

**Yes Oui Can:
Addressing British Columbia's Shortage of French
Immersion Teachers**

**by
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Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

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Abstract

French immersion offers students in British Columbia the opportunity to learn French as a second language, but since the program's inception in the 1970s the province has faced a shortage of qualified teachers, with worrying consequences for both the quality of the program and the availability of spaces for students. This study explores this multi-faceted problem through a survey of school district and interviews with key stakeholders and experts. It describes several interrelated causes of the shortage and uses its findings to identify and analyze policy options to increase the supply of French immersion teachers in the province. The study recommends the implementation of professional development funding to help teachers transition to French, an informational campaign for French speaking students, and a student loan forgiveness program as solutions.

Keywords: French immersion; French education; British Columbia; skills shortage

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Table of Contents

Approval.....	ii
Ethics Statement	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
List of Acronyms.....	x
Executive Summary.....	xi
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Chapter 2. French language programs in BC	3
2.1. What is French immersion?	3
2.2. Policy context and stakeholders.....	3
2.3. Enrolment trends	6
Chapter 3. The shortage of French immersion teachers in BC	8
3.1. Existing evidence of the shortage	8
3.2. The importance of addressing the French immersion teacher shortage	9
3.3. Defining and measuring the shortage	11
3.4. Nature and causes of the shortage of French immersion teachers in BC.....	12
Chapter 4. Methodology.....	16
4.1. Survey of school districts	16
4.2. Interviews	17
Chapter 5. Results.....	18
5.1. Online survey.....	18
5.2. Interviews	23
Chapter 6. Policy objectives and evaluative criteria	29
6.1. Increase in the supply of French immersion teachers	29
6.2. Retention of French immersion teachers.....	30
6.3. Rural-urban distribution.....	30
6.4. Program and teaching quality	31
6.5. Cost to government	31
6.6. Administrative complexity	31
6.7. BCTF support	32
Chapter 7. Policy options.....	35
7.1. Option 1: Student loan forgiveness program	35
7.2. Option 2: Increased bursaries for pre-service teachers studying in French	36
7.3. Option 3: Informational campaign for French-speaking students.....	36

7.4. Option 4: Additional professional development funding for teachers wishing to transition to French immersion	37
7.5. Option 5: Fund moving expenses and provide housing assistance for out-of-province teachers	38
Chapter 8. Policy analysis	39
8.1. Student loan forgiveness program	39
8.2. Increased bursaries for pre-service teachers studying in French	41
8.3. Informational campaign for French-speaking students	43
8.4. Allocate additional professional development bursary funding for teachers wishing to transition to French immersion.....	45
8.5. Fund moving expenses and provide housing assistance for out-of-province teachers	48
8.6. Summary of analysis.....	51
Chapter 9. Recommendations	52
9.1. Allocation additional professional development bursary funding for teachers wishing to transition to French immersion.....	52
9.2. Informational campaign for French-speaking students	52
9.3. Student loan forgiveness program	53
Chapter 10. Conclusion.....	54
References.....	56
Appendix A. Survey questions for school districts with French immersion.....	61

List of Tables

Table 1:	Summary of evaluative criteria	33
Table 2:	Summary of analysis of option 1.....	41
Table 3:	Summary of analysis of option 2.....	43
Table 4:	Summary of analysis of option 4.....	45
Table 5:	Summary of analysis of option 4.....	48
Table 6:	Summary of analysis of option 5.....	50
Table 7:	Summary of policy analysis results.....	51

List of Figures

Figure 1.	Percentage of British Columbia Students Enroled in French Immersion ...	7
Figure 2.	“If you needed to hire an additional French immersion teacher today, how difficult do you think it would be to fill that position?” (n=18)	18
Figure 3.	“It is difficult to find French immersion teachers to hire due to a lack of qualified applicants.” (n=18)	19
Figure 4.	“Over the past few years, has it become more or less difficult to find fully qualified candidates for French immersion teaching positions?” (n=18)..	20
Figure 5.	“Please indicate to what extent you think each of the following is important to address to increase the supply of French immersion teachers in British Columbia.”	21
Figure 6.	Responses to “How successful have you found the following strategies to recruit French immersion teachers?”	22

List of Acronyms

BC	British Columbia
BCTF	British Columbia Teachers' Federation
BCPSEA	British Columbia Public School Employers' Association
CPF	Canadian Parents for French
FSL	French as a Second Language
SFU	Simon Fraser University
TRB	Teacher Regulation Branch
UBC	University of British Columbia
uVic	University of Victoria

Executive Summary

Introduction and background

Since the 1970s, French immersion programs in British Columbia (BC) have been increasing the prevalence of bilingualism in the province by providing instruction of all core subjects in French. Research has consistently demonstrated that French immersion allows students to obtain a high degree of proficiency in French without sacrificing their English skills or their knowledge of core subjects, providing numerous academic, cognitive, linguistic, and cultural benefits. Enrolment in French immersion has been increasing steadily in BC, yet the province has faced a shortage of qualified French immersion teachers since the program's inception.

Although academic literature on this problem has been scarce in recent years, there has been attention from advocacy groups, school districts, government reports, and the media that paints a picture of the shortage. For example, in 2015 the Canadian Parents for French BC & Yukon Branch conducted a survey of school districts to better understand the nature and the scope of the French immersion teacher shortage. Of the districts that responded to the survey, 86 percent reported that it was “challenging” or “very challenging” to fill available French immersion teaching positions with qualified teachers and 78 percent reported that a “lack of qualified applicants” was a challenge they faced in recruiting French immersion teachers. The shortage is chronic, and is more severe in rural school districts than in urban ones. Key factors to consider that affect the supply of French immersion teachers in the province include the rate of enrolment in French teacher education programs, the number of teachers coming to BC from other jurisdictions, and the rate of professional attrition.

Methodology and results

This study comprises a two-part methodology: a survey of school district human resource officials and interviews with experts and stakeholders. Of the 45 districts in the province that offer French immersion, the survey received responses from 18, representing 40 percent of the districts with French immersion. Interviews were conducted with nine individuals.

The survey confirmed the presence of a shortage of French immersion teachers in the districts that responded to the survey. Of the 18 responding districts with French immersion, only one responded that it would not be difficult to hire an additional French immersion teacher if needed. The remaining 17 anticipated some difficulty, with five indicating that it would be “difficult” and 12 indicating that it would be “very difficult.” Districts were also asked to rate the extent to which they believed various factors were important to address to increase the supply of French immersion teachers in BC. The strongest importance was reported for the number of students in BC entering French teacher training programs. There was also strong importance reported for the number of teachers coming to BC from other provinces, and for professional attrition. The results regarding the number of teachers immigrating from other countries was more mixed, with no districts rating it as “very important.”

Key themes that were discussed in interviews include the current barriers to making French teaching a more attractive career, to reducing attrition, to encouraging the pursuit of French teacher training in BC, and to incentivizing movement from other jurisdictions. The role of these barriers in the shortage of French immersion teachers, as well as strategies to address them, were also discussed. A consistent theme throughout the interviews was that there is a need for a multi-pronged approach to address this problem, and that it will require significant collaboration between multiple stakeholders.

Policy analysis and recommendations

This study uses seven criteria to compare policy options. These criteria were chosen to assess the extent to which the policy options are expected to achieve multiple objectives as identified through the research. The seven criteria used are as follows:

- Increase in the supply of French immersion teachers
- Retention of French immersion teachers
- Rural-urban distribution
- Program and teaching quality
- Cost to government
- Administrative complexity

- BCTF support

Five policy options were chosen for analysis. As the scope of the policy problem identified for this project is the supply of French immersion teachers at the provincial level, options that could be implemented on a smaller scale, for example by an individual school district, are not explored in this analysis. The five options analyzed are as follows:

- A student loan forgiveness program for French immersion teachers working in BC with provincial student loans
- Increased bursaries for pre-service teachers studying in French
- Informational campaign for French-speaking students
- Additional professional development funding for teachers wishing to transition to French immersion
- Fund moving expenses and provide housing assistance for out-of-province teachers

Based on the analysis of each option using the seven evaluative criteria, this study recommends the following three options, in order of priority: (1) Allocate additional professional development bursary funding for teachers wishing to transition to French immersion; (2) Informational campaign for French-speaking students; (3) Student loan forgiveness program.

Chapter 1. Introduction

As one of Canada's two official languages, French education is an issue whose importance extends beyond the educational benefits of second language learning and touches questions of identity and culture in a country whose political landscape has been shaped by bilingualism. Eighty-two percent of British Columbians are in favour of bilingualism for all of Canada, and 85 percent support the aims of the *Official Languages Act* (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages 2016). Two-thirds of Canadian Anglophones consider bilingualism to be among the factors that define what it means to be Canadian. Two-thirds also believe that Anglophones learning French can help keep the country united (Parkin and Turcotte 2004, 17).

French immersion programs are available across Canada as a way for students to learn French as an additional language and have shown widely positive results. Since the 1970s, French immersion programs in British Columbia (BC) have been increasing the prevalence of bilingualism in the province by providing instruction of all core subjects in French (Hunt, Ashman, and Short 2016). Research has consistently demonstrated that French immersion allows students to obtain a high degree of proficiency in French without sacrificing their English skills or their knowledge of core subjects, providing numerous academic, cognitive, linguistic, and cultural benefits (Lazaruk 2007).

Enrolment in French immersion has been increasing steadily in BC, yet the province has faced a shortage of qualified French immersion teachers since the program's inception (Martin 1994). This shortage threatens the quality of French immersion programs and constrains their growth in school districts throughout the province. School districts work to recruit and retain teachers but are often unable to fill open positions as they are met with the reality that the supply of French immersion teachers is not sufficient to meet demand. The problem is complex in nature, with no singular cause or solution; it involves the federal and provincial governments, school districts, teachers, universities, parents, and students.

This project identifies and analyzes policy options to address the shortage of French immersion teachers in BC. To analyze the nature and causes of the problem, a survey was conducted of school districts in the province and interviews were conducted

with stakeholders and experts. Policy options that could increase the supply of French immersion teachers across the province are then identified. The benefits and trade-offs of these options are assessed based on evaluative criteria to compare their effectiveness in recruitment and retention, as well as their impact on program and teaching quality, equity between districts, cost, and complexity. The objective is to provide recommendations to the Government of British Columbia that can be implemented to relieve the shortage and help ensure that students in British Columbia have access to high quality French immersion education.

Chapter 2. French language programs in BC

2.1. What is French immersion?

French immersion is an educational program offered from kindergarten to grade 12 in which French is the main language of instruction for all subjects. English language instruction is gradually added over the course of the program, beginning in grade 4 (Ministry of Education 1996). The goal of the program is for students to become bilingual by the time they graduate, with sufficient language skills to be able to work or pursue additional education in French. There are two entry points to French immersion in BC: early French immersion begins in kindergarten or grade 1, and late French immersion begins in grade 6. Enrolment in French immersion is open to all students, regardless of whether they have any previous French background or knowledge (Ministry of Education 1996).

French immersion has a long history in the province of BC. It was first developed by a group of parents in Quebec in the 1960s, after which time it began to spread across the country (Day and Shapson 1996). French immersion was introduced in British Columbia in the 1970s and quickly gained popularity in the province (Hunt, Ashman, and Short 2016). Since the 1960s, the rise in bilingualism across the country among Anglophones outside Quebec has been primarily attributed to the growing popularity of French as a second language (FSL) programs¹, particularly French immersion (Statistics Canada 2017).

2.2. Policy context and stakeholders

While French is widely taught across BC, there is no legislation requiring that French instruction be provided in schools². The *Official Languages Act* of 1969 made English and French Canada's official languages, with the hope that provincial

¹ BC offers two FSL programs other than immersion: Core French, through which students develop basic French communication skills from grades 5 and 8, and Intensive French, in which students in grades 6 and 7 develop a strong proficiency with more instruction than Core French (Ministry of Education 2017e).

² This is only true of FSL programs. Access to Francophone education is protected as a right under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Ministry of Education 2017f).

governments would take measures to protect French in the areas they controlled, such as education. Since the introduction of the Act, BC is the only Canadian province that has not enacted any legislation or policies in place to govern the status of French or the delivery of French-language services (Standing Senate Committee on Official Language 2017). All BC students are required to learn a second language between grades 5 and 8, with the choices of and access to second language programs managed by school districts. While French is the most commonly taught second language in the province, it is not required that school districts offer FSL programs (Standing Senate Committee on Official Language 2017).

2.2.1. Provincial government

The Ministry of Education is the primary provincial body with responsibility related to the shortage of French immersion teachers. The purpose of the ministry is to enable students “to achieve their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous, sustainable economy” (Ministry of Education 2017c, 5). This involves providing leadership by establishing provincial policies, legislation, and standards related to education, as well as some level of co-governance with school districts (Ministry of Education 2017c).

The Ministry of Education is also responsible for teacher certification. Teachers who have completed a teacher education program can apply to the Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB) for a teaching certificate, which is required to teach in the public-school system unless a letter of permission has been issued³. The TRB assesses candidates based on academic record, teaching record, and fitness to teach, and is guided by standards set by the BC Teachers’ Council (Ministry of Education 2017d).

2.2.2. School districts

Public education in BC is provided through school districts. The province is divided into 60 districts, each of which is governed by an elected Board of Education,

³ In certain circumstances, a letter of permission may be issued to allow candidates who have not completed a teacher training program, and thus do not have a valid teaching certificate, to teach in the public-school system for a specified period of time. The employer must provide evidence that they have made every effort to fill the position with a certified individual (Ministry of Education 2017b).

defined as a corporation under the *School Act*. School districts are responsible for setting local education policies and for supervising the administration of public schools (Bish and Clemens 2008). School districts are primarily funded by the Ministry of Education, and are each responsible for preparing their own annual budgets (Bish and Clemens 2008). In the context of French immersion, it is school districts that are responsible for choosing whether to offer French immersion. They are also responsible for the recruitment and retention of teachers. Although the Ministry of Education is responsible for certification of teachers, it does not determine what subjects a teacher is qualified to teach; school districts are responsible for determining whether a candidate is qualified to teach French immersion.

2.2.3. Federal government

The main role of the federal government in support French immersion programs is the provision of funding. In 1970 the federal government began providing financial assistance to the provinces for minority language education and second-official-language instruction. Since 1979, this program has been named the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP) (Standing Senate Committee on Official Language 2017). This funding is administered by the Ministry of Education, which in turn disperses it to school districts based on their funding formula. All federal funding received by school districts under OLEP is required to be spent entirely in support of core French programs or French immersion programs (Ministry of Education 2013).

2.2.4. Other stakeholders

Other key stakeholders include universities, the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF), the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) and parents.

- Universities have a stake in the shortage of French immersion teachers as they offer teacher education programs. Simon Fraser University (SFU) and the University of British Columbia (UBC) are the two universities in BC that offer teacher education programs in French. The University of Victoria (uVic) offers a Professional Specialization Certificate in Teaching French Immersion for individuals who are already certified teachers (Ministry of Education 2017g).

- The BCTF is the professional union representing all public school teachers in the province (British Columbia Teachers' Federation 2018).
- The BCPSEA is the accredited bargaining agent for BC's public school boards and provides human resources services to school districts. They also administer Make a Future, a job board that collects teaching jobs throughout the province (British Columbia Public School Employers' Association 2014).
- Canadian Parents for French (CPF) is a non-profit organization that does advocacy and research work related to the provision of French immersion programs. Their BC and Yukon branch help parents advocate for strong French programs in communities across BC (Canadian Parents for French British Columbia & Yukon Branch n.d.).

2.3. Enrolment trends

Both the absolute number of students enrolled in French immersion and the percentage of students enrolled in French immersion have been steadily increasing over the past two decades (Ministry of Education 2017a). From 1992 to 2016 the total number of students enrolled in the program increased by 89.5 percent, from 29,165 to 55,276. In the same period, total school enrolment in the province increased by 10.9 percent. The share of students enrolled in French immersion at the elementary and secondary level, as well as the total for all grades, is illustrated in Figure 1. The percentage of students enrolled at the elementary level is consistently higher than the percentage enrolled at the secondary level. This points to student attrition that is occurring between the elementary and secondary level. Despite this, the percentage of students enrolled at both levels has increased considerably: from 6.1 percent of elementary students in 1991/92 to 10.1 percent in 2015/16, and from 2.9 percent of secondary students in 1991/92 to 6.3 percent in 2015/16.

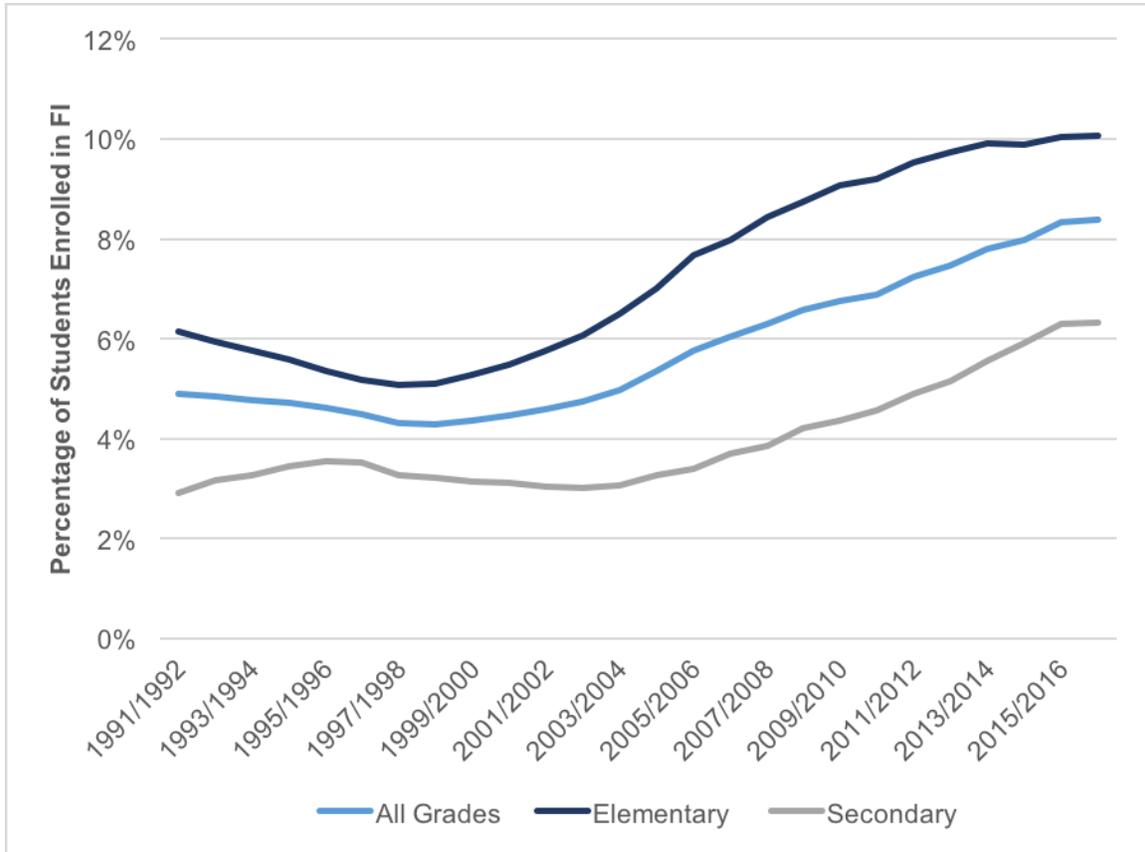


Figure 1. Percentage of British Columbia Students Enroled in French Immersion

Data Source: Ministry of Education (2017a)

Chapter 3. The shortage of French immersion teachers in BC

3.1. Existing evidence of the shortage

In the 1990s and early 2000s, several research papers were published that provided evidence of the shortage of French immersion teachers (Majhanovich 1990; Obadia and Martin 1995; Veilleux and Bournot-Trites 2005). In the decade since, there has been little research published on the subject. Although academic literature on this problem has been scarce in recent years, there has been attention from advocacy groups, school districts, government reports, and the media that paints a picture of the shortage.

In 2015 CPF BC & Yukon Branch (2015) conducted a survey of school districts to better understand the nature and the scope of the French immersion teacher shortage. The survey received responses from representatives of 96 percent of the school districts in British Columbia and the Yukon that offer French immersion (p. 4). Of those districts, 86 percent reported that it was “challenging” or “very challenging” to fill available French immersion teaching positions with qualified teachers (p. 6) and 78 percent reported that a “lack of qualified applicants” was a challenge they faced in recruiting French immersion teachers (p. 7). In 2017 the Vancouver School Board released a memorandum that references that report, acknowledging that this is a problem they face and noting that, in addition to constraints such as lack of space, they would be unlikely to be able to hire teachers for additional French immersion classes (Keough 2017). In May 2017, the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages released a report on French language education in BC. In that report, the shortage of qualified teachers is identified as among the main factors hindering access to FSL programs in BC. The shortage has also been documented through media reports, highlighting its role in preventing the expansion of French immersion programs in the province (CBC News 2013; Alphonso 2017; Bell 2017; Holm 2016).

3.2. The importance of addressing the French immersion teacher shortage

3.2.1. Benefits of French immersion

Canada's experience in immersion education has benefited from systematic evaluations of the program since its introduction (Cummins 1983). This research was crucial in leading to the spread of French immersion programs across the country, and in "establishing the Canadian experiment as one of the most significant innovations in second-language teaching in this century" (Cummins 1983, 118). Day and Shapson (1996) compile results from program evaluations and research studies that were conducted in BC, beginning when French immersion was implemented in the province. Studies overwhelmingly show positive outcomes for students; students achieve high levels of French proficiency without sacrificing their English language skills or progress in other subjects, and gain an appreciation of French language and culture (Day and Shapson 1996). In a more recent summary of the existing literature on Canadian FSL programs, Lazaruk (2007) echoes that the research has consistently demonstrated numerous benefits of French immersion programs, noting that students often perform more highly than non-immersion students in core subjects including English. Studies have also found that, beyond academic performance, bilingualism is positively associated with characteristics such as mental flexibility, creative thinking, concept formation, metalinguistic awareness, and interpersonal communication (Lazaruk 2007; Cummins 1983).

Critics of French immersion programs argue that such evidence of academic and cognitive benefits is not the result of French immersion programs themselves being beneficial, but of an elitist student population being recruited to the program (Churchill 2003). Day and Shapson (1996) acknowledge that factors such as parental support and encouragement, and the ability and motivation levels of students, may also be contributing factors to the high performance of French immersion students beyond programmatic effects. However, studies that have controlled for differences in general academic performance and socioeconomic background have found positive academic and cognitive effects of French immersion (Day and Shapson 1996; Churchill 2003; Lazaruk 2007). For example, Churchill (2003) states that standardized testing in several provinces has shown that French immersion students achieve higher scores than the

rest of the student population, even when comparing groups of similar socioeconomic status.

The justification for French language education extend beyond the transmission of language skills to include education of culture and values (Churchill 2003). Framing French immersion within the politics of Canada's two official languages, Churchill (2003) states that an important motivator of such language education is to promote bilingualism as part of the Canadian identity, and to improve understanding and communication between Canadian Anglophones and Francophones. Churchill (2003) finds that the introduction of French immersion led both to rising rates of bilingualism and rising rates of support for Canada's official bilingualism among Canadian Anglophones. Learning French can provide cultural and employment opportunities nationally and internationally; many parents choose to enrol their children in French immersion in order to provide them with an advantage in the labour market once they are grown (Churchill 2003; Lazaruk 2007).

3.2.2. Program quality and risk of lowering standards

There exist concerns about the qualification standards for French immersion teachers, especially in the context of a shortage (Veilleux and Bournot-Trites 2005). Veilleux and Bournot-Trites (2005) find a high degree of heterogeneity in the ways that both universities and school districts assess the French language proficiency of teacher candidates in BC, in particular finding the tests used by school districts to be informal and without demonstrated validity. The study finds that districts vary in their use of assessment tools such as oral or written tests, or reliance on transcripts and references (Veilleux and Bournot-Trites 2005, 498). It also notes that there have been requests from school districts to lower the pass level of entrance tests for the French immersion teaching stream in order to increase the number of students entering the programs at SFU and UBC (490). The study finds that in the context of a shortage there is increased likelihood that school districts will hire teachers with lower qualifications. It identifies teacher education, certification, and recruitment as three stages at which qualification verification could take place⁴. Other studies have also noted the connection between

⁴ While some level of verification does exist at all three of these stages, the paper suggests that more systematic evaluation of French language skills could take place at one of them to replace the current heterogeneous models of assessment.

teacher shortages and lower qualification standards (Grimmett and Echols 2000; Swanson 2010).

The threat of lowering standards due to the shortage of French immersion teachers is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, as noted in Grimmett and Echols (2000), the public is against the notion of lower standards for entry into the teaching profession. More specifically, parents do not want teachers with lower qualification standards teaching their children (Veilleux and Bournot-Trites 2005). Secondly, reducing the qualification standards for French immersion teachers will reduce the overall quality of the program, as teachers with high-quality French language skills are necessary to provide high-quality French education (Bayliss and Vignola 2000; Reeder, Hasebe-Ludt, and Thomas 1997). If the shortage continues, it has the potential to decrease the quality of French immersion programs overall, diminishing the benefits of such a program for even those students that are able to enrol.

3.3. Defining and measuring the shortage

In order to understand the shortage of French immersion teachers, it is first necessary to define skills shortages. The simplest definition is that a skills shortage exists when the demand for workers of a particular type exceeds the supply of those workers under the prevailing market conditions (Shah and Burke 2003). Shah and Burke (2003) distinguish between two common ways to identify the existence of and measure skills shortages. The first is to use economic indicators such as vacancy rates, hiring rates, and changes in wages. The second is often used when such economic data are not available, and instead relies on more ad-hoc indicators, such as employer-based surveys and interviews, to infer the imbalance in supply and demand. As the employer perspective on skills shortages is defined through recruitment difficulties, inability or difficulty to find qualified candidates can thus be used to identify the existence of a skills shortage (Richardson 2007).

While the concept of a skills shortage seems straightforward, there are several confounding factors that can make identifying, measuring, and understanding the causes of a shortage complicated and somewhat ambiguous. While we may be able to measure the number of professionals certified within a particular geographic location, we are not able to measure whether they have left the profession, whether they are working in

regions with the most need, or how many belong to certain sub-categories or specializations (Richardson 2007). These constrictions in measuring supply present a challenge in measuring the supply of French immersion teachers in BC. As the current data collected on teachers in BC are not disaggregated by teaching subject or language, it is not reflected in the existing labour market data if there are imbalances in supply and demand for only particular subject areas or language (Grimmett and Echols 2000).

In the studies reviewed that have been conducted on the shortage of French immersion teachers, or of teachers more widely, almost none offer an operational definition of what constitutes a shortage. Veilleux and Boumot-Trites (2005) are the exception, defining that a shortage exists if there is only one qualified candidate or fewer applying on average for each teaching position. In most other research that has been conducted on the subject, the shortage is defined less explicitly. Surveys of school districts has been a commonly used methodology in identifying such shortages (Majhanovich 1990; Obadia and Martin 1995; Canadian Parents for French British Columbia & Yukon Branch 2015), generally identifying that a shortage exists if school districts report that it is challenging to hire French immersion teachers. Such studies are therefore relying on the second classification of skills shortage identification and measurement described by Shah and Burke (2003). Given the lack of quantitative economic data to measure supply and demand, surveys showing recruitment difficulties are an appropriate method of inferring the existence of a shortage.

3.4. Nature and causes of the shortage of French immersion teachers in BC

3.4.1. The shortage is chronic

In the case of a skills shortage, economists generally predict that the labour market will eliminate the shortage through adjustment of wages and/or working conditions. However, the shortage of French immersion teachers in Canada has been a chronic problem virtually since the program's inception (Martin 1994). Majhanovich (1990) declared the shortage of French immersion teachers a "challenge for the 90s" (452), yet over 25 years later the problem has not been solved. While there has been little academic research published on this problem in the last decade, in the late 1980s and the 1990s researchers were studying the problem and providing policy

recommendations to address it (Obadia 1989; Obadia and Martin 1995). Most recently, Veilleux and Bournot-Trites (2005) find a shortage of French immersion teachers in 56 percent of British Columbia's school districts. While no academic research has since been published that identifies or measures the shortage in BC, advocacy group research and government reports identified above confirm that the problem has not resolved itself.

3.4.2. The shortage is more severe in rural school districts

Differences between school districts mean that not all school districts are experiencing a shortage or may experience differing severities. In particular, rural school districts are at a disadvantage compared to urban ones, with many teachers less eager to settle in remote regions (Veilleux and Bournot-Trites 2005; French Education Stakeholder Advisory Committee 2016). BC's French Education Stakeholder Advisory Committee (2016) also identifies the location of teacher education programs as posing a barrier to rural districts, as both teacher education programs offered in French in the province are in the Lower Mainland. This suggests that policy options that increase the overall number of French immersion teachers in the province may be less effective in rural districts.

3.4.3. Enrolment in French teacher education programs

An important source of French immersion teachers in BC is those who have graduated from teacher education programs in the province. Obadia (1989) notes that the number of student teachers enrolled across Canada had been diminishing in the 1980s—a cause for concern given the growing popularity of FSL programs. A similar issue is noted in Majhanovich (1990). While more recent studies have not discussed this aspect of the shortage in BC, Canadian Parents for French BC & Yukon (2015) finds that school districts identify increasing the number of students in French teacher education programs as a solution to the problem.

3.4.4. Professional attrition

While many discussions of the shortage of French immersion teachers revolve around training more teachers or attracting teachers from other jurisdictions, professional attrition is also contributing to the problem (Karsenti et al. 2008). Ingersoll

and Smith (2003) argue that the typical approach of policymakers to address teacher shortages, increasing supply, fails to take into account a large part of the problem: attrition. Research on dissatisfaction with the occupation that leads to that attrition thus suggests that policy may have a role to play in improving teacher retention as a way of addressing teacher shortages, rather than merely attempting to increase supply. Policies and programs to help improve support for new teachers are generally found to be the most successful in reducing attrition, with mentorship specifically being identified as an important component to reducing attrition (Ewart 2009; Ingersoll and Smith 2003; Canadian Parents for French British Columbia & Yukon Branch 2015).

Karsenti et al. (2008) identify a large number of factors that contribute to the high attrition rate of French immersion teachers. The paper groups these into five categories: (1) occupational difficulties inherent to the FSL teaching profession; (2) a lack of pedagogical resources; (3) relational difficulties as a teacher; (4) difficulties in class management due to difficult students; and (5) initial training and career choices of the teacher. Key occupational difficulties include a demanding work schedule and the large quantity of work that must be completed outside of normal working hours. Relational difficulties can include the state of relationships with the parents of students, but often includes a lack of support from school administration.

3.4.5. Attracting teachers from other jurisdictions

An important recruitment strategy for school districts in BC has been to hire teachers from other jurisdictions, such as other provinces (Canadian Parents for French British Columbia & Yukon Branch 2015). The province's French Education Stakeholder Advisory Committee has brought up the barriers that currently exist in trying to recruit teachers from other provinces. The high cost of living in BC is cited as a difficulty, in particular in the current context of Vancouver's housing affordability crisis (French Education Stakeholder Advisory Committee 2016). The committee also notes that it is often difficult to retain teachers long-term that have been recruited from other jurisdictions, as there is difficulty with integrating oneself into a new community. This is partly why programs such as mentoring are often identified as being important for teachers arriving from other regions or countries.

3.4.6. General teacher shortage

In 2016 the BCTF won a case in the Supreme Court of Canada regarding class sizes, restoring classes to their 2002 levels (O'Neil and Sherlock 2016). This reduction in class size required the immediate hiring of a large number of teachers across the province. While the shortage of French immersion teachers had previously existed amongst a general surplus of teachers, the ruling has led to a shortage of teachers in all disciplines (Correia 2017). The impact of this has been a worsening of the shortage of French immersion teachers.

Chapter 4. Methodology

This study comprises a two-part methodology: a survey of school district human resource officials and interviews with experts and stakeholders. Together, these methods are used to further understand the nature and causes of the shortage, to identify appropriate policy options to address the shortage, and to analyze the effectiveness and trade-offs of those approaches.

4.1. Survey of school districts

An online survey was distributed to 59 school districts in BC. This includes all districts in BC except the *Conseil scolaire francophone*, which is the province's Francophone school board. The survey was distributed to human resource (HR) officials based on publicly available contact information. In cases where a district did not have publicly listed contact information for an HR official, the survey was sent to another employee of the district with the request that it be forwarded to the appropriate respondent. Twenty districts completed the survey, for a total response rate of 34 percent. Eighteen of the districts that responded currently have a French immersion program. As there are 45 districts in the province that offer French immersion, this represents 40 percent of the districts that currently offer French immersion.

Districts that do not offer French immersion completed a shortened version of the survey that asked whether they have plans to implement French immersion and what considerations were relevant to that decision. For districts with French immersion, the survey serves several purposes. Its goals are to confirm that school districts are experiencing a shortage of French immersion teachers and to assess to what extent causal factors identified in the literature are contributing to the shortage. It also helps to provide an understanding of the strategies used by school districts to recruit and retain French immersion teachers and how successful those strategies have been. A copy of the survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

4.2. Interviews

Semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted with experts and stakeholders as the second methodology of the study. Interviews were conducted either over the phone or in-person, depending on the location of the interviewee, and were recorded for note-taking purposes. The interviews were semi-structured, and questions varied per the expertise and experience of each interviewee. Nine interviews were conducted overall with the following individuals⁵

- Wendy Carr, Associate Dean, Teacher Education, UBC
- H el ene Lalancette, Associate Director, Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, SFU
- Participant 1, Division of Continuing Studies, uVic
- Glynn Lewis, Executive Director, CPF BC & Yukon Branch
- Participant 2, Teacher Regulation Branch, Ministry of Education
- Participant 3, French Education Branch, Ministry of Education
- Participant 4, French Education Branch, Ministry of Education
- Sophie Bergeron, Language, Culture and Identity Coordinator, Coquitlam School District and President of the *Association Provinciale des Professeurs de l'Immersion et du Programme-Francophone BC*
- Participant 5, working in a relevant position related to teacher recruitment and retention

Interviews were used to further understand the nature and causes of the shortage, to identify possible policy options to address the shortage, and to understand the benefits and challenges related to those options to support the policy analysis portion of the study. In some cases, interview findings support or provide additional detail to information contained within the existing literature. In other cases, qualitative interview findings are used to fill in gaps or make predictions where quantitative data are not available.

⁵ In cases where interviewees requested to remain anonymous, their name has been replaced by "Participant [x]".

Chapter 5. Results

5.1. Online survey

5.1.1. Confirmation of the shortage

Three survey questions confirmed the presence of a shortage of French immersion teachers in the districts that responded to the survey. Districts were asked how difficult they thought it would be to fill the position if they needed to hire an additional French immersion teacher today. Of the 18 responding districts with French immersion, only one responded that it would not be difficult. The remaining 17 anticipated some difficulty, with five indicating that it would be “difficult” and 12 indicating that it would be “very difficult.” 16 districts agreed with the statement “it is difficult to find French immersion teachers to hire due to a lack of qualified applicants.” The remaining two districts responded as “neutral.” Lastly, despite recent reports of a shortage of all teachers in the province, all responding districts agreed that it is easier to find qualified teachers for English programs than for French immersion.

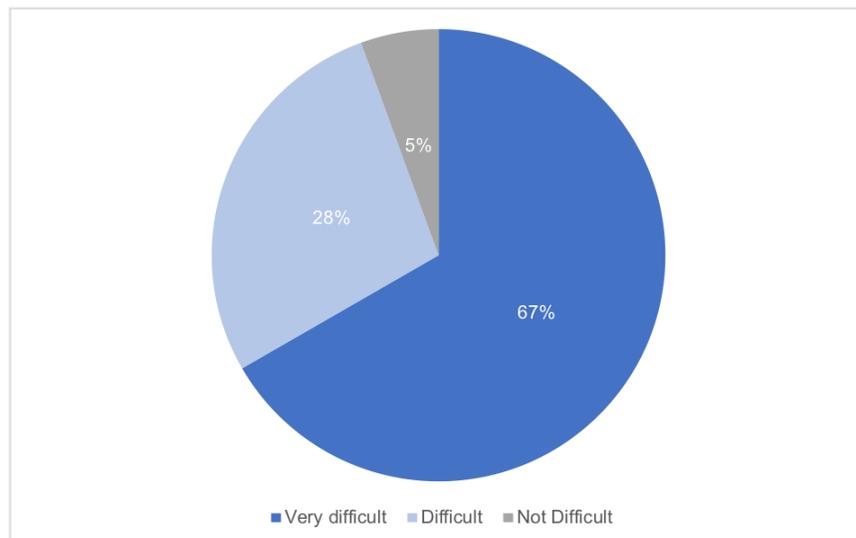


Figure 2. “If you needed to hire an additional French immersion teacher today, how difficult do you think it would be to fill that position?” (n=18)

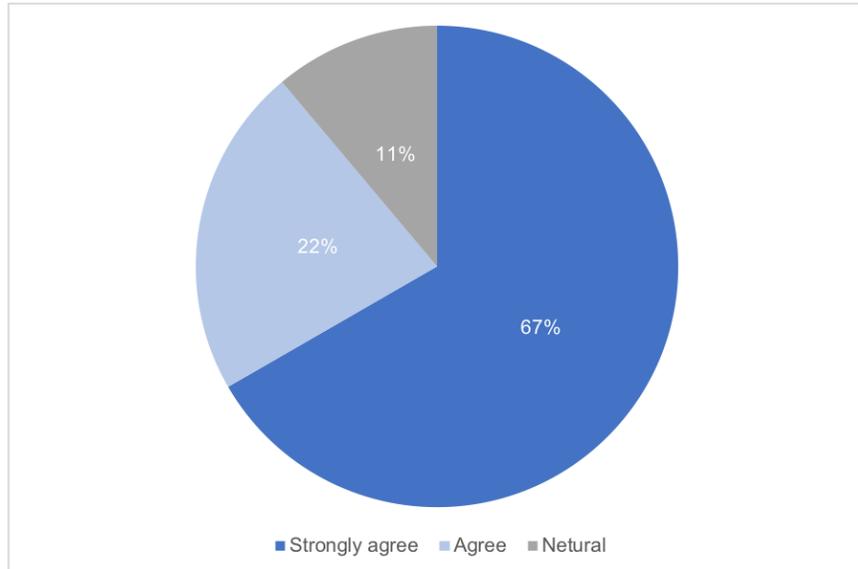


Figure 3. “It is difficult to find French immersion teachers to hire due to a lack of qualified applicants.” (n=18)

While districts face difficulty in hiring additional teachers, not all have been unable to meet demand for French immersion due to this constraint. Only five districts agreed that a lack of qualified teachers is preventing them from meeting demand for French immersion programs. Most districts did report both an increasing demand for French immersion and increasing difficulty in finding qualified French immersion teachers. No districts reported that the demand for French immersion has been decreasing, nor did any report that they had been experiencing less difficulty in finding qualified French immersion teachers.

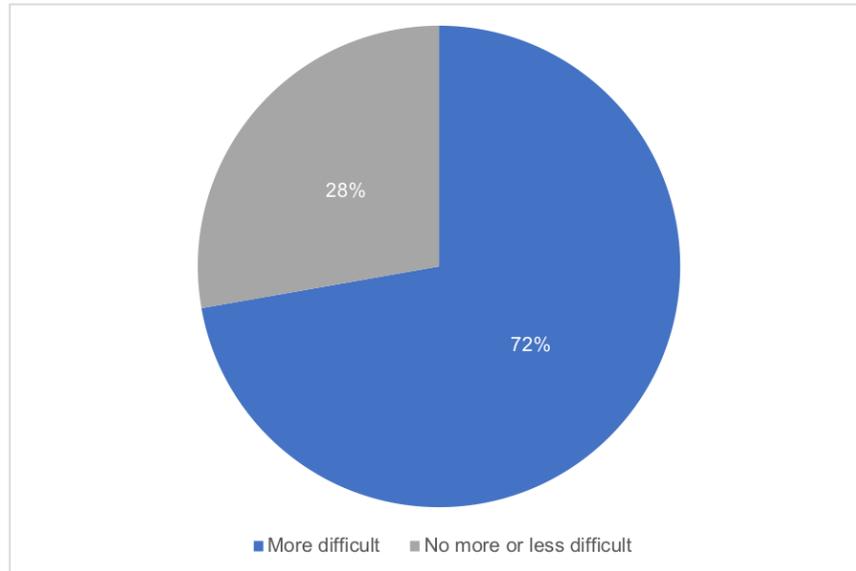


Figure 4. “Over the past few years, has it become more or less difficult to find fully qualified candidates for French immersion teaching positions?” (n=18)

5.1.2. Contributing factors

Districts were asked to rate the extent to which they believed various factors were important to address to increase the supply of French immersion teachers in BC (see Figure 4). No district identified any factor as not at all important. The strongest importance was reported for the number of students in BC entering French teacher training programs, with 12 districts rating it as very important. There was also strong importance reported for the number of teachers coming to BC from other provinces, although fewer districts rated it as “very” important. The results regarding the number of teachers immigrating from other countries was more mixed, with no districts rating it as “very important.” 14 districts rated professional attrition as “very important” or “important” to address. This is an interesting result, as only six districts agreed that they find it difficult to retain French immersion teachers, and only seven agreed that there is higher turnover of French immersion teachers compared to other teachers.

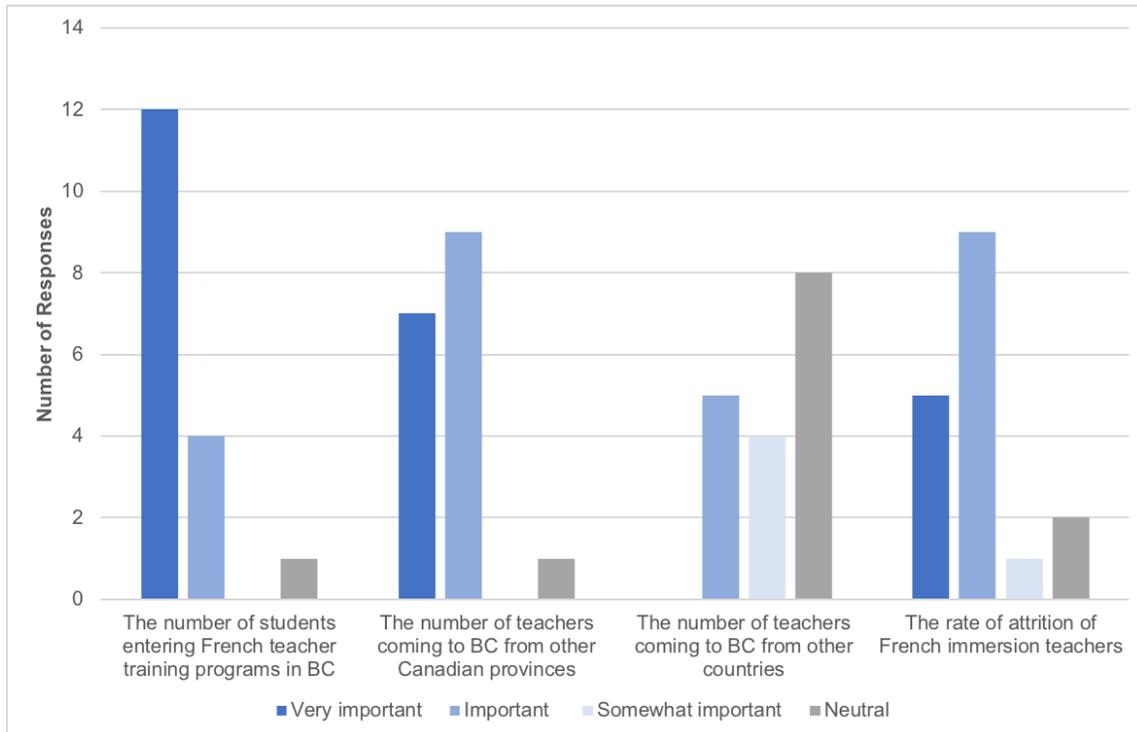


Figure 5. “Please indicate to what extent you think each of the following is important to address to increase the supply of French immersion teachers in British Columbia.”

5.1.3. Recruitment strategies

Districts were asked to rate how successful they had found various other strategies to recruit French immersion teachers. The strategies included contact with faculties of education in BC and in other provinces, travelling outside of BC for recruitment, online advertising, and hiring of student teachers completing practicums in the district (see Figure 5). Online advertising and the recruitment of student teachers that have had placements in the district were the two strategies most commonly reported as successful. Districts have had mixed results with contact with faculties of education and travel outside BC to recruit French immersion teachers.

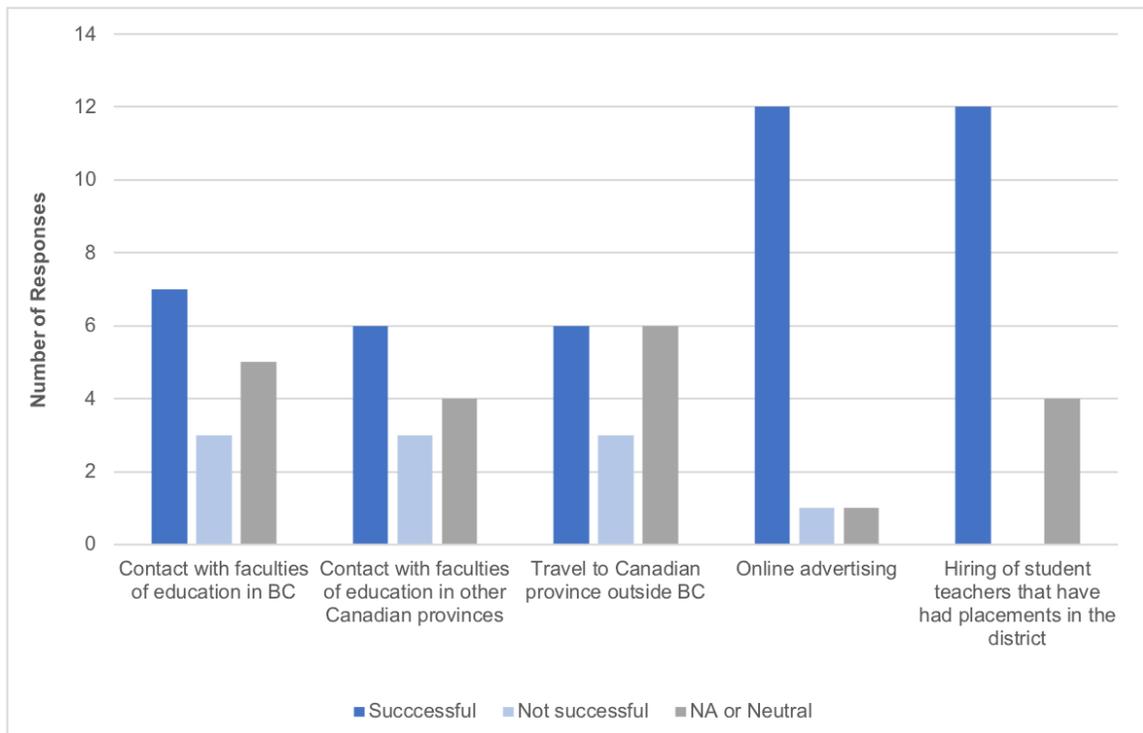


Figure 6. Responses to “How successful have you found the following strategies to recruit French immersion teachers?”

Districts were also given the opportunity to list any other successful strategies they have employed to recruit French immersion teachers. Strategies that were listed include networking, supporting teachers who wish to improve their French, and attending university teacher fairs. One district noted that they have been quite successful in recruiting teachers from Ontario and Quebec through Make a Future and Skype interviews.

Districts were asked whether they currently use any strategies to encourage French immersion students to pursue careers as French immersion teachers. Six districts reported that they currently use such strategies. Eight reported that they did not, and three respondents were unsure whether their district had any such strategies. Districts that responded “yes” were asked to briefly describe those strategies. The strategies included providing information through career counsellors and other career-related activities, inviting guest speakers to present on French immersion programs, and allowing students with an interest in teaching to volunteer in elementary French classrooms.

5.2. Interviews

5.2.1. Making French teaching a more attractive career

Several interview participants discussed the need to make teaching, in particular French immersion teaching, a more attractive career choice. Participant 5 spoke at length about the need for employers to take action to make people see teaching as a wonderful profession, citing nursing as an example of a profession that has done a lot of work to market itself positively. Many of the concerns about why there are not more teachers choosing to teach French immersion revolve around the increased difficulty of teaching French immersion, especially as the salary for immersion teachers is no higher than that of other teachers.

Some of the difficulties expressed by participants that are faced by French immersion teachers include a heavier workload and stronger parental involvement. For example, Sophie Bergeron noted that with the introduction of a new curriculum, publishers will often quickly release lesson planning materials for English programs only, as there is not enough demand for French materials. This may lead French teachers to feel they are doing extra work when their colleagues have access to resources they do not. There is also a common perception that parents of French immersion students are more involved than parents in other programs, given that French immersion is often thought of as more “prestigious.” Without sufficient support, these sorts of factors can cause teachers to leave teaching or to seek a job in English instead.

While the obvious solution may be to simply increase the salary of French immersion teachers, participants emphasized that this would be nearly impossible given the position of the BCTF, which is that “a teacher is a teacher is a teacher.” The BCTF does not support any teachers being paid more than others based on their discipline or specialization. Some participants expressed disagreement with this position, given that being able to teach French is an additional qualification, and it is considered to be a more difficult job. While there are options to give French immersion teachers certain benefits, such as additional funding for supplies, it is currently unfeasible to raise their salaries without raising the salaries of all teachers.

5.2.2. Encouraging the pursuit of French teacher training in BC

Interviews with universities brought out two factors to consider in increasing the number of students in BC pursuing French teacher training: the amount of funding available for spots, and the ability to recruit enough students to fill those spots. Both H  l  ne Lalancette and Wendy Carr confirmed that there is currently some difficulty in recruiting enough students for French cohorts at SFU and UBC, citing reasons such as the extensive career opportunities that exist for bilingual students in addition to teaching. H  l  ne Lalancette also emphasized that there is misinformation among many students who might want to pursue a career in French education, as well as a lack of knowledge that there is a shortage. She therefore suggested that there is a need to better inform students about the need for French teachers and the educational options to pursue that path.

Several interview participants noted that the current bursaries offered by the Ministry of Education for students studying in French cover only a small portion of the total cost of the program, at roughly 10 percent. Most agreed that increasing the amount of bursary funding available could be helpful in recruiting more students to teacher education programs.

5.2.3. Incentivizing movement across Canada

Participants confirmed that recruitment from other provinces is an important practice to increase the supply of immersion teachers in BC. Both individual school districts and the BCPSEA travel to university fairs in other provinces to recruit French immersion teachers. Sophie Bergeron explained that while these efforts have historically been successful, the shortage of French immersion teachers is also affecting provinces including Ontario and Quebec, and as it worsens it is becoming more difficult to recruit teachers from those regions. In addition to simply being a source of qualified teachers, teachers from Francophone regions are beneficial to programs as they have higher linguistic proficiency and are able to better incorporate elements of Francophone culture into their teaching.

Participants repeatedly brought up the issues of salary and the cost of living. The high cost of living in Vancouver was cited as a deterrent for many who might otherwise

consider moving to the city to teach. This is especially true given that the salaries of teachers in BC is lower than in many other provinces. One participant asked rhetorically whether a teacher from the East considering moving West would choose Alberta or BC, given that the cost of living in BC is 25 percent higher and the salaries 25 percent lower. It was therefore repeatedly suggested that salaries should be higher, both to help incentivize inter-provincial movement and to make teaching an all-around more attractive profession.

Participants also brought up the concern with retention of out-of-province teachers. It is commonly understood that while recruitment from other provinces is likely to be helpful in the short-term, many teachers return to their home province within a few years. Reasons for this include the difficulty in adjusting to a new province, and simply beginning to miss one's family and home after a few years. While there is little that can be done to address such motivations, interview participants did state that there are ways to help teachers from out-of-province better integrate into communities to improve retention, such as offering mentorship programs.

Participant 2 stated that the Canadian Free Trade Agreement has made it much easier for teachers to move between jurisdictions. As such, there are few to no barriers related to certification that prevent teachers from out-of-province from moving to BC. Other measures must therefore be considered to incentivize such movement. The most common suggestion for encouraging inter-provincial migration of teachers was to offer student loan forgiveness for teachers who move from other jurisdictions, or to provide other financial incentives such as reimbursement of moving costs.

5.2.4. Incentivizing movement internationally

While the Canadian Free Trade agreement has reduced barriers for inter-provincial movement, there remain significant barriers to international teachers coming to BC. Participant 2 discussed the process of offering credential certification to teachers arriving from other countries. He stated that many international teachers are denied certification and must return to university to upgrade their education. This most often takes a full year, for which the teacher must pay full tuition. In the case of a permanent resident, this would mean paying domestic fees. However, if the individual is not a permanent resident they are likely to have to pay international student fees, which are

significantly higher⁶. Immigrants from certain countries are more likely to have their credentials transfer easily than others.

In order to import teachers from around the world, participants spoke about addressing barriers such as tuition and certification. For example, an option might be to charge international students only domestic fees if they need to upgrade their credentials. Other options that were brought up by interview participants were similar to those that could be used to incentivize inter-provincial migration, such as student loan forgiveness programs.

5.2.5. Targeting attrition and bringing teachers back in

While it is uncertain exactly to what extent professional attrition is contributing to the shortage, several participants agreed that it is an important part of addressing the problem. This is true both to help ensure that French immersion teachers from BC remain in the profession or do not switch to English programs, and to help retain recruits from out-of-province. Mentorship programs were commonly brought up as a way to ease the transition into the teaching profession and help new teachers feel more comfortable. Investing in professional development programs was also discussed as being important to help teachers feel comfortable and supported, while also improve overall teaching quality.

Wendy Carr emphasized that there are currently many French teachers in the province who have transitioned to teaching in the English programs. She suggested that this presents a large pool of teachers who, if incentivized to return to French teaching, could help relieve the shortage. In particular, she referenced research that shows that many teachers do not feel confident (or sufficiently competent) teaching French. These teachers might be encouraged to continue developing their proficiency if there was professional development support for language. This could be an important component of a strategy to reduce the attrition of French immersion teachers and to invite teachers to return to French teaching.

⁶ UBC's online cost calculator shows tuition for the year as \$11,789 for Canadian students, and \$48,958 for international students. SFU's program website lists tuition as approximately \$12,000, and notes that international fees are roughly four times as high.

5.2.6. Measuring the shortage and lack of data

Another consistent theme that emerged throughout the interviews was that there is a lack of data, making it difficult to adequately measure and understand this problem. These concerns about the lack of data that could be used to understand the problem led to a frequent suggestion that improved data collection and data sharing could help to better understand the problem and design solutions.

Glynn Lewis spoke about how Canadian Parents for French BC & Yukon Branch has approached this topic. In 2015 they conducted a survey on the shortage, whose results are described in Chapter 3. He noted that the Ministry of Education does not track teachers by subject area, making it difficult to identify mismatches between supply and demand when there may be a surplus in certain teaching disciplines and a shortage in others. He also identified Make a Future as being a useful data source, though far from perfect as the number of applicants to a job is not necessarily indicative of the number of *qualified* applicants. Participants 3 and 4 also discussed the difficulty in using data from Make a Future, as it doesn't present a complete picture. Overall, much of the data now comes in the form of qualitative feedback from school districts describing their difficulty in filling positions for French immersion teachers.

Participant 2 discussed the segregation of much of the relevant data at the ministerial level. For example, he stated that the Teacher Regulation Branch collects data that is relevant to certification, but that data cannot be shared with the rest of the ministry. Furthermore, while the Ministry of Education collects data on where teachers are working, and where they were working the previous year, they do not track what subject they are teaching. As such, it is difficult to get an overview of the number of French immersion teachers, as well as the attrition rate, throughout the province. Lastly, he noted that privacy rules prevent the BCPSEA from sharing much of their data that may be useful in further understanding the problem with the provincial government.

5.2.7. Need for a multi-pronged approach

A consistent theme throughout the interviews was that there is a need for a multi-pronged approach to address this problem, and that it will require significant collaboration between multiple stakeholders. It was generally agreed upon that it is not

possible to solve the problem by looking only in one place, for example only by increasing the number of students training to be French teachers here or by recruiting from another province. There must instead be a mix of these approaches. This is highly complex as there are many stakeholders involved, all of whom have a role to play. One participant joked that if the problem could have been solved by one organization, it would have been solved long ago. Instead, strategies to address the problem will require the collaboration and cooperation of multiple organizations.

Chapter 6. Policy objectives and evaluative criteria

This section details the analytical framework that is used to evaluate policy options. Seven criteria have been identified and are used to compare options in Chapter 8. These criteria have been chosen to assess the extent to which the policies are expected to achieve multiple objectives as identified through the research thus far. These objectives are as follows:

- Increase the number of French immersion teachers in BC and retain those teachers long-term
- Ensure that there is a sufficient number of French immersion teachers in all school districts with French immersion programming, both rural and urban
- Maintain the quality of French immersion programs in BC and ensure sufficiently high qualification standards for French immersion teachers

In addition, the impact of policy options on governmental objectives through budgetary cost, administrative complexity, and stakeholder acceptance are considered. This framework provides a rigorous analysis through which each option is systematically evaluated on the same criteria to produce as objective a recommendation as possible.

Each option is rated as high, medium, or low against each criterion, with high representing the most desirable option and low representing the least desirable option. In cases where the lower value is preferred, such as with cost, the more desirable option (lower cost) is still rated as “high.” To avoid confusion, the summary of the analysis of each option is colour-coded with green, yellow, and red, with green always representing the most desirable option. Table 2 provides a summary of the evaluative criteria and their measurement.

6.1. Increase in the supply of French immersion teachers

The first of two criteria to measure the overall effectiveness of policy options is the increase in the supply of French immersion teachers in BC. Options are assessed by the extent to which the policy is expected to increase the number of French immersion teachers working in BC. Due to constraints with the type of data available to make such

a prediction, this assessment is done qualitatively based on the literature, survey findings, and interview findings. Based on the findings from those sources, each option is scored as resulting in a small, moderate, or significant increase in the number of French immersion teachers. These measures are not defined quantitatively, but rather by how the options are expected to perform relative to one another.

6.2. Retention of French immersion teachers

The second criterion that is used to measure the effectiveness of policy options is the retention of French immersion teachers. This criterion is used to assess to what extent difficulty is anticipated in retaining new French immersion teachers in BC. This criterion was included based on interview findings that teachers who migrate to BC are less likely to remain in the province long-term, as well as the finding that professional attrition plays a contributing role in the shortage. It is therefore optimal to design policies that not only increase the number of French immersion teachers in the province but maximize the likelihood that those teachers will continue to work as French immersion teachers. This criterion is measured by whether new French immersion teachers are expected to work in BC long term, or whether there is anticipated difficulty in retaining new French immersion teachers. This assessment is largely based on interview findings, as well as some relevant literature.

6.3. Rural-urban distribution

The criterion of rural-urban distribution of French immersion teachers is primarily responding to the issue of equity throughout the province. This criterion is included as there is evidence that the shortage of French immersion teachers is more severe in rural areas than in urban ones. The reasons for this include the geographical location of French teacher education programs as well as the higher preference of teachers moving to the province to settle in urban areas. This criterion is measured by whether the policy encourages an increase in the number of French immersion teachers in rural districts as well as urban ones. The measurement is based on the policy design itself as well as literature and interview findings that document the reasons rural districts tend to experience the shortage more severely.

6.4. Program and teaching quality

As described above, the shortage of French immersion teachers leads to a risk of lowering qualification standards and overall lower program quality. In addition to the literature noting this risk, interview participants gave examples of school districts in BC hiring teachers with low levels of language proficiency or otherwise lacking appropriate training to teach French immersion. While the ideal policy would increase the supply of French immersion teachers while also ensuring that qualification standards remain high, participants also noted that there is somewhat of a “balancing act” between ensuring that there are enough teachers and setting qualification standards. This criterion assesses the effect that policy options will have on the program and teaching quality of BC’s French immersion program. This is measured by the estimated impact on teaching quality and overall program quality. The assessment is based on the policy design, with support from interview findings and the literature. This considers that teaching quality involves more than just French proficiency and must include strong pedagogical training to effectively teach in French.

6.5. Cost to government

The first criterion that considers governmental management objectives is that of cost to government. Given the budget constraints faced by governments, they are less likely to be willing or able to implement high-cost options. This criterion therefore estimates the cost of each policy option, measured by the estimated total financial cost to the provincial government per additional teacher that the policy would create. Cost is measured with a rough estimate and then rated as high, medium, or low based on how costly options are estimated to be relative to one another. Because a lower cost option is more desirable than a higher cost option, options rated as “high” have the lowest cost, and vice versa.

6.6. Administrative complexity

The second criterion that addresses governmental management objectives is that of administrative complexity. A key interview finding is that the problem of the shortage of French immersion teachers requires action at multiple levels of government and within multiple organizations, as well as collaboration between those actors. While

this collaboration can lead to more robust policy, it is more time-consuming, complex, and difficult to achieve. This criterion is therefore measured by the degree of collaboration that is required between multiple levels of government, multiple departments, and external stakeholders for each policy option. Because less complexity is more desirable than high complexity, options rated as “high” have the lowest levels of complexity, and vice versa.

6.7. BCTF support

The last criterion that considers governmental management objectives is that of BCTF support or opposition to the proposed policy option. As described in the interview findings, the BCTF adopts the position that “a teacher is a teacher is a teacher,” meaning that they do not support increased pay or benefits for only one group of teachers based on speciality or subject area. Because of this, options to raise the salaries of only French immersion teachers were not considered, but other possible financial incentives are. This criterion therefore measures the likelihood that the BCTF would oppose the policy intervention, as significant opposition could make the option difficult or impossible to implement.

Table 1: Summary of evaluative criteria

Objective	Criterion	Measure	Scoring
Effectiveness	Increase in supply of French immersion teachers	Extent to which the policy is predicted to increase the number of French immersion teachers across British Columbia	High: Results in a significant increase in the number of French immersion teachers in BC
			Medium: Results in a moderate increase in the number of French immersion teachers in BC
	Retention of French immersion teachers	Expected retention of new French immersion teachers	Low: Results in a small increase in the number of French immersion teachers in BC
			High: New French immersion teachers are expected to work in BC long-term
Equity	Rural-urban distribution of French immersion teachers	Extent to which the policy is expected to increase the supply of French immersion teachers in both rural and urban school districts	Medium: There may be some difficulty retaining new French immersion teachers
			Low: New French immersion teachers are unlikely to work in BC long-term
			High: Results in more French immersion teachers in both rural and urban school districts
Development	Program and teaching quality	Estimated impact on teaching quality and overall program quality	Medium: Somewhat favours urban school districts compared to rural districts
			Low: Significantly favours urban school districts compared to rural districts
			High: Could increase overall program and/or teaching quality
Budgetary cost	Cost to government	Approximate cost to government per additional teacher	Medium: Maintains current program and/or teaching quality
			Low: May somewhat reduce program and/or teaching quality
			High: Low cost per additional teacher
			Medium: Moderate cost per additional teacher
			Low: High cost per additional teacher

Objective	Criterion	Measure	Scoring
Administrative complexity	Administrative complexity	Degree of collaboration required between government departments, multiple levels of governments, and other stakeholders	High: Can be implemented with little to no collaboration between government departments, levels of government, or stakeholders
			Medium: Requires some collaboration between multiple levels of government, government departments, and/or stakeholders
			Low: Requires signification collaboration between other levels of government, government departments, and stakeholders
Stakeholder acceptance	BCTF support	Likelihood that the BCTF will oppose the policy	High: BCTF unlikely to oppose the policy
			Medium: BCTF could oppose the policy
			Low: BCTF likely to oppose the policy

Chapter 7. Policy options

This chapter presents five policy options that have been chosen for analysis. As described in previous chapters, this problem is complex and potential solutions require the collaboration of many stakeholders. There are policy options that can be implemented at multiple levels: federally, provincially, by school districts, or by universities. As the scope of the policy problem identified for this project is the supply of French immersion teachers at the provincial level, options that could be implemented on a smaller scale, for example by an individual school district, are not explored in this analysis.

7.1. Option 1: Student loan forgiveness program

This option proposes introducing a student loan forgiveness program for French immersion teachers working in BC with provincial student loans. The option is modeled after the student loan forgiveness program that currently exists for health care professionals in underserved communities in the province (StudentAidBC n.d.). Under the program, full-time French immersion teachers would be eligible for forgiveness of 20 percent of the BC portion of their Canada-BC integrated student loan debt per year, for up to five years. The program would also pay for any accumulating interest on the loan for the duration of the program. In other words, after five years of working as a French immersion teacher, participants would have the entirety of the BC portion of their loan forgiven.

The purpose of this option is to provide a financial incentive to work as a French immersion teacher in BC. Any teacher who has graduated from a post-secondary institution with student loans and is making choices regarding their career would be incentivized to consider French immersion positions more seriously than they may have otherwise, given that their loan could be forgiven. This could also incentivize students who are considering a career in education, particularly French education, to choose that educational path.

7.2. Option 2: Increased bursaries for pre-service teachers studying in French

Current bursaries provided by the Ministry of Education are available to full-time students studying in a teacher education program in BC and taking at least 55 percent of their courses in French. These bursaries are valued at a maximum of \$1600 per student (Ministry of Education 2018). Interview participants stated that most students receive approximately \$1000-\$1200, which is enough to cover roughly 10% of their total fees. This option therefore proposes increasing the amount of bursary funding available so that students in teacher education programs studying in French can receive financial support that covers a higher portion of their fees, while retaining the current eligibility criteria.

The purpose of this option is to incentivize more students to study to become French teachers by reducing the cost of their education. This option was included based on the fact that interviewees stated that current bursaries are not sufficient, and that increasing their value could incentivize more students to pursue teacher education in French.

7.3. Option 3: Informational campaign for French-speaking students

This option proposes a coordinated provincial campaign to provide current French immersion high school students and university students in French courses with information related to the pursuance of a career as a French immersion teacher. This includes information on the benefits of a career as a French immersion teacher, educational requirements, and the need for French immersion teachers in the province (i.e. the high likelihood of getting a job). Such information would be communicated through presentations to French immersion classes by teachers and university recruiters, as well as included in promotional materials such as pamphlets available from teachers and guidance counsellors.

French immersion students are currently provided with such information in many cases, however there is no province-wide coordination or initiative. Many school districts do encourage their French immersion students to consider French education as a

career. UBC and SFU also engage in recruitment activities that target French immersion students in the province, for example through presentations in schools by recruiters. However, given the concern that many students have misinformation or are not included in these initiatives, the option proposes an initiative with leadership and coordination by the Ministry of Education to ensure that such information is more widely available province-wide. The option therefore aims to encourage students with an interest in education to pursue a career as a French immersion teacher by providing them with information to both spark an interest and guide their education decisions.

7.4. Option 4: Additional professional development funding for teachers wishing to transition to French immersion

This option proposes investing in additional professional development funding that would be available specifically for teachers wishing to transition into French immersion. It is difficult to determine how many such bursaries should be available, as there are not good data on the number of teachers in the province that might be willing and able to make such a transition. If an average of one teacher per school district with French immersion were to use such funding, this would represent 45 per year. Provincial bursaries are currently available on a first-come, first-serve basis for any teacher with a BC teaching certificate or Letter of Permission for up to \$1500 for one training program per year and up to \$300 for one conference per year, plus a travel subsidy. Training programs include any in-person program in Canada in French language and/or French teaching methods, such as uVic's Professional Specialization Certificate in Teaching French Immersion (Ministry of Education 2018). These bursaries are available regardless of whether the teacher is currently employed as a French teacher; so, while teachers wishing to transition to French immersion are eligible for existing bursaries, the option proposes adding an additional category of funding that is specifically for those wishing to transition. Therefore, a key feature is that it would not reduce the amount of bursary funding available for current immersion teachers, as it is an important component of maintaining teachers' professional and language competency, improving program quality, and reducing professional attrition.

This option is included as research findings suggest that there are teachers in the province who are not teaching French immersion that have some level of French competency. For example, one school district responding to the survey stated that the district has teachers who are interested in teaching French immersion, but are worried as their French is “rusty.” Ensuring that bursaries are available specifically for such circumstances could help to increase the supply of French immersion teachers from the pool of those who are already certified teachers in the province.

7.5. Option 5: Fund moving expenses and provide housing assistance for out-of-province teachers

This option proposes paying the cost of moving expenses and providing housing assistance for new teachers that are hired from out-of-province. Many school districts do currently pay moving expenses for out-of-province recruits, but not all, as this is a decision made at the district level. However, this option proposes a provincial initiative to ensure that such funding is available to all school districts hiring French immersion teachers. Housing assistance is also proposed as part of this option as an additional financial incentive. Housing assistance is included as the high cost of living in BC relative to other provinces was repeatedly cited by research participants as posing a barrier to out-of-province recruitment. This assistance could take the form of cash reimbursements for a portion of rent for the first several months a teacher is in the province, or an equivalent cost toward a down-payment for a house. This option would provide an additional financial incentive to teachers in other provinces, likely Ontario and Québec, to move to BC to teach French immersion by removing the barriers of the cost of moving and cost of living.

Chapter 8. Policy analysis

8.1. Student loan forgiveness program

8.1.1. Supply

This option is expected to significantly increase the number of French immersion teachers in the province relative to the other options. There are two main reasons for this evaluation. Firstly, the option provides the highest financial incentive of the five options. Secondly, the option has the potential to both incentivize teachers who are already certified to consider French immersion positions if they otherwise would not have, and to incentivize students entering university to consider studying to be a French teacher. There are therefore two pools of potential French immersion teachers targeted, while the other options target only one pool. There is also evidence that student loan forgiveness has been a successful strategy in other jurisdictions. Student loan forgiveness programs to address shortages of special education teachers and of teachers in low-income schools in the United States have been successful in increasing the supply of teachers for those positions (Podolsky and Kini 2016). It is not certain that results would be the same in addressing the shortage for French immersion in BC, given that the causes of the shortages are not identical, but such evidence does suggest that loan forgiveness can be an effective solution for specialty teaching positions.

8.1.2. Retention

This option is expected to have a positive impact on retention. Attrition poses the greatest concern when teachers are recruited from out-of-province, so it is beneficial for retention that this option targets BC residents. Given that the loan forgiveness program lasts five years, most teachers in the program would be expected to continue teaching French immersion for at least that length of time. While there is no specific incentive for teachers to remain after reaching the five-year mark, the option could help teachers stay in their positions longer than they might have otherwise. Once having stayed for five years, teachers may see more value in staying long-term. It is possible that teachers without intentions to teach in French immersion long-term could enter the program in

order to receive loan forgiveness and then transfer to an English position, but overall the option is expected to perform well relative to the other options on this criterion.

8.1.3. Rural-urban distribution

Overall, urban districts would likely benefit somewhat more than urban districts under this option. The option does not incentivize teachers to teach in rural districts compared to urban ones, but it may incentivize teachers within rural districts to enter the loan forgiveness program or for students from rural areas to pursue a career in French teaching.

8.1.4. Program and teaching quality

This option is not expected to significantly alter program and teaching quality from its current state. Teachers with few qualifications to teach French immersion may be incentivized to pursue such positions under this program, however there is no reason to believe that the current qualification standards of school districts would change in response. Given existing concerns about the qualification standards of school districts in the context of a shortage, it is possible that some districts would hire teachers who are ill-prepared to teach French immersion, but the likelihood of this happening is small, as is its expected impact on overall program and teaching quality.

8.1.5. Budgetary cost

This option is quite costly relative to the other proposed options. As of 2016, 36 percent of students graduating in BC with a bachelor's degree has government student loan debt. The median debt burden for those students was \$25,000 (BCStats 2017). Under the current government student loan system, 40 percent of student loans are provided provincially and 60 percent federally, making the total BC-portion median \$10,000. Therefore, under this option the cost for each additional teacher hired under the program would be approximately \$10,000 over five years.

8.1.6. Administrative complexity

This option would require coordination between BC Student Aid, the Ministry of Education, school districts, and teachers. While there is already student loan forgiveness in BC after which the options could be modelled, there would still be a significant amount of coordination and cooperation required to set up and implement such a program, and some level of complexity in its administration once implemented.

8.1.7. BCTF support

This option is likely to receive opposition from the BCTF. The BCTF has called for student loan forgiveness as an option to address the overall shortage of teachers in the province that has existed since the Supreme Court ruling on class sizes, and therefore may express discontent at implementing such an option only for French immersion teachers (British Columbia Teachers' Federation 2017). While the BCTF is not opposed to student loan forgiveness, it may be opposed to such a program that is only available to one type of teacher.

Table 2: Summary of analysis of option 1

Supply	Retention	Rural-urban	Quality	Cost	Complexity	BCTF
High	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low

8.2. Increased bursaries for pre-service teachers studying in French

8.2.1. Supply

This option is expected to result only in a small increase in the number of French immersion teachers in the province relative to the other options. The first reason for this is that the option provides only a small financial incentive. It also targets only students entering teacher training programs in BC. While participants did express that increased bursary funding could incentivize more students to pursue careers as French teachers, there is little evidence that this option would result in a large increase in enrolment. At best, its outcome is quite uncertain. One participant noted that many students who enrol

in teacher education programs in French are not even aware of available bursary funding until after they have entered the program. Lastly, there is not a guarantee that teachers entering such programs due to the financial incentive of bursaries would end up working as French immersion teachers in the province after graduation. Therefore, while the additional financial incentive could lead to some increase in enrolment and therefore an increase in the number of French teachers, the option has been ranked low relative to the other proposed policy options.

8.2.2. Retention

This option is not expected to significantly change the rate of attrition of French immersion teachers compared to the current situation. The pool of potential teachers primarily targeted are from BC, who are more likely to stay in BC long-term than recruits from out-of-province. However, there is no reason that this option would reduce the number of French immersion teachers that leave the profession or move to English positions compared to the current situation.

8.2.3. Rural-urban distribution

This option is not expected to benefit rural school districts. By potentially increasing enrolment into French teacher training programs in the province, no additional incentives to teach in rural districts are provided. Research participants noted that the only two French teacher training programs in the province are both located in Metro Vancouver, and that this disadvantages rural school districts. This option would not address this barrier. Currently, urban school districts have an easier time recruiting students that are graduating from French teacher education programs in the province, and after increasing the number of graduates through increased bursaries this trend would likely remain unchanged.

8.2.4. Program and teaching quality

This option is not expected to change program or teaching quality from its current state. Increasing enrolment in French teacher training programs in the province would result in more teachers with the same education and training that many French immersion teachers currently employed in the province already have.

8.2.5. Budgetary cost

The total cost of this option is less costly relative to the other options. Although an exact amount for the increase is not included, the increase would likely represent an additional \$1500-\$2500 per student compared to what is currently offered.

8.2.6. Administrative complexity

This option would not be very complex to implement. Given that the current bursary eligibility would be retained, the increase would take place within the current system and require relatively little cooperation between stakeholders. To increase its effectiveness, there may be some coordination required to market the available funding to potential candidates.

8.2.7. BCTF support

There is unlikely to be opposition from the BCTF in response to this option.

Table 3: Summary of analysis of option 2

Supply	Retention	Rural-urban	Quality	Cost	Complexity	BCTF
Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High

8.3. Informational campaign for French-speaking students

8.3.1. Supply

It is uncertain how effective this option would be in increasing the supply of French immersion teachers in the province. The option targets only students in the province who could potentially enter French teacher training programs. It is difficult to estimate how many of those students might choose to enter those programs given more information than they currently have. However, there is concern that many students in the province are not aware of the shortage, or of the potential career options available to them as French immersion teachers. This option also does not provide any financial incentive, which has been an important consideration in estimating the effectiveness of

other options. Given this, it is expected that the option would raise enrolment in French teacher training programs somewhat, but the overall impact is expected to be low.

8.3.2. Retention

Students recruited to French teacher training programs through this initiative would be expected to work in BC long-term as French teachers. Students recruited would be BC residents, who are the most likely to continue working in the province long-term. Although there is still a possibility of professional attrition, the aim of the campaign is to provide information in order to incentivize those with a genuine interest in the teaching profession. The lack of direct financial incentive would hopefully result in increased enrolment from students who have a strong likelihood of remaining in French immersion teaching, as they are pursuing the career based on interest in the profession rather than the financial incentive. There can still be some level of attrition expected, but retention is expected to be strong relative to the other policy options.

8.3.3. Rural-urban distribution

This option is expected to help both urban and rural school districts. As a campaign would be active in both rural and urban school districts, students in rural districts could be encouraged to pursue a French teaching career within their own communities. Research participants noted that those most likely to work long-term in rural communities are those from those communities. There is no guarantee that those choosing to pursue French teaching as a result of this option would return to work in rural school districts, but relative to the other options there is a higher likelihood that the option could benefit rural and urban districts equally.

8.3.4. Program and teaching quality

This option is expected to have a positive impact on program and teaching quality relative to the other options. As school districts currently hire some teachers without immersion-specific training, it is positive that students encouraged to become French immersion teachers through this option would pursue immersion-specific training. Students could also receive information on immersive experiences or volunteer opportunities to further prepare themselves and explore their interest in French teaching

as a career, improving their language proficiency and relevant experience in addition to their formal education.

8.3.5. Budgetary cost

This option would be relatively low cost compared to the other options. Unlike the other options, it is difficult to predict the cost per teacher. Costs that would be required for this option include personnel, travel, and the creation of promotional materials. However, there are no direct financial incentives being provided to potential candidates, resulting in a lower overall cost than the other options.

8.3.6. Administrative complexity

This option would require some level of coordination and cooperation between the Ministry of Education, universities, and school districts to prepare and deliver the appropriate information.

8.3.7. BCTF support

There is unlikely to be BCTF opposition in response to this option.

Table 4: Summary of analysis of option 4

Supply	Retention	Rural-urban	Quality	Cost	Complexity	BCTF
Low	High	High	High	High	Medium	High

8.4. Allocate additional professional development bursary funding for teachers wishing to transition to French immersion

8.4.1. Supply

This option is expected to result in a moderate increase in the number of French immersion teachers in the province. The pool of potential teachers targeted through this option is certified teachers with some French language competency that are not currently teaching in French immersion. There are not reliable data on the number of

teachers in the province that might be able to transition to French immersion, but survey and interview findings revealed that those working in the field believe this is an important pool of candidates through which to address the shortage. By providing additional funding for programs to help this transition, this option would reduce a barrier to teachers moving into French immersion positions. As there is uncertainty in the number of teachers in the province who might be able to make such a transition, there is also uncertainty regarding the potential take-up rate for such a program. Given the qualitative findings that these teachers do exist, the option is ranked as being expected to result in a moderate increase relative to the other options.

8.4.2. Retention

This option is expected to perform highly with regards to retention relative to the other options. Individuals who are already working as teachers that would choose to transition to French immersion are likely to be those that have a strong interest in teaching French and have thought seriously about it. As the option targets those who are already working as teachers, it is likely that they have a strong understanding of the decision they are making. The fact that the option facilitates additional professional development is also positive for this criterion, as such programs themselves are important for retention. Lastly, as the option targets those who are already working in BC, there is a stronger likelihood that those participating in the program would stay than those recruited by an option targeting individuals from out-of-province.

8.4.3. Rural-urban distribution

This option is expected to benefit both rural and urban school districts. The teachers most likely to remain within rural districts are those from that community, and this option therefore allows school districts to offer opportunities to their own teachers from within the community to transition to French immersion rather than recruiting from elsewhere. As such bursaries are paired with travel subsidies, it also allows teachers living far from eligible programs to travel to complete their professional development activities.

8.4.4. Program and teaching quality

This option is not expected to impact program and teaching quality greatly from its current state. The fact that teachers wishing to transition to French immersion would receive additional training would be positive for program quality, as immersion-specific training is positive for the quality of French immersion programs. However, there is a chance that those teachers not currently teaching in French immersion have a lower language proficiency, explaining their current reluctance to teach French. While professional development programs can help those teachers to improve their language skills and effectively teach French using the level of proficiency they do have, it is not likely to increase the overall quality of the program to find additional teachers in this way.

8.4.5. Budgetary cost

The cost of this option would be similar to that of the option to increase bursaries for pre-service teachers studying in French. Adding additional bursaries would cost approximately \$2000 per teacher, based on the amount covered for tuition and travel by current professional development bursaries offered to teachers.

8.4.6. Administrative complexity

There would be some level of complexity involved in implementing this option. The option would require some coordination and cooperation between the Ministry of Education and school districts, and possibly with the institutions offering such professional development programs. While the system of offering bursaries already exists, and therefore some level of complexity is avoided, it would be necessary for the Ministry of Education to work with school districts to identify appropriate candidates for the program and to market the program to try to achieve a reasonable rate of up-take.

8.4.7. BCTF support

There is unlikely to be BCTF opposition in response to this option.

Table 5: Summary of analysis of option 4

Supply	Retention	Rural-urban	Quality	Cost	Complexity	BCTF
Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	High

8.5. Fund moving expenses and provide housing assistance for out-of-province teachers

8.5.1. Supply

This option is expected to result in a moderate increase in the number of French immersion teachers recruited to the province. School districts in the province have had some success previously recruiting from other provinces, although research participants cautioned that recruitment from other provinces is becoming more difficult as many other Canadian provinces are also experiencing a similar shortage. The added financial incentive, however, is expected to be effective in incentivizing more teachers from other provinces to consider moving to BC to teach. In particular, the financial incentive is expected to be helpful as the high cost of living in BC was brought up repeatedly by research participants as posing a barrier to out-of-province recruitment. The option is not providing a financial incentive as high as the loan forgiveness option, and the incentive does not last as long, leading the option to be ranked below it in terms of expected supply increase.

8.5.2. Retention

This option is expected to perform poorly relative to the other options in terms of retention of new teachers that are recruited. Research participants repeatedly emphasized that teachers who are recruited from out-of-province often return to their home province within a few years. While this option would help incentivize the initial migration to BC, it does not offer any additional incentives to have recruits stay in BC long-term.

8.5.3. Rural-urban distribution

Both rural and urban school districts could use this program to incentivize French immersion teachers from other provinces to move to their district to work. While teachers have historically preferred to settle in urban areas such as Metro Vancouver, research participants noted that the high cost of housing is making the region less desirable. Given that the cost of housing is less in rural areas, such a program could cover a larger portion of the cost of living, providing an additional incentive to relocate to rural regions.

8.5.4. Program and teaching quality

This option is expected to have an overall positive impact on program and teaching quality. Teachers recruited from out-of-province are likely to be either Francophone or have a very high level of language proficiency. While having a high level of language proficiency does not necessarily mean that a teacher has the pedagogical tools to be an effective French immersion teacher, it is beneficial overall to have more teachers in French immersion schools who are Francophone or have high levels of language proficiency. Furthermore, teachers from Francophone communities are able to bring more cultural knowledge into the program, which is an important component of French immersion in addition to the language acquisition itself.

8.5.5. Budgetary cost

This option has a high cost relative to the other policy options. For new BC public service employees, those moving over 4,000 kilometres are eligible to receive up to \$18,800 in moving expenses reimbursed (Government of British Columbia 2017). While the option does not define an exact amount to be provided in housing assistance, to represent a meaningful contribution to the cost of housing would likely require at least \$1000 per month for three months. Even if most recruits were to spend significantly less than the \$18,800 cited above and housing assistance were kept to a minimal amount, this option would be the most expensive per teacher.

8.5.6. Administrative complexity

This option would require a moderate amount of coordination and cooperation to implement. In particular, coordination between school districts and the Ministry of Education would be necessary. As some districts do already reimburse moving expenses, it would be necessary to determine how this option would fit in with the current systems in place. There would also be some level of complexity and cooperation required in determining who was eligible for such assistance, and how much.

8.5.7. BCTF support

The BCTF is likely to oppose this option if it were to apply only to French immersion teachers. In response to the general teacher shortage that began after the Supreme Court ruling on class sizes, funding for moving expenses and housing assistance have both been advocated for by the BCTF (British Columbia Teachers' Federation 2017). If this option were to be implemented for only one group of teachers, the BCTF would be likely to oppose it, as they are generally not in favour of specific teachers receiving benefits based on their specialization or subject area. There would likely be pressure to offer such a program for all teachers being hired from out-of-province.

Table 6: Summary of analysis of option 5

Supply	Retention	Rural-urban	Quality	Cost	Complexity	BCTF
Medium	Low	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low

8.6. Summary of analysis

Table 7: Summary of policy analysis results

	Option 1: Loan Forgiveness	Option 2: Student bursaries	Option 3: Informational campaign	Option 4: Professional development funding	Option 5: Moving expenses
Supply	High	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Retention	High	Medium	High	High	Low
Rural-urban distribution	Medium	Low	High	High	High
Program and teaching quality	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High
Budgetary cost	Low	Medium	High	Medium	Low
Administrative complexity	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
BCTF support	Low	High	High	High	Low

Chapter 9. Recommendations

Based on the analysis above, this study recommends the following three options, in order of priority: (1) Option 4: Allocate additional professional development bursary funding for teachers wishing to transition to French immersion; (2) Option 2: Informational campaign for French-speaking students; (3) Option 1: Student loan forgiveness program. The recommended options have been prioritized as it is unlikely, given political and budgetary constraints, that all three options could feasibly be implemented in the short-term.

9.1. Allocation additional professional development bursary funding for teachers wishing to transition to French immersion

This option is recommended as it performed the most highly across-the-board, as the only option to be rated as medium or high on all criteria. Addressing the shortage by seeking to increase the supply of French immersion teachers from the existing pool of trained teachers in the province is beneficial for retention and rural-urban distribution. While there is uncertainty with regards to the total number of teachers who might be willing to make such a transition, there is sufficient evidence that there are teachers in the province not currently teaching French that the option can be reasonably expected to help increase the supply of French immersion teachers in the province. While the option performs below some others on cost, complexity, and quality, these trade-offs are not severe, with the option performing only marginally worse than others on these criteria.

9.2. Informational campaign for French-speaking students

Although this option is rated low for its effectiveness in increasing supply, it is still recommended for two reasons. Firstly, the option performs well on all other evaluative criteria. Secondly, the low evaluation of its increase in supply was due to high uncertainty regarding its effectiveness. Therefore, given the low cost it would be worthwhile to implement such an option given the possibility that it could in fact succeed in increasing the supply of French immersion teachers in the province. The option is recommended as lower in terms of priority than the option of professional development

funding, however, given its lower ranking in terms of effectiveness. While it is still recommended that this option be implemented, it is not recommended that it be implemented as a sole solution.

9.3. Student loan forgiveness program

Given this option's low performance on several evaluative criteria, such as cost and complexity, it is not recommended as the top priority in addressing the shortage of French immersion teachers. Given these practical barriers, implementing such an option would likely require significant political will. However, the option is also expected to perform highly both in terms of supply increase and retention. Therefore, although the option does not perform as highly on several criteria, if the political will were there it presents the best option to make a substantial impact on the shortage of French immersion teachers. The option would pose challenges, but if the other options recommended were implemented and there remained the need and will to put forth an additional initiative to increase the supply of French immersion teachers, this option is recommended given its expected effectiveness.

Chapter 10. Conclusion

The shortage of French immersion teachers in BC is understood by some as a problem that is unsolvable. While this analysis finds that such skepticism is not warranted, there are several factors that make the shortage difficult to understand, analyze, and ultimately solve. With the present availability of data, it is virtually impossible for this study to determine how many French immersion teachers there are in the province compared to how many are ultimately needed. There is no single actor with whom the responsibility for addressing the shortage rests. While there are actions that can be taken by the provincial or federal government, the power at those levels to act is limited, with school districts continuing to bear the brunt of the burden of finding ways to manage in the face of the shortage, given their responsibility for recruitment and retention. The causes of the shortage are complicated and overlapping, and solutions may not be immediately obvious.

This study has shown that, while these factors present challenges to policymakers in designing and implementing options to address the shortage, addressing the shortage is not impossible. Increasing the supply of French immersion teachers in BC will require political will, time and patience, cooperation and collaboration between numerous stakeholders, and further research to fill existing knowledge gaps. But there are other factors that provide glimmers of hope that the problem is not unsolvable. The ever-rising demand for French immersion shows that there is interest in continuing and expanding French education programs in the province. While the multiple actors with responsibility poses a complication, it also presents an opportunity to tackle the problem from multiple angles and share knowledge between stakeholders. There is not a singular pool of candidates to be targeted; there are strategies that can target students considering a teaching career, teachers not currently teaching French, French teaching in other provinces, and even French teachers in other countries. While this is complicated, it also means there are multiple options available to address the shortage.

There are several areas for future research and data collection that will help to better understand the complexities of this problem. Better data is needed on the number of French immersion teachers in the province, the number of additional teachers needed, and the movement that is occurring inter-provincially and internationally. Further

research to better understand what motivates people, particularly in BC, to become French immersion teachers, and what barriers and challenges they face in pursuing that career path could also help to better predict how various policy interventions may perform. Lastly, while this study has focused on policies at the provincial-scale, similar analysis could be done for action that could be taken at a smaller scale, such as at the school-district level.

This study addressed the problem at the provincial-level, but there are still important lessons that emerged, in addition to a large body of existing literature, that documents the need for work at other levels to address the problem. Support at the district level, for example through mentorship programs, is imperative to ensuring that individuals continue to pursue careers as French teachers and remain in those careers long-term. In addition, continuing leadership and financial support from the federal government are also imperative to ensuring the survival of French education in BC. This study has analyzed an important piece of the puzzle by focusing on the provincial government; these recommendations have the potential to help resolve this chronic and complex problem, but a long-term and effective solution will require action beyond the provincial government.

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Appendix A.

Survey questions for school districts with French immersion

1. Please select the district you are representing in this survey
2. This school district currently offers (Please check all that apply):
 - Early French Immersion/Late French Immersion
3. Does your district currently have a waitlist for French immersion?
 - Yes/No/Unsure
4. How many full-time equivalent French immersion teachers does your district currently employ?
5. In recent years the demand for places in French immersion classrooms in the district has been (Please respond to the best of your knowledge):
 - Increasing significantly/Increasing/Staying about the same/Decreasing/Decreasing significantly/Unsure
6. If you needed to hire an additional French immersion teacher today, how difficult do you think it would be to fill that position?
 - Very difficult/Difficult/Not difficult
7. Over the past few years, has it become more or less difficult to find fully qualified candidates for French immersion teaching positions?
 - More difficult/No more or less difficult/Less difficult
8. Does your district have plans to expand the number of available French immersion spaces in the next few years?
 - Yes/No/Maybe/Unsure

9. Please briefly describe the reasons your district is or is not planning to expand its French immersion program, and considerations in this decision.
-

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree that each of the following statements reflects the current situation in your school district.

10. It is difficult to find French immersion teachers to hire due to a lack of qualified applications.

- Strongly agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree

11. It is easier to find qualified teachers for English language programs than for French immersion.

- Strongly agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree

12. A lack of qualified teachers is preventing the district from being able to meet student/parent demand for French immersion.

- Strongly agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree

13. It is difficult to retain French immersion teachers.

- Strongly agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree

14. There is higher turnover of French immersion teachers than other teachers

- Strongly agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

15. Retirement in the coming years will have an adverse effect on the supply of French immersion teachers.

- Strongly agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree
-

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If you do not have access to the information, please leave the answer blank.

16. Approximately what portion of French immersion teachers in your district are currently working on letters of permission?
 17. Approximately what portion of French immersion teachers in your district are Francophone?
 18. Approximately what portion of French immersion teachers in your district have immersion-specific training?
 19. Please rank where most of the French immersion teachers in your district come from, with 1 indicating the highest percentage and 4 indicating the lowest percentage:
 - British Columbia/Quebec/Other Canadian province/Other country
-

Please indicate to what extent you think each of the following is important to address to increase the supply of French immersion teachers in British Columbia.

20. The number of students entering French teacher training programs in British Columbia:
 - Very important/Important/Neutral/Somewhat important/Not at all important
21. The number of teachers coming to British Columbia from other Canadian provinces:
 - Very important/Important/Neutral/Somewhat important/Not at all important
22. The number of teachers coming to British Columbia from other countries
 - Very important/Important/Neutral/Somewhat important/Not at all important
23. The rate of attrition of French immersion teachers:
 - Very important/Important/Neutral/Somewhat important/Not at all important

24. Please note any other factors that you think are important to consider that are not listed above.

25. Does your district currently use any strategies to encourage French immersion students to pursue careers as FSL teachers?

- Yes/No/Unsure
 - If yes, please describe them briefly.
-

How successful have you found each of the following strategies to recruit French immersion teachers?

26. Contact with Faculties of Education in British Columbia

- Very successful/Somewhat successful/Neutral/Not very successful/Not at all successful/NA

27. Contact with Faculties of Education in other Canadian provinces

- Very successful/Somewhat successful/Neutral/Not very successful/Not at all successful/NA

28. Travel to Canadian provinces outside British Columbia

- Very successful/Somewhat successful/Neutral/Not very successful/Not at all successful/NA

29. Online advertising

- Very successful/Somewhat successful/Neutral/Not very successful/Not at all successful/NA

30. Hiring of student teachers that have had placements in the district

- Very successful/Somewhat successful/Neutral/Not very successful/Not at all successful/NA

31. Please describe any additional strategies that you have found to be successful in recruiting French immersion teachers that are not listed above.

32. Do you have any other comments that you wish to include?