support at the very basic level. And that's as a substitute teacher, right? Even as a temporary contract, I felt that I was working very hard to try and fill needs, or try to meet needs without any sort of help. And it seems like there's no one you can talk to. There's one person responsible for the staff desk [at the board] who's only available between 6:00 am and 1:00. And they're manually entering everything, right? So that becomes difficult because nothing's accessible to you. So you're sort of in a sink-or-swim situation. And ultimately you feel like how can I be put in a sink-or-swim situation when I'm working with children and I'm responsible for children and liable on so many levels, yet there is no support in place to ensure that I have any support in case there is a liability issue? So yeah, for me that was huge and I felt like I don't think this is reasonable and I don't think this is the expectation that should be put on teachers, especially new ones that are starting out. So that was a huge part, that was a huge deterrent for me. So I guess that's what I sort of mean by bureaucracy – everyone tapping the back of somebody else, without anyone actually there to help you.* (Kiara)

Another aspect about the system that contributed to Kiara's decision to quit teaching had to do with the changes that were constantly being implemented:

*And given the changes that were taking place, too - things like pilot programs, like [name of program] and I think the expectations were so high... I felt like generationally, between… there's been a rapid shift in school between the 1960's and then we reached the year 2000 when we're dealing with technology, we're dealing with a completely different way of learning. And in that, it feels like everything is trial and error. So there seem to be consistent changes all the time, but no one can figure out what constant solution we need. And you end up feeling like every year you're a guinea pig with children to deliver information or whatever it is that they need. And that doesn't necessarily seem to be fair to kids and it's not fair on the teachers. There is no consistency so you can do your job, you know. And if your job is to educate, right, primarily, if that's the thing that you love, it's really the act of teaching and delivering curriculum and creating curriculum, but then that stops being number one on your priority list because in the mean time you're trying to function or figure out how to maneuver around all these other things that you need to do that are bound… that are subject to change in years to come because we can't figure out how to tap into 21st century learning in the way that we need to. You know, I think as we're trying to progress, we're not actually thinking of the practicality of the changes we're making...* (Kiara)

On the other hand, Everleigh mentioned that one of the main reasons for wanting to stay in teaching was because it was an ever-changing profession:

*I think it's something that changes a lot so you could be teaching grade two for three years and then you could move to a grade four class or a kindergarten class. So it is a career that is always evolving and there's always new theories that are coming out that you can*

*try and implement in your class. Therefore, I don't think I could really get bored with it so I think I'd like teaching as a life-long career...* (Everleigh)

Everleigh also mentioned that by taking additional courses and learning about new ways to teach made teaching more appealing to her:

*... just knowing that there's things out there that you could try makes it interesting and appealing because you want to see how it would work for you and your class, and kind of change it up on your own to see how you can improve it for your students.* (Everleigh)

Kiara and Everleigh talked about the changing aspects of the teaching profession. Kiara's comments related to larger systemic changes that were occurring that impacted the teaching profession as a whole; and, Everleigh spoke of classroom teaching and the joys of creating a learning environment.

Veronika and Kiara expressed that the system was there and it could not be beat: *"You can't. I felt like I can't, I can't, there is nothing that's allowing me to do what I wanted to do"* (Kiara). Veronika suggested that one simply needed to learn to live within the existing system and only young naive people thought that they could change the world and beat the system: *"... because it is young people who have the energy, who think they can change the world. And with age, you realize that the world cannot be changed. And that's why you just have to peacefully coexist within the system in which you find yourself"* (Veronika). That belief of not being able to affect change may not have been just that of the older generations since Kiara believed that as well. Kiara works in a different profession now where she feels she is able to affect change and mentor others. Veronika is satisfied with a regular non-teaching job which allows her to come home and forget all about it: *"Now I just want to come to work, work, come home, and forget about everything"* (Veronika).

On the other hand, Courtney is not satisfied with the current system and she is hoping to one day be in the position where she will be able to affect some of the changes on the systemic level. One of the reasons she is doing her Master of Education at the moment is to help her move up to more leadership positions in the future.

When bringing up their concerns with the education system, three participants - Kiara, Jenny, and Mariana mentioned the process of blacklisting employees or otherwise described a non-transparent process where administrators purposely contributed to teachers not being able to secure other teaching jobs.

> *You know, the other thing is – it seems like blacklisting. So you know, you have a file, and if you don't take x-amount of jobs or if you do something that goes into your file – staff file, it's very easy for an administrator to say: "Oh, she denied jobs with us several amount of times, so I'm going to put in the file 'declines jobs easily'" and so then you get put into this file. And it's called blacklisting. And these aren't typically put out there but having talked with other subs or other teachers, you know that they exist. So stuff like that makes you feel very uncomfortable because the expectation is that you go above and beyond.* (Kiara)

> *... there were also rumours and I have no empirical evidence for this but some people... because in June, if you want to switch schools, you would go to another school to interview and then if you're accepted, you would go to that school the following year. So some people tried to do that and then something happened – the rumour was that the administrators stopped them from moving to the next school (...) You just want to move to another high school that's maybe closer to home. So you interview there, you get the job, and then you should be able to go. But then between them saying: "Yes, we really like you here, you can come to this school" and them actually leaving, something happened and they were stuck*

*at this old school. We don't know if something happened, like we don't know maybe it's paper work, maybe that school actually didn't like them but something happened and it happened a few times, enough for us to think that the common denominator was the administrator people. So the people stayed at the school the following year while I left to do my Ph.D. But yeah, we had a few people who jumped districts to get out of that school.* (Jenny)

*And then she [principal] always took advantage of our information, she said: "Remember that you have something in your file. I can write it down." [And then] in the district, they said they couldn't hire me because I have something in my file. I didn't know she [principal] said something wrong about me and I didn't know... what I knew is that they have two files. One file they can show you and the other that they hide. That means they never show you the truth... I know they call each other because nobody, nobody wanted to hire me even as a substitute teacher.* (Mariana)

Lastly, all of the millennial former teachers (five out of five), one millennial current teacher, and two immigrant former teachers expressed concerns about Canada's standardized education. They generally felt it was not right to assess children based on standardized tests, that more time was spent on covering the content of the curriculum rather than making sure the children learned the needed skills, and they felt the education system was not open or accessible to all learners.

*It's like that myth about Procrustes' bed. In order to get into Rome, there was this bench, it had a specific size. Everyone who wanted to get into Rome, was put on that bench. If you're a dwarf, you got stretched out. If you're a giant, you had something cut off or squeezed in. And schools cannot do that.* (Veronika)

*... this is what's been putting me off with a lot of children or the teachers teaching them, too - they're skipping steps. You going from step one to step four, and missing step two and step three... somehow the lessons were more interesting [in Europe].* (Dina)

*I think some big changes just need to happen within teaching through an outdated system. Just that "we teach, they listen" type model isn't preparing students for their future, for life, for careers, for 21st Century thinkers, learners. So I think to have some new fresh perspective is important... I would argue that curriculum needs to be more open-ended and more emergent... There are still curriculum expectations but you can meet all those expectations through inquiry. And there are so many cross-curricular things you can get at by learning through students' questions and by learning in an emergent curriculum. So emergent meaning that what works for that class and what their interests are and what their strengths are that will decide the curriculum a bit more... we're always saying: "I have to cover the curriculum, I have to cover the curriculum!" Because it is, it's massive, I found. And it's great things they need to learn but I think there's different ways we can go about it.* (Courtney)

*I'd like to see the elimination of standardized tests. Sometimes, teachers plan lessons as a means to an end kind of thing because of these tests and I don't think that's any way to go about teaching – just so that their students can pass tests and so that their school can look good.* (Olga)

*I really feel it's important for teachers to have the space to be creative, to be flexible, and to not let assessments... dominate their teaching. I think that's really important because if you let that control how you teach your class, it'll affect, first of all, your relationship with the students, it'll affect whether they're engaged or not... So I think teachers need to have*

*space to teach kids and to have kids contribute to critical thinking and to pragmatics. Otherwise, how are they going to thrive in the real world? ... So I think teachers should have more freedom to teach to your class where there are some people who are interested in this topic, some people who have more of these sorts of funds of knowledge, some people who want to share their culture. Like, every class should be different. Basically, it's not cookie-cutter. I don't think you can say: "I'm teaching grade eight for 10 years and every class I'm going to teach the same way." But because of assessments, because of standardized tests, you know…* (Zoey)

*... so this is the other part as to why I left teaching. I feel like we're very standardized in the way that we teach. Although we talk about differentiation, I think it's not something that people really understand how to do and I think typically because the deficit is placed on students versus the school system, and it's not fair. And I thought perhaps I'd have the opportunity to be able to make education accessible. But ultimately I don't think I was and I don't think I can because I think the mentality is still - the deficit is placed on students, which is why we have infinite amounts of coding, we have issues with behaviour, we have standardized tests – none of those things have changed. And so ultimately, we say: "Oh this kid is gifted, this kid has a learning disability." Realistically, it's sort of like: "Well, yeah, but the school… the deficiency isn't in those children." Learning cannot possibly be one way, it doesn't make sense, understanding can't be one way. And I think we're not looking at things like, for instance, frontal lobe development or executive skills – things that should be integrated into the system. And so yeah, to me, I just felt as though I wanted to make learning accessible to everybody and make them feel as though school was worthwhile because I think a lot of us grow up feeling like we sucked at something or "I*

*hated this class because I wasn't good at it." And then in hind side as an adult, you're like: "Well, no that's not what it was at all. I just don't think it was made accessible to me in the way that I could best interpret the information."* (Kiara)

Olga's and Zoey's concerns with standardized assessments could be seen in Jenny's experiences. She recalled teaching her students to the test the first two years of her teaching career, before she took graduate level courses that taught her about the importance of the learning process and making sure students understood the concepts rather than memorized them:

*So I would focus a lot on like exam preparation. I would focus a lot on making sure they understood how to use the formulas. Less so on how did they come up to understand this formula. So I'd just be like: "This is the endpoint, you have to be able to perform." So near the end, I would have like almost like three weeks of Diploma prep. where I would just give them tons and tons of old diploma exams to work through. And like by the time they got there to the end like now I see that they could perform. But now I understand how testing works and I wasn't actually teaching them knowledge, I was just teaching them how to take this test (...) It was like a drill grill. Where I just grilled them and like drill, drill, drill kind of thing... But then I realized that as soon as the students walk out of the exam, they forget everything. So I spent all this time teaching for this one moment and then everything goes out the door.* (Jenny)

Lily did not explicitly talk about standardized approaches or differentiation. However, her example of when she was told to think of the whole class rather than individual concerns may have potentially been seen as a scenario where she was told not to differentiate. *"I don't know if there is a way to mitigate that issue of like... because it's almost an issue of parts-whole. Like you need to attend to the parts but you also need to be attentive to the whole"* (Lily).

As it stands, the current data showed that although all of the participants (13 out of 13) expressed some kind of dissatisfaction with Canada's education system, no relation could be found between teachers' dissatisfied experiences within the system and their tendencies to quit. However, it is important to note that all of the millennial former teachers (five out of five) and only one of the millennial current teachers expressly voiced their concerns with standardized practices in education. In light of this finding, it may be possible that teachers' individual characteristics and personalities could have acted as contributing factors to their decisions to leave the profession.

**Finding 5 - Teacher Personalities: All of the millennial teachers (eight out of eight) indicated that teacher personalities influenced how teachers felt about their profession. Three out of three millennial former teachers, who did not naturally progress to academia, indicated that their personalities did not fit with their teaching situations. All of the millennial current teachers (four out of four) indicated that one really had to love the job a 100% in order to withstand all the stressors and negativity.**

Majority of participants stated that it took someone special to be a teacher, someone whose personality could help them withstand the stressors of the job. Returning to Finding 2 on teacher preparation programs, participants suggested that there had to be special programs that could filter out teacher candidates based on their personalities in order to provide the best fit for the profession.

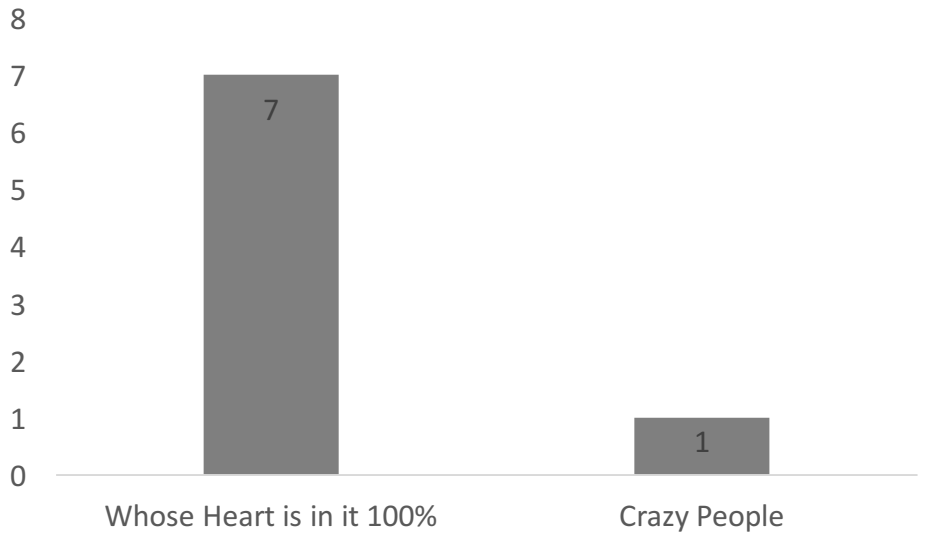


*Figure 5.* Personalities of people who became teachers, according to participants.

Based on Olga's experiences and interactions with former coworkers, she believed that teaching attracted a specific group of people: *"I guess teaching attracts a lot of crazy people."*

On the other hand, Kiara felt that people went into teaching because they wanted to affect change and if there were teachers who were not great it was only because the system had made them that way over time:

> *I think most people go into teaching because it's a very rewarding profession and people want to affect change. And I think the ability to affect change... there are some who initially have that goal but then kind of just end up doing what they need to do because they're just in the system and go through the motions of it all. At one point, I think we all experienced that one teacher who probably shouldn't be there anymore - the passion is gone and they're just recycling the old tasks. "Everything is about the way that it needs to be because that is how I've been doing it for 30 years." They're all coping mechanisms. I don't think any of*

*those teachers start out feeling that way, I think over time it's what the profession can do to you.* (Kiara)

Kiara's statement was quite different from what Lily said about her B.Ed. classmates when she mentioned that teaching seemed to attract many people who could not care less about being teachers. On the other hand, Kiara also talked about teachers who had taught for a long time and were great year after year. She attributed the difference in teacher attitudes to individual personalities. It was her personality that drove her to want to do well and do her due diligence. However, she felt based on her personality, the systemic framework was not set up for her to do well:

*And then there are some [teachers] that are amazing year after year after year after year for 30 years because they love what they do and they love children. But you also have to look at who you are as an individual. And me, as an individual, I know that for me to be able to do what I would love to do and do it with excellence, it can't just come from me. I'm someone, personally, who needs to feel my job can be done well because everything is in place or the framework is set up, the foundation is there, so that I have no alternative other than doing it well. And I don't feel like that's fair and that's the stuff that I don't miss. Because then what tends to happen is that the kids go to the back burner and I never want to be a teacher who's so caught up in trying to meet expectations that I'm actually not fulfilling needs and I'm not fun to be around, and I'm cranky, and I just want to get through class because that's what I need to do. I don't think that's doing your job well, from my perspective. I don't miss that part, I don't miss that part. And I wouldn't go back for that reason.* (Kiara)

Zoey taught in a supportive environment and admitted to never having gotten to the point where she hated being a teacher. For her, it was a natural progression to academia. Just like the teacher described in Kiara's quote, Zoey loved what she did: *"I really loved my job. And I know that because I loved it, I put in 110%. And I did. It's more about who I am. I might as well be the best I can be"* (Zoey). However, Zoey expressed a view similar to Kiara's in that the stresses of the teaching profession could be to blame for some teachers not being very good:

> *I think very few people can be great teachers. There are teachers who are good, there are teachers who are bad, there are teachers who are excellent, great. There's very few of them. I'm thinking back in my childhood, maybe I can think about two or three that I would consider great teachers, like really-really top. And the rest were either average or poor… It could be that there's pressure on them to do more with less. More with less. It could be very exhausting, there's lots of pressure. It's just teaching is a stressful profession. I think it is, it is, it is stressful. You have to really love what you're doing, you have to love children, you have to believe that you're making a difference and that they are learning from you. When you stop believing in those things, when you feel like "Ugh, who cares? I'm just going to do this lesson over and over and over again. They get it – they get it, if they don't get it – too bad." So there's a quote from a long time ago I came across "It's not what is taught but what is caught." You can teach, teach, teach, but if they don't catch anything, that's not teaching.* (Zoey)

One of the reasons Jenny did not notice the extent of the negative work environment at her school was because she, as a person, tended to gloss over negativity: *"...but I'm often one of those people who glosses over the negative so it could've been really bad but I didn't notice…"* (Jenny)

While talking about being able to balance between attending to the whole and attending to individual needs, Lily felt it had to do with teacher personality:

*It's just the nature of the role. And that will be a good fit for some. Some will be much more classroom focused and holistic in how they see the classroom. And others, naturally tend towards certain students or be more individual focused… I think to teach, your heart really needs to be in it. There are going to be very hard days, very long hard painful days, so you need to love it to withstand the challenge.* (Lily)

Similar to Kiara and Zoey, Lily expressed that the stress associated with the teaching profession impacted teachers' abilities to be passionate educators:

*I think teachers have a lot on… they have to wear many, many, many, many hats – so many that it's impacting their ability to be passionate about their jobs, to be good at their jobs sometimes because they're so stressed and overwhelmed by everything. I don't know the specifics of it, but I think some of the stress needs to be taken off of teachers. They need to do less. They need to do less and do less better.* (Lily)

Amelia and Everleigh expressed opinions that were indicative of personality traits that the former teachers said to be important for teachers' career longevity. Everleigh became a teacher because she wanted to contribute to community in a meaningful way. Although some days were tougher than others, Everleigh expressed always taking away something positive from her days and she felt as though at the end of the day, she was making a difference in the children's lives. Everleigh and Amelia, both, expressed optimism in terms of the teaching profession and believed that they could find their perfect positions in the future.

*I don't know what else I would be as passionate about. So even though it's a long process, I always just think to myself that if I keep sticking with it, eventually something will*

*happen… even though it has taken a lot for me to get on any kind of teaching list and it feels like it's a long process and it's a bit stressful, I still wouldn't change the job that I'm doing because I still love teaching and I don't know what else I would do. So even though it's a bit challenging and I don't know what the future holds, I still have hope that I will have my own classroom sometime soon.* (Amelia)

Sophia, as an educator, kept up to date on her professional development and constantly came across material that she wanted to share with her students. It was her continuous professional development courses and travel experiences that inspired her social studies practice year after year.

Sophia and Courtney stated that it was important to acknowledge different people's opinions on teaching and learning. Those beliefs allowed them to remain positive in challenging situations where disagreement arose. Courtney said that teachers had to be a 100% committed to their jobs:

*… you have to really want and love what you're doing. That can go for any job I think, but especially teaching and working with students and children. I think that's such a special and vulnerable group of individuals that you have an ability to make a difference and impact positively or, unfortunately, negatively. So I really think it takes someone who has that want to go into that profession a 100%.* (Courtney)

Three out of five of the millennial former teachers admitted to not being a 100% sure if teaching was for them upon entering the profession or even during B.Ed.

Three out of four millennial current teachers indicated that in order to remain positive it was important to focus on the students and what was best for them, even if it meant, at times, ignoring the administrators or the parents.

*I guess, in general, the teachers should try to concentrate on what they do best and teaching the students to the best of their abilities and sometimes ignoring the administrators if they're trying to be a bit too controlling and just focus on their classroom and focus on the students because at the end of the day, you just want them to learn as much as possible and be in a safe environment. So sometimes you just have to concentrate on your own thing and not worry about parents and everything else that can sometimes bring you down.* (Everleigh)

*I mean I always had – not because I am a teacher – high respect for [teachers] and it's unfortunate that politics, not just in [my province] but everywhere, just seem to dictate… the media has such a role on what society thinks. So I would always say to ignore that because that's what I [do], I ignore it. I know that those things are important and unions are important but I kind of just try to keep those things separate and not always think about them as much. Be informed but I just try to focus on what I was doing in the classroom because that's the most important thing. And always just bringing your best, as hard as it is some days, just bringing that to the classroom because it makes a difference and kids know and notice…* (Courtney)

*Sometimes we get sucked in with the negatives, "Oh, I'm teaching this group of kids again. Oh, I'm teaching this group of kids. I have so many IPP's [individualized program planning] to do." And they [teachers] get sucked in that negativity. They forget there are such good things about our profession, too, and they tend to overlook. I guess that's a big reason why teachers leave. And then they get sucked into: "Oh, downtown - it pays this and it does this, and it does this," and then they leave. They forget why they initially came into teaching. And I think a lot of teachers, they forget that. And there is - there is a lot of*

*paperwork, there's a lot of politics, there's a lot of red tape. And a lot of teachers, they get sucked into that and forget the positives.* (Sophia)

Even though Veronika expressed not completely understanding why there was a lack of hierarchy in Canadian schools, at the same time, she explained that respect between teachers and students depended more on teacher personality rather than the hierarchical structures set up by the school system:

> *... it all depends on the personality of the teacher. And most importantly, regardless of where you live, we are all human. We all understand kindness, attention, love that are directed at us. And we just as much reject when we are ignored, when we are not noticed… And school, most likely is a place for special people – I mean teachers. An ordinary person who simply decided, "Oh, it's interesting for me to be with kids," cannot work at school. There should be special programs for selecting people (...) School should not be a place of boredom or a place of exile. And it will not be that place only when the right people work at schools.* (Veronika)

**Finding 6 - Age in connection to teacher enthusiasm: Three out of three older immigrant participants who discussed age felt that being young was important in order to be an enthusiastic teacher. On the other hand, seven out of seven millennial participants who discussed age, believed that age made no difference in teachers' enthusiasm.**

Enthusiasm and energy were believed to be important characteristics of good teachers, as expressed by the majority of my participants. While an overwhelming majority of older participants believed younger teachers had the energy and enthusiasm to work the long hours required by the profession, all of the younger participants believed that teachers of any age could be energetic and enthusiastic. Many millennial participants admitted that new teachers brought in

enthusiasm, energy, and fresh perspectives needed to reform today's education. However, new did not mean young, rather it meant someone fresh out of teacher preparation program, who could be of any age.

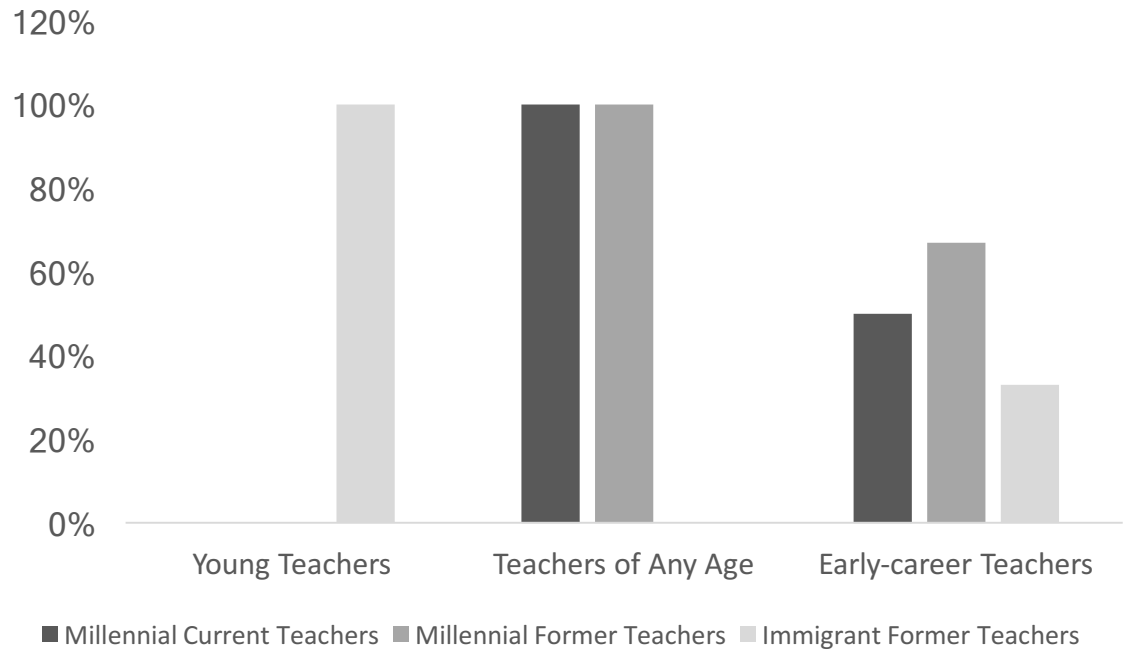


*Figure 6*. What kind of teachers are more enthusiastic, according to participants.

As a young teacher, Veronika tried to promote herself, and took on many teaching hours and duties: *"In the beginning, when I was a teacher and I had to earn money and had to promote myself, I had very many lessons, very many hours per week. I had seven-eight lessons practically everyday. And plus two homerooms"* (Veronika). Being young, she had a lot of energy and therefore, didn't mind working many hours: *"I was young, full of energy and strength, I wanted to, and that's why I worked so much"* (Veronika). Veronika does not feel sad about not working as a teacher now because she just wants to come home and not worry about her work: *"My age – I no longer have that energy, that desire"* (Veronika). Veronika felt having young teachers was very important because it was only young ones who thought it possible to change the world. She

admitted that with age, one realized that the world could not be changed and it became difficult for older people to inspire: *"... it is young people who have the energy, who think they can change the world. And with age, you realize that the world cannot be changed"* (Veronika). Veronika also expressed that young teachers and young people in general were more open to embracing new things and change. She stated that with age, it became more difficult to change and learn something new: *"... it's still a new step. I will talk for myself, I know many people and I am one of them - with age, the desire to embark on something new, to get into all of that, and to dedicate yourself – it is scary and it seems like you wouldn't be able to do it"* (Veronika).

Dina expressed that doing a lot of planning at home or on the weekends was important for teachers because that resulted in more interesting and engaging lessons. She remembered her time teaching in the Middle East and working all the time outside of school hours. However, she admitted that she could work so much from home and in her spare time because she was young and did not have her own family at the time. Therefore, she had the time and the energy: *"On the weekend, I would plan activities for the children. Maybe I was single, I was young, I didn't have a family - I was able to do that"* (Dina).

Patricia recalled her experiences teaching in her old country, where school ran until 5:00pm and she was required to come in on Saturdays to lead activities. She admitted that she enjoyed working so much and could play around with the children for a long time because she was young: *"I was young. I should mention I was young. Students were kind of my toys. And I was playing with them and doing many-many stuff together"* (Patricia).

On the other hand, millennial participants felt that age made no difference in enthusiasm or energy of teachers.

Although Zoey, shared some of the beliefs as the older immigrant participants, in that young teachers were more enthusiastic and hardworking than the older teachers, she acknowledged that older teachers could also be very good. Zoey recalled her time teaching, being busy, and always being involved in various school activities. She attributed her enthusiasm and energy to her age at the time - being younger: *"I was young, I was very excited, I felt privileged. I felt fortunate that me, as a young teacher, I never had to sub. in my life"* (Zoey). Similar to what Veronika said, Zoey believed that young and especially new teachers tended to be very hardworking and enthusiastic because they wanted to promote themselves in order to get to a safe place in their careers:

> *... the young ones, a lot of them are very enthusiastic and hardworking, especially in the beginning because you want to get to the place where you feel like you're safe in your job, you have the permanent contract. So those first few years, I would say they are really – working really hard and putting in like 110-120%.* (Zoey)

While Zoey stated that some of the poorer teachers she knew were older, she also explained that there were many older teachers who were great: *"... actually some of the not so great teachers were a little older, from my own personal experience. But some of them were also really good teachers, the older teachers, are also really awesome teachers"* (Zoey),

Jenny did not specifically talk about teachers' age, she claimed that a lot of good guidance and mentorship came from more experienced and veteran teachers who were confident in their subjects and their teaching practices. She also expressed that teaching got easier with experience because one learned about possible student reactions and became used to the whole process of teaching. However, Jenny also admitted that it was important for some veteran teachers to change with the times and not get stuck in the past.

Kiara did not expressly mention age as an important factor in teacher quality or enthusiasm. However, she talked about new teachers working very hard and therefore becoming burnt out. Similar to Zoey, she mentioned veteran teachers who worked for a long time and were not very good educators, as well as she talked about veteran teachers who were great teachers. Based on that data, it is reasonable to believe Kiara did not think of age as a contributing factor to teacher enthusiasm or energy.

Lily expressed that actual physical age did not make any difference. She felt that new teachers coming out of the program definitely had a fresher perspective and energy. However, she mentioned that there were more veteran teachers as well who had the same amount of energy as the younger teachers.

> *I think that maybe they [new teachers] have a fresh perspective. I feel fairly confident in saying that. If they just recently came out of the program, maybe they have a fresher perspective... And maybe they haven't been in the teaching profession so long that they've encountered a number of obstacles or have dealt with considerable stressors. Maybe they have. Maybe it's personality, maybe it's temperament that contributes to that, too. But I would sort of wonder if someone's been in the profession less, then maybe they have that fresh perspective. However, as I'm speaking I'm wondering, too, if you're new in the profession that could be a very stressful period of time – you're just trying to navigate everything and learn how it all works. So that might not be ideal either. I don't know. And I've met teachers that have been in the profession 30 years and they have the energy of a 20-year old.* (Lily)

Although Courtney claimed that new teachers brought fresh perspectives and that was what was needed in order to reform an outdated system, she felt actual age did not matter:

*First year teachers are wonderful but there is also something to be said about experience. But some people come with that experience from the start. Some people, I think have that. Some people are naturally good at different things. And so a new teacher maybe could never look like a new teacher in the classroom so it could go both ways.* (Courtney)

Courtney admitted that the more one did something the better they became at it and the easier it got:

*But I know personally, I get more confident with assessment, with dealing with parents, with everything – the more years I teach. That's me personally. I think that's typically the case – you do get better at things. But new teachers coming in can bring a wealth of new knowledge and a fresh change, a perspective that I think we need in schools today.* (Courtney)

At the same time, Courtney said that having a longer teaching experience did not necessarily mean someone was a better teacher than someone new, it all depended on the quality of experience rather than quantity:

*... so it goes both ways - even if you've been teaching for 10 years, it doesn't mean you're going to be this amazing teacher. Maybe you are… But I think it goes with your experience but also your strengths, like what can you actually bring to the school, to the classroom, to the field of education, to this board - what could you bring? And that could be after teaching for years or that could be after your first year. So it's hard to draw that line because everyone is so different in what we bring and our experiences and our background are so different. So I feel that will always vary.* (Courtney)

Courtney felt sad that some teachers left the profession before they got to the point where they felt safe and confident in their careers:

*I don't think there's anything wrong with a lot of new teachers in the field but I do feel it's unfortunate if teachers are leaving before they get to really feel confident and perfect and feel really good about where they are as an educator. I feel bad for that and I think that's unfortunate. People leaving the field before they even get a chance to get into a board and teach. So that's unfortunate to see because there's loss of potential sometimes happening...* (Courtney)

Amelia did not think the age of a teacher mattered. Just like Courtney, Lily, and Zoey, she felt being new mattered more because new teachers were more enthusiastic and creative. However, a new teacher could be of any age:

*I don't think it matters what age a teacher is, as long as they are creative and are passionate about teaching, which they could be at any age. A new teacher coming out of teacher's college... may be more enthusiastic and have new ideas - however, they could be a 20-year old, a 30-year old or a 40-year old.* (Amelia)

Just like all the previous millennial participants, Everleigh did not think a teacher's age made any difference in the levels of enthusiasm or teaching quality. Going back to teacher personality, she believed the most important aspect of a good teacher had to do with actually loving the profession. While Lily, Courtney, and Amelia mentioned that new teachers brought in fresh perspectives, Everleigh expressed an opinion similar to Jenny's in that it was important for older teachers to stay up to date in order to have that fresher perspective:

*I don't necessarily think that a teacher needs to be a certain age to be enthusiastic or to provide quality education, as long as the teacher is staying current on trends in education and on what students enjoy learning about and how. By attending workshops, taking additional qualification courses, and discussing educational topics with fellow staff*

*members, anyone can stay current and provide quality education as long as their heart is in it and they are in the field of education because they truly enjoy teaching children and watching them grow as learners and thinkers. When teachers learn new things, gain new perspectives, find new learning resources and materials to share and implement into their classroom, it is easy to become more enthusiastic. As long as teachers don't become stuck in what and how they teach and are willing to adjust their teaching styles to meet the needs of those in their class, teachers of any age can provide quality education.* (Everleigh)

Based on this finding, all of the millennial participants believed that the actual physical age of a teacher would make no difference to a teacher's enthusiasm and energy levels. That belief was polar opposite of what was expressed by the older generations of immigrant participants who believed age definitely made a difference. However, what all three of the groups agreed on was the belief that early-career teachers were more dedicated and displayed more energy and enthusiasm.

## Conclusion

This chapter presented the six findings uncovered by my study. Data from individual interviews and written follow-up questions revealed the research participants' perceptions of why they either stayed or left the teaching profession. Quotations from my participants were used throughout this chapter in order to help the readers feel more confident in my representation of the teaching realities of my participants.

The primary finding of this study was that teachers who eventually left the teaching profession did not initially start their post-secondary education with the goal of becoming certified school teachers. All of the participants, millennial and previous generations, Canada and foreign-trained, confirmed this finding. Although every participant had her own unique story of how she

got into teaching and why she left, all of the former teachers enrolled in post-secondary studies in fields other than education, while all of the current teachers enrolled in post-secondary studies with the goal of becoming certified teachers.

The second finding was that the overwhelming majority of the millennial former teachers experienced negative practicums during their Bachelor of Education programs, often in connection to their relationships with the assigned mentor teachers. On the other hand, all of the millennial current teachers expressed positive experiences during their practicums.

The third finding showed that administrative and collegial relationships did not serve as a compelling contributing factor to these millennial teachers' decisions to actually leave the profession. All of the millennial participants, current and former teachers, have experienced positive and negative work interactions.

The forth finding showed that all of the participants had concerns with the education system as a whole. However, each participant had a slightly different concern. The most dominant concern with the system had to do with the participant teachers' disapproval of standardized education. However, while some claimed to have left because of the standardized system, others claimed to have stayed so they could improve this standardized system. Therefore, the education system as a whole was not a compelling contributing factor to millennial teacher attrition.

The fifth finding addressed the various personalities of teachers. Due, in part, to the difference in opinions in finding four, it was inferred from the participant stories that their individual personalities may have contributed to their decisions to leave the teaching profession. Majority of the participants, current and former teachers, stated that in order to be a teacher one had to love it and be dedicated to the profession a 100%.

The sixth finding was that neither of the millennial participants believed that age made a difference in teachers' abilities to be enthusiastic and energetic. On the other hand, the immigrant participants from the previous generations believed that it was important for teachers to be young.

Based on these 13 in-depth interviews with the three groups of participants, I can conclude that neither the education system nor the levels of administrative and collegial support (that included workload) nor the young age served as overriding contributing factors to teacher attrition. Factors that made the biggest contributions to attrition had to do with teachers' initial post-secondary study interests, experiences in the Bachelor of Education programs, and individual personalities.

# CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

## Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis of Findings

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions of millennial teachers, living in Canada, who left the teaching profession. Two additional groups of participants were interviewed in order to better understand the unique experiences of the millennial former teachers. Millennial teachers currently in the profession helped explain why they believed they were still teaching in order to see how it related to the experiences of those millennial teachers who had left the profession. The third group, former teachers who came to Canada as immigrants, helped explore whether experiences and opinions of not teaching in Canadian K-12 schools were unique to Canadian educated millennials or if perhaps there were contributing factors to teacher attrition that crossed generations and cultures.

I used in-depth interviews and written follow-up questions to collect qualitative data. There were 13 participants in the study: five millennial former teachers, four millennial currently practicing teachers, and four immigrant former teachers. The data were colour coded, analyzed, and organized by categories and subcategories. The study was based on the following seven research questions:

1. Why did participants leave the K-12 teaching profession? Or alternatively, for those who stayed - why are they teaching and what are their career plans for the future?
2. How would participants describe their experiences during their Bachelor of Education programs?
3. What were their relationships like with their colleagues and administrators?
4. What were their relationships like with their students and the students' parents?
5. How did they experience work and life balance?

6. What was the best part about working as a teacher?

7. What was the worst part about working as a teacher?

Findings from chapter four satisfied some aspects of these questions; however, a further comparative generational study is needed to explore experiences of younger and older generations of former Canada-trained teachers and their reasons for leaving the profession. Given the cultural and economic differences between provinces and territories, a future study should also focus on just one province or territory at a time.

The key finding from my study was that the participant teachers who voluntarily left the K-12 teaching profession had a different field of interest when initially enrolling in post-secondary education. On the other hand, all of the teachers currently in the profession, claimed to have always wanted to be teachers and enrolled in post-secondary education with the goal of becoming certified teachers. Furthermore, practicum experiences during B.Ed. programs appeared to play a role in the participants' decisions to stay in or leave the teaching profession.

This chapter analyzes, interprets, and synthesizes the findings. The chapter is organized by the following analytic categories:

1. The relationship between teachers' Bachelor of Education experiences and attrition.

2. Administrative and collegial support and its connection to teacher attrition.

3. Class composition in relation to teacher attrition.

4. Bureaucratic processes and standardized education, and their connection to teacher attrition.

5. Personal characteristics of teachers and how those relate to teacher attrition.

6. The relationship between teachers' initial fields of interests for post-secondary education and their tendencies to leave the profession at a later date.

The above analytic categories are directly related to the main research questions of my study and were also used to code data for chapter four. Data was coded for recurring themes that were organized into categories and presented in the previous chapter. Now, these themes will be put into the context of previous literature. Furthermore, data that went beyond previous literature is also presented in this chapter. While the previous chapter focused on analyzing the participants' interviews, this chapter is more holistic in order to understand how the millennial participants' experiences relate to the "bigger picture" of the teacher attrition phenomenon.

The discussion takes into consideration literature on teacher attrition and mobility, as well as literature on millennial employees. My findings are intended to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of why some millennial teachers choose to leave the profession while others choose to stay. The chapter concludes with a re-examination of my biases and assumptions about the phenomenon of millennial teacher attrition.

**Analytic Category 1: The relationship between teachers' initial fields of interest for post-secondary education and their tendencies to leave the profession later on**

This analytic category is closely related to another category about the individual personalities of teachers. The most over-riding finding from my study had to do with personal backgrounds of the participant teachers. In this study, each of the participant teachers who eventually left the teaching profession had a different field of interest initially going into post-secondary education. In contrast, participant teachers who remained in the profession went into post-secondary with the goal of becoming certified teachers.

It was evident that the millennial participants in this study, who did after-degrees in education or who transferred to concurrent B.Ed. programs after starting studies in a different faculty did so because of interest in teaching, had an overseas experience in teaching, considered

teaching to be an economically secure profession, or otherwise believed it overlapped with their other interests - not because they were unsuccessful at their initially chosen fields. Even though all of the participant millennial former teachers enjoyed the actual act of teaching and working with children, and had their own unique reasons for quitting, having interests outside of teaching prompted them to pursue other career options. One of the millennial teachers who was currently teaching also had strong interests in an area outside of teaching and she, too, admitted to having tried to leave teaching a few times.

There is currently a gap in research literature about the initial field of interest for post-secondary education aspect of teacher attrition and it should be explored further, with more participants (perhaps quantitatively) in a future study.

In summary, why some participant millennial teachers quit while others remained in the profession was a result of a complex combination of contributing factors. Although collegial and administrative support, together with the standardized and bureaucratic system played a role in how teachers felt in their environment, those aspects showed little influence over the participant teachers' decisions to actually leave the profession. Bachelor of Education coursework, even though it was considered useless by many participants, appeared to have very little influence over teachers' decisions to leave. Allensworth et al. (2009) found only weak links between B.Ed. programs and attrition rates. However, my finding suggests that the type of B.Ed. program (e.g., 4-year, concurrent, or after-degree) may have some connection to attrition and those connections should be explored further in a future research study. The participants in this study indicated that the most prevailing contributing factors that led to their decision to leave the teaching profession were negative experiences with practicum mentor teachers and their individual personalities. It is

important to acknowledge that mentor - student teacher relationship is just as much dependent on the mentor personality as on the student teacher personality.

The personal characteristics related to teachers' age and experience were the strongest predictors for teacher turnover (Allensworth et al., 2009; Ball, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Loeb et al., 2005). This finding further challenges the notion that younger less experienced teachers leave in higher numbers than the older generations because participant millennial Canadian former teachers and participant pre-millennial immigrant former teachers shared a similarity since both groups of participants were interested in a field other than teaching when initially enrolling in post-secondary education. This finding transcended age and culture as the two groups of participants shared this similarity.

**Analytic Category 2: The relationship between teachers' Bachelor of Education experiences and attrition**

Although Allensworth et al. (2009) found only weak links between teacher education programs and turnover/attrition rates, the links related to practicum experiences within a Bachelor of Education program proved to be quite strong based on the findings from my study.

**Mentorship for student teachers and first-year teachers.** The findings from my study were very consistent with Kutsyuruba et al.'s (2013; 2014) claims that the type of mentorship new teachers received was indicative of how long those new teachers remained in the profession: "... high-quality mentoring programs have positive impacts through increased teacher effectiveness, higher satisfaction, commitment, improved classroom instruction and student achievement, and early-career retention of novice teachers" (Kutsyuruba et al., 2013, p. 6). Majority of the millennial former teachers from my study described either negative experiences with their practicum mentors or otherwise felt unprepared to enter the field upon completion of their programs. All of the

participant millennial teachers who were currently teaching described positive experiences with their mentors and claimed to have learned useful skills from them - skills that they still use to this day.

Kutsyuruba et al. (2013; 2014) pointed out Canada's overall lack of consistency in terms of providing mentorship for beginning teachers. The ATA (2014) study pointed out that "most teachers in Canada receive no support or mentoring upon entering the profession..." (p. 13). That phenomenon was confirmed by my participants. The participants in this study came from different cities and provinces, and while some of them received ongoing hands-on mentorship by a veteran teacher for a full school year, others received no mentorship at all.

Furthermore, Kutsyuruba et al. (2013; 2014) urged that when designing mentorship programs, stakeholders had to consider the role of administrators in serving as "proper mentors" in order to help new teachers develop and grow:

> ...failure to appropriately match mentor with mentee, unsuccessful new teacher/mentor dyads, lack of willing and/or able mentors, lack of mentor training, or individual factors (e.g., burnout, lack of professional respect) may result in failed efforts [to support new teachers]. (Kutsyuruba et al., 2013, p. 7)

My participants' statements may be applicable to the mentorship programs (practicums) that are used in Bachelor of Education programs. Lily expressed that more emphasis needed to be placed on who exactly became practicum mentor teachers and how they got selected:

> *...mentor teachers are impacting future generations [of teachers] and if you have a mentor teacher who's burnt out, who's tired, and is not doing as well as they would like to be or could be then that impacts the [student teachers] that come in... I think there needs to be more emphasis placed on who becomes a mentor teacher. Emphasis and a little bit more*

*thoughtfulness. Like, if you want to be a mentor teacher is not simply that you've taught a certain number of years... Like, let's learn more about your energy and what you can give to the next generation [of teachers] (...) I think there needs to be proof of the fact that they have the capability, the desire to really be a mentor. Maybe that entire term "mentor" needs to be re-evaluated and re-examined"* (Lily).

Further research is needed to explore the impact mentor teachers have on student and new teachers' early-career retention. As well, practices used to select mentor teachers need to be re-examined in order to allow only mentors who "foster new teachers' confidence, enhance teaching practice, improve job satisfaction, and provide the support that new teachers require to remain in the profession" (Kutsyuruba et al., 2014, p. 28). Just like Kutsyuruba et al. (2013) suggested that burnout may have affected the quality of mentorship provided for new teachers, within this study, Lily advised that all teachers needed to take care of themselves in order to be effective and supportive workers:

*[Suggestion] for those that are teaching, I would say to develop a good self-care regiment. Like, self-care is important much like when the plane is going down, who puts the mask on first? The individual. And then you feed those around you. Adopt that same idea – put your mask on, feed yourself, and energize yourself and do what you need to do to be a successful happy healthy human being. And then give to your students.* (Lily)

**Bachelor of Education coursework.** Furthermore, more research is needed to explore teacher education programs and the types of students they admit. Majority of my participants indicated that it was very easy to get admitted into their B.Ed. programs and they urged universities to re-evaluate their entrance criteria in order to attract top students, as well as develop a practical and relevant tracking system that could track students' ongoing commitment to the program (e.g.,

maintaining a certain GPA, finding a way to do honest reflections on experiences, introducing field experience within the first two weeks of the program). In terms of the suggested entrance criteria for top students, participants indicated that a high GPA need not necessarily be the main defining factor: *"I think just a little more thoughtfulness on the part of the program, just say like: "If we want to attract top students," and top being for a variety of reasons, maybe their grades, maybe they got great volunteer experience - they might have a 2.0 but they started a group home and reformulated care for young at-risk youth. Like that's pretty incredible. So looking at the whole package as opposed to maybe just having a 2.0..."* (Lily). "The extent of preparation teachers have for teaching influences whether individuals will stay in the profession" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 19). Again, this finding challenges Allensworth et al.'s (2009) claim that the links between B.Ed. programs as related to practicum experiences and teacher attrition were weak.

Based on the fact that the majority of my millennial participants did not find B.Ed. coursework very useful or relevant, it is important to further explore the relationship between coursework in a Bachelor of Education program and teacher attrition in future research.

Darling-Hammond (2010) claimed that the four root problems with new teacher retention were: (1) salaries, (2) working conditions, (3) preparation, and (4) mentoring and support. Although low salaries were one of the contributing factors for attrition among teachers in the U.S., salaries were not a contributing factor in attrition among teachers in Canada. Previous literature on Canadian teachers (Duxbury & Higgins, 2013) and data from my own participants showed that salaries did not affect Canadian teachers' attrition rates. On the contrary, salaries were claimed to be high and kept some of the teachers in the profession. Darling-Hammond (2010) defined working conditions as "conditions that teachers feel enable them to succeed with students - including administrative supports, strong colleagues, and opportunities to participate in decisions" (p. 21).

Working conditions as part of administrative and collegial interactions, work-life balance, as well as class compositions will be discussed later in this chapter. As demonstrated previously, Darling-Hammond's (2010) points (3) preparation and (4) mentoring and support were confirmed by my data to have very strong links to teacher attrition.

**Analytic Category 3: Administrative and collegial support, and its connection to teacher attrition**

Previous research (Allensworth et al., 2009; ATA, 2014; Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013; Kutsyuruba et al., 2013; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014) demonstrated the importance of administrative and collegial support on teacher job satisfaction; and, teacher job satisfaction was closely tied to teachers' tendencies to leave their schools. While some of my participants expressed being negatively affected by a couple of other teachers at their schools, others expressed being negatively affected by the administrators. Consistent with the previous research (Fuller et al., 2013), participants in this study expressed opinions that pointed to school administrators' strong influences over the work climate and workplace morale. Although some participants expressed feeling unsupported and described experiences where their colleagues had to transfer across districts just to escape from certain administrators, it was unclear to what extent having negative work relationships affected teachers' tendencies to actually leave the teaching profession.

Furthermore, an unexpected theme that came up in analyzing the interviews when discussing co-workers had to do with department heads. Department heads were believed to be important in creating either negative or positive feelings in teachers toward their workplaces, as well as effective "blockers" of negativity that came down from the administrators. Those opinions were consistent with Horn and Little's (2009) findings on the differences in morale among teachers

in different departments. However, only a small number of the participants in this study mentioned their departments and therefore it was unclear to what extent departments may have influenced teachers' decisions to leave the profession. It would be very helpful for a future study to explore the roles department heads play in teachers' tendencies to either change departments, change schools, or leave the profession altogether.

A number of millennial teacher participants described how they enjoyed collaborating with colleagues on various projects, as well they expressed the importance of networking and learning from their coworkers. Instances where collaboration with colleagues was restricted, either by administrators not allowing for a project to continue or by having colleagues with negative attitudes, participants experienced negative emotions toward their work environments. Olga stated that even though she would have made good money being an elementary teacher in Canada, she did not want to work with negative coworkers and be overworked. This phenomenon is consistent with literature on millennial employees from other sectors (PwC, 2013) that stated that millennials valued collaboration very highly and that having a positive work environment was more important for that generation than monetary gains: "Millennials place a high priority on workplace culture and desire a work environment that emphasizes teamwork and a sense of community" (PwC, 2013, p. 8). At the same time, in her literature review of studies on teacher attrition, Darling-Hammond (2010) came to a similar conclusion, only in terms of teachers of multiple generations, not just millennials: "While money can help, teachers are primarily attracted by principals who are good instructional leaders, by like-minded colleagues who are committed to the same goals..." (p. 25).

Millennial participants from my study gave suggestions for colleagues and administrators that were consistent with previous literature (Allensworth et al., 2009; ATA, 2014; Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014)

about teachers' desires to work in supportive working environments. Discouraging gossip among teachers and having trusting administrators were among the top suggestions for improvement:

> *... I didn't feel like teachers were appreciated for their work in those schools [in Canada] and they didn't look very happy. Maybe if they had some encouragement coming their way, they wouldn't be so negative and nasty. Maybe another suggestion would be to discourage gossip and that kind of stuff in the workplace.* (Olga)
>
> *I think it's important that the administrators know that we're competent people so to give us a level of their trust, that we can do things and get things done (...) And then in terms of being more of a veteran teacher, it's like just reminding them that classrooms change, students change, so making sure that you also change with time so that you don't stick to what you do every single day.* (Jenny)
>
> *Just sometimes the way that principals talk to new teachers or supply teachers – they talk as if they're better than [the new teachers]. Even though they have a higher position obviously but they don't talk to us as equals sometimes, so it feels like they're talking down to us and they don't have confidence in the work that we can do at their school.* (Amelia)
>
> *I'd like to think admin. goes to being admin. to make the school they're at a better place. So I think if they support teachers, it ultimately makes that learning atmosphere better. Supporting teachers, ultimately, helps the students. And I hate to say it but when students want to learn, your marks go up and it always looks good when school marks go up.* (Sophia)

Participants' comments were consistent with Allensworth et al.'s (2009) statement that: Teachers are also somewhat more likely to remain in schools where there is a strong sense

of trust among teachers at the school and where there are positive efforts to include new teachers in the professional community of the school (Allensworth et. al, 2009, p. 25).

A fairly consistent theme that was brought up by previous literature (ATA, 2014; Duxbury & Higgins, 2013) had to do with work flexibility and a work-life balance. Work-life balance was often tied to the relationships between the administrators and the teachers. Clark and Antonelli (2009) as well as Duxbury and Higgins (2013) discussed the effects work flexibility had on teacher job satisfaction. Duxbury and Higgins (2013) as well as the OECD (2013) study reported that Alberta teachers worked 10 hours more per week than other professionals in Canada and that Alberta teachers worked seven hours per week more than the other teachers from the TALIS study. However, of the millennial participants in this study who became in-service teachers, only one reported not being able to achieve a work-life balance. Interestingly, the other two millennial participants who did not become K-12 teachers in Canada (Olga and Lily) made suggestions for policymakers to cut the teachers' workload, saying that Canadian teachers *"need to do less and do less better"* (Lily). All other participant teachers stated they were able to achieve a work-life balance and expressed being satisfied with their work schedules. As only one millennial teacher participant reported being unable to achieve a work-life balance, this finding from my study is not consistent with previous literature on teacher workloads and their inability to achieve a work-life balance (ATA, 2013).

Based on the number of participants in this study, I do not have sufficient participant data on work-life balance to compare it with previous literature on millennial employees' attrition related to an inability to achieve a work-life balance: "Millennials value work/life balance, and the majority of them are unwilling to commit to making their work lives an exclusive priority, even with the promise of substantial compensation later on" (PwC, 2013).

While not wanting to teach in Canada upon graduation from university, Olga wanted an exotic experience and went to teach overseas for a number of years. Olga, Zoey, Jenny, Amelia, Everleigh, and Sophia (six out of nine millennials) have considered working abroad at least at one point during their teaching careers; and, the majority of them submitted job applications for positions abroad. This phenomenon is also consistent with literature on millennials, in terms of workplace happiness being dependent on opportunities for interesting work, such as assignments around the world: "Millennials also are particularly attuned to the world around them, and many want the chance to explore overseas positions" (PwC, 2013, p. 8). However, only Olga and Zoey actually ended up teaching outside their home cities, whereas the others stayed in their cities. It would be useful for a future study to explore generational differences and similarities between teachers who choose to teach abroad.

Work-life balance came up in conversations with participants when discussing their Bachelor of Education programs; however, most participants indicated that achieving work-life balance was not an issue once they started to work. Some of the millennial participants reported working a lot and taking on additional duties despite being told to slow down. Others reported having very balanced days and still chose to leave the profession. Work-life balance and other aspects of administrative and collegial interactions were not prevailing contributing factors in my participants' decisions to actually leave the profession.

**Analytic Category 4: Class composition in relation to teacher attrition**

Although few Canadian studies discussed the socio-economic status of students in relation to teacher attrition, it may be inferred from the participant interviews that the socio-economic status of students did not have an effect on the millennial teachers' tendencies to leave the profession. Indeed, three out of the four millennial current teacher participants have worked with

socio-economically disadvantaged and visible minority children; and, the two of them explicitly expressed their passion for working with students in socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. This finding confirmed Allensworth et al.'s (2009) claims that teachers did not generally leave their schools because of student demographics. As discussed in Chapter 2: Literature Review, teachers were generally believed to leave low-income schools with many visible minority students and behaviour issues, as well as because of crime rates in certain neighborhoods. However, Allensworth et al.'s (2009) study proved otherwise:

> Differences in students' behavior across schools, and feelings of safety, account for many of the differences in teacher stability between low-income African American schools and other schools. After accounting for difference in students' classroom behavior and parent involvement across schools, low-income African American elementary schools do not show different rates of teacher stability than other CPS [Chicago Public Schools] schools. (p.27)

Consistent with the ATA (2014) and the CTF (2011) reports, participants from all three groups in my study were concerned with class sizes at schools in Canada. Kiara claimed that having a large class prevented her from properly attending to the special needs students who required individual attention, therefore making education inaccessible for those students. Lily claimed that large classes contributed to teacher stress which was already very high. *:"... classroom sizes and everything that's contributing to this added stress for teachers"* (Lily). Amelia was weary of her province's ministry changing the language of school policies that would allow class sizes to be unlimited, unlike being capped at a certain size as it is now. Dina expressed that having large class sizes robbed some students of basic school resources, such as the required textbooks and proper desks.

The PISA (2013) report stated that connections between class size and student achievement depended more on the culture of the country rather than the sheer number of students since some countries, for example in Asia, had very large class sizes while simultaneously having high achieving students. As mentioned by Veronika, many other countries may also have a stronger sense of hierarchy deeply engrained in the student and teacher mentality, allowing for classes to focus more on academic content and less so on behaviour management.

However, neither student demographics nor class sizes were primary or overriding reasons that influenced my participants to leave the profession.

**Analytic Category 5: Bureaucratic processes and standardized education, and their connection to teacher attrition**

All of the millennial participants discussed bureaucratic processes in education, such as numerous and ever-changing steps involved in getting hired by the school authority, dealing with the union, and receiving permissions for special activities. Coley (2009) noted that cumbersome paperwork procedures have served as contributing factors to millennial teachers' tendencies to leave the profession. Based on the data from my interviews, while it was clear that cumbersome processes added extra stress to the lives of millennial teachers from my study, there was no direct connection between these bureaucratic processes and millennial participants' decisions to leave the profession.

Many millennial participants expressed opinions indicative of not approving of standardized practices in teaching. Those opinions criticized the current systemic practices, such as coding special needs and gifted students, where the inability to achieve as well as an "average student" was believed to be the child's deficit. Other participants criticized standardised tests, claiming that standardized tests made teachers teach to the test rather than actually instilling

knowledge and transferrable skills in their students. Courtney believed the current curriculum was too "narrow" and needed to be opened up in order to successfully move into inquiry-based learning.

Because standardized tests within education is an established research area, a separate study is needed to explore connections between the curriculum, standardized tests within education, and teacher attrition, particularly millennial teacher attrition.

When giving suggestions for policymakers, participants in this study asked for less bureaucracy and asked for a change in the way the current curriculum worked:

> *So give teachers more freedom... And the next part I would say, it's hard though – less bureaucracy, red tape, paper work, all that stuff you're spending time doing but that's taking time away from preparing interesting lessons, from doing things outside of class.* (Zoey)
>
> *Just to be more open. And, I know there's tons of legality but just to be open. What's so bad about having an outdoor education program? Why is it so hard to take kids camping? Like, I know all these teachers that want to do an outdoor ed. program or want to do service trips to overseas. Because there's so much red tape and so much paperwork, they don't go through it to making it easier for teachers to do that. It'd be so great if they could do it. These are the teachers that are so passionate, they could touch students, and they could get students really inspired and really involved in a program like that. But it's just so hard... Like, you know, if we want to take kids camping, we can only take them up until this point and there has to be this and this and this and this and this. And then you know, by the time you get to the fifth step, well, what's the point?* (Sophia)
>
> *To not be afraid to make big changes in education because that is what needs to happen with regard to curriculum. I know funding is always an issue, unfortunately, and politics*

*always seem to control what happens in education, which is unfortunate. So if we could put those things aside, our goal is always, hopefully - student success. So if that is always our goal, we all have the same goal in mind, so I feel that we can work together. Even if I don't ever work with a policymaker... so if we have the same intentions in mind, hopefully, positive changes would be made...* (Courtney)

*You know, textbooks - this is frustrating when you're getting old, used textbooks, and they're not even available, they're having to borrow from other schools. I mean, we're living in Canada, we're not living in the third world. So this is really frustrating.* (Dina)

In this study, current and former teachers described bureaucratic procedures and expressed disapproval of what they perceived to be a standardized bureaucratic system. While Kiara left teaching because she felt the system was too standardized, Courtney wanted to stay in the system in order to try to make it less standardized in the future. Hence, teacher attrition may come down to individual personalities of teachers.

**Analytic Category 6: Personal characteristics of teachers and how those relate to teacher attrition**

In their research, Allensworth et al. (2009) aimed to further explore how personal characteristics of teachers influenced mobility rates. Their questions focused primarily on educational and racial backgrounds of teachers. Further research is needed to explore teacher personalities - the types of people teaching attracts, the types of people who stay and types who leave.

The millennial teacher participants in this study described experiences which indicated they may be competent and even exceptional teachers, being appreciated by their students and coworkers. However, some of the participants indicated they left teaching for the same reasons

others chose to stay. Some saw themselves doing research in academia, while others could not see themselves outside of the classroom. Although previous literature (Allensworth et al., 2009; Ball, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Loeb et al., 2005) suggested that age and experience were the strongest predictors of attrition in regards to personal characteristics of teachers, this finding in this study suggests that personality traits, such as individual passions and life goals, may also influence teachers' tendencies to quit. Previous literature (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fuller et al., 2013) also suggested that teachers who held master's degrees or higher were more likely to leave the K-12 teaching profession. My findings confirmed that as graduate school inspired participant millennial former teachers to remain in academia - therefore, leaving the K-12 teaching profession.

Based on the analysis of in-depth interviews and participant stories, participant millennial former teachers reported that they were loved by their students and displayed beliefs that pointed to their sincere commitment to student learning.

The most pervasive personality trait common to each teacher participant (millennial current and former teachers, as well as immigrant former teachers) was their expressed enjoyment in working with children and the enjoyment of the actual act of teaching. Although the majority of the participant millennial former teachers mentioned negative experiences with their practicum mentors and all of the participant millennial current teachers mentioned positive experiences with their practicum mentors, it was unclear to what extent the individual personalities of those millennial participants came into play when building rapport with their mentor teachers. The number of participants in this study was not sufficient to make any claims about the type of personalities of millennial former and current teachers.

## Revisiting Assumptions from Chapter 1

It is useful to revisit my core assumptions underlying this study and the reason I pursued my master's degree. These assumptions were presented in the beginning of my study and were based on my own background and experience as a new teacher. The three assumptions identified in the beginning of the study are discussed below in the context of my data analysis.

The first assumption underlying my study was that I believed Canadian teachers worked too many hours per week and were unable to achieve a work-life balance. This assumption was proven to be mostly false. Although previous literature, such as the OECD (2013) report and Duxbury and Higgins' (2013) findings, aligned with my assumption about working too many hours, the findings from my research did not. Only one millennial teacher participant was unable to achieve a work-life balance while being an in-service teacher in Canada. Two other millennial participants shared this same assumption as me about Canadian teachers, although neither of them had ever taught as an in-service school teacher in Canada.

The second assumption that I had was that unsupportive and unfriendly principals drove teachers out of the profession. That assumption turned out to be untrue. Even though some of my participants shared stories of having had experienced unapproachable and unsupportive principals, those did not really drive them out of the profession. In fact, some of the millennial teacher participants who ended up leaving the profession described very positive and supportive relationships with their principals.

The third assumption was that I believed there were considerable generational differences between millennial teachers and teachers of older generations. The generational differences or similarities need to be explored further in future research. However, based on the findings from this study, it looks like there are no noteworthy generational differences between teacher participants. It is worth noting that I am basing this conclusion on what had been said by my

millennial participants and how their beliefs and desires were tied to previous literature on multiple generations of teachers. Even though I had a group of immigrant former teacher participants who were from pre-millennial generations, it was unclear if any of the differences that came up were generational or cultural. It would be useful to interview Canada-trained former teachers of older generations for more reliable comparisons.

## Summary of Discussion

This chapter discussed the findings from my research in relation to the previous literature on teacher attrition and mobility, and millennial employees. It further illustrated the complex nature of the teacher attrition phenomenon, especially in terms of generational differences among teachers. This chapter revealed several reasons why participant millennial teachers left Canadian K-12 schools. It offered an explanation as to why some participant millennial teachers left the profession while others chose to remain in it.

The goal of this chapter was to produce a multilayered but holistic view on the phenomenon of teacher attrition, especially in the context of millennial teachers. The challenge throughout data collection and data analysis was to make sense of the large amounts of data and group it into themes, while simultaneously analyzing the volume of information. I performed cross-interview analysis and tied participants' experiences to previous literature. I did not find any noteworthy relationships between participants' ages (generation) and reasons for leaving the profession. Gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation of teachers were not explored or analyzed in this particular study.

Findings from this study should be regarded with caution. The research sample was small, comprising data from only 13 interviews. Out of those interviews, only four or five people made up each of the three participant groups. The focus of the study was on teachers or former teachers

of the millennial generation who received their teacher education in Canada. Thus, the perceptions of those teachers on either staying or leaving the profession could not really be compared to the perceptions of pre-millennial generations who went through teacher education in Canada. Although some comparisons were made between Canada-trained millennial teachers and foreign-trained immigrant teachers, the data derived from those interviews was not sufficient to explain whether the differences were generational or cultural. Furthermore, participants in this study came from across Canada. With each province having its own culture, programs, and job availabilities, my study was very broad in terms of teacher participants. A future study should focus on one province or territory at a time before whole country comparisons and conclusions can be made.

I acknowledge the limited nature of my claims. I further acknowledge a potential additional bias in analyzing the findings. I was personally familiar with half of the participants prior to their interviews. Steps taken to minimize personal bias were discussed in Chapter 3: Methodology. I realize that other millennial and immigrant teachers may have told different stories. Therefore, this chapter is a presentation of how I made sense and meaning of the given data and the connections I saw as it related to millennial teacher attrition in Canada given this group of participants.

# CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions of a sample of Canadian millennial teachers as to why they left the teaching profession. A group of millennial current teachers and a group of immigrant former teachers of pre-millennial generations were also interviewed in order to relate the experiences to those of Canadian millennial former teachers. The conclusions from this study follow the findings and address the following six areas: (1) teachers who left K-12 teaching did not initially begin post-secondary education with the goal of becoming teachers; (2) millennial former teachers described negative experiences during their Bachelor of Education programs; (3) school administrators and colleagues had no influence on the millennial former teachers' decisions to leave the profession; (4) millennial former teachers disapproved of the standardized education system; (5) individual personality was the main contributing factor to teachers' decisions to either stay or leave (6) millennial teachers believed age did not affect teachers' levels of enthusiasm toward the profession. This chapter consists of a discussion of the conclusions and recommendations drawn from this research, followed by my final reflection on the study.

## Conclusions Arising from This Study

### Participant Teachers Who Left K-12 Teaching did not Initially Begin Post-Secondary Education with the Goal of Becoming Teachers

The first major finding of this study was that participant teachers who ended up leaving the profession did not begin their post-secondary studies thinking they wanted to work as K-12 teachers; while, teachers who stayed in the profession knew they wanted to become K-12 teachers when starting their post-secondary studies. A conclusion to be drawn from this is that participant

teachers who remained in the teaching profession were generally those who saw teaching as their main employment option. However, this conclusion says nothing about teacher effectiveness or the quality of education they may provide, as discussed in chapter two. In her literature review of teacher attrition, Darling-Hammond (2010) suggested that retaining teachers for longer than five years had a positive effect on teachers' sense of efficacy and the quality of education they provided. The analysis of the participants' stories and interviews indicated that those who stayed in the profession may not have necessarily been "good" effective teachers and the teachers who left may not have necessarily been "bad" ineffective teachers. Because the millennial teachers in this study who left K-12 teaching, remained connected to the education sector whether through teaching adults or conducting educational research, a further and related conclusion can be made that some teachers seek career mobility and professional growth - something that is natural and often expected in any profession.

**Millennial Former Teachers in This Study Described Negative Experiences During Their B.Ed. Programs**

The study's second finding was that participant millennial teachers who left or never started K-12 teaching in Canada attributed their decisions to one of three factors: negative relationships with their mentor teachers during practicums, weak relationships with their B.Ed. classmates, or feelings that the program did not prepare them well enough for the realities of the profession. This finding indicates that participants' perceived negative B.Ed. experiences may play a role in teachers' decisions to leave teaching or not enter the profession.

**School Administrators and Colleagues had no Influence on the Participant Millennial Former Teachers' Decisions to Leave the Profession**

The third finding was that colleagues did not appear to influence participant teachers' decisions to leave the profession. Although negative and unsupportive work relationships may have caused teachers to change schools, those relationships had little to do with participant teachers' decisions to actually leave the K-12 teaching profession. The findings seem to indicate that even though negative work environments drive teachers out of some schools, they do not necessarily drive teachers out of the profession.

**Participant Millennial Former Teachers Disapproved of the Standardized Education System**

All of the participant teachers who left K-12 teaching expressed dissatisfaction with the standardized system in the provinces in which they taught. A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that the constricting standardized system left little freedom for the participants to teach in a way that they felt was most effective for their given classes and made education accessible to different types of learners. Another related conclusion is that some participant teachers joined the profession without being fully aware of the school realities and found themselves unpleasantly surprised when faced with a standardized system. Perhaps this conclusion may be tied to the conclusion for the second finding in that some teachers felt that teacher education experiences did not adequately prepare them for the profession.

**Individual Personality of Participant Teachers was the Main Contributing Factor to Their Decisions to Either Stay or Leave**

The fifth major finding of this study was that whether participant teachers left or stayed in the profession was dependent on their individual personalities and individual preferences related to their career choices. For example, while some stayed in the K-12 teaching so they could affect change in the classroom, others left K-12 teaching so they could affect change from outside of the classroom. Some participants indicated that the teacher pay was good while others thought the

teacher pay was bad. There was not a clear divide between what physical and emotional conditions led participant teachers to leave and what conditions led them to stay. Therefore, a conclusion that may be drawn from this finding is that attrition may be dependent on individual personalities of those joining the teaching profession. Teachers' own characteristics, life situations, and preferences may affect what steps those teachers take in their career lives. Similar to the conclusion for the first finding, this finding and conclusion are not related to teacher effectiveness or quality of education they provided while in the profession. Participants who described their personalities as not being a good match for the demands of the current teaching profession, also provided evidence of effective teaching and successful student-teacher relationships while in the profession. Hence, a related conclusion that can be made is that participant teachers who chose to leave the K-12 teaching profession were not necessarily ineffective teachers. This conclusion is similar to the conclusion to the first finding.

**Participant Millennials Believed Age did not Affect Teachers' Levels of Enthusiasm Toward the Profession**

The millennial participants in the study collectively expressed that teachers of any age could be enthusiastic, energetic, and creative in the classroom. They conveyed that age did not affect teachers' levels of enthusiasm toward the job. On the other hand, the older generations of participants expressed that younger teachers were more enthusiastic, inspiring, willing to take risks and learn something new than the older generations of teachers. This finding made forming a conclusion tricky because the younger generations talked about older generations without having had experienced being older, while the older generations talked about younger generations after obviously having had experienced being young. A possible conclusion could be that the older generations were right and the millennial participants were simply being more enthusiastic by

thinking age did not affect levels of enthusiasm toward the teaching job. However, this does not explain examples from millennial participants' interviews when talking about energetic and enthusiastic older colleagues. On the other hand, because the millennial generation is quite broad (1977 - 1995) and the millennial participants from the study represented a broad spectrum of these millennial ages, it was unclear what the participants meant when talking about "older" teachers. There may also possibly be cultural differences between millennial and pre-millennial participants because the pre-millennial participants finished their teacher education programs outside of Canada before immigrating to Canada; whereas, the millennial participants finished their teacher education programs in Canada. On the other hand, the pre-millennial immigrant participants had lived in Canada for a number of years (e.g., more than 10 years) at the time of the interviews; and, some of the millennial participants had spent a few years living outside of Canada at some point in their lives. Overall, there were insufficient participants in this study to make definitive claims in regards to cultural differences or age differences as they relate to teacher attrition and retention. Therefore, this finding remains largely inconclusive.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, analysis, and conclusions of this study, this section covers recommendations. The recommendations are for: (a) Bachelor of Education programs; (b) current and prospective student teachers; (c) human resources (HR) or hiring departments for schools and school boards; (d) ministries of education; and (e) further research.

### Recommendations for Bachelor of Education Programs

Administrators of Bachelor of Education programs should consider the following:

1. Review admission requirements into Bachelor of Education programs. Many universities' admission into Bachelor of Education programs tends to be based on

applicants' previous academic achievement. A decision to admit into a Bachelor of Education program is also, in many ways, a decision into who is qualified to enter the profession. Bachelor of Education programs might consider whether high school or post-secondary marks provide sufficient insight into an applicant's ability to excel in classroom teaching. As this study found, many teachers who remain in teaching showed a passion for teaching before they began their education to become a teacher. Admitting potentially excellent teachers rather than simply potentially excellent students may not necessarily improve the current attrition rates because everyone's individual situations play out differently. However, admitting potentially excellent teachers rather than simply potentially excellent students has the possibility of addressing high attrition rates within the profession.

2. Place more emphasis on who becomes a mentor teacher and ensure they are aware of their expectations as the host for student teachers. Increased collaboration between universities, school authorities, and teacher professional associations would be advisable as each of these stakeholders has a role to play in the selection of partner mentor teachers. Every Bachelor of Education program should have an assigned field instructor from the university who regularly communicates with the school principal, mentor teachers, and the student teachers to ensure an effective learning experience.

**Recommendations for Current and Prospective Student Teachers**

Student teachers currently enrolled or planning to enroll in a Bachelor of Education program should consider the following:

1. Be clear of their reasons for wanting to enter a Bachelor of Education program. As the findings in this study indicate, teachers who remain in teaching showed a passion for teaching before they began their education to become a teacher.

2. Become involved in service learning opportunities or volunteer opportunities within schools. Additional insight into the profession, the ability to make connections, working with students, and gaining a diversity of experience may assist student teachers in becoming more comfortable in the profession early in their education.

**Recommendations for Human Resources or Hiring Departments for Schools and School Boards**

1. Make sure that hiring practices and materials requested of job applicants are relevant and assist in selecting the best candidates.

2. Streamline the application and interview processes to ensure these are not overly bureaucratic and onerous for candidates.

**Recommendations for Ministries of Education**

Administrators and curriculum developers for provincial ministries of education should consider the following:

1. Ministries of education need to ensure that they provide schools with a contemporary research-based program of studies.

2. Ministries of education should ensure the provincially mandated assessments reflect contemporary research on standardized assessment.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on this study, the following recommendations suggest future research directions to develop a broader and deeper understanding of teacher attrition in Canada:

1. Because reasons for attrition likely vary between provinces and territories, research needs to focus on millennial teacher attrition within one province or territory rather than on all of Canada.

2. Because it was difficult to tell whether some differences between millennial participants and older participants in the study were generational or cultural, it is recommended that future research should compare experiences of younger and older generations of former teachers who had lived in Canada since childhood and finished their teacher education in Canada.

3. A future quantitative study should explore the relationship between attrition rates within the K-12 teaching profession and GPAs of students being accepted into Bachelor of Education programs.

4. A future qualitative study should explore the perspectives and life stories of practicum teachers who agree to host student teachers in their classrooms.

## Researcher Reflections

As this study comes to an end, I want to reflect on the journey of designing, executing, and writing about this study. First of all, the question for this study ended up being very broad because it turned out that different provinces and territories had different reasons for teacher attrition. Although it made the study broad rather than deep, it served as a stepping stone for future research to go more in-depth on the provincial and territorial level.

I started this study with the goal of uncovering work overload issues for teachers - which would have confirmed my biases. However, workload was not present in any of my major findings, and now I do not think that work overload is that big of an issue as I had initially thought.

During the data collection and data analysis stages, I tended to empathize with the study participants when they talked about their negative experiences in B.Ed. programs and during practicums. Generally, I found myself feeling sorry for student teachers in B.Ed. programs and worried for them about being mistreated by the practicum mentor teachers. However, during the course of my research study, I also became a sessional instructor in a B.Ed. program which provided me with a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in student teaching. My biases have shifted and I am left wondering what this study's findings would have been if I would have asked different questions during interviews.

**References**

Alberta Education. (2015). *2015 Stakeholder satisfaction with education in Alberta surveys summary report*. Retrieved from https://archive.education.alberta.ca/admin/funding/outcomes/resultreport/

Alberta Education. (2015). *Alberta teaching certification statistics*. Retrieved from https://education.alberta.ca/teaching-in-alberta-what-you-need-to-know/certification-statistics/

Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). (2014). *Reflections on teaching: teacher efficacy and the professional capital of Alberta teachers.* (ISBN 978-1-927074-21-3). Edmonton, AB. ATA. Retrieved from http://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/PD-86-27%20Reflections%20on%20Teaching.pdf

Allensworth, E., Ponisciak, S. & Mazzeo, C. (2009). *The schools teachers leave: Teacher mobility in Chicago.* Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago. Chicago, IL. Retrieved from http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications

Ball, A. F. (2013). Learning to Teach in a Complex Interconnected World. *Theory Into Practice, 52*(sup1), 31-41. doi:10.1080/00405841.2013.795439

Behrstock, E., & Clifford, M. (2009). *Leading Gen Y teachers: Emerging strategies for school leaders.* National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. Retrieved from http://secc.sedl.org/orc/resources/February2009Brief.pdf

Bloomberg, L. D. D., & Volpe, M. F. (2008). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end*. London: Sage Publications, Los Angeles.

Boissonnault, R., & Csorba, E. (2014). "Gen Y employees want freedom and respect - and they want it now." *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/what-do-gen-y-employees-want-freedom-and-respect-and-now/article17654882

Canadian Teachers' Federation. (2010). A Study of Aboriginal Teachers' Professional Knowledge and Experience in Canadian Schools. Ottawa, ON. Retrieved from http://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Issues%20In%20Education/Diversity%20Equity%20and%20Human%20Rights/Aboriginal%20Report%202010%20English.pdf

Canadian Teachers' Federation. (2011). *The Voice of the Canadian Teachers on Teaching and Learning, Second Edition*. Ottawa, ON. Retrieved from http://www.ctf-fce.ca/Research-Library/TeacherVoice2011_EN_WEB-2ed.pdf

Clandinin, D. J., Schaefer, L., Long, J., Steeves, P., McKenzie-Robblee, S., Pinnegar, E., Wnuk S., & Downey, C. A. (2012, April). *Early career teacher attrition: Problems, Possibilities, Potentials*

Clark, R., & Antonelli, F. (2009). *Why teachers leave: Results of an Ontario survey 2006-08*. Retrieved from http://www.otffeo.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/10/why_teachers_leave.pdf

Coggshall, J. G., Ott, A., Behrstock, E., & Lasagna, M. (2010). Retaining teacher talent: the view from Generation Y. *Learning Point Associates and Public Agenda*. Naperville, IL. Retried from http://www.learningpt.org/expertise/educatorquality/genY/Gen%20Y%20report.pdf

Coley, D. C. (2009). Leading Gen Y. Condensed, with permission, from *Principal Leadership, 9*, 24-28.

Creswell, J. (2013). Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc..

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). Recruiting and retaining teachers: Turning around the race to the bottom in high-need schools. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, 4* (1), doi:10.3776/joci.2010v4n1p16-32

Day, C., & Gu, Q. (2010). *The new lives of teachers*. United Kingdom: Routledge.

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. Medical Education 40 (1), 314-321. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x

Dibbon, D. (2004). *It's About Time! A Report on the Impact of Workload on Teachers and Students*. St John's, NL: Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Duxbury, L., & Higgins, C. (2013, March). *The 2011/2012 National study on balancing work, life and caregiving in Canada: The situation for Alberta teachers*. Edmonton, AB. ATA. Retrieved from http://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/COOR-94%20National%20Study%20on%20Balancing%20Work%20-Duxbury.pdf

Dyck-Hacault, G. & Alarie, R. (2010). *Teacher workload: Manitoba teachers' society task force on teacher workload final report*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Einarsen, S. (2000). Harassment and bullying at work. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 5*(4), 379-401. doi:10.1016/s1359-1789(98)00043-3

Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., & Zapf, D. (Eds.). (2010). *Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace: Developments in Theory, Research, and Practice, Second Edition*. United States: CRC Press.

Fuller, B., Waite, A., Miller, P., & Torres Irribarra, D. (2013). *Explaining teacher turnover – school cohesion and intrinsic motivation in Los Angeles*. Los Angeles Unified School District.

Horn, I. S., & Little, J. W. (2009). Attending to problems of practice: Routines and resources for professional learning in teachers' workplace interactions. *American Educational Research Journal, 47*(1), 181-217. doi:10.3102/0002831209345158

Jacobson, K. J., Hood, J. N., & Van Buren, H. J. (2013). Workplace bullying across cultures: A research agenda. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 14*(1), 47-65. doi:10.1177/1470595813494192

Jordan, W. J., & Cooper, R. (2003). High school reform and black male students: Limits and possibilities of policy and practice. *Urban Education, 38*(2), 196-216. Doi:10.1177/0042085902250485

Kutsyuruba, B., Godden, L., & Tregunna, L. (2013). *Early-career teacher attrition and retention: A Pan-Canadian document analysis study of teacher induction and mentorship programs*. Kingston, ON: Queen's University.

Kutsyuruba, B., Godden, L., & Tregunna, L. (August, 2014). Curbing early-career teacher attrition: A Pan-Canadian document analysis of teacher induction and mentorship programs. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, Issue #161.

Leithwood, K. (2006). *Teacher working conditions that matter: Evidence for change*. Toronto, ON: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

Leymann, H. (1996). The content and development of mobbing at work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 5*(2), 165-184. doi:10.1080/13594329608414853

Loeb, S., Darling-Hammond, L., & Luczak, J. (2005). How teaching conditions predict teacher turnover in California schools. *Peabody Journal of Education, 80*(3), 44-70. doi:10.1207/s15327930pje8003_4

MacIntosh, J., Wuest, J., Gray, M. M., & Cronkhite, M. (2010). Workplace bullying in healthcare affects the meaning of work. *Qualitative Health Research, 20*(8), 1128-1141. doi:10.1177/1049732310369804

MacIver, M. (2012). Aboriginal Students' perspectives on the factors influencing high school completion. *Multicultural Perspectives, 14*(3), 156-162. doi:10.1080/15210960.2012.697008

Merriam, S. B., & Merriam (1997). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2014). *TALIS 2013 results: An international perspective on teaching and learning*. TALIS, OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/97892641961-en

Philip, T. M. (2012). Asian American as a political-racial identity: Implications for teacher education. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 17*(2), 219-241. doi:10.1080/13613324.2012.674024

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), University of Southern California, & London Business School. (2013). *PwC's NextGen: A Global Generational Study (summary and compendium of findings).* Retrieved at http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/hr-management-services/punlications

Programs, & Assessment, I. S. (2013). *PISA 2012 results: What makes schools successful? Resources, policies and practices*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Rhodes, C., Pullen, A., Vickers, M. H., Clegg, S. R., & Pitsis, A. (2010). Violence and Workplace Bullying. *Administrative Theory & Praxis, 32*(1), 96-115. doi:10.2753/atp1084-1806320105

Ryan, J., Pollock, K., & Antonelli, F. (2007). Teacher and administrator diversity in Canada: Leaky pipelines, bottlenecks and glass ceilings. *Paper prepared for the Annual Conference of the Society for the Study of Education*. Saskatoon. Retrieved from http://home.oise.utoronto.ca/~jryan/pub_files/Art.April09.numbers.pdf

Salin, D., & Hoel, H. (2013). Workplace bullying as a gendered phenomenon. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 28*(3), 235-251. doi:10.1108/02683941311321187

Schaefer, L., Long, J. S., Cladinin, D. J., Wnuk, S., Pinnegar, E., McKenzie-Robblee, S., Steeves, P., & Downey, C. A. (2012, April). *Early Career Teacher Attrition: Problems, Possibilities, Potentials*. Retrieved from http://www.elementaryed.ualberta.ca/en/Centres/CRTED/~/media/elementaryed/Documents/Centres/CRTED/ECA_-_FINAL_Report.pdf

Statistics Canada. Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Metis and First Nations, 2006 census: Highlights: Aboriginal People surpass the one-million mark. (2008, January 15). Retrieved from https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-558/p2-eng.cfm

Statistics Canada. Consumer price index, by province (monthly) (Canada). (2016, January 22). Retrieved from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/cpis01a-eng.htm

TALIS. (2013). *Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013: Alberta report.* Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

Yin, R. (2013). Case study research: design and methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc..

Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2007b). Teachers: the next generation. Alexandria, VA: *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*. Retrieved from http://newteacher.com/pdf/ascd_express_wong_teachers.pdf

## Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

**Why Do Generation Y Teachers Quit and What Can Be Done To Retain Them?**

Thank you for expressing your interest in the study about Canadian Generation Y teachers.

**Background:**
Half of the teachers leave the profession within their first 5 years on the job. Gen Y teachers are currently the youngest generation of teachers entering the workplace. Generation Y (also known as Millennials) are persons who were born roughly between 1977 and 1995.

**Purpose of the Study:**
The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of former Canadian Gen Y teachers, former immigrant teachers of all ages, and current Gen Y teachers. The main idea is to draw links and comparisons between the three groups of participants in order to help answer the main research questions (1) why do Gen Y teachers quit; and, (2) how to retain Gen Y teachers?

**Participation:**
Participation in this study includes: former Canadian teachers who have received their teacher training in Canada; former teachers of all ages who immigrated to Canada and either taught in Canada and quit or never began teaching in Canada; Gen Y teachers who are currently teaching at a school in Canada.

Participation in this study will include the completion of a consent form and 2 individual interviews of approximately 60 minutes each. Former Gen Y and former immigrant teachers may also sign up for a focus group that will last for approximately 60 minutes.

Participation is entirely voluntary and participants will have the option to withdraw at any time during the process.

**Procedures:**
Participants who have expressed their interest in the study will be contacted by the researcher to set up appointments.

**For more information, please contact Lena Shulyakovskaya at yelena.shulyakovskay@ucalgary.ca**

*This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board*

## Appendix B: Informed Consent

---

**Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email**: Lena Shulyakovskaya, MA Candidate Werklund School of Education Educational Leadership

(403) 921-8944

yelena.shulyakovskay@ucalgary.ca

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Sharon Friesen, Vice Dean Werklund School of Education

**Title of Project:**

Why Do Generation Y Teachers Quit And What Can Be Done To Retain Them?

**Sponsor:**

N/A

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of former Canadian Gen Y teachers, former immigrant teachers of all ages, and current Gen Y teachers. The main idea is to draw links and comparisons between the three groups of participants in order to help answer the main research questions (1) why do Gen Y teachers quit; and, (2) how to retain Gen Y teachers?

**What Will I Be Asked To Do?**

For this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews about your teaching experience. Each interview should take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete.

For data analysis, all interviews and the focus group will be audio recorded and transcribed. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participants may refuse to participate altogether, may refuse to

---

participate in parts of the study, may decline to answer any and all questions, and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

**What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?**

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide some basic background information such as age, gender, country of birth, country where you received your teacher education or teaching experience.

The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Quotes from the transcriptions may be used in the dissertation and subsequent papers, at which point, all personal identifying information will be removed.

Only the researcher's supervisor will have access to the recordings and transcriptions. Recordings and transcriptions will never be shown in public.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this study. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:

You may quote me and use my real name: You may quote me, but only use a pseudonym instead of my real name: I agree to participate in the focus group

**Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?**

Yes: ___ No: ___ Yes: ___ No: ___ Yes: ___ No: ___

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. However, there is a small possibility that you could become emotional when sharing your story. If this happens, you can take a break or end the interview altogether.

Participation in this study will help us better understand the needs and experiences of teachers in Canada. It may also help us develop better conditions for new and immigrant teachers.

If during the course of the interviews, information is revealed that is required by law to be reported to a law enforcement agency, it is the legal obligation of the researcher to report that information.

**What Happens to the Information I Provide?**

Your identity will be kept private in this study. That means that all personal details will be removed from the dissertation or subsequent works. The following adjustments will be made in the dissertation and subsequent works: (1) real school names or personal names (unless you indicated your real name may be used) mentioned during the interviews or focus group will be replaced with pseudonyms; (2) the countries of birth, if outside of Canada, will not be used and instead the name of the geographical region in which the country is located will be used; (3) the exact ages of the participants will not be used and instead will be grouped into generations. Participation in this study will have no effect on your relationship with your former or current school board and no private information will be shared with the school board.

While a high degree of anonymity and confidentiality is offered, there is no absolute guarantee that some persons who may be familiar with the participants would not recognize them based on the quotes used in the dissertation and subsequent works.

Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the recordings and transcriptions. If you withdraw from this study, the information that you shared with us will be destroyed.

All information you share will be stored in a secure location under password protection. This information will be stored for five years, and then it will be permanently erased.

***Signatures***

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____
Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____
Researcher's Name: (please print) _____
Researcher's Signature: _____ __ Date: _____

**Questions/Concerns**

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Lena Shulyakovskaya Werklund School of Education, Educational Leadership (403) 921-8944, yelena.shulyakovskay@ucalgary.ca and Dr. Sharon Friesen (403) 220-5625, sfriesen@ucalgary.ca

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 210-9863; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

---