Recruitment of Trades Instructors: Current Practices and Challenges Faced

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to identify what recruitment practices have been used by post-secondary trades training providers in British Columbia to assist in their process of hiring trades instructors and what challenges have they faced in ensuring that an adequate pool of trades instructors submit applications for job postings.

It was hypothesized that the results of the study would indicate that the training providers were not using a detailed or strategic approach in their recruitment processes and that there would be a heavy reliance on the connections between existing faculty members and their respective trade industries to recruit applicants. It was also hypothesized that there would be significant economic challenges identified in recruiting trades instructors and that the training institutes would not feel that their recruitment processes were effective.

In 2018, 11 Deans of post-secondary Trades Faculties in British Columbia participated in the study. The data collected revealed that training providers were using an array of recruitment practices, but not necessarily as part of an overarching recruitment plan. Professional relationships between Faculty members and their respective industry leaders was the most common theme of recruitment practices identified. Further, economic challenges were shown to impact the overall effectiveness of recruiting trades instructors at most of the training providers.
Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Problem to be Investigated

Purpose of the Study

With the goal of having the highest quality trades instructors hired for teaching our apprentices, it is important to understand the journey that an individual takes to fill that role. At some point of a tradesperson’s career, a seed needs to be planted to initiate the thought of the potential of becoming an instructor in their chosen industry. Once they commit to that path, there are steps that can be taken to develop the necessary skills required to facilitate the transition from tradesperson to instructor. The path to becoming a quality trades instructor is similar to apprenticing in a trade. It is a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge that requires an abundance of hands on experience before someone can become competent in the role.

The purpose of the present study was to identify what recruitment practices have been used by post-secondary trades training providers in British Columbia to assist in their process of hiring quality trades instructors. In addition, the present study aimed to identify some of the challenges that are faced in ensuring that an adequate pool of quality trades instructors submits applications for job postings.

The present study recognized that recruitment is only a part of the process of reaching the goal of having the highest quality trades instructors teaching British Columbia’s apprentices. If the right tradespeople are recruited and hired, there stands a better chance of achieving that goal. Understanding what recruitment practices have been used and the challenges that were faced along the way will help inform best practices moving forward.

Justification of the Study

The justification for investigating this research question is based on the following factors:
1) current and future demand for trades training defines that there is a need to recruit and hire
trades instructors; 2) tradespeople face challenges in transferring their practical knowledge into a teaching environment; 3) there are economic challenges in recruiting tradespeople based on industry wages compared to instructional wages; and 4) the importance for an organization to have a strategic approach to their recruitment process to ensure an adequate pool of applicants to choose from.

Current demand for qualified tradespeople is high, driven by government initiatives and robust activity in the trades sectors (Government of British Columbia, 2016). The Government of British Columbia (2016) states that in 2016 “B.C. has twice as many apprentices, and is issuing around three times as many credentials compared to 2004” (p. 17). With the increase in demand for qualified tradespersons, there will be a further strain on the recruitment process for instructors. The college and vocational instructor sector currently employs 6267 positions in British Columbia and will have 3385 job openings by 2025, the majority of which will be a result of retirements due to the aging workforce (Work BC, 2016). The combination of projected retirements in the instructor workforce and demand for training of qualified tradespersons, ensures that there will be a continued demand for training institutes to recruit and hire instructional faculty.

Instructors in trades programs require a combination of expertise in their respective industry, an ability to teach in both a classroom and shop setting (Vladicka, 2014) and “the temperament to work with sometimes challenging students” (Page, 2013, p.825). Although tradespersons often progress to be experts in their field, there is little correlation to that skillset transferring into an ability to teach (Vladicka, 2014). Flannigan, Jones, and Moore (2010) suggested that “credentials provide almost no sense of the ability of the person to perform” (p.825) in an instructional role. Many tradespersons were attracted to their trade because they are
hands on learners who may have struggled with traditional schooling, therefore they are hesitant to see themselves in the role of an instructor (Vladicka, 2014). Most instructors at a community college level did not see themselves as teachers when they started their careers (Higgins, Hawthorne, Cape, & Bell, 1994).

Significant economic factors can also be a deterrent to recruiting instructors. Industry wages for highly qualified and experienced tradespersons can be substantially higher than what is earned while working at a post-secondary institute (Vladicka, 2014). Hence, the earning potential that exists in industry creates a reluctance for tradespeople to consider a shift into an instructional role (Page, 2013).

It is important for a Faculty to have a strategic approach planned for the recruitment of trades instructors. That plan should be based around a vision of not only what the Faculty sees itself as at the current time, but where it will be in the future with its curriculum and teaching and learning approaches (Middlewood & Lumby, 1999). It is integral that the strategic goals of the Faculty align with the recruitment plan (Brown, 2011). Brown (2011) noted that many organizations see recruitment as a stand-alone activity. A unified approach that pays significant attention to not only the recruitment, but the assessment and engagement of instructors as well, will in the long run reduce the amount of time spent on recruitment (Brown, 2011). The hiring of a new employee is one of the most important decisions that management can make so it is important that recruitment attracts an adequate pool of candidates (Rynes, 1991).

**Research Question and Hypothesis**

The following research question was proposed for the present study: What recruitment practices are being used by British Columbia post-secondary trades training institutes in an attempt to ensure that they have an adequate pool of quality trades instructors to hire from; how
effective are these practices, and from this, what are some of the challenges revealed in the recruitment process?

The hypothesis that the author of the present study proposed is that the results of the research would identify that: 1) there are not many thought out approaches or detailed plans being followed in the recruitment of trades instructors; 2) there is a heavy reliance on the connections between existing faculty members and their respective trade industries to recruit applicants; 3) there are significant economic challenges that trades training institutes face in their recruitment processes; and 4) trades training institutes will not feel that their recruitment practices are effective in attracting high quality trades instructors.

**Definition of Terms**

The present study will assume the following operational definitions:

‘Recruitment practices’ are methods that are being used to attract tradespeople to submit an application for employment.

‘Adequate pool’ is a group of diverse and qualified applicants.

‘Quality trades instructor’ is a tradesperson who has the following skills and characteristics: extensive theoretical knowledge and skillset in their trade, ability to work with and engage a diverse group of students and learning styles, and excellent interpersonal and communication skills.

**Brief Overview of Study**

The present study investigated the practices being used by British Columbia post-secondary trades training institutes to recruit trades instructors, and identified some of the challenges that were faced in the process. Participants of the survey were identified as having a role in the recruitment process at their institution.
Chapter 2: Background and Review of Related Literature

Introduction

Ultimately the end goal of every trades training institute is to have high quality trades instructors teaching in their programs. There are many steps along the way to achieving this goal. First, the individual must develop the required knowledge and skills to become an expert in their chosen trade. At some point the individual then needs to gain an interest in becoming an instructor and start to develop their skillset as a teacher. There needs to be demand in the industry for apprentices and qualified tradespersons for there to be a need for training, which in turn drives the demand for instructors. Training institutions will then attempt to recruit qualified instructors to fill these positions. Once hired, there is a continual journey of developing teaching and learning skills that will eventually lead to the individual becoming a high-quality instructor.

This study focused on one step of this journey, aiming to identify what recruitment practices are being used by post-secondary trades training institutions in British Columbia, what challenges are being faced in recruiting quality trades instructors by these same institutions, and to get a sense of their overall satisfaction of their recruitment practices in attracting high quality trades instructors.

The literature reviewed for this study identified that recruitment cannot be looked at in isolation though, it is an integral piece of the larger interconnected process of developing high quality trades instructors. Recruitment is only required if there is a demand for qualified instructors to deliver training. There also needs to be a strategic approach to recruiting where the training institutes have a clear understanding of the important qualities they are looking for in an instructor (Flannigan et al., 2010). And finally, it is important to understand the challenges that are faced in attracting skilled tradespersons into the role of instructor.
Current and Future Demand

There are two major influences required for there to be a demand for quality trades instructors. First there needs to be a demand for certified tradespersons and second there needs to be an expectation of forecasted instructor job openings.

There are 917,700 job openings expected in British Columbia by 2027, of which 42% will require a diploma, certificate, or apprenticeship training (WorkBC, 2017). By the year 2025, 122,700 job openings will occur in the trades, transportation, and related industries in British Columbia. An estimated 97,200 of these openings will come in the form of replacing retiring workers (Work BC, 2016). The high demand for qualified tradespersons in British Columbia is being addressed in 2016 by maintaining the current level of funding for industry training as well as investing an extra $6.6 million into training needs for in demand trades, and $3 million a year towards youth training in priority trades (Government of British Columbia, 2016). The Government of British Columbia (2016) states that in 2016 “B.C. has twice as many apprentices, and is issuing around three times as many credentials compared to 2004” (p. 17). With the increase in demand for qualified tradespersons, there will be a further strain on the recruitment process for instructors.

The college and vocational instructor sector currently employs 6267 positions in British Columbia and will have 3385 job openings by 2025, the majority of which will be a result of retirements due to the aging workforce (Work BC, 2016). The Government of British Columbia (2016) is also “suggesting that the education and the training sectors look for ways to help qualified tradespeople more quickly and easily acquire teaching skills and credentials so that we can use their experience and skills to improve our school programs” (p.11).
Vladicka (2014) completed the only study that I was able to find that directly related to the recruitment of trades instructors in Canada. The focus was on five high demand trades in Northern Alberta and the four training providers of those trades within the region. Enrollment for the five identified programs increased between 11% and 78% across the four colleges over the previous four years. Growth rates in some of the identified programs increased between 100% to 500%, which are probably understated as the colleges did not have the capacity to accept any more students. The human resource personnel at these training institutes reported that they were in nearly constant recruitment for instructors for some of the five trades. Some of the course intakes had to be cancelled and some colleges were unable to support ministry requests to expand the training in these trades to accommodate student demand due to the lack of faculty available to teach (Vladicka, 2014).

The combination of projected retirements in the instructor workforce and demand for training of qualified tradespersons, ensures that there will be a continued demand for training institutes to recruit and hire instructional faculty.

**Recruitment**

For post-secondary programs to be successful, it is vital to effectively recruit, hire and retain talented and motivated faculty (Winter, 1996), (Winter, Kjorlien, 2000). The reality is that generations are changing and that recruitment and retention strategies that proved successful in the past may not be the best practices moving forward (Hessler, Ritchie, 2005), although the exploratory research conducted by Flannigan et al. (2004) noted that there has been very little research conducted around community college faculty hiring practice. They also suggested that there are challenges in the apparent shortage of literature available to review for their study regarding faculty hiring practices in community colleges. Vladicka (2014) also noted that there is
“an absence of published material regarding the experience of other institutions in addressing similar challenges with faculty recruitment” (p. 6).

Middlewoed et al. (1999) suggest that it is important for a Faculty to have a strategic approach planned for the recruitment of trades instructors. That plan should be based around a vision of not only what the Faculty sees itself as at the current time, but where it will be in the future with its curriculum and teaching and learning approaches. Brown (2011) suggests that if an organization does not have a recruitment strategy then they need to take stock of what practices are currently being used and analyse whether those practices are meeting the strategic goals of the organization. It is integral that the strategic goals of the Faculty align with the recruitment plan. Brown (2011) also noted that “Recruitment is often seen in organizations as a ‘stand-alone’ activity” (p. 5). A unified approach that pays significant attention to not only the recruitment, but the assessment and engagement of instructors as well, will in the long run reduce the amount of time spent on recruitment (Brown, 2011).

There are two basic areas that need to be defined regarding the position that is being recruited for: job description and person specification (Middlewood & Lumby, 1999). Understanding the long-term vision of a Faculty as well as what Higgins et al, (1994) describe as “the specific kind of professional experiences, personal qualities, and expertise that applicants for faculty positions should possess to be effective” (p. 35) allows for the creation of a composite portrait of what a successful instructor would look like (Higgins et al., 1994). This allows for a clear understanding of what is being recruited for.

For a recruitment process to be successful, there needs to be a quality pool of applicants to choose from. “Application decisions are critical to organizations; if individuals do not apply, there will be little opportunity to influence their choices through recruitment activities” (Rynes,
RECRUITMENT OF TRADES INSTRUCTORS

1991, p. 435). A lot of earlier research focused on the organizational perspective of the recruitment process instead of the applicant perspective (Young & Heneman, 1986). According to Rynes (1991) “most recruitment research has been conducted subsequent to the first employment interview. As such, little is known about the determinants of job application behaviors” (p. 435). Successful recruitment requires affirmative decisions by both the applicant (eg: must choose to apply for the job, accept interview, accept job if offered) and the hiring organization (eg: post job, offer candidate interview, offer position) (Winter, 1998). The idea of “conceptualizing recruitment as a dual decision-making process” (Winter, 1998, p.188) inspired research on the applicants perspective of influences that inspired them to apply for positions, including “Community College Faculty Recruitment Practices: The effects of Applicant Gender, Instructional Programs, and Job Attributes” (Winter, 1998), “Community College Faculty Recruitment: Effects of Job Mobility, Recruiter Similarity-Dissimilarity, and Applicant Gender” (Winter & Kjorlien, 2000) and “Firm Reputation and Applicant Pool Characteristics” (Turban & Cable, 2003).

Flannigan et al. (2004) suggest that most recruitment practices employed by community colleges appear to be similar in that there are a number of methods that are used consistently including the following: posting both internal and external advertising, word of mouth, faculty member personal networks, and head hunters.

Challenges

Instructors in trades programs require a combination of expertise in their respective industry, an ability to teach in both a classroom and shop setting (Vladicka, 2014) and “the temperament to work with sometimes challenging students” (Page, 2013, p.825). Although tradespersons often progress to be experts in their field, there is little correlation to that skillset
RECRUITMENT OF TRADES INSTRUCTORS

transferring into an ability to teach (Vladicka, 2014). This can lead to a shortage in supply of tradespersons that are qualified or are a good fit to become quality trades instructors. Flannigan, Jones, & Moore (2010) suggest that “credentials provide almost no sense of the ability of the person to perform” (p.825) in an instructional role. Many tradespersons were attracted to their trade because they are hands on learners who may have struggled with traditional schooling, therefore they are hesitant to see themselves in the role of an instructor (Vladicka, 2014). Most instructors at a community college level did not see themselves as teachers when they started their careers (Higgins et al., 1994).

Significant economic factors can also be a deterrent to recruiting instructors. Industry wages for highly qualified and experienced tradespersons can be substantially higher than what is earned while working at a post-secondary institute (Vladicka, 2014). Vladicka (2014) reported that estimates in pay differential ranged from 25 to 100 percent higher pay in industry, depending on the training institute and the trade. The earning potential that exists in industry creates a reluctance for tradespeople to consider a shift into an instructional role (Page, 2013). Vladicka (2014) also noted that the high cost of living in some of the communities that the training institutes were located influenced tradespersons decisions on whether or not they would take a reduction in pay to become an instructor.

There are also cultural differences that exist between a post-secondary institutional environment and the trades industry. Industry typically operates on an hourly wage scale with paid overtime while faculty members are compensated with a salary. The workload of an instructor as well as institutional bureaucracy, systems and administration, often exceeds the instructor’s expectations. (Page, 2013). Vladicka (2014) research supported this with college administrators input noting that new faculty members coming from industry were challenged by
the non-instructional demands that are expected to be met with no additional compensation provided by the institution. The duration of the probationary periods for new instructors, which are tied to union collective agreements, was identified by administrators as being significantly different than what exists in industry (Vladicka, 2014). Vladicka (2014) also noted that it is difficult to devote enough time to support and assist new instructors to adapt to the environment and culture of a post-secondary institution.

There was also a number of social factors that were identified specific to Vladicka’s (2014) study due to the sample of training institutes used in the research were all located in remote communities. The isolation of the communities provided a challenge in recruiting instructors from outside the region as there was often an unrealistic negative impression of what services and amenities actually existed. Access to health care and other services was identified as a challenge when there was not an airport available. It was reported that a significant factor in applicants declining offers of employment was family reluctance to relocate to a remote community.

**Summary**

In reviewing literature for this study, it became apparent that there has been a minimal amount of research done specifically to do with recruiting practices or challenges faced in recruiting trades instructors. There is ample literature available though on the topic of recruitment generically and some that deals specifically with recruitment of college faculty, although this typically focuses on the academic and not the vocational faculty.

The end goal of trades training institutes is to have high quality trades instructors teaching in their programs. Recruiting quality tradespersons, with the ability to instruct, to fill these roles is an integral part of reaching this goal. Middlewood et al. (1999) and Brown (2011)
indicated the importance of having a strategic recruitment plan that is based on the vision of the Faculty. If this strategic plan does not exist, Brown (2011) suggests that institutions need to take stock of their current practices and evaluate their effectiveness.

There is a gap in the literature in knowing what recruitment practices are currently being used by trades training providers in British Columbia, how effective these practices are, and what are some of the challenges in attracting a quality pool of applicants to apply to postings. This study aims to help fill this gap which in turn will be able to assist in informing further research on best practices for recruiting trades instructors in British Columbia.
Chapter 3: Procedures and Methods

Description of Research Design

This exploratory study intended to identify the recruitment practices that have been used by post-secondary trades training providers in British Columbia in their process of hiring quality trades instructors, as well as to identify some of the challenges that are faced in ensuring that an adequate pool of candidates apply for job postings. In the current study, the participants were also asked to rate their satisfaction level of the impact their recruitment practices had on their ability to hire quality trades instructors.

Participants were selected based on their involvement in the recruitment of trades instructors at their public post-secondary trades training institutes in British Columbia. Each participant completed a survey where they revealed practices that their institution used to recruit quality trades instructors. Further, each participant was asked to comment on challenges they faced in ensuring an adequate pool of candidates applied for job postings. Participants also self-reported the effectiveness of their recruitment practices in helping to ensure an adequate pool of candidates.

Description of the Sample

The population for the present study was chosen based on purposive sampling. It consisted of persons, as identified by the Deans of Trade Faculties at 14 publicly funded post-secondary trades training providers in British Columbia. These people are knowledgeable of their institute’s recruitment practices and they have also played an active role in the hiring process of trades instructors. The participant group was chosen because they would have the most accurate account of what recruitment practices were being utilized by their institution in the process of hiring trades instructors. Deans and Associate Deans are involved in the hiring
process of trades instructors so they would be able to report on the quantity and quality of applicants that submit applications for job postings. The sampling criteria also required that the participants completed the consent form and were willing to complete the survey.

**Description of the Instruments Used**

Participants were each given a questionnaire to complete. The participants were asked two open ended questions. The first question asked them to identify all recruitment practices that their Faculty used to attract tradespersons to apply for job postings. The second question asked them to identify some of the challenges faced in ensuring that an adequate pool of candidates submitted applications to job postings. Participants were also asked to self-evaluate the effectiveness their recruitment practices had on an attracting an adequate pool of candidates for job postings.

As the first two questions were open ended responses, no scoring procedure was used. A semantic differential scale was used to rate the participant’s perception of the effect their recruitment practices influenced their ability to hire quality trades instructors.

**Explanation of Procedures**

The author of the present study contacted the Deans or Directors of Trade Faculties at the 14 publicly funded post-secondary trades training providers in British Columbia to give them a brief overview of the purpose of the study (see Appendix A). The Deans were asked to identify potential participants for the study that were knowledgeable of their Faculty’s recruitment practices and who also played an active role in the hiring process of trades instructors.

The potential participants were then contacted by email and given a brief overview of the study (see Appendix B). The participants were asked to complete the current study’s questionnaire (see Appendix C). They were informed that participation in the survey was
completely voluntary and that by completing the questionnaire they were consenting to participating in the survey. It was also noted to the participants that they could discontinue their participation by not submitting the survey.

The Deans and Directors of the post-secondary training institutes were contacted in January 2018 and asked to identify potential participants that met the criteria. Identified potential participants were then sent the questionnaire via email at the beginning of February 2018 and were asked to complete and return the questionnaire by the end of the same month.

Discussion of Validity

The purpose of the present study was to have post-secondary trades training providers in British Columbia identify recruitment practices they have used, and to reveal what challenges they faced to ensure they had an adequate pool of quality tradespersons submit applications for job postings. The sample population identified for the present study adds to the validity of the study as the 14 publicly funded British Columbia post-secondary institutes that were invited to participate in the present study make up the vast majority of trades training providers in the province. Also, the population selected for the present study included persons identified as having knowledge of their Faculty’s recruitment practices as well as actively participate in the hiring process of trades instructors at their institute.

Description and Justification of the Methods Used

The data gathered for the present study was examined using a content analysis procedure. Each survey provided data to three distinctly individual questions, therefore a separate content analysis was done for each question.

The first question on the survey had the participants identify what recruitments practices their institution were currently using or had used in the past to ensure they had an adequate pool
of quality trades instructors to hire from. Each participant’s descriptive information given in their responses was presented in a summarized table. The descriptive information was then coded into categories of recruitment practices that emerged through the content analysis. A frequency table was used to illustrate the categories of recruitment practices and the frequency that they were used by the participants.

Question number two had the participants identify some of the challenges they faced in recruiting an adequate pool of quality trades instructors to hire from. The descriptive information given in the participant’s responses was presented in a summarized table. The descriptive information was then coded into themes, as they emerged through content analysis, of challenges faced in recruiting trades instructors. A frequency table was used to illustrate the themes of recruitment challenges and the frequency that they were identified by the participants.

The third question had the participants self-report on a semantic differential scale on how effective they felt their training institutions recruitment practices were in allowing them to hire quality trades instructors. A line graph was used to illustrate the respective rating that each participant had self-reported for their training institute. The following assumptions were made by the author of the current study prior to the survey regarding the interpretation of the rating scale: 1) a rating between 7-10 identified the participant felt confident that their institutions recruitment practices were working well, 2) a rating between 4-6 identified the participant was somewhat satisfied with their institutions recruitment practices, and 3) a rating between 1-3 identified the participant was not satisfied with their institutions recruitment practices.

The current study examined what recruitment practices are being used by trades training institutes in British Columbia and what are some of the challenges they face in ensuring they have an adequate pool of quality trades instructors to recruit from. The summarized tables
reported the descriptive information data that was provided by the participants of the survey. The frequency tables illustrated the number of times similar recruitment practices and challenges were identified by the participants. The line graph helped to illustrate the level of satisfaction that the participants felt towards the recruitment practices that were used by their institutions.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

Research Overview

The purpose of this study was to identify what recruitment practices have been used by post-secondary trades training providers in British Columbia as well as to rate the satisfaction level of these practices on the impact they have on recruitment efforts. Further, the participants of the study identified and reported the challenges that they faced while trying to ensure that an adequate pool of quality trades instructors apply for job postings. The research was conducted from January 9 through to February 24, 2018. A request was sent out to the Deans of Faculties that oversee trades training at 14 publicly funded post-secondary training providers in British Columbia to identify someone in their institution to participate in the present study. The participants invited to participate in the present study were considered knowledgeable in their institution’s recruitment practices and played an active role in the hiring process of trades instructors.

Data from the present study is presented for the following areas: participant response rate, recruitment practices at trades training institutes, recruitment practice effectiveness, and reported challenges.

Participant Response Rate

Of the 14 requests to participate that were sent out, 11 participants responded. This resulted in a response rate of 79% for the present study. See Figure 1 for a graphic representation of the response rate.
Recruitment Practices at Trades Training Institutions

The first item on the participant questionnaire asked the participants to identify all recruitment practices that their institution has used (past and current) to ensure that they had an adequate pool of quality trades instructors to hire from. Figure 2 shows all the recruitment practices that were identified by the 11 participants, along with the number of participants that identified each of the recruitment practices. Due to the open-ended nature of the question, the recruitment practices that were identified in the questionnaire were coded and grouped into the 18 categories shown in Figure 2.
Figure 2. Recruitment practices identified by participants and the number of participants that identified each recruitment practice.

1 British Columbia Association of Trades and Technical Administrators
2 Colleges and Institutes Canada

Number of recruitment practices identified per participant.

Table 1 lists the number of recruitment practices identified by each of the respondents.
Table 1

*Number of Recruitment Practices Identified per Participant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Number of Recruitment Practices Identified</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>J</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Figure 3, the mean number of recruitment practices identified by participants was 4.9, with the highest being eight and the lowest being two. Most of the participants, 7 out of 11, identified between 4-6 recruitment practices being used by their institutions, while 9 out of 11 participants identified using four or more recruitment practices.

*Figure 3. Number of recruitment practices identified per participant compared to the mean.*
**Recruitment practice themes.**

All the recruitment practices identified by the participants could be categorized into three general themes shown in Table 2: *faculty/industry connections, external practices, and internal practices*. The recruitment practices that fit into the *faculty/industry connections* theme all have direct connections between the faculty members/program areas and industry. The *external practices* all involve connections to external sources while the *internal practices* are all controlled within the institution.

Table 2

Summary of recruitment themes from the recruitment practices identified by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Recruitment Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/industry connections</td>
<td>• Faculty/staff personal networks&lt;br&gt;• Program advisory committees&lt;br&gt;• Industry newsletters/websites&lt;br&gt;• Retired faculty/tradespersons for sessional contracts&lt;br&gt;• Trade associations&lt;br&gt;• Secondments from industry&lt;br&gt;• BCATTA&lt;br&gt;• Regionally based industry representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External practices</td>
<td>• Regional/national newspapers&lt;br&gt;• Recruitment agencies&lt;br&gt;• Job search websites&lt;br&gt;• Social media&lt;br&gt;• CICAN job board&lt;br&gt;• Regional employment agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal practices</td>
<td>• Institutional website&lt;br&gt;• Giving back/lifestyle angle&lt;br&gt;• Temporary assignments as onboarding strategy&lt;br&gt;• Flexibility in scheduling options</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Faculty/industry connections.**

The hypothesis purposed by the author of the present study that training providers would report a heavy reliance on the connections between existing faculty members and their respective
trade industries to recruit qualified applicants is supported by the data shown in Figure 4 in that *faculty/industry connections* is the largest of the three themes in terms of both the number of recruitment practices (tied with seven) and the number of participants that identified these recruitment practices (20).

![Recruitment Practice Themes](image)

*Figure 4. Number of recruitment practices and number of participants that identified recruitment practices in the 3 themes identified.*

Within the theme of *faculty/industry connection* shown in Figure 5, the recruitment practice of ‘faculty/staff personal networks’ was the most commonly used recruitment practice, as it was identified by 8 of the 11 participants. ‘Program advisory committees’ were the second highest recruitment practice identified by participants in this theme with five. ‘Program advisory committees’ are institutional committees that are developed specifically for program areas, which typically means that industry members of the committee have a direct connection to the faculty and program area that they serve.
Figure 5. Recruitment practices that fit into the theme of faculty/industry connections.

**External practices.**

Figure 6 shows that ‘Regional/national newspapers’ was the most identified recruitment practice in the *External Practices* theme with 7 of the 11 participants identifying it. ‘Job search websites’, ‘Recruitment Agencies’, and ‘Social media’ were identified by 3 out of the 11 participants, while ‘BCATTA’, ‘CICAN job board’, and ‘Regional employment agencies’ were only identified by 1 participant each.
Internal Practices.

For the theme of Internal Practices, Figure 7 shows the most commonly identified recruitment practice was ‘Institutional website’ with 9 of the 11 participants identifying that they use this as one of their recruitment practices.

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**Figure 6.** Recruitment practices that fit into the theme of external practices.

**Figure 7:** Recruitment practices that fit into the theme of internal practices.
Recruitment Practice Effectiveness

One of the items on the questionnaire asked the participants to rate on a scale how effective they felt their institution’s recruitment practices were in attracting high quality trades instructors to apply for job postings. As shown in Figure 8, the mean effectiveness rating from the 11 participants was 5.25 out of 10, with the highest rating of 8.5 and the lowest of 1. Five of the participants rated the effectiveness of their recruitment practices at their institutions at 7 or higher, two participants rated the effectiveness between 4 and 6, while the other four participants rated it at 3 or lower.

![Effectiveness Rating of Recruitment Practices](image)

*Figure 8: Effectiveness rating of respondent's institutional recruitment practices in attracting quality trades instructors given by participants.*

Reported Challenges

The second item on the participant questionnaire asked the participants of the present study to identify challenges that they faced in recruiting an adequate pool of qualified trades instructors to hire from. Figure 9 shows the challenges and related prevalence that were
identified by the participants of the present study. The responses were coded and formed into 14 different categories.

Figure 9. Challenges identified in recruiting trades instructors and the number of participants that identified the challenge.

Reported challenge themes.

The present study hypothesized that trades training institutes would identify that there are significant economic challenges that they face in recruiting trades instructors. The 14 challenges identified by the participants could be grouped into the five different themes identified in Table 3: economic, lack of required qualifications, industry related, recruitment practices, and cultural.
Table 3

Summary of challenge themes from challenges identified by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>• Low wages compared to industry&lt;br&gt;• Inability to guarantee ongoing work&lt;br&gt;• Collective agreement limitations&lt;br&gt;• Cost/access to housing&lt;br&gt;• Regional opportunities for spousal employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>• Overall lack of quality candidates to draw from&lt;br&gt;• Lack of teaching experience/expertise/training&lt;br&gt;• Lack of administrative skills&lt;br&gt;• Dual qualifications sometimes required for full time employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>• Industry demand for workers&lt;br&gt;• Employers not allowing tradespersons time away for secondments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>• Lack of recruitment plan&lt;br&gt;• Lack of funding dedicated to recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>• Rural postings not attractive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Figure 10, the *economic theme* had both the highest number of challenges with five, and the total number of participants that identified challenges within a theme with 22. The data shows that 22 of the 40 challenges that were identified by participants were considered economic challenges.

![Figure 10. Number of challenges and total number of participants that identified challenges within the 5 challenge themes.](image)
Number of challenges identified per participant.

In Figure 11, the mean number of challenges identified per participant was 3.7 and 8 of the 12 participants identified four or more challenges in recruiting trades instructors. This data suggests that there are significant challenges in recruiting trades instructors across all regions and training institutes in British Columbia.

Figure 11. Number of challenges identified per participant compared to the mean.

Research Summary

The present study had eleven participants identify 18 different recruitment practices that they use in recruiting trades instructors, of which the practices that fit into the faculty/industry connections were the most commonly used. The average effectiveness rating of their recruitment practices reported by the participants was 5.45 out of 10. There were 14 challenges in recruiting trades instructors identified by the participants, with the majority falling into the economic theme.
Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions

Summary

The author of the present study is currently in the role of Associate Dean for the Faculty of Trades and Applied Technology at Vancouver Island University (VIU). That position is required to be knowledgeable of the institutions recruitment practices as well as to play an active role in the hiring process of trades instructors for the departments within the Faculty. What he learned in that role is that although there are recruitment practices employed in an attempt to attract candidates to apply to job postings, there was not an overarching strategic plan that is followed on a consistent basis to ensure the recruitment process has the potential to be successful. He also learned that there are a number of challenges faced on a consistent basis in recruiting trades instructors to apply for job postings.

In reviewing the literature for the present study, it became apparent that there has not been much research done around the area of recruiting trades instructors or the challenges faced. The present study investigated the following research question: What recruitment practices are being used by British Columbia post-secondary trades training institutes in an attempt to ensure that they have an adequate pool of quality trades instructors to hire from; how effective are these practices, and from this, what are some of the challenges revealed in the recruitment process? Qualitative research was employed using an exploratory method to gather a database of information on what recruitment practices are being used, how effective are these practices, and what challenges are being faced that could potentially help inform further research on best practices for recruitment strategies of trades instructors.

Purposive sampling was used to identify the participants for the research. The majority of trades training in British Columbia is conducted through fourteen publicly funded training
providers. The Deans of the Trades Faculties at these training providers were contacted to participate in the study as it was identified that they would be knowledgeable of and participate in the recruitment process at their institutions, as well they would be aware of the challenges faced in recruiting trades instructors for their program areas.

Once participants agreed to participate in the survey, they were asked to fill out a questionnaire that had them identify what practices were being used by their institution to recruit trades instructors, how effective were these practices, and what were the challenges that they faced in ensuring they had an adequate pool of candidates to hire from. Eleven participants participated in the study and returned the questionnaires. The data for the questions was then summarized and coded for themes and then either displayed in charts or described in written form.

**Implications of the Findings**

The author of the present study hypothesised that: training institutions were not following detailed strategic plans in their recruitment of trades instructors, they have a heavy reliance on connections between faculty members and industry to recruit trades instructors, training institutions will identify economic challenges in recruiting trades instructors, and these institutions will not feel that their recruitment practices are effective in attracting high quality trades instructors to apply for job postings. These hypotheses were informed by the three themes that emerged from the literature review: current and future demand, recruitment practices, and challenges faced in recruiting trades instructors. The data gathered in the study provided further understanding of these themes in the context of the British Columbia region that was being looked at.
Current and future demand.

For there to be a demand for trades instructors, there must be a need for training qualified tradespersons. The literature review identified that there is high demand for qualified tradespersons in British Columbia and the provincial government is investing extra dollars into training needs for in demand trades (Government of British Columbia, 2016). The current study did not gather specific data on the current and future demand for trades instructors at the training providers that participated in the research. Some participants’ responses to identifying challenges they faced in recruiting trades instructors did support the notion that there is high demand for tradespersons in industry though. From responses given by participants in the questionnaire, one participant noted that “There are not a lot of unemployed trades people in our area”, while another participant offered that “Certain trades are extremely difficult to hire as they are very busy in industry”.

Recruitment practices.

The hypothesis that participants would identify that there are not many strategic approaches being employed and there is heavy reliance on the connections between their faculty and industry in their efforts to recruit trades instructors was informed by the experiences of the author of the present study in his role of recruiting trades instructors combined with the literature that was reviewed.

Strategic approaches.

In the responses to the questionnaire, none of the participants identified that their institution was following a strategic or detailed recruitment plan, yet Middlewood et al. (1999) had suggested the importance of a Faculty having a strategic approach to recruiting trades instructors. From responses given by participants in the questionnaire, one participant responded
that “There is not to my knowledge any proactive (recruitment) practices in place, just reactive based on immediate need.”, while another participant noted that “In short, we don’t have this practice (recruitment) sorted out.”. This lends itself to support Brown (2011), in which they noted that recruitment is dealt with as a stand-alone activity.

There were 18 recruitment practices in total that were identified by the participants of the current study, while 9 of the 11 participants identified 4 or more recruitment practices that they were using. This implies that most training institutes are using a variety of approaches to recruit trades instructors, but the data is unclear if the recruitment practices are being used as part of an over-arching strategic recruitment plan. One participant did identify that their institution used the strategy of starting with temporary assignments and/or part-time studies contracts for onboarding new instructors.

Flannigan et al. (2004) suggested that community colleges consistently used similar methods in recruiting faculty including: internal/external advertising, word of mouth, faculty member personal networks, and head hunters. There are similarities to the current study in that the three most common recruitment practices that were identified by participants included: institutional website (9), faculty/staff personal networks (8), and regional/national newspapers (7). The 15 other recruitment practices were all identified by five or fewer of the participants (<50), which would indicate that they are not practices that are used on a consistent basis.

**Faculty connections to industry.**

The hypothesis purported by the author of the present study that training providers would report a heavy reliance on the connections between existing faculty members and their respective trade industries to recruit qualified applicants is supported by the data in that faculty/industry connections was the largest of the three recruitment themes identified in the participant responses
in terms of both the number of recruitment practices (8) and the number of participants that identified these recruitment practices (22). The advantage of these methods that have personal connections is that they are targeted specifically to the industry that the instructional positions are being recruited for. One of the respondents identified that they use “personal email to reach out through industry/employer networks”. The contacts that faculty have in industry typically will have a vested interest in the training as they recognize the value of having a highly skilled workforce to support the needs of their industry, which ensures that they are motivated to help in the recruitment process.

**Effectiveness of recruitment practices.**

The author of the present study hypothesized that trades training institutes would report that their recruitment practices were not considered effective in attracting quality trades instructors. The author used the assumptions that a rating between 0-3 meant that the participant was not satisfied with their recruitment practices, a rating between 4-6 meant that they were somewhat satisfied, and a rating between 7-10 meant that they were satisfied.

The data suggests that there was a fairly even split amongst the respondents as to whether they felt their recruitment practices were effective or not as the mean effectiveness rating was 5.45, while five respondents rated between 7-10, 2 respondents rated between 4-6, and four respondents rated between 0-3.

**Challenges faced in recruiting trades instructors.**

The present study identified 14 different challenges that were faced in recruiting trades instructors at 11 different training providers in British Columbia. There were five themes that emerged within these challenges identified by the respondents: economic, qualifications,
industry, recruitment, and cultural. This presented a strong connection to the literature review as the challenge themes of economic, qualifications, and cultural were also identified.

**Economic challenges.**

The present study hypothesized that training providers would identify significant economic challenges in their efforts to recruit trades instructors. The data supported this hypothesis as 22 of the 40 challenges identified by the respondents fell under the economic theme. *Low wages compared to industry* and the *inability to guarantee ongoing work* were the highest reported challenges as both were identified by 8 of the 11 respondents, which suggests that these are challenges that are consistently faced in most regions of the province as well as across a broad range of trades. This highlights that the economic challenge is not only lower wages paid by training providers, but it is also the lack of ability in providing steady employment opportunities, especially when an instructor is first hired on. From responses given by participants in the questionnaire, one respondent stated that “we struggle finding term instructors as we can’t keep them employed for long enough terms for them to commit and take time out of industry”. *Collective agreement limitations* also impact the *inability to guarantee ongoing work* as new employees are often hired into term instead of regular positions to start and as one respondent stated, “who will leave a high paying, secure job for one with less pay that has no guarantee of continued work?”.

**Lack of qualifications.**

The second most identified challenge theme was qualifications. Trades instructors are required to have a combination of expertise in their industry as well as the ability to teach in a classroom/shop setting, yet there is little correlation to a tradesperson’s trade skillset being able to transfer into an ability to teach (Vladicka, 2014). One participant in the current study
identified that the “need for Red Seal Credential, Provincial Instructor Diploma, and instructional experience is a challenging combination to acquire in the trades”. Most tradespersons have focused their careers around developing their knowledge and skill in their respective trade without having given thought to becoming an instructor. When the opportunity arises to instruct, very few tradespeople have already developed their skills as an instructor to go along with their trade knowledge. This is supported by one of the respondent’s comment that “There are simply not enough quality candidates to draw from.”.

Cultural challenges.

Vladicka (2014) had identified a number of cultural differences that exist between the trade industries and the post-secondary working environments that present challenges for tradespersons that are transitioning between these sectors, including the ability of tradespersons to adapt to the culture of post-secondary institutions. The current study only identified one challenge related to culture and it was focused on the fact that rural postings were not attractive to experienced trades instructors.

Limitations

In reflecting on the research that was conducted and the data that was collected, the author of the present study recognized that there were some limitations in the design of the study. The three key limitations that the author identified included: 1) open-ended questions on the survey, 2) varying array of trades programs offered by each training provider, and 3) regional considerations that could influence responses.

Open-ended questions on the survey.

The author of the present study chose to ask open-ended questions to gather data on what recruitment practices were being used by training institutions and what challenges they faced in
trying to recruit quality trades instructors. Although this allowed the opportunity to gather a wide range of responses to both questions, it did not ensure that the participants were thinking about all the recruitment practices or challenges that were identified. This raises the question of would the response rates have been different if the participants were presented the question in a different format. For example, participants could have been given a checklist of common recruitment practices and then identified from that list which ones they included in their recruitment processes. The participants could have been given the opportunity to add any other practices they used as well to ensure that there all practices could be identified. A good example of this limitation in the study was that only 9 of the 11 participants identified that they used their institutional website to post positions, yet further study showed that all institutions post their job openings on the Human Resource area of their websites.

**Varying array of trades programs offered.**

Each of the training providers that participated in the survey offer a different array of trades programs at their institutions. The current study looked at the challenges in recruiting trades instructor in a broad sense in that the participants were giving responses that were generic to their whole Faculty, not specific to individual trades. Every trades occupation is unique unto itself and would have different nuances and influences that would impact the challenges that are faced in recruiting trades instructors. For example, the Heavy Mechanical and Welding industries typically have a higher pay scale than what post-secondary institutions can offer within their collective agreements so there would be an expectation that low wages compared to industry would be prevalent. On the other side, the Culinary Arts and Baking industries typically have a lower pay scale than what an instructor would be paid so that would be looked at as an advantage in recruiting instead of a challenge. Depending on the cross section of programs that an
institution offers could then be deemed to have an influence on the participant’s response to the challenges faced in recruiting, which in turn could also influence their response to how effective they felt their recruitment practices were.

Regional considerations.

Having 11 of the 14 post-secondary training providers participate in the present study ensured that there was representation from almost all geographical areas in British Columbia. Similar to the uniqueness of each trade occupation, each geographical area would have regional influences that would impact recruitment practices and challenges faced. Rural areas would have a smaller pool of tradespersons to recruit from compared to urban centers and may have difficulty attracting applicants to relocate. The faculty/staff personal networks may also not be as broad in rural areas as the respective trade industries tend to be smaller than urban centers and are spread over a larger area.

Suggestions for Further Research

The literature review for the current study revealed that there has been research on the applicant’s perspective of influences that inspired them to apply for job postings, but this was mostly looked at from a community college perspective in the United States. There would be an opportunity to further explore what motivated current trades instructors in British Columbia to make the shift from tradesperson to instructor. Given the uniqueness of each trade, it would be worth looking at this from both an overarching perspective as well as a trade or industry perspective.

Suggestions to Further Develop Institutional Recruitment Practices

The present study examined recruitment practices and challenges faced from a provincial perspective with the hope of building a foundation of knowledge in these areas that would help
post-secondary training providers in their development of best practices for recruiting trades instructors. For a training provider to establish best practices for recruiting trades instructors for their programs, they will need to approach it from a place-based perspective as each program and region will be unique. What works well for one institution or program does not necessarily mean that it will work well in another location as the circumstances are never identical.

Middlewood et al. (1999) noted the importance of a Faculty having a strategic approach to recruiting trades instructors. Brown (2011) suggested that the first thing an organization needs to do in developing a strategic approach is to take stock of what practices are currently being used and assess whether they are meeting the strategic goals of the institution. The present study identified 18 recruitment practices that are being used in British Columbia to recruit trades instructors. This provides a toolkit of recruitment practices that training providers can access to help them develop a strategic plan. It will be important for them to assess the effectiveness of the different recruiting practices within their own institution to decide if they want to implement them within their strategic plan.

The current study also identified 14 challenges that British Columbia training providers are facing in recruiting trades instructors. As part of developing a strategic approach to recruitment, it will be important that each institution identifies what challenges they are facing that are specific to their program areas and how they will attempt to address these challenges within their plan.

With the end goal of developing best practices for recruiting trades instructors at post-secondary training institutes in British Columbia, it is important that a strategic approach is developed that integrates practices that are relevant for the region and trade being served, as well as address the specific challenges that are being faced.
References


Rynes, S. L. (1991) Recruitment, job choice, and post-hire consequences: A call for new research directions. In M. D. Dunnette & L. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and...*


Appendix A

Request to Participate Letter to Deans of Trade Faculties

Date
Sample name
Sample address

Dear sample,

I am writing to inquire regarding your participation as part of my Master of Education in Educational Leadership thesis research project.

The purpose of the present study is to identify what recruitment practices have been used by post-secondary trades training providers in British Columbia to assist in their process of hiring quality trades instructors. In addition, the present study aims to identify some of the challenges that are faced in ensuring that an adequate pool of quality trades instructors submits applications for job postings.

The focus of my research stems from the goal of having the highest quality trades instructors hired for teaching our apprentices. It is important to understand the journey that an individual takes to fill that role. At some point of a tradesperson’s career, a seed needs to be planted to initiate the thought of the potential of becoming an instructor in their chosen industry. Once they commit to that path, there are steps that can be taken to develop the necessary skills required to facilitate the transition from tradesperson to instructor. The path to becoming a quality trades instructor is like apprenticing in a trade. It is a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge that requires an abundance of hands on experience before someone can become competent in the role.

I recognize that recruitment is only a part of the process of reaching the goal of having the highest quality trades instructors teaching British Columbia’s apprentices. If the right tradespeople are recruited and hired, there stands a better chance of achieving that goal. Understanding what recruitment practices have been used and the challenges that were faced along the way will help inform best practices moving forward.

For my research, I am conducting an exploratory study intending to identify recruitment practices that have been used by publicly funded post secondary trades training providers in British Columbia in their process of hiring quality trades instructors as well as identify some of the challenges that are faced in ensuring that an adequate pool of candidates apply to trades instructor job postings.

I was hoping that you would be able to identify someone in your Faculty that would be able to participate in my research project. It is a requirement that the potential participant be knowledgeable of your institute’s recruitment practices as well as play an active role in the hiring process of trades instructors. Participation in the study is voluntary and would consist of responding to an online questionnaire.

I would like to thank you in advance for taking the time to consider and/or respond to my request.

Jessie Chalmers
Vancouver Island University
Appendix B

Request to Participate Letter to Persons Identified by the Deans of Trade Faculties

Date
Sample name
Sample address

Dear sample,

I am writing to inquire regarding your participation as part of my Master of Education in Educational Leadership program thesis. You have been identified by the Dean or Director of your Faculty as knowledgeable of your institute’s recruitment practices as well as play an active role in the hiring process of trades instructors.

The purpose of the present study is to identify what recruitment practices have been used by post-secondary trades training providers in British Columbia to assist in their process of hiring quality trades instructors. In addition, the present study aims to identify some of the challenges that are faced in ensuring that an adequate pool of quality trades instructors submits applications for job postings.

The focus of my research stems from the goal of having the highest quality trades instructors hired for teaching our apprentices. It is important to understand the journey that an individual takes to fill that role. At some point of a tradesperson’s career, a seed needs to be planted to initiate the thought of the potential of becoming an instructor in their chosen industry. Once they commit to that path, there are steps that can be taken to develop the necessary skills required to facilitate the transition from tradesperson to instructor. The path to becoming a quality trades instructor is like apprenticing in a trade. It is a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge that requires an abundance of hands on experience before someone can become competent in the role.

I recognize that recruitment is only a part of the process of reaching the goal of having the highest quality trades instructors teaching British Columbia’s apprentices. If the right tradespeople are recruited and hired, there stands a better chance of achieving that goal. Understanding what recruitment practices have been used and the challenges that were faced along the way will help inform best practices moving forward.

For my research, I am conducting an exploratory study intending to identify recruitment practices that have been used by publicly funded post secondary trades training providers in British Columbia in their process of hiring quality trades instructors as well as identify some of the challenges that are faced in ensuring that an adequate pool of candidates apply to their job postings. The results of the study will be reported in my thesis project: Recruitment of Trades Instructors: Current Practices and Challenges Faced.

Participation in the study is optional. By completing and returning the attached survey, you are consenting to allow your responses to be used as data for the current study.

I would like to thank you in advance for taking the time to consider and/or respond to my request.

Jessie Chalmers
Vancouver Island University
Appendix C

Questionnaire for Participants


Please respond to the following questions:

Post Secondary Institution:

1. Please describe all recruitment practices that you have knowledge of that your institution has used (past and current) in an attempt to ensure that you have an adequate pool of quality trades instructors to hire from?

2. Please identify some of the challenges that your institution has faced in recruiting an adequate pool of trades instructors to hire from.

3. How effective do you feel that your institution’s recruitment practices are in attracting high quality trades instructors? Indicate your answer with an X on the scale below.

   Not helpful                                      Very helpful
   ____________________________________________